

BIBLE DOCTRINE SURVEY

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SESSION 10

ESCHATOLOGY:

The Doctrine Of Last Things

This doctrinal study was prepared by Pastor Tom Alexander for use in a Bible Doctrine Survey class at Berea Baptist Bible School in Berea, Ohio, and reflects his personal doctrinal beliefs.

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SESSION 10 - ESCHATOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY OF PROPHECY

A. A Significant Portion Of Scripture Was Prophetic When It Was Written.

* “A greater body of Scripture is given to prophecy than any other one subject, for approximately one-fourth of the Bible was prophetic at the time it was written.” (J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come*, Zondervan Publishing House, 1958, p. vii)

* Concerning the Second Coming of Christ: “It is claimed that one out of every thirty verses in the Bible mention this doctrine; to every one mention of the first coming the second coming is mentioned eight times; 318 references to it are made in 216 chapters; whole books . . . and chapters . . . are devoted to it.” (William Evans, *The Great Doctrines Of The Bible*, Moody Press, 1939, p. 236)

B. A Proper Understanding Of Prophecy Brings Hope - Titus 2:13; I Pet 1:3-5

C. A Proper Understanding Of Prophecy Brings Comfort - I Thess 4:13-18

D. A Proper Understanding Of Prophecy Motivates Holy Living - I Jn 3:1-3; II Pet 3:11-14; Titus 2:11-14

E. A Proper Understanding Of Prophecy Motivates Watchfulness - I Thess 5:6-11; II Tim 4:7-8

F. A Proper Understanding Of Prophecy Motivates Evangelism And Service - II Pet 3:8-10; Lk 19:12-13; Rev 6-20

2. KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING BIBLE PROPHECY

A. Key 1: A Proper Method Of Interpretation

* Many of the differences in the understanding of prophetic Scriptures over the years are due to differences of opinion on how the prophetic portions of the Bible are to be interpreted.

1. Allegorical Interpretation

a. Defined

* “Allegorism is the method of interpreting a literary text that regards the literal sense as the vehicle for a secondary, more spiritual and profound sense.” (Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 21, cited by Pentecost, *op. cit.*, p. 4)

* “In this method the historical import is either denied or ignored and the emphasis is placed entirely on a secondary sense so that the original words or events have little or no significance.” (Pentecost, *op. cit.*, p. 4)

- b. Dangers - Why we reject it as a method of interpretation
(David Winget, Temple Baptist Theological Seminary, Chattanooga, TN, unpublished class notes)
 - (1) It does not actually interpret the language; instead, it forces upon the language the fancies desired by the interpreter.
 - (2) In such a method, the Scripture ceases to be the basic authority; instead, the mind of the interpreter becomes the authority.
 - (3) There is no way to test the conclusions of the interpreter.
 - (4) If consistently used, this method would destroy all Bible doctrine.

2. Literal / Normal Interpretation

- a. Definition - "The literal method of interpretation is that method that gives to each word the same exact basic meaning it would have in normal, ordinary, customary usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking." (Ramm, cited by Pentecost, p. 9)
- b. Advantages (Bernard Ramm, cited by Pentecost, *op. cit.*, p. 9)
 - (1) It grounds interpretation in fact, based on objective data -- grammar, logic, etymology, history, archaeology, theology
 - (2) It is controlled. The interpretation can be tested against the objective text.
 - (3) It has had the greatest success in opening up the Word of God to our understanding.
 - (4) It is consistent with the very purpose of the Bible -- to give us truth that God wanted us to know. (Winget, *op. cit.*)
 - (5) New Testament persons (including Jesus) used this method to interpret the Old Testament. (Winget, *op. cit.*)
 - (6) Prophecy that has been fulfilled has been fulfilled literally. (Winget, *op. cit.*)
- c. Figures of speech are recognized and interpreted accordingly (e.g., God's wings, arm, etc.)
 - * A figure of speech is used to teach us something new that we do not understand by comparing it to something that we are familiar with (e.g., analogies - the Holy Spirit is like oil in a lamp).

