

Eschatology

(Lecture notes by **Steve Gregg**-lecture: *When Shall These Things Be*)

- ✓ Introduction to Eschatology
- ✓ Interpretation of Scripture
- ✓ History of Eschatological Views
- ✓ The Millennium - in Revelation 20
- ✓ The Resurrection and Rapture of the Church
- ✓ The Case for the Two-stage Second Coming - Biblically Examined
- ✓ Is There A World-Wide Tribulation Predicted in Scripture?
- ✓ The Future of the Church

Introduction to Eschatology

I. Definitions:

A. Eschatology — from “eschatos” (“last”) and “logos” (“word” or “subject”)

B. Greek vocabulary for the “coming of Christ”

1. nouns

- a. *parousia* — “a presence” (from “para” [with] and “ousia” [being]) trans. “coming”
Of Paul (II Cor.10:10/Phil.1:26/2:12), of Stephanus and Fortunatus (I Cor.16:17), of Titus (II Cor.7:6,7) of the man of sin (II Thess.2:9)
Of Christ (Matt.24:27/I Cor.15:23/I Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23/II Thess.2:1,8/James 5:7,8/II Pet.1:16; 3:4,12/I John 2:28)
- b. *epiphaeia* — lit. “a shining forth”
(translated “appearing” - I Tim. 6:14/II Tim.1:10 [of Christ’s first coming];4:1,8/Titus 2:13 and “brightness” at II Thess.2:8)
- c. *apokalupsis* — lit. “an uncovering, or unveiling”
(usually translated “revelation” or “appearing” — Rom.2:5/I Cor. 1:7/II Thess.1:7/I Pet.1:7,13;4:13/Rev.1:1)

2. verb

- a. *erchomai* — regular generic word for “come” (Matt.10:23/16:28/26:64/Rev.1:7; 22:12)

C. Millennial views

- 1. *millennium* - from Latin “mille” (“1000”) and “annus” (“years”) mentioned in Rev.20
- 2. *premillennialism* - Christ returns before the 1000 years
- 3. *postmillennialism* - Christ returns after the 1000 years
- 4. *amillennialism* - The 1000 years and subsequent “little while” (Rev.20:7-8) represent the whole time between the first and second comings of Christ.

II. The Modern System (Dispensationalism)

1. *Seven Dispensations* (according to Scofield)

- a. Innocence (Creation till the fall)
- b. Conscience (the fall till the flood)
- c. Government (Post-flood till Abraham)
- d. Promise (Abraham till Sinai)
- e. Law (Sinai till Pentecost)
- f. Grace (church age)
- g. Kingdom (millennium)

2. *Israel’s eternal uniqueness*

3. *Professed commitment to literal interpretation*

4. *Hidden gaps in prophecy*

- a. Isaiah 61:1-2
- b. Daniel 2
- c. Daniel 9:24-27

5. *Seven-year tribulation, pre-trib rapture (two-stage coming)*

6. *Judaic temple-centered millennium*

Interpretation of Scripture

“Hermeneutics is that science which furnishes the principles of interpretation. These principles guide and govern anybody’s system of theology. They ought to be determined before one’s theology is systematized, but in practice the reverse is usually true. At least in the awareness of most people, hermeneutics is one of the last things to be considered consciously.” (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p.86)

Alleged difference in general methods of interpretation:

What dispensationalists say about their own hermeneutics:

“Dispensationalists claim that their principle of hermeneutics is that of literal interpretation. This means interpretation which gives every word the same meaning it would have in normal usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking. This is sometimes called the principle of grammatical-historical interpretation since the meaning of each word is determined by grammatical and historical considerations.” (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p.86f)

What dispensationalists say about amillennial hermeneutics:

“There is a growing realization in the theological world that the crux of the millennial issue is the question of the method of interpreting Scripture. Premillennialians follow the so-called ‘grammatical-historical’ literal interpretation while amillennialians use a spiritualizing method.” (John Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 59)

What amillennialists say about their own hermeneutics:

“...conservative amillennialians interpret the Bible in exactly the same manner claimed to be used by conservative millennialians in each of the other schools! All conservative groups, including the futurist and the dispensationalist, claim to use the grammatical-historical literal method of interpreting Scripture.” (Wm. E. Cox, *Amillennialism Today*, p.14)

“But if we reject the literal method of interpretation as the universal rule for the interpretation of all prophecies, how are we to interpret them? Well, of course, there are many passages in prophecy that were meant to be taken literally. In fact, a good working rule to follow is that the literal interpretation of the prophecy is to be accepted unless (a) the passages contain obviously figurative language, or (b) unless the New Testament gives authority for interpreting them in other than a literal sense, or (c) unless a literal interpretation would produce a contradiction with truths, principles, or factual statements contained in non-symbolic books of the New Testament. Another obvious rule to be followed is that the clearest New Testament passages in non-symbolical books are to be the norm for the interpretation of prophecy, rather than obscure or partial revelations contained in the Old Testament. In other words we should accept the clear and plain parts of Scripture as a basis for getting the true meaning of the more difficult parts of Scripture.” (Floyd Hamilton, *The Basis of Millennial Faith*, pp.53-54)

Dispensationalists put a finer point on the distinction:

“Most premillennialians would agree with Hamilton that obvious figurative language or instances where the New Testament gives authority for interpreting the Old Testament in other than a literal sense would be just grounds for the use of the spiritualizing method. Obviously, some Scriptures of the Old Testament have a figurative meaning.” (John Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 65)

“The amillennial method of interpreting Scripture is correctly defined as the spiritualizing method. It is clear, however, that conservative amillennialists limit the use of this method, and in fact adopt the literal method of interpreting most of the Scripture.” (John Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 62)

“Of course, literal interpretation is not the exclusive property of Dispensationalists. Most conservatives would agree with what has just been said. What, then, is the difference between the dispensationalists’ use of this hermeneutical principle and the nondispensationalists’? The difference lies in the fact that the dispensationalist claims to use the normal principle of interpretation *consistently* in *all* his study of the Bible...He admits that the nondispensationalist is a literalist in much of his interpretation of the Scriptures, but charges him with allegorizing or spiritualizing when it comes to the interpretation of prophecy. The Dispensationalist claims to be consistent in his use of this principle, and he accuses the nondispensationalist of being inconsistent in his use of it.” (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p.89)

“Amillennialians use two methods of interpretation, the spiritualizing method for prophecy and the literal method for other Scriptures.” (John Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 63)

“the nondispensationalist position is simply that the literal principle is sufficient except for the interpretation of prophecy. In this area, the spiritualizing principle must be introduced.” (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p.91)

Ryrie considers it inconsistent to take, for example, Ezekiel 39 nonliterally (exchanging the ancient weapons mentioned there with modern counterparts) while being literal in the handling of Micah 5:2 (where Bethlehem is given as Messiah's birthplace:

“If the Bible says ‘like chariots’ or ‘like Bethlehem,’ then there may be some latitude in interpretation. But if specific details are not interpreted literally when given as specific details, then there can be no end to the variety of meanings of a text.” (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp.89-90)

Three reasons for choosing literalist method (according to Ryrie):

1. Philosophically, the purpose of language itself seems to require literal interpretation. Language was given by God for the purpose of being able to communicate with man...

2. ...the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the first coming of Christ—His birth, His rearing, His ministry, His death, His resurrection—were all fulfilled literally. There is no non-literal fulfillment of these prophecies in the New Testament.

3. “If one does not use the plain, normal, or literal method of interpretation, all objectivity is lost. What check would there be on the variety of interpretations which man’s imagination could produce if there were not an objective standard which the literal principle provides? To try to see meaning other than the normal one would result in as many interpretations as there are people interpreting.” (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp.87-89)

“It was shown that the only rule which could be followed by the amillennialist was hopelessly subjective—the figurative method was used whenever the amillennialist found it necessary to change the literal meaning of Scripture to conform to his ideas.” (John Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 71)

What about the literal understanding of Daniel 9:24-27; Matt.16:28; Rev.1:1; 4:1?

The Book of Revelation: proving ground of consistent literalism

1. Henry Morris:

Henry Morris says of his commentary, The Revelation Record:

“I have tried to follow a strictly literal and sequential approach to the events narrated, on the assumption that the *best* interpretation of a historical record is *no* interpretation but simply letting the divine Author of the record say what He says and assuming He says what He means...the student may well find [Morris's commentary] to be the most literal approach he has encountered.”

