

# The End

## Rapture

*"Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."*

(Revelation 20:4)

## Introduction

Credit for the doctrine of the Rapture is most often given to John Nelson Darby, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century theologian. An individual named C.I. Scofield (maker of Scofield Reference Bible) picked up this doctrine and proliferated the idea throughout the various footnotes of his study Bible. Finally, in 1995, Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins wrote 12 books in their *Left Behind* series, 7 of which became bestsellers (with total sales surpassing 65 million copies).

Though not as popular as it once was, the doctrine of the rapture has since moved into the category of "commonly held belief" where many Christians just accept "this is how it works" due to both the popularity of the belief, and the difficult nature of Revelation.

In this lesson, we will walk through the doctrine of the rapture as it is supposedly presented in Revelation 20, and seek to understand what is actually happening in that chapter. Before we can begin their, we must talk about what "houses" rapture doctrine...premillennialism.

## Millennials

Revelation 20 mentions the phrase "thousand years", six times. For Bible students, the question comes to us, are we living before, during, or after the thousand-year reign of Christ?

### Before

Referred to as premillennialism, is the belief that Jesus will physically return to the earth before the 1000-year reign. It suggests that there are still unfulfilled prophecies to Israel, namely the land promise made to Abraham (Genesis 15:9-17 and Deuteronomy 34) and the promise made to King David about David's son being established "forever" (2 Samuel 7:10-17). The literal, physical rule of Christ for 1000 years in Revelation 20 fulfills these promises. Has two views associated with it (post-tribulation and pre-tribulation; see chart on next page)

### During

Referred to as amillennialism, is the belief that the 1000 years are not literal, but rather a symbolic number (see Psalm 84:10; Job 9:3; 1 Chronicles 16:15; 2 Peter 3:8), and that we are currently

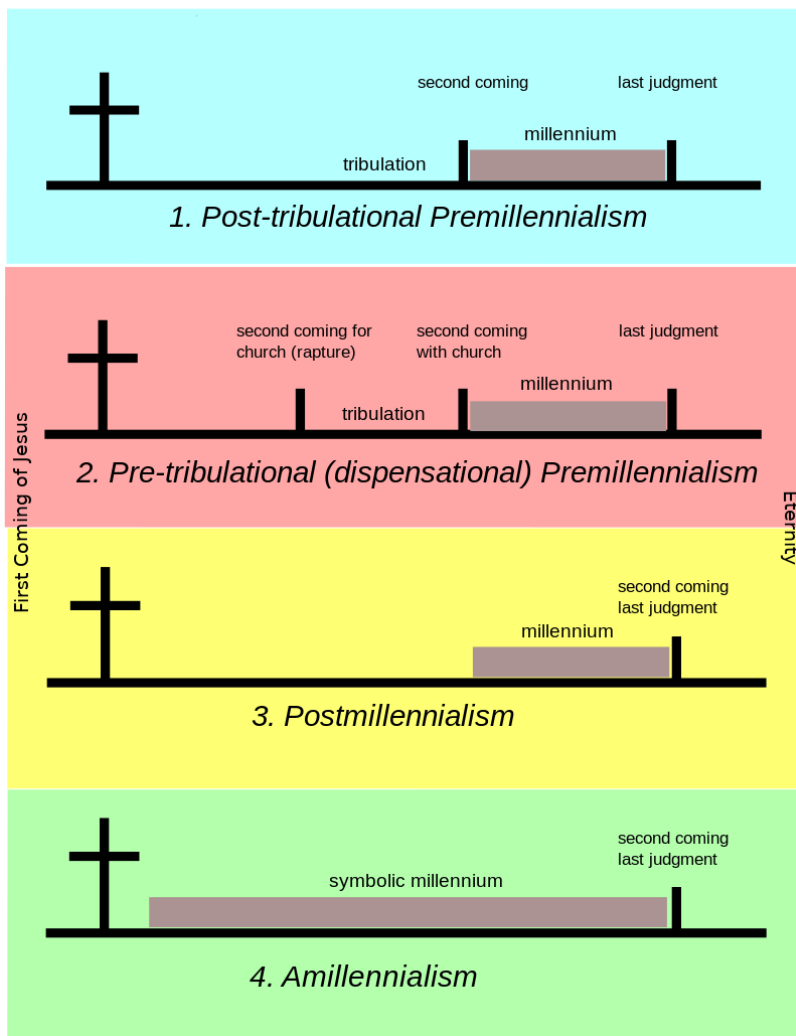
living in the reign of Christ in the church. Christ will eventually return in final judgment and establish a permanent reign in the "new heaven and new earth".