3. Significant Interpretive Issues

- a. There is an important distinction between Israel and the Church.
 - * Israel began with Abraham (Gen 12, 15). The Church began at Pentecost (Acts 2).
 - * The church is made up of Jews & Gentiles in one body - A mystery in Old Testament times! - Eph 3:3-9
 - * Israel is pictured in O.T. as God's wife; the Church is pictured in N.T. as Christ's bride!
 - * SIGNIFICANCE: God has separate & distinct programs for each. They *must not* be confused!
- b. The pattern of prophetic fulfillment has been literal.
 - * Prophecies of the judgment of Israel & Judah - Isaiah, Jeremiah
 - * Prophecies of the return of Judah from the Babylonian captivity - Jeremiah, Daniel

- * Prophecies of Christ's first coming (Bethlehem; born of virgin; tribe of Judah . . .)
- * Prophecies of Christ's crucifixion (triumphal entry; betrayed by friend for 30 pieces of silver; sufferings on cross; lots cast for His clothing . . .)
- * CONCLUSION: Other Biblical prophecies will be fulfilled literally, too!

c. Some prophecies involve a "double reference."

(1) Definition - "Many prophecies in the Bible contain both a near view and a far view. That is, these prophecies are given for two audiences separated in time. The fulfillment of such prophecies would relate both to nearer events as well as to more distant future events." (Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation Of Prophecy*, BMH Books, Inc., 1974 p. 178)

(2) Examples

- * Deut 18:15 - Moses predicts a prophet would follow him → Joshua;
But Acts 3:22-23 applies this prophecy to Christ.
- * Isaiah 14 - King of Babylon → Satan
- * Ezekiel 28 - King of Tyre → Satan
- * II Sam 7:12-16 - Davidic Covenant - Solomon → Christ

d. There are sometimes unseen time gaps in prophetic passages.

(1) ILLUS: Mountain peaks - valleys not seen

(2) Examples

- * Lk 4:17-19 - Jesus is reading Isaiah 61:1-3, but stops in the middle of the passage - The first coming fulfilled part of the prophecy; the remainder must wait until His second coming.
- * Daniel's 70 weeks - gap between 69th & 70th

B. Key 2: An Understanding Of Bible Covenants

* Common Elements Of These Covenants

- 1) They are unconditional (cf. Mosaic -- conditional)
- 2) They are eternal
- 3) They are made with Israel

1. Abrahamic Covenant (ca. 2000BC) - Gen 12:1-3, 6-7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21

a. The focus of the promises

- (1) Personal - Great nation; great name; blessing
- (2) National - Seed; land
- (3) Universal - Blessing (Gentiles included)

b. Prophetic provisions

- (1) Seed (nation of Israel) -- Reaffirmed in Davidic Covenant
- (2) Land - Reaffirmed in Palestinian Covenant

(3) Blessing (Christ) - Reaffirmed in New Covenant

2. Palestinian Covenant (ca. 1400BC) - Deut 30:1-10

* Repeats the promise of the land after the Law was given. Stipulates that they would not necessarily possess it continuously.

3. Davidic Covenant (ca. 1000BC) - II Sam 7:12-16 (esp. v. 16)

* Promises David an eternal house, kingdom & throne - Nation & King!

4. New Covenant (ca. 600BC) - Jer 31:31-40

* Possible partial fulfillment in church age.

* Complete fulfillment will be with Israel in the Millennium.

C. Key 3: A Proper Prophetic Framework

1. Postmillennialism

* “We have defined Postmillennialism as that view of 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 is eventually 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.’ It should be added that on postmillennial principles the second coming of Christ will be followed immediately by the general resurrection, the general judgment, and the introduction of heaven and hell in their fullness.” (Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium*, The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1958, p. 14)

* The Millennium may not literally be 1000 years. It could be shorter, and it could be longer.

* This view became less accepted after World War II.