Of the four horsemen, Morris writes:

“In heaven, the *symbolism of four great horses* and their fearsome riders is employed; on earth, the terrible judgments which they unleash are very literal and real.”(p.108, Italics mine)

...and again...

“These horses, of course, are clearly symbolic. There are no horses in heaven”(p.112).

2. Charles Ryrie:

“How do we make sense of all those beasts and thrones and horsemen and huge numbers like 200 million? Answer: Take it at face value.” (Ryrie, *The Living End* , p.37).

Ryrie's thoughts about the locusts from the bottomless pit (Rev.9):

“John’s description sounds very much like some kind of war machine or UFO.” (Ryrie, *The Living End* , p.45).

In discussing the angel fallen from heaven to release the locusts from the pit, Ryrie writes:

"Sometimes the word "star" refers to a heavenly body (as in 8:12). But the word is often used to refer to some kind of intelligent creature, usually an angel (cf. 1:20; Job 38:7). *Both meanings are perfectly consistent with plain, normal interpretation.* In English we use this word in the same two ways. Literally, a star means an astronomical entity; and *equally literally, though as a figure of speech*, we use the word to mean a person, like the star of a football game." (Emphasis mine)

One is tempted to ask whether there is any method of interpretation that would be regarded by such an interpreter as recognizably non-literal, since the use of "a figure of speech" is regarded (when convenient) to be "equally literal" as the ordinary lexical meaning of a word. The applicability of the term "literal" to such usage suggests an almost infinite flexibility in determining what may be called "plain," "normal," and "literal" interpretation.

I have frequently heard teachers claim that, when convenient to their interpretation, "literal" interpretation does not preclude the use of symbolism, parable or figures of speech. I think these people are giving the word a novel new flexibility. I am using the word "literal" as the dictionary and most people understand it, i.e. as meaning "according to the exact meaning; not figurative"...in other words, I am using it literally. (me, in original intro)

When to be literal...

Dispensational suggestions:

1. The law of frequent mention:

"All agree that [the number 1000] is used symbolically in Psalm 50 [v.10], but the phrase 'a thousand years' occurs six times within the narrative of Revelation 20."

The term "the Lamb" occurs 22 times in Revelation, but this does not make it a literal description of Christ.

2. The law of genre:

"This genre [the 1000 years in Rev.20] is not poetic; it is prose nonfiction." (House & Ice, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse?*, p.325)

2. The law of detailed description:

"That there will be blood sacrifices in the future millennial temple service is set forth in such detail in Scripture that it is not possible to deny their literality. Apparently such sacrifices look back upon the finished work of Christ, as they once looked forward..." (*Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, p.859, at Jer.33:18)

If this rule works, then we ought to apply it to the graphic description of the seven-headed beast (Rev.13:1-3) or of the Assyrian tree (Ezek.31:3-9). The idea that the sacrifices in Ezekiel are a mere memorial ignores Ezek. 45:15, 17, 20, where the sacrifices are said "to make atonement."

The amillennial alternative:

"[Calvin and other amillennial scholars]...taught the now generally accepted 'grammatical-historical' literal interpretation so far as the Scriptures in general are concerned. That they retain the spiritualizing method in expounding many of the prophecies was because they found themselves forced to do so in order to be faithful to the New Testament." (Albertus Pieters, *Darbyism Vs. The Historical Faith*, in *Calvin Forum*, II, 225-28, May, 1936)

"The Reformed hermeneutic is not literal nor spiritual, but surrendered to the usage, regulation, and amelioration of the infallible inscripturated Word." (Crenshaw & Gunn, *Dispensationalism Today, Yesterday, and Tomorrow*, p.38)

Was first-coming fulfillment always literal?

"When we look at the prophecies of Christ's first coming, we see that they were fulfilled in a literal manner, rather than figuratively...[lists 31 examples]...None of these fulfillments were taken in a figurative way by the New Testament writers." (*Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse?*, House & Ice, pp.321-323)

Among the examples listed by the above authors, several are not literal:

#10. Christ would be a stone of stumbling for the Jews—Psalm 118:22 (1 Peter 2:7)

(Though Psalm 118:22 is a Messianic prophecy fulfilled in Christ, this Psalm says nothing about Jesus being a stone of stumbling. The authors apparently were thinking of Isaiah 8:14. Neither passage in the OT use literal terminology)

#11. Christ would be a light to the Gentiles—Isaiah 60:3 (Acts 13:47-48)

(The language is not literal. The OT reference that Paul quotes is not Isaiah 60:3, but Isaiah 49:6. However, neither passage employs literal language).

#14. Christ would be sold for thirty pieces of silver—Zechariah 11:12 (Matthew 26:15)

(This is nowhere literally stated or hinted at in Zechariah 11:12)

#31. Darkness would come over the land—Amos 8:9 (Matthew 27:45)

(On this last example, they write: "In example 31, darkness literally occurred. It may also have symbolized the darkness of sin, but it got physically dark as well." Apparently, symbolism may be admitted as a secondary meaning, but the literal must never be sacrificed. However, they do not argue that it got physically light with reference to example #11.)

Crenshaw & Gunn list 97 OT prophecies about Christ, identifying the nature of each fulfillment in the NT—finding that only 34 (or 35.05%) were literally fulfilled. (Crenshaw & Gunn, *Dispensationalism Today, Yesterday, and Tomorrow*, pp.16-22)

Examples of NT fulfillment:

Matt.1:23	(Isa.7:14)	literal
2:5	(Mic.5:2)	literal
2:15	(Hos.11:1)	nonliteral
2:18	(Jer.31:15)	nonliteral
2:23	(???)	nonliteral
3:3	(Isa.40:3-5)	part literal/part nonliteral
4:15-16	(Isa. 9:1-2)	nonliteral

The true crux of literal interpretation controversy: Israel!

"The dispensationalist studies the words ["Church" and "Israel"] in the New Testament, finds that they are kept distinct, and therefore concludes that when the Church was introduced God did not abrogate His promises to Israel nor enmesh them into the Church...all of this is built on an inductive study of the use of the two words, not a scheme superimposed on the Bible. In other words, it is built on a consistent use of the literal, normal, plain method of interpretation without the addition of any other principle that will attempt to give respectability to some preconceived conclusions." (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp.95-96)

The amillennialist studies the same words in the New Testament and finds just the opposite conclusion:

When is a Jew NOT a Jew? Matt.3:9/John 8:39-40/Rom.2:28-29/ 9:6-8/Rev.2:9; 3:9

When is a Gentile a Jew? John 10:16/ Rom.9:23-26/ 11:16-17/ 1 Pet.2:9-10/ Gal.3:28-29/ Phil.3:3/Eph.2:12-18/ Heb.11:39-40/ 12:22-24

Can the OT Jews' interpretation be incorrect?

New revelation cannot mean contradictory revelation. Later revelation on a subject does not make the earlier revelation mean something different. It may add to it or even supersede it, but it does not contradict it...If this were so, then the Bible would be full of contradictions, and God would have to be conceived as deceiving the Old Testament prophets when He revealed to them a nationalistic Kingdom, since He would have known all the time that He would completely reverse the concept in later revelation. The true concept of progressive revelation is like a building—and certainly the superstructure does not replace the foundation. (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp.94-95)

Did the OT Jews understand the scriptures properly? 2 Cor. 3:14-16/1 Pet.1:10-12/1 Cor. 2:14/Luke 24:45

The History of Eschatological Views

A. 100-200's premillennialism (chiliasm)

Papias (60-130 AD), Polycarp (70-155 AD), Justin Martyr (100-165 AD), Ireneaus (130-202 AD),

B. 200's -1700's amillennialism

Origen (185-254 AD), Eusebius (260-340 AD), Augustine (400) — Luther (1500), Calvin, et al.

C. 1700's-1900's postmillennialism

Daniel Whitby, Jonathan Edwards, B.B. Warfield

D. 1830 - present dispensationalism

J.N. Darby, C. I. Scofield, Lewis S. Chaffer, Walvoord, Ryrie, Lindsey, et al

Was the Early Church Uniformly Premillennial?

Justin Martyr (AD 100-165), *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, 80:

[regarding the hope of the millennial kingdom] I admitted to you formerly, that I and many others are of this opinion, and [believe] that such will take place, as you assuredly are aware; but, on the other hand, I signified to you that many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians, think otherwise.