After

Referred to as postmillennialism, is the belief that the kingdom of Jesus is extended through the preaching of the gospel, ultimately culminating in more and more Christians on the earth until we reach a majority. After Christianity dominates the globe for a long time, Jesus will return. This view differs from the other two in that it avoids Jesus needing to have some violent entry into the world against sin. Instead, He will not need to impose righteousness, but rather just come get his righteous majority on the world. They do still believe in a general resurrection, destruction of the present creation, and entry into the eternal state.

### Comparison of Christian millennial teachings

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<sup>1</sup> By Lamorak - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0,

## Summary

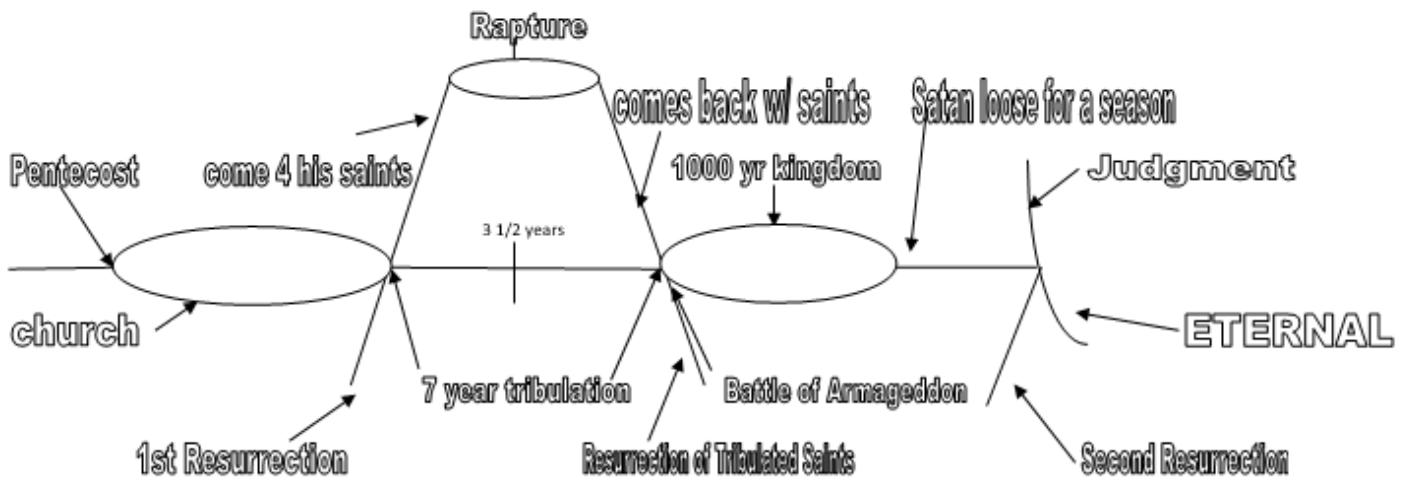
These four categories (separating pre- and post- tribulation premillennialism into two) are the four views of eschatology (end times) held by Christians today. It is in the pre-tribulation premillennialism view that we get the rapture doctrine.

## Rapture

The “rapture” is defined as “the eschatological event of both dead and living believers being caught up together in a moment in the twinkling of an eye to meet Jesus in the air.”<sup>2</sup>

See 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and 1 Corinthians 15:52

The word “rapture” actually comes from Latin “to seize, snatch away” and is equivalent to the Greek “caught up” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. We also see this idea in Matthew 24.



The rapture ushers in a 7 year period of tribulation (coming from the final week of the 70 weeks in Daniel 9) for those that are left behind. This is all centered around God's dealing with the nation of Israel (so the church needs to go).

Much of this interpretation of Revelation, depends on the 70 weeks of interpretation in Daniel 9.

It is in Daniel, and later reference to “time, times, and half a time” in Revelation 12, that we get the 3 ½ year shift in the 7 year tribulation. The math works this way:

Time = 1

Times = 2

Half a Time = ½

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-rapture-question/>

3 ½ years is also 42 months, as described in Revelation 11:2-3 and 13:5-7 (with the Beast)

The tribulation is when humanity reaches its worst point, and faces God's wrath. After this, Israel finally receives Jesus as the Messiah and the great thousand years reign begins. Following this, we will have a final battle against Satan and his forces, where Satan will ultimately be defeated and then everyone will go to their eternal place either with Jesus or away from Him.

**Q:** What are some questions/thoughts you have about the Rapture?

### **Summary**

The rapture is a teaching that relies on making a distinction between Israel and the church, and between God's promises to each group as being separate.

To put it simply, this view takes Revelation 20 and forces the rest of the Bible to fit it. Next week, we'll discuss how Revelation ends.

### **Take Home**

Where else, outside of Revelation, does the Bible talk about "new heavens, new earth"?