* ILLUS: “We’ve A Story To Tell To The Nations”

2. Amillennialism

* “The amillennial view holds that there will be no literal millennium on the earth following the second advent. All the prophecies concerning the kingdom are being fulfilled in the inter-advent period spiritually by the church.” (Pentecost, *op. cit.*, p. 372)

* “Amillennialism is the view of last things that holds there will be no Millennium before the end of the world. Until the end there will be a parallel development of both good and evil, God’s kingdom and Satan’s. After the second coming of Christ at the end of the world there will be a general resurrection and general judgment of all people.” (Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, Victor Books, 1986, p. 445)

3. Premillennialism

* “Premillennialism is the view that holds that the second coming of Christ will occur prior to the Millennium which will see the establishment of Christ’s kingdom on this earth for a literal 1,000 years. It also understands that there will be several occasions when resurrections and judgments will take place. Eternity will begin after the 1,000 years are concluded. Within premillennialism there are those who hold differing views as to the time of the Rapture.” (Ryrie, *op. cit.*, p. 450)

3. THE TRIBULATION

A. Key Scriptures Dealing With The Tribulation

- * Rev 6-19 - A detailed recounting of the events and judgments of the seven years.
- * Dan 2:31-45; 7; 9:24-27; 11:36-12:13 - Prophecies of Gentile dominion, concluding with the Tribulation and Antichrist.
- * Mt 24-25 - The Olivet Discourse, focused on the “sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world.”
- * II Thess 2 - Prophecies of Antichrist and the Tribulation, prior to “the day of Christ.”

B. Names Associated With The Tribulation

1. The Tribulation - Deut 4:30-31; Mt 24:29
2. The Great Tribulation - Mt 24:21
3. “The Day of the Lord” - Isa 2:12; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; Amos 5:18; Acts 2:20; I Thess 5:2; II Pet 3:10
 - * “The Day of the Lord” refers to a broad period of time, including the Tribulation, the Second Coming of Christ, and the Millennial Kingdom, up through the creation of the new heavens and the new earth. The term is used primarily in the Old Testament, although there are a few New Testament references. It is also referred to as “that day” or “the day” or “the great day.” The term is typically used in a context of judgment, but also includes the idea of God’s blessing following the judgment. There are nearly 100 prophetic references to the “Day of the Lord,” mostly in the Old Testament.
4. Daniel’s Seventieth Week - Dan 9:24-27
5. The Time Of Jacob’s Trouble - Jer 30:7
 - * Significance - This is a Jewish prophecy! The primary importance of the Tribulation is for Israel (cf. Dan 9).

C. Key Personalities In The Tribulation

1. The Holy Trinity
2. The Unholy Trinity: Satan, Antichrist & the False Prophet - Rev 13
3. The Two Witnesses - Rev 11:3-13
4. The 144,000 - Rev 7:1-8; Rev 14:1-5
5. Other Groups: Israel, Gentile nations, tribulation “saints.” But take note that the church is not mentioned in Tribulation passages!

D. The Nature And Character Of The Tribulation

1. It will be unique in the history of the world - Mt 24:21
(Adapted from Ryrie, *Basic Theology*)
 - a. Worldwide tribulation - Rev 3:10
 - b. Unparalleled tribulation - Mt 24:21-22; Jer 30:7
 - c. Man reacts with fear, but refuses to repent - Rev 6:15-17; 9:20-21; 16:8-11

2. It will be a time of unparalleled trouble and destruction - Dan 12:1; Joel 1:15; 2:1-2; Zeph 1:14-15; Lk 21:25-26; I Thess 5:3
3. It will be a time of God's wrath and judgment
 - a. A time of God's wrath - Zeph 1:18; Rev 6:15-17; 11:18; 14:10, 19; 15:7; 16:1, 19
 - b. A time of God's judgment - Isa 24 (esp. vss. 20-21); Isa 26:20-21; Rev 14:7; 15:4; 16:7; 19:1-2
 - (1) Seven Seal Judgments - Rev 6; 8:1-2
 - (2) Seven Trumpet Judgments - Rev 8:7-9:21; 11:14-19
 - (3) Seven Vial (Bowl) Judgments - Rev 16
4. It will be a time of great Satanic activity - Rev 12:7-17 (Satan); 13:1, 4-10 (Antichrist); 13:11, 15-17 (False Prophet)
5. It will be a time in which multitudes will believe - Rev 7:9-10, 13-17

E. The Purpose Of The Tribulation

1. God's purpose for Israel: To finish judging her for her sin and to prepare her for her Messiah - Jer 30:7; Dan 9:24; Hosea 5:14-6:3; Rom 11:25-27
2. God's purpose for Gentile nations: To judge the wickedness of mankind and complete the "Times of the Gentiles" - Isa 26:21; Jer 25:32-33; II Thess 2:12; Dan 2; Lk 21:24; Rom 11:25