Ireanaeus (*Against Heresies* 5:31:1) said that there were “some who are reckoned among the orthodox” who did not hold his premillennial views.

Dispensationalist, Patrick Allen Boyd, *A Dispensational Premillennial Analysis of the Eschatology of the Post-Apostolic Fathers (Until the Death of Justin Martyr)*, Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1977, pp.90-91:

It is the conclusion of this thesis that Dr. Ryrie's statement [i.e. that dispensationalism was the view of the early church fathers] is historically invalid within the chronological framework of this thesis. The reasons for this conclusion are as follows: 1). the writers/writings surveyed did not generally adopt a consistently applied literal interpretation; 2). they did not generally distinguish between the Church and Israel; 3). there is no evidence that they generally held to a dispensational view of revealed history; 4). although Papias and Justin Martyr did believe in a Millennial kingdom, the 1,000 years is the only basic similarity with the modern system (in fact, they and dispensational premillennialism radically differ on the basis of the Millennium); 5). they had no concept of imminency or a pretribulational rapture of the Church; 6). in general, their eschatological chronology is not synonymous with that of the modern system. Indeed, this thesis would conclude that the eschatological beliefs of the period studied would be generally inimical to those of the modern system (perhaps, seminal amillennialism, and not nascent dispensational premillennialism ought to be seen in the eschatology of the period).*

Postmillennialist, Daniel Whitby, *A Treatise on the True Millennium* :

The doctrine of the millennium was not the general doctrine of the primitive church from the times of the apostles to the Nicene council. . . for then it could have made no schism in the church, as Dionysius of Alexandria saith it did.

Epiphanius (315-403), *Heresies*, 77:26 :

There is indeed a millennium mentioned by St. John; but most, and those pious men, look upon these words as true indeed, but to be taken in a spiritual sense.

Eusebius (325 AD), *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:39 :

Papias. . . gives also other accounts which he says came to him through unwritten traditions, certain strange parables and teachings of the Saviour and some other more mythical thing. Among these he says that there will be a period of some thousand years after the resurrection of the dead, when the kingdom of Christ will be set up in a material form on this very

* In a footnote, Boyd writes: “[The writer of this thesis] is a dispensational premillennialist, and he does not consider this thesis to be a disproof of that system. He originally undertook the thesis to bolster the system by patristic research, but the evidence of the original sources simply disallowed this.”

earth. I suppose he got these ideas through misunderstanding of the apostolic accounts, not perceiving that the things said by them were spoken mystically in figures. For he appears to have been of very limited understanding, as one can see from his discourses—though so many of the Church Fathers after him adopted a like opinion, urging in their own support the antiquity of the man.

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The Earliest Fathers **(including premillennial Fathers)** **interpreted "Israel" as the Church in Old Testament Kingdom Passages**

"Papias [AD 60-130] applied much of the Old Testament to the church..."

"Justin Martyr [AD 100-165]... claims that the Church is the true Israelitic race, thereby blurring the distinction between Israel and the Church."

(Dispensationalist, Alan Patrick Boyd: *Dispensational Premillennial Analysis of the Eschatology of the Post-Apostolic Fathers (Until the death of Justin Martyr)* unpublished master's thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1977, pp.60-61, 62).

Possible originator of premillennialism: the Gnostic Cerinthus?

W.G.T. Shedd (1820-1894), *A History of Christian Doctrine*, Vol.II, pp.390f:

" [Millennialism] appears first in the system of the Judaistic Gnostic *Cerinthus*."

Alan Patrick Boyd, (*Ibid.*, p.17) calls Cerinthus

"the earliest chiliast [millennialist]."

Philip Schaff, *A Religious Encyclopedia: Or Dictionary of Biblical, Historical, Doctrinal and Practical Theology* (1883), Vol.3, pp.1514f:

"The ultimate root of millenarianism is the popular notion of the Messiah current among the Jews...It is found in Cerinthus (Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3:28; 7:25), in *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Jud.,ca. 25; Benjam., ca. 10), and amongst the Ebionites (Jerome, *In Jes.*, 40:1; 66:20)."

The Millennium in Revelation 20

I. Three schemes

- A. Premillennial: Christ comes prior to chapter 20. These events follow His return.
- B. Postmillennial: These events occur at the end of the church age, prior to the 2nd coming.
- C. Amillennial: The chapter is a symbolical representation of the age of the church.

II. Summary of whole chapter:

- A. Revelation 20:1-3 — The Binding of the Dragon
- B. Revelation 20:4-6 —The Thousand-Year Reign
- C. Revelation 20:7-9a —Satan’s Brief Respite
- D. Revelation 20:9b-15 —The Judgment Scene

III. The closing events (vv.9-15) are those associated elsewhere with Christ’s 2nd coming:

- A. Rev.20: 9 Fire from heaven (2 Thes.1:8/2:8)
- B. Rev.20:12-15 Resurrection and Judgment (John 5:28-29/2 Tim.4:1/Matt.25:31ff)
- C. Rev. 20:14 The last enemy, death (1 Cor.15:26), is destroyed at the resurrection of the last day (1 Cor.15:54-55)
- D. Rev.20:11 & 21:1 The destruction of the cosmos, and its regeneration (2 Pet.3:10-13/Rom.8: 18-21/1 Cor.15:24)

IV. Exposition of the chapter:

A. Revelation 20:1-3 — The Binding of the Dragon

1. The “angel”

- a. Jesus called “angel of the covenant” (Mal.3:1) and an “angel” (Rev.10:1).
- b. Could any lesser “angel” manhandle Satan in the manner described here? (cf. Jude 9)

2. The “binding” of Satan

- a. This very metaphor is used by Jesus of what He accomplished against Satan (Matt.12:29) and by the apostles about what was accomplished against the demons (2 Pet.2:4/Jude 6)
- b. The imagery of “binding” in Matt.12:29 is substituted with “disarming” in Luke 11:22.
- c. Compare Col.2:15/Heb. 2:14/1 John 3:8

3. The “thousand years”

The term “1000” is never used elsewhere as a statistical figure, but is frequently used as a figure for an indefinitely large number (cf. Deut.1:11/7:9/32:30/Ps.50:10/84:10/90:4/Eccl.7:28/Isa.30:17/2 Pet.3:8), even as “hundredfold” (Matt.19:29) means “many-fold” (Luke 18:30) and “seventy-times seven” contrasts with “seven” (Matt.18:21-22).

B. Revelation 20:4-6 —The Thousand-Year Reign

1. The enthroned saints—Where? Heaven or earth?

- a. Thrones: All thrones seen previously in Revelation (except the throne of the beast) were seen in heaven, not on earth. What evidence is there for making an exception here?
- b. The souls of the martyrs: This apparently means “disembodied souls”—which can only relate to a time after death but *before* the resurrection at the second coming. The same were seen in heaven in 6:9.
- c. “Lived [still]” (i.e. in heaven) or “lived again” (i.e. resurrected on earth)? v.4 (See accompanying chart)

2. The beast and his mark

The beast is not necessarily an “end-times” figure merely. The figure of the beast has been credibly applied to a person or system in John’s own day or, alternately, with the “world system” in general throughout the age.

3. The “first resurrection”

- a. Since there is only one physical resurrection at the end of the age, which will gather in both the righteous and the unrighteous, this resurrection is the spiritual resurrection of regeneration, thus spoken of by Jesus (John 5:24) and by Paul (Eph.2:1, 5).
- b. This chapter has two deaths (v.15) and two resurrections (vv.5-6). As the second death is not of the same kind as the first death (physical), so the first resurrection is not of the same kind as the second (physical).

4. The “rest of the dead”

The unsaved do not experience resurrection of any kind until the end of the age, when all the bodies of the righteous and of the unrighteous will rise together (John 5:28-29/ Acts 24:15)

C. Revelation 20:7-9a —Satan Again "At Large"

1. Deception of the nations—yet to come, just prior to the end of the age
2. The “beloved city”—the church (Matt.5:14/Heb.12:22-23/Rev.21:2, 9-10)
3. Gog and Magog —mentioned only here and, in a different form, in Ezek.38:2, in connection with a battle usually understood as occurring before the second coming of Christ.

V. Conclusion:

This chapter, found in the most symbolic book of the Bible, and utilizing obvious symbolism, does not invite an overly-literal interpretation. When Scripture is compared with relevant Scripture, it becomes evident that the second coming of Christ is depicted in the closing verses of the chapter—not at the beginning—and that the binding of Satan at the beginning of the chapter is a symbol of Christ’s victory at the cross. The 1000 years in the middle of the chapter thus represents the lengthy period between the first and the second comings of Christ, as interpreters throughout history have suggested.

Revelation 20:4

“they *lived* and reigned...” or “they *came to life* and reigned...”

The first option supports the amillennial view that the souls of the Christians, though they had died, *lived on* (i.e. in heaven).

The second option supports the premillennial view that the saints *came back to life* (i.e. by resurrection) after death.

“lived” or “came to life” = *ezésan*, aorist indicative active of *záo* (to live), and is found in the same tense in two other places in Revelation:

Rev. 2:8 — “[Christ], who was dead and *ezésan*”

Rev. 13:14 — “...the beast who was wounded by the sword and *ezésan*”

— where it is variously translated as follows—

Bible Version	Revelation 2:8	Revelation 13:14	Revelation 20:4
King James	is alive	did live	lived
New King James	came to life	lived	lived
NASB	has come to life	has come to life	came to life
NIV	came to life again	yet lived	came to life
Amplified	came to life again	still lived	lived again
TEV (Good News Bible)	lived again	yet lived	came to life
Jerusalem Bible	has come to life again	still lived	came to life
Revised Standard	came to life	yet lived	came to life again
Revised English	came to life again	yet lived	came to life again

Notice:

1. In Revelation 2:8, all translations except the KJV translate *ezésan* as “came to life” or some equivalent, since the resurrection of Christ is in view;
2. In Revelation 13:14, all translations except the NASB translate *ezésan* as “lived” or some equivalent, since it is the beast that survived the wounding of one of its seven heads;
3. Only the KJV and NKJV (probably following the KJV) translate *ezésan* as “lived,” (reflecting the amillennial commitments of the KJV translators), while all others (probably reflecting premillennial commitments of the translators) translate as “came to life” or some equivalent;
4. Only the KJV and NASB translated consistently in all three passages, though they favored different translations from one another.
5. Since most agree that *ezésan* means “came to life” in Rev.2:8, and “yet lived” in 13:14, it seems clear that the translation in 20:4 could go either way, depending upon one’s eschatological leanings.

A.T. Robertson wrote, on Revelation 20:4 “and they lived”:

“If ingressive aorist, it means ‘came to life’ or ‘lived again’ as in 2:8...If it is constantive aorist here and in verse 5, then it could mean increased spiritual life.”

The second verb “and reigned,” is *ebasileusan* which is also the same aorist indicative active (of *basileuo*), and is, according to Robertson, “more clearly constantive.” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol.5, p.459)

The Resurrection and Rapture of the Church

I. Distinctives of the Dispensational scheme:

- A. Two phases or stages of “the second coming”: “the rapture” before the tribulation, and “the revelation” after the tribulation.
- B. In first stage, Christ comes *for* the saints; in the second stage, He comes *with* the saints.
- C. The rapture occurs with the “first resurrection” (Rev.20:5-6), that is, the resurrection of the church saints. The lost will be resurrected after the millennium (Rev.20:11ff).
- D. The church is thus removed before God pours out His wrath for seven years on the earth, and is taken to heaven to receive her rewards and to participate in the marriage supper.
- E. Those in the tribulation who become believers, will therefore not be part of the church, having missed the first resurrection.

II. Origins of the two-stage theory of the second coming:

- A. 1812, Jesuit priest Emmanuel Lacunza, wrote that there would be a 45-day interval between the coming of Christ for the saints and His coming in judgment upon the earth.
- B. In 1826-27, Edward Irving translated Lacunza’s work from Spanish and taught something similar, extending the interval from 45 days to three and a half years.
- C. In 1930, John Nelson Darby incorporated the two-stage belief into his new dispensational system, but extended the length of the interval to seven years.
- D. Irving or Darby, or both, may have been influenced by a “prophetic utterance” given by a girl named Margaret MacDonald around the same period.
- E. Today, there are “mid-tribulation rapturists,” who believe, like Irving, in an interval of three and a half years, but most dispensationalists are “pretrib-ers,” who follow Darby in making the interval seven years. There is also the view of Marv Rosenthal, called “the pre-wrath rapture,” placing the rapture later in the tribulation than the mid-tribulationists do (21 months later), but still finding an interval between the rapture and the revelation of Christ from heaven.

III. Relevant basic texts: 1 Thess.4:14-18 & 1 Cor.15:51-54

- A. No mention of tribulation in either text.
- B. No mention of interval between two stages of second coming.
- C. Both passages connect the rapture with the resurrection of the saints.

IV. When is the resurrection of the saints?

- A. Are there two resurrections, or only one?
 - 1. Only one? (John 5:28-29 / Acts 24:15 / Matt.25:31ff)
 - 2. Two? (Rev.20:5-6, 12-13)
 - a. “the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thess.4:16)
 - b. “those who are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Cor.15:23)
 - 3. What is meant by “the first resurrection”? (John 5:24-29/Eph.2:1, 5/Col.2:13)
- B. When will the resurrection/rapture be?

1. At the *Parousia* (1 Thes.4:15, 17) [*parousia* = *apokalupsis* (cf. Matt.24:39 with Luke 17:30)]
2. At the last trump (1 Cor.15:52)
3. At the judgment appearing of Christ (2 Thes.1:6-8)
4. At the “day of Christ”/ “day of the Lord”/ “day of God” (all synonymous: 1 Cor.1:8/ 2 Cor.1:14)
5. On the last day (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54/12:48)

The Case for the *Two-stage* Second Coming Biblically Examined

I. The Arguments

A. Arguments from interpretation of Revelation:

1. The entire church age is encompassed in the seven letters (Rev. 2-3)
2. John's being caught up to heaven (4:1) represents the rapture of the church.
3. The term "church" found frequently in the first 3 chapters, is not found in Revelation after 4:1.
4. The church is not seen on earth after Rev.4:1, though it is seen in heaven (i.e. in the 24 elders).
5. Rev.3:10 promises the Philadelphian church (representing the faithful church in the last days) that Christ would deliver them out of the tribulation period.

B. Arguments of inappropriateness

1. We are not appointed to wrath (1 Thes.1:10/5:9). The tribulation is the time of God's wrath.
2. The tribulation, "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer.30:7), is not for the church, but for Israel.
3. Jesus told us to pray that we might escape the great tribulation (Luke 21:36)—Jesus apparently thought we don't belong here during the tribulation.
4. Matt.24 :40-41 and Luke 17:34-36, speak of the sudden "taking" of the church, leaving others behind to endure the tribulation.
5. The view that the rapture happens simultaneously with the second coming posits the ridiculous scenario of the church going up, then right down again...like a yo-yo!

C. Arguments of impossibility

1. Passages about the rapture (John 14:1-4/1 Cor.15:51-58/1 Thess.4:13-18) do not contain the same details as do those about the judgment coming of Christ (Zech.14/Rev.19/Matt.24:29-31 and parallels)—so the two cannot be speaking of the same event.
2. Christ cannot come "with" His saints (1 Thes.3:13) until He has first come "for" the saints.
3. The rise of the man of sin at the beginning of the tribulation cannot occur until the church is removed (2 Thes.2:6-8). The "falling away" (v.3) may be a reference to the rapture.
4. Jesus likened the time of His coming to the days of Noah and of Lot (Luke 17:26-29). Both persons illustrate the pretribulation rapture: The flood and the destruction of Sodom represent the tribulation period. Enoch was "raptured" before the flood (Gen.5:24), and Noah's family (representing the remnant of Israel) were preserved through the flood. Lot (a type of the church) was taken out of Sodom *before* its destruction. God said He could "do nothing" to Sodom until Lot had been safely removed (Gen.19:22).
5. If we must endure the tribulation, the "blessed hope" (Tit.2:13) cannot be blessed, but wretched!