F. A Crucial Scripture: Daniel 9:24-27

1. God's Calendar

- a. Its Duration - 70 Weeks (490 Years)
 - * Literally, "Seventy sevens" or "seventy heptads" (heptagon - a figure with 7 sides). What the "sevens" were is determined by the context - They could have been 7 minutes, hours, days, weeks or years, depending on how the term was used.
 - ~ Cf. our use of the term "dozen" - What is referred to is 12, but "12 of what" is determined by the context.
 - * The context indicates that the word "weeks" in verse 24 does not refer to literal 7-day periods of time - 1 1/3 years would not be enough time for the events described in the following verses to occur!
 - * In this context, Gabriel is speaking of 70 "weeks" of years, or 70 "sevens" of years -- 490 years altogether.
 - ~ Daniel has been thinking and praying about the 70-year captivity. He was thinking in terms of years.
 - ~ 70 sets of 7 years, or 490 years, would be enough time for the prophesied events to occur -- 70 weeks of days or 70 weeks of months would not be long enough.
- b. Its Focus - Israel & Jerusalem
 - * "Thy people" - Israel; The Jews
 - * "Thy holy city" - Jerusalem

- * Interpretation: This is a Jewish prophecy! It relates to the nation Israel. It is not a prophecy dealing with Gentile nations, as in the earlier visions in Daniel. It is not a prophecy dealing with the church. It is Jewish in its emphasis. Israel is the focal point.

c. Its Purposes

- * Six things would be accomplished during these 70 “weeks” (490 years). The first three are negative, and the final three are positive. The first three have to do with sin; the final three have to do with the kingdom.
 - (1) To finish the transgression - The word “finish” means “to bring to an end.” Israel’s sin of apostasy and disobedience would be brought to an end.
 - (2) To make an end of sins - Israel’s sin would either be taken away, or brought to its full and final judgment, thus ending sin.
 - (3) To make reconciliation for iniquity - This speaks of atonement for sin, provided by Christ on the cross. The actual application to Israel will happen at the Second Coming of Christ.
 - (4) To bring in everlasting righteousness - Christ’s death provided righteousness for all who believe. But God will finally establish a kingdom based on righteousness at the Millennium.
 - (5) To seal up the vision and the prophecy - Visions and prophecies will be completely fulfilled and ended, with no need for further prophetic visions, when Christ returns.
 - (6) To anoint the most Holy - This refers to the anointing of the Holy of Holies in the Millennial Temple.
 - * Note: Temple worship will be reestablished and will be occurring during the Tribulation. It is this worship that Antichrist will cause to cease, replacing it with worship of himself. After the Tribulation, during the Kingdom, the Holy of Holies will be cleansed and dedicated or anointed again, establishing Temple worship during the Millennium (Ezekiel 41-46).

d. Its Divisions - 7 weeks; 62 weeks; 1 week

- (1) 7 Weeks = 49 years
 - * The starting point is the decree to rebuild Jerusalem. There were four decrees for the Jews to return: Cyrus in 538BC; Darius I in 512BC; Artaxerxes Longimanus in 457 or 458BC; and Artaxerxes Longimanus in 445BC (Neh 2). This final decree was the only one concerned with rebuilding the city of Jerusalem, and serves as the starting point for the prophecy.
 - * The only logical division between the 7 weeks and the 62 is that it took 49 years to finish the wall, clean the rubble from Jerusalem, rebuild the streets, restore the city to its usefulness, and protect it with a moat. This would occur during a time of duress and trouble. This fits well with the events recorded in Nehemiah.
- (2) 62 Weeks = 434 years
 - * Totaling 69 weeks, or 483 years