D. Arguments from "imminency" (the teaching that Jesus could come at any time)

1. We are to be "looking," "watching" and "waiting" for the any-moment return of Jesus (1 Thes. 1:10/5:6/ Phil.3:20/Tit.2:13/Heb.9:28). The doctrine of the Imminency of Christ's coming (i.e. that Christ might come at any moment) would be invalid if there were events (i.e. the tribulation) that must occur before Christ returns (Matt.24:48).
2. Jesus will come "as a thief" (1 Thes.5:2-3/2 Pet.3:10), meaning "without warning." This must apply only to the rapture, since there will be signs indicating the time of His coming at the end of the tribulation.
3. That no one knows the day or the hour of His coming (Matt.24:36) also suggests an early rapture, since the exact day of His coming could be calculated from events occurring in the tribulation.
4. The doctrine of imminency is the principal motivator for holy living and evangelism.

II. The Arguments cross-examined

A. Arguments from interpretation of Revelation

1. This proposition is not stated or implied in Scripture.

2. If John's ascension in 4:1 represents the church's, do the later passages where John is on earth (e.g. 11:1-2/17:1ff) also represent the church back on earth?
3. The term "church" is never used in Revelation of the whole church, but only of individual local congregations, contemporary in John's day. That they are not addressed after 4:1 is inconsequential to the question of the rapture.
4. That portions of the church are seen in heaven in Revelation does not require a previous rapture to have taken place. There are millions of saints in heaven even now. The church is seen on earth as well as in heaven, because the "saints" (13:7) are identified with "the Lamb's wife" [i.e. the church] (19:7-8).
5. Revelation 3:10 does not promise a rapture, nor necessarily refer to the tribulation. If the tribulation is in view, the church could be "kept from" (Gr. *ek tereo*) harm without being raptured (comp. John 17:15, where *ek tereo* is also found).

B. Arguments of inappropriateness

1. There is no reason to identify "wrath" in 1 Thes.1:10 & 5:9 with a period of tribulation (Rom.5:9). Besides, no one ever claimed that Christians would suffer God's wrath, even if they were in the tribulation.
2. Jeremiah 30:7 is not about the tribulation, but about the Babylonian exile (cf. vv.3, 8, 10), but, even if the tribulation were in view, this doesn't logically argue for the absence of the church from earth.
3. There is no prior mention in Luke 21 of a tribulation at the end of the present age. There is mention of the holocaust at destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD (vv.5-7, 20-23), from which the believers actually did escape (according to Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*).
4. Matt.24 :40-41 and Luke 17:34-36, in context, do not speak of the rapture of the church, but of the destruction of the wicked at Christ's coming (see Matt.24:38-40/Luke 17:37/Psalm 91:7-8/ Ps. 37:9-11/Prov.2:21-22/Matt.5:5/13:30, 41-43, 49-50). Is the rapture found in the Olivet Discourse? If so, where? Matt.24:31?
5. The word "to meet" (1 Thes.4:17) can refer to the custom of going out to welcome a distinguished guest in order to accompany him on the remainder of his approach (Matt.25:1/Acts 28:15).

C. Arguments of impossibility

1. By the same reasoning, Jesus must have been born on earth twice (since Matt. 2 and Luke 2 give very different accounts) and He must have died and arisen from the dead four times or more, since no two accounts give exactly the same details of these events!
2. Jesus could come "with" His saints, even if He had come "for" them only moments earlier. However, even without the rapture, there are multitudes of saints already with Him, whom He will bring with Him (1 Thes.4:14).
3. 2 Thessalonians 2 :6-7 makes no mention of the removal of the church prior to the appearance of the man of sin, and plainly states that the man of sin must appear before our gathering unto Christ [the rapture] (vv.1-3). Thus "he that hinders" (v.7) may mean any number of things, but it *cannot* mean the church or the Holy Spirit in the church. The *apostasia* [falling away] (v.3) is not the rapture. The word is used elsewhere only in Acts 21:21 of Jews falling away from Moses.
4. The flood and destruction of Sodom are nowhere said to represent a time of tribulation, but they are likened to the judgment of sinners at the second coming (2 Pet.3:4-10/ Jude 7)
5. Titus 2:13 does not equate "the blessed hope" with the rapture, *per se*, but with "the glorious appearing" of Christ. Why would the hope of being raptured *not* be a blessed one to saints in the tribulation?

D. Arguments from "imminency"

1. The doctrine that Jesus "may come at any time" is nowhere taught in the Bible. Paul specifically refutes it in 2 Thes.2:1-8. To wait or watch or look for something does not rule out the possibility that we expect some other things to happen first (see Heb.11:10, 13). The man who said "my Lord delays his coming" was judged for his behavior, not his eschatological beliefs (Matt.24:49)
2. The idea that there will be "signs" indicating the soonness of His coming is a proposition resting upon the flimsiest scriptural foundation. The fact that His coming "as a thief" must be only "for the saints" is ruled out by Peter applying it to the end of the world (2 Pet.3:10ff), and Paul applying it to judgment of unbelievers (1 Thess.5:2-3). Paul plainly states that this phrase is not applicable to Christians specially (1 Thes.5:4).
3. Jesus' admission of His own ignorance, and that of everyone else, applied to the time-frame of His comment. There is no reason to apply it to persons living in some future tribulation period. Nonetheless, attempts at calculating the date of Christ's return, if made by those living in the tribulation, would not be more likely to be accurate than have the many embarrassing attempts to do the same throughout history.

4. It is not necessary to employ falsehood to motivate to holy living or evangelism. If Jesus is not going to come today, there is no reason for God to wish us to believe He will come today. The imminency of *death and judgment* (to say nothing of love and gratitude to God as motivators!) should be sufficient motivation for all proper conduct (1 Pet.1:17/2 Cor.1:9/5:11)

III. Conclusion

None of the arguments for a two-stage coming of Christ is valid when the relevant texts are exegeted without a pre-trib bias. It would require stronger evidence than this to overthrow the plain ("literal") teaching of Christ and the apostles that the rapture and resurrection of the church will occur simultaneously with the judgment-coming of Christ on the "last day" (e.g. Matt.25:31ff/John 6:40, 44, 54/ 2 Thes.1:8/2 Tim.4:1/2 Pet.3:10-13, etc., etc.).

CHARTS: The Case for the *Two-stage* Second Coming-Biblically Examined

chart prepared by Steve Gregg

A. Arguments from the interpretation of Revelation:	
<i>The Arguments—</i>	<i>The Arguments cross-examined—</i>
<p>1. The entire church age is encompassed in the seven letters (Rev. 2-3)</p> <p>“The messages to the seven churches...present an exact foreview of the <i>spiritual</i> history of the church, and in this precise order.” (C. I. Scofield, 6:1331-32)</p>	<p>1. This proposition is not stated or implied in Scripture.</p>
<p>2. John’s being caught up to heaven (4:1) represents the rapture of the church.</p> <p>“Many Bible scholars believe (and I agree) that John the Apostle, as he is summoned into heaven, represents the church which will be called out of the world and into heaven...” (Stedman, 5:113)</p> <p>“[Revelation 4:1f] appears to be the Rapture of the Church in the Book of Revelation.” (Chuck Smith, 9:18)</p>	<p>2. If John’s ascension in 4:1 represents the church’s, do the later passages where John is on earth (e.g. 11:1-2/17:1ff) also represent the church back on earth?</p> <p>“It is clear from the context that this is not an explicit reference to the rapture of the church...[John] was only translated into scenes of heaven temporarily.” (Walvoord, 4:103)</p>
<p>3. The term “church” found frequently in the first 3 chapters, is not found in Revelation after 4:1.</p> <p>“The singular ‘church’ and the plural ‘churches’ together occur 19 times in the first three chapters...However, there is a strange silence of the term in chapters 4-19.” (Robert Gromacki, 2:355)</p>	<p>3. The term “church” is never used in Revelation of the whole church, but only of individual local congregations, contemporary in John’s day. That they are not addressed after 4:1 is inconsequential to the question of the rapture.</p>
<p>4. The church is not seen on earth after Rev.4:1, though it is seen in heaven (i.e. in the 24 elders).</p> <p>“There is the mention of ‘saints’ in the context (13:7, 10). These saints, however, are those who get saved during the seven years after the true church has been taken into heaven.” (Robert Gromacki, 2:356)</p> <p>“The godly remnant of the tribulation are pictured as Israelites, not members of the church...” (Walvoord, 8:195)</p>	<p>4. That portions of the church are seen in heaven in Revelation does not require a previous rapture to have taken place. There are millions of saints in heaven even now. The church is seen on earth as well as in heaven, because the “saints” (13:7) are identified with “the Lamb’s wife” [i.e. the church] (19:7-8).</p>
<p>5. Rev.3:10 promises the Philadelphian church (representing the faithful church in the last days) that Christ would deliver them out of the tribulation period.</p> <p>“One of the best promises guaranteeing the church’s rapture before the Tribulation appears in Revelation 3:10...The guarantee of rapture before Tribulation could hardly be more powerful. No wonder one writer labeled it ‘a cardinal Scripture.’” (LaHaye, 3:41-42)</p>	<p>5. Revelation 3:10 does not promise a rapture, nor necessarily refer to the tribulation. If the tribulation is in view, the church could be “kept from” (Gr.<i>ek tereo</i>) harm without being raptured (comp. John 17:15, where <i>ek tereo</i> is also found).</p> <p>“This verse neither asserts that the Rapture is to occur before the Tribulation, nor does its interpretation require us to think that such removal is intended.” (G.E. Ladd, 7:86)</p>

B. Arguments from “inappropriateness”	
<i>The Arguments—</i>	<i>The Arguments cross-examined—</i>
<p>1. We are not appointed to wrath (1 Thes.1:10/5:9). The tribulation is the time of God’s wrath.</p> <p>“The Tribulation is the time of God’s wrath on the world, not on the church.” (LaHaye, 3:212)</p> <p>“The church is not appointed to wrath...The church therefore cannot enter ‘the great day of their wrath’(Rev.6:17).” (Walvoord, 8:194)</p>	<p>1. There is no reason to identify “wrath” in 1 Thes.1:10 & 5:9 with a period of tribulation (Rom.5:9). Besides, no one ever claimed that Christians would suffer God’s wrath, even if they were in the tribulation. What about the so-called “tribulation saints”? Are they “appointed to wrath”?</p> <p>“1 <i>Thessalonians</i> 5:9 says nothing about the Rapture. . . If the Church is on earth during the Great Tribulation but is divinely sheltered from wrath, this verse is fulfilled. This is all it asserts.” (G. E. Ladd, 7:84-85)</p>
<p>2. The tribulation, “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer.30:7), is not for the church, but for Israel.</p> <p>“It is the ‘time of Jacob’s trouble’ when Israel fulfills its seventieth week (seven years) of Daniel...Why drag the church through that dreadful time?” (LaHaye, 3:212)</p> <p>“None of the New Testament passages on the tribulation mention the church (Matt.24:15-31; 1 Theess.1:9-10, 5:4-9; Rev. 4-19).” (Walvoord, 8:193)</p>	<p>2. Jeremiah 30:7 is not about the tribulation, but about the Babylonian exile (cf. vv.3, 8, 10), but, even if the tribulation were in view, this doesn’t logically argue for the absence of the church from earth.</p>
<p>3. Jesus told us to pray that we might escape the great tribulation (Luke 21:36)—Jesus apparently thought we don’t belong here during the tribulation.</p> <p>“Since [posttribulationists] maintain that there’s to be no escape for the Church, they make the prayer Christ encouraged us to pray in Luke 21:36 meaningless.” (Chuck Smith, 9::iii)</p>	<p>3. There is no prior mention in Luke 21 of a tribulation at the end of the present age. There is mention of the holocaust at destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD (vv.5-7, 20-23), from which the believers actually did escape (according to Eusebius, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>).</p>
<p>4. Matt.24 :40-41 and Luke 17:34-36, speak of the sudden “taking” of the church, leaving others behind to endure the tribulation.</p> <p>“A man and wife asleep in bed/She hears a noise and turns her head/ He’s gone./ I wish we’d all been ready. . . “There’s no time to change your mind/The Son has come and you’ve been left behind.” (Larry Norman, <i>I Wish We’d All Been Ready</i>, popular song in the 70’s)</p>	<p>4. Matt.24 :40-41 and Luke 17:34-36, in context , do not speak of the rapture of the church, but of the destruction of the wicked at Christ’s coming (see Matt.24:38-40/Luke 17:37/Psalm 91:7-8/ Ps. 37:9-11/Prov.2:21-22/Matt.5:5/13:30, 41-43, 49-50). Is the rapture found in the Olivet Discourse? If so, where? Matt.24:31?</p>
<p>5. The view that the rapture happens simultaneously with the second coming posits the ridiculous scenario of the church going up, then right down again...like a yo-yo!</p> <p>“As a matter of fact, it seems fair to ask what purpose the Rapture would serve in a scheme where the saints immediately accompany Christ to the earth.” Paul Feinberg, 1:81</p> <p>“...it becomes the great elevator escape: we zip up to the Father’s house, take a quick peek, and zip right back down moments later with Christ in His Glorious Appearing. Such a reading is ludicrous!” (LaHaye, 3:210)</p>	<p>5. The word “to meet” (1 Thes.4:17) can refer to the custom of going out to welcome a distinguished guest in order to accompany him on the remainder of his approach (Matt.25:1/Acts 28:15). There is no promise associated with the Rapture that we will be taken to “the Father’s house”—only into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thes.4:17).</p>

C. Arguments from “impossibility”	
<i>The Arguments—</i>	<i>The Arguments cross-examined—</i>
<p>1. Passages about the rapture (John 14:1-4/1 Cor.15:51-58/1 Thess.4:13-18) do not contain the same details as do those about the judgment coming of Christ (Zech.14/Rev.19/ Matt.24:29-31 and parallels)—so the two cannot be speaking of the same event.</p> <p>“These two episodes, the Rapture and the Second Coming, are so different that it is impossible to combine them.” (LaHaye, 3:32)</p> <p>“...there is no clear, indisputable reference to the Rapture in any Second Advent passage.” (Paul Feinberg, 1:81)</p> <p>“No passage dealing with the resurrection of saints at the second coming in either Testament ever mentions translation of living saints at the same time.” (Walvoord, 8:199) [!?!?!?]</p>	<p>1. By the same reasoning, Jesus must have been born on earth twice (since Matt.2 and Luke 2 give very different accounts) and He must have died and arisen from the dead four times or more, since no two accounts give exactly the same details of these events!</p>
<p>2. Christ cannot come “with” His saints (1 Thes.3:13) until He has first come “for” the saints.</p> <p>“It’s important to realize that the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ are completely different. At the Rapture Jesus is coming <i>for</i> His saints. At the Second Coming the Church will return <i>with</i> Jesus Christ.” (Chuck Smith, 9:12)</p>	<p>2. Jesus could come “with” His saints, even if He had come “for” them only moments earlier. However, even without the rapture, there are multitudes of saints already with Him, whom He will bring with Him (1 Thes.4:14).</p>
<p>3. The rise of the man of sin at the beginning of the tribulation cannot occur until the Holy Spirit in church is removed (2 Thes.2:6-8). The “falling away” (v.3) may be a reference to the rapture.</p> <p>“The Holy Spirit as the Restrainer must be taken out of the world before ‘the lawless one,’ who dominates the tribulation period, can be revealed (2 Thess.2:6-8)...If the expression, ‘except the falling away come first,’ be translated literally, ‘except the departure come first,’ it would plainly show the necessity of the rapture taking place before the beginning of the tribulation.” (Walvoord, 8:196)</p>	<p>3. 2 Thessalonians 2 :6-7 makes no mention of the removal of the church or the Holy Spirit prior to the appearance of the man of sin, and plainly states that the man of sin must appear before our gathering unto Christ [the rapture] (vv.1-3). Thus “he that hinders” (v.7) may mean any number of things, but it <i>cannot</i> mean the church or the Holy Spirit in the church. The <i>apostasia</i> [falling away] (v.3) is not the rapture. The word is used elsewhere only in Acts 21:21 of Jews falling away from Moses.</p>
<p>4. Jesus likened the time of His coming to the days of Noah and of Lot (Luke 17:26-29). Both persons illustrate the pre-tribulational rapture: The flood and the destruction of Sodom represent the tribulation period. Enoch was “raptured” before the flood (Gen.5:24), and Noah’s family (representing the remnant of Israel) were preserved through the flood. Lot (a type of the church) was taken out of Sodom <i>before</i> its destruction. God said He could “do nothing” to Sodom until Lot had been safely removed (Gen.19:22).</p> <p>“It is characteristic of divine dealing to deliver believers before a divine judgment . . . as illustrated in the deliverance of Noah, Lot, Rahab, etc. (2 Pet.2:6-9).” (Walvoord, 8:194)</p> <p>“In Luke 17 when Jesus makes reference to Lot’s escape, Jesus clearly points out that in the same hour Lot was brought out of the city, the judgment of God fell.” (Chuck Smith, 9:4)</p>	<p>4. The flood and destruction of Sodom are nowhere said to represent a time of tribulation, but they are likened to the judgment of sinners at the second coming (2 Pet.3:4-10/Jude 7)</p>
<p>5. If we must endure the tribulation, the “blessed hope” (Tit.2:13) cannot be blessed, but wretched!</p> <p>“...it would take a masochist to look forward to [the Tribulation] as a time of blessing. . . If Christ does not rapture His church before the Tribulation begins, much of the hope is destroyed, and thus it becomes a ‘blasted hope.’” (LaHaye, 3:62, 63)</p>	<p>5. Titus 2:13 does not equate “the blessed hope” with the rapture, <i>per se</i>, but with “the glorious appearing” of Christ. Why would the hope of being raptured <i>not</i> be a blessed one to saints in the tribulation?</p>