- * Sir Robert Anderson (*The Coming Prince*) did some amazing calculations a number of years ago. He took the actual date from the decree, added 483 prophetic years of 360 days each, and came to the very date for the traditional Triumphal Entry of Christ into Jerusalem! He entered as the King and Messiah, but was rejected!
- * Note the word “after” - No events are given for the course of the 62 weeks. But there are some events given that will occur after the 62 weeks end!
- * These events also occur before the 70th week begins! Therefore, there must be a time gap between the first 69 weeks of years and the 70th! The Church Age fits within this time gap! There has been a “time-out” in God’s calendar for Israel! God’s countdown clock has stopped for the time. But it will start again!
- * Events “after” the 62 weeks:
 - (a) Messiah shall be cut off - Crucifixion of Christ
 - ~ “Not for himself” - He died for others
 - (b) The people of the prince that shall come will destroy the city and the sanctuary
 - ~ In 70AD, the Roman army, under Titus Vespasian, utterly destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple.
 - ~ Prince that shall come - Antichrist. The “Little Horn” of Daniel 7.
 - ~ People - Antichrist would not destroy Jerusalem, his people would. Historically, that was the Romans. Prophetically, the Antichrist will be of Roman origin.
 - ~ The end shall be with a flood - A flood of destruction
 - (c) Unto the end of the war desolations are determined
 - ~ This age will be marked by wars and desolations - Pretty accurate picture!
- (3) 1 Week - 7 years - Daniel’s “Seventieth Week”

2. The Seventieth Week - The Tribulation

- a. The starting point for the Tribulation - Confirmation of a covenant by Antichrist
 - * This is a covenant to protect Israel.
 - * NOTICE: The Tribulation does not formally begin with the Rapture!
 - * This covenant will be for “one week” - 7 years
 - * God’s calendar / clock has started again!
- b. The duration of the Tribulation = 7 years
 - * “One week” = 7 years
 - * “Midst of week” = 3½ years - “Abomination of Desolation” (cf. Jesus in Mt 24:15; II Thess 2:4)
 - ~ At the 3 1/2 year mark, the Antichrist will stop the worship of God in the Temple. He will set himself up for worship, committing abominations and defiling the Temple.

* Two halves - cf. 7:25; Rev 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5

(1) "The Beginning of Sorrows" - Mt 24:4-8

(2) "The Great Tribulation" - Mt 24:15-21

* Further evidence of a literal 7-year period: References to one or the other half of the tribulation

~ "Time, times, and the dividing of time" or "half a time" - Dan 7:25; Rev 12:14

~ Forty-two months - Rev 11:2; Rev 13:5

~ 1260 days - Rev 11:3; 12:6

c. The people of the Tribulation: Israel (Jews)

G. Conclusions:

1. The Tribulation is a time of God's wrath and judgment
2. The purposes of the Tribulation focus on Israel and the Gentile nations.
3. There is no clear mention of the church on earth in Tribulation passages.
 - * NOT "church" "Christians" "Disciples" "Pastor" "Bishop"
 - * Saints, redeemed, the righteous, prophets - Yes!

4. THE RAPTURE

A. The Bible's Teachings Concerning The Rapture

1. Key Scriptures dealing with the Rapture:
 - * Jn 14:1-3 - Christ promises to prepare a place for Christians and then to come again to get us and to take us to be with Him eternally.
 - * I Cor 15:51-57 - Paul discusses the purposes of the Rapture (to give Christians an immortal body fit for Heaven; and to assure us of victory over sin and death). He also explains the rapidity of the Rapture.
 - * I Thess 4:13-18 - Paul explains to grieving Christians that those who have died have not missed the Lord's return. They will be resurrected and living Christians will be "caught up" at the return of Christ.
2. The Rapture is identified in Scripture - I Thess 4:17
 - a. The word "rapture" is not found in our English Bibles.
 - b. The word comes from the Latin version of I Thess 4:17, where the Latin word *rapturo* is used for the phrase "caught up."
 - c. The Greek word in this verse is *harpazo*: "To seize; To carry off by force; To catch up; To snatch out or away"
 - * Narrowly, it refers to the change that living Christians will go through when Christ returns.
 - * In theology, it has come to refer to the whole event: The return of Christ for His body in the air; the resurrection of the dead in Christ; & the translation of living believers.

- * From I Cor 15 we learn that at the Rapture, *all* believers will be caught up to be with Christ. We will not die, but our bodies must be changed from mortal, earthly bodies to immortal, heavenly bodies.
- * NOTE: The truth concerning the Rapture is called a “mystery” in I Cor 15 - A truth not previously revealed which we would not know except by direct revelation of God. This truth is not taught in the Old Testament.