D. Arguments from “imminency” (the teaching that Jesus could come at any time)	
<i>The Arguments—</i>	<i>The Arguments cross-examined—</i>
<p>1. We are to be “looking,” “watching” and “waiting” for the any-moment return of Jesus (1 Thes. 1:10/5:6/ Phil.3:20/ Tit.2:13/Heb.9:28). The doctrine of the Imminency of Christ’s coming (i.e. that Christ might come at any moment) would be invalid if there were events (i.e. the tribulation) that must occur before Christ returns (Matt.24:48).</p> <p>“The exhortation to look for ‘the glorious appearing’ of Christ to His own (Titus 2:13) loses significance if the tribulation must intervene first. . .The church is uniformly exhorted to look for the coming of the Lord, while believers in the tribulation are directed to look for signs.” (Walvoord, 8:196)</p> <p>“To put any event before the coming of Christ for His Church is, in essence, saying that the Lord will delay His coming until after that event has happened. Teaching this is very dangerous, and Jesus Himself warns against it.” (Chuck Smith, 9:35)</p>	<p>1. The doctrine that Jesus “may come at any time” is nowhere taught in the Bible. Paul specifically refutes it in 2 Thes.2:1-8. To wait or watch or look for something does not rule out the possibility that we expect some other things to happen first (see Heb.11:10, 13). The man who said “my Lord delays his coming” was judged for his behavior, not his eschatological beliefs (Matt.24:49).</p>
<p>2. Jesus will come “as a thief” (1 Thes.5:2-3/2 Pet.3:10), meaning “without warning.” This must apply only to the rapture, since there will be signs indicating the time of His coming at the end of the tribulation.</p> <p>“The rapture is described as imminent, while the second coming is preceded by definite signs.” (Walvoord, 8:198)</p>	<p>2. The idea that there will be “signs” indicating the soonness of His coming is a proposition resting upon the flimsiest scriptural foundation. The fact that His coming “as a thief” must be only “for the saints” is ruled out by Peter applying it to the end of the world (2 Pet.3:10ff), and Paul applying it to judgment of unbelievers (1 Thess.5:2-3). This phrase is not applicable to Christians specially (1 Thes.5:4).</p>
<p>3. That no one knows the day or the hour of His coming, (Matt.24:36) also suggests an early rapture, since the exact day of His coming could be calculated from events occurring in the tribulation.</p> <p>“The Bible says that no man knows the day or the hour. This cannot refer to the day Christ returns to reign on earth, because that exact day has been given to us in Daniel’s prophecy.” (Chuck Smith, 9:34)</p>	<p>3. Jesus’ admission of His own ignorance, and that of everyone else, applied to the time-frame of His comment. There is no reason to apply it to persons living in some future tribulation period. Nonetheless, attempts at calculating the date of Christ’s return, if made by those living in the tribulation, would not be more likely to be accurate than have the many embarrassing attempts to do the same throughout history.</p>
<p>4. The doctrine of imminency is the principal motivator for holy living and evangelism.</p> <p>“Historically, belief in the any-moment-coming of Christ has three vital effects on Christians and their churches.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It produces holy living in an unholy society like ours (1 John 3:3). 2. It produces an evangelistic church of soul-winning Christians, for when we believe Christ could appear at any moment, we seek to share Him with our friends lest they be left behind at His coming.” (LaHaye, 3:18) 	<p>4. It is not necessary to employ falsehood to motivate to holy living or evangelism. If Jesus is not going to come today, there is no reason for God to wish us to believe He will come today. The imminency of <i>death and judgment</i> (to say nothing of love and gratitude to God as motivators!) should be sufficient motivation for all proper conduct (1 Pet.1:17/2 Cor.1:9/5:11)</p>

Conclusion—

None of the arguments for a two-stage coming of Christ is convincing when the relevant texts are exegeted without a pre-trib bias. It would require stronger evidence than this to overthrow the plain (“literal”) teaching of Christ and the apostles that the rapture and resurrection of the church will occur simultaneously with the judgment-coming of Christ on the “last day” (e.g. Matt.25:31ff/John 6:40, 44, 54/ 2 Thes.1:8/2 Tim.4:1/2 Pet.3:10-13, etc., etc.).

Books cited:

1. *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, Post-, Tribulational?* (Richard R. Reiter, ed., Zondervan, 1984)
2. *When the Trumpet Sounds: Today's Foremost Authorities Speak Out on End-Time Controversies* (Thomas Ice & Timothy Demy, eds., Harvest House, 1995)
3. *No Fear of the Storm* (Tim LaHaye, Multnomah Press, 1992)
4. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (John Walvoord, Moody Press, 1966)
5. *God's Final Word: Understanding Revelation* (Ray C. Stedman, Discovery House, 1991)
6. *The Scofield Reference Bible* (C.I.Scofield, Oxford University Press, 1909)
7. *The Blessed Hope* (George Eldon Ladd, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956)
8. *The Rapture Question* (John Walvoord, Zondervan, 1957)
9. *The Tribulation & the Church* (Chuck Smith, The Word For Today, 1980)

“There are two positions taken in this paper for which no argument is offered. First, it is assumed that following the return of Christ to earth in power and great glory at the end of the Tribulation period, there will follow an earthly reign of Christ...Second, there is presupposed a futuristic interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27 and the Book of Revelation...The justification for not arguing these positions is that the Rapture question has mainly been an issue between premillennialists, and also that most recent premillennialists have been futurists with regard to Daniel and Revelation.” Paul Feinberg, 1:49-50

Check in Greek Rev.3:10 (with 1:19) “which is about to come on the whole inhabited world...”

on ek tereo, see Prov 21:23 *diatero-ek* (dia does not change the sense of *tereo*, but intensifies it. Same combination (*diatero-ek*) is used in Acts 15:29

In John 12:27, a synonym of *tereo* (*sozo*) is used with *ek* — “Father, save me from this hour.” The same words are in Heb.5:7 — “To the one who was able to save him from death” and in James 5:20 — “Save the sinner’s soul from death.”

John 17:15 is the only other time in classical or biblical Greek where *ek-tereo* is found.

“Jesus is talking about a well-known time of distress and trouble. This was the Tribulation period (Deut. 4:26-31; Isa.13:6-13; 17:4-11; Jer. 30:4-11; Ezek.20:33-38; Dan.9:27; 12:1; Zech.14:1-4; Matt.24:9-31).” Paul Feinberg, 1:69

“While an amillennialist can identify Matthew 25:31-46 with Revelation 20:11-15 because the Second Coming comes at the end of the Millennium, a premillennialist *cannot* do this. A judgment that occurs *at* Christ’s glorious coming and one that occurs *after* the Millennium are separated by a thousand years.” Paul Feinberg, 1:77-78

“Often in prophetic literature there is the foreshortening of two events so that they appear to be temporally successive, but in fact are separated by many years (e.g., Isa.61:1-2 treats as one the Advent and the Second Coming although they are separated by two thousand years; Dan.12:1-2 and John 5:29 refer to both the first and second resurrections, which will be separated by one thousand years).” Paul Feinberg, 1:78.

Tim LaHaye is concerned about the waning confidence, among the evangelical ranks, in the doctrine of the pre-tribulational rapture of the church. He was shocked, recently, when upon being invited to conduct a family seminar, he was asked by the host pastor not to inject any eschatology into the seminar. “The reason was,” writes LaHaye, “he no longer believed the church would be raptured before the Tribulation. Apparently he was looking forward to going through it.”

This final caustic remark, besides demonstrating LaHaye’s inability to sustain an argument without resorting to sarcasm and ridicule, reveals much more about LaHaye’s motivation for believing in the pretribulational rapture than he may have intended to disclose—possibly more than even he is himself aware of. It suggests that, at least to LaHaye’s thinking, a man’s eschatology arises from his preferences.

If it is “apparent” (to LaHaye’s mind) that a person who reaches certain conclusions must necessarily take pleasure in those conclusions, then it must be that LaHaye has told us a great deal about his own methodology for arriving at a theological position. If a person’s belief that he must go through tribulation, in LaHaye’s estimation, necessarily springs from that person’s being favorably disposed to such a prospect, then it is equally “apparent” that LaHaye believes in the pretribulation rapture because of his disinclination to go through the tribulation. Now, inclinations and disinclinations do not provide valid rationales for reaching objective conclusions (and it is doubtful that any “post-tribulationist” has ever attained such a position because of a desire to believe it). However, there is reason to suspect, that if any interpreter will be motivated to bend the

meaning of a text in order to fit his prior emotional preferences, it is more likely to be the pre-tribulationist than the post-tribulationist. I say this as an objective analyst, since I hold neither view.

Appealing to the emotions of his readers, more than to their critical thinking, and again revealing much of his own heart, LaHaye writes:

“Christian mothers now worry that their precious sons and daughters will be forced to undergo the horrors of the Great Tribulation. Christian fathers fret about the impossible task of keeping their families alive through the most gruesome period the world has ever known...

Are you able to look at your children playing in the sunlight and believe firmly in your heart that they will not have to endure the monstrous horrors of the Tribulation?”

It has “apparently” not occurred to LaHaye that belief in the pre-tribulational rapture is not the biblically-prescribed remedy for “worry” and “fret” (two attitudes forbidden to the believer). It seems not to be a fact in the forefront of his mind that, whether there be a pre-tribulational rapture or not, many parents the world over (including Christians) look at their beloved children day by day and wonder how they will be able to keep them alive, even in their present circumstances of war, famine, plague, pestilence, poverty and persecution (the principal aspects of the anticipated Tribulation from which LaHaye expects to escape). It certainly would be wiser (and more biblical) to counsel and comfort such believers in the way of trusting God and being faithful unto death (Rev.2:10), committing themselves to Him as unto a faithful creator (1 Pet.4:19), and looking forward to their part in the resurrection of the just (1 Cor.15:)—than to dangle before them the questionable prospect of being snatched out of present or future troubles by the one-time event that may well never occur in their lifetime.

Is There A World-Wide Tribulation Predicted in Scripture?

I. Features of the tribulation anticipated by popular prophecy teachers:

- A. Global crisis (plagues, famine, persecution, etc.) of unprecedented proportions.
- B. Cashless economy and one-world government under Antichrist (world dictator).
- C. Prominence of Israel and temple as focus of persecution by Antichrist.
- D. Seven-year duration, broken in middle by abomination of desolation.
- E. The Battle of Armageddon (World War III).

II. Scriptural basis for this scenario:

A. Principal passages Daniel 7, 9, 11-12/Revelation 6-19/The Olivet Discourse (Matt.24/Mark 13/Luke 21)

B. Specific details

1. Global

- a. Matthew 24:22 (“no flesh” & “all flesh”—Jer.12:12/25:31/45:5/Eze.21:4f/Dan.4:12)
- b. Rev. 3:10 (“the whole world”—Luke 2:1/ Acts 2:5/ Col.1:6, 23)
- c. Rev. 6:4, 8/ 8:7, 8, 12/ 16:2, 3, 8, 20 (“earth”= Gr. “*ge*” = “land”)

2. Unique in history Dan. 12:1 / Matt.24:21 / Jer. 30:7 / Joel 2:2

(Use of hyperbole: cf. Ex.10:14/ 2 Chron.1:12/ Ezek.5:8-9/ Luke 1:69-70/ John 9:32)

3. Cashless society (Rev. 13:16-17)

(no mention of cashless economy. Economic boycott would fulfill as well.)

4. World-government

- a. Dan. 7:23 (not an end-times prediction; pertains to old Roman empire)
- b. Rev. 13:3, 7-8 (see comments under #1 above)

5. Antichrist (1 John 2:18, 22/ 4:3/ 2 John 7)

- a. Dan. 7:24-25/ 11:36ff (in context, timing is not right for end-times figure)
- b. 2 Thess.2:3-10 (obscure. Timing questionable)
- c. Rev. 13 (not necessarily an individual, nor identified with the previous figures)

6. Focus on Israel

- a. Jer.30:7 (wrong time period—cf. vv.3, 8, 18)
- b. Matt. 24:15-20 (wrong time period—cf. v.34, Luke 21:20ff)
- c. Rev. 7:2-8/ 14:1-5/ 11:8 (wrong time period—Rev.1:1, 3, 19/ 3:10/ 22:10)

7. Temple in Jerusalem

- a. 2 Thess. 2:4 (wrong temple—cf. 1 Cor.3:16-17)
- b. Rev.11:1-2 (wrong temple—cf. Luke 21:24)

8. Seven-year duration

- a. Dan.9:27 (wrong time period)
- b. Rev. 11:2, 3 / 12:6, 14 / 13:5 (assumption of more than one 3 1/2 -year period not valid)

9. Abomination of desolation

- a. Dan.9:27 (wrong time period—cf.v.26)
- b. Matt.24:15 (wrong time period—cf. Luke 21:20)

10. Battle of Armageddon

- a. Rev.16:16 (time period questionable)
- b. Zech. 12:2-4, 9/14:1-1-3 (wrong time period—Luke 21:22)

The Future of the Church

I. Definition of church

- A. Israel in Old Testament (Acts 7:38, Gr.)
- B. Disciples in New Testament (Matt. 16:18/ 1 Pet.2:9-10)
- C. Not defined institutionally, but spiritually (Heb.12:22-23/ Eph.5:23-24)

II. Survey of opinions about the church at the end of the present age:

- A. Dispensational (pessimistic) church weak and apostate in the end
- B. Postmillennial (optimistic) church triumphant and radiant
- C. Amillennial (either pessimistic or optimistic depending on interpreter)

III. The destiny of the Kingdom of God

- A. Identified with the church
- B. Expansion and infiltration (Dan.2:35, 44/ Matt.13:31-33)
- C. Crushing the dominion of Satan (Gen.3:15/ 1 John 3:8/ Heb.2:14-15/ Col.2:15/ Rom.16:20/ Luke 10:19/ Rev.12:11)
- D. Dominion through evangelism (Ps.2:8/ Acts 1:8/ Matt.24:14)

IV. The ripened harvest

- A. Incremental progress (Mark 4:26-29)
- B. Ripening in the midst of opposition (Matt.13:24-30, 37-43)
- C. Patient endurance until harvest (James 5:7-8)

V. The maturity of the Body

- A. The new man becomes a mature man (Eph.4:11-16)
- B. Unity (love) the measure of maturity (1 Cor.3:1-4/ Col.1:28/3:14/ 1 Cor. 13:9-13)

VI. Preparation of the Bride

- A. Purity (Eph.5:25-27)
- B. Righteous acts (Rev.19:7-8)

VII. The Glory of the Lord

- A. The knowledge of the Glory (Num.14:21/Isa.11:9/Hab.2:14/2 Cor.4:6/ Tit.2:13)
- B. The house of His glory (Ex.40:34-35/ 1 Kg.8:11/ Isa.60:7/ Eph.2:19-22/ 1 Pet.2:5)
- C. Likeness of Christ (John 1:14/ Heb.1:3/ 2 Cor. 3:18/ Eph.4:13-15)
- D. Relation to suffering (Luke 24:25-26/ Rom.8:17-18/ 2 Cor.4:16-17/ 1 Pet.4:12-14/ 5:10)
- E. Dawning of the glory (Isa.60:1-5/ Luke 1:78/ Mal.4:2/ 2 Pet.1:19/ Prov.4:19/ Matt.24:27)