3. The Rapture is imminent

- * What “imminence” means: Christ could come for the church at any moment. The rapture could occur at any time. There is no prophecy to be fulfilled or events that must occur before Christ can return.
- * What “imminence” does not mean: The doctrine of the imminent return of Christ does not teach that His coming *must* be *soon*! Obviously, almost 2000 years have passed since the angels told the disciples that Jesus would return. It was not “soon” for the first century Christians. And although His coming is almost 2000 years closer, it *may* not be “soon” for us today!
- * We don’t know *when* Jesus will return, but we do know that He could come at any time - even today!
- a. John 14:1-3 - Jesus’ promise to the disciples was to return to take them to be with Him in Heaven, not to set up His kingdom on the earth. This heavenly hope for the church is different from Israel’s earthly hope of the kingdom. No time element is given. No intervening signs or events are mentioned. This promise was given to comfort the disciples and give them hope as Jesus departed for Heaven.
- b. Rom 13:11-12 - “Our salvation” is nearer now than when we believed. This does not refer to eternal salvation, but our deliverance. Paul challenged the Roman Christians to stay “awake” and live according to the light because “the day is at hand.” The imminent coming of Christ was a motivation to holy living.
- c. I Cor 1:7 - The Corinthian Christians were “eagerly awaiting” Christ’s coming. They expected it during their lifetime.
- d. I Cor 15:51-58 - Paul expected, as part of the “we” in this passage, to be “changed” (vss. 51-52). He expected the rapture even in his lifetime. The rapture served to motivate Christians to faithful service until Christ returned (vs. 58).
- e. Php 3:20-21 - Paul and the believers at Philippi were “eagerly awaiting” Christ’s return from Heaven. This return would be coupled with the “changing” of our vile bodies into glorious bodies like Christ’s. They were looking for the rapture in their lifetime.
- f. I Thess 1:9-10 - The believers at Thessalonica were “waiting” for Christ’s return from Heaven. This return would deliver them from the coming wrath (of the tribulation).
- g. I Thess 4:13-18 - In order to comfort the church at Thessalonica concerning those believers who had died, Paul assured them that those believers would be raised at the rapture, then “we which are alive and remain” will join them in the air. The rapture was expected in their day!
- h. I Thess 5:4-9 - Paul challenged these Christians to watch and be alert, awaiting Christ’s “salvation” before the time of wrath.

- i. Titus 2:11-13 - Christ's return is a "blessed hope" that should motivate us to godly living today.
 - j. Jas 5:7-9 - James encourages these suffering Christians to wait patiently for Christ's return, because He would then judge righteously. This return was said to be "drawing nigh" and Christ was pictured as "standing at the door," ready to return.
 - k. I Jn 3:2-3 - When Christ appears, we will be like Him. This hope serves to motivate us to be pure. This motivation to purity of life makes sense if Christ's coming could be at any moment.
 - l. Rev 22:7, 12, 20 - Three times Jesus said He was coming "quickly." Since these verses were written 1900 years ago, the word cannot mean "soon." It should be taken in the sense of "suddenly" or "without delay." When Jesus returns, it will be sudden and unexpected. It can happen at any moment.
4. The Rapture is instantaneous
- a. The order of events - I Thess 4:16-17
 - (1) Christ will descend from Heaven into the air with a victory cry, the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God.
 - (2) The dead in Christ (the New Testament church) will rise.
 - (3) Living believers will be caught up and be translated (receive glorified bodies), meeting the Lord and the dead in Christ in the air.
 - (4) Christians will live forever with the Lord.
 - b. The timing of events - I Cor 15:51-52
 - (1) "In a moment" - It's instantaneous!
 - * The word is the Greek word atomos, from which we get our word "atom" -- only time in New Testament - Meaning: Something that cannot be divided (when the atom was named, it was believed to be the smallest, indivisible particle of matter).
 - * It will happen in the smallest unit of time -- so small it cannot be divided!
 - (2) "In the twinkling of an eye"
 - * This word was used for any rapid movement: the flapping of a wing (hummingbird), the buzz of a gnat, the vibration of a harp, the twinkling of a star.
5. The Rapture is intimate - I Thess 4:16-17
- * Only certain people will be raptured!
 - a. The dead in Christ - 4:16
 - b. "We which are alive and remain" - 4:17
 - * This phrase refers to Christians in the New Testament church - cf. I Thess 1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, **unto the church of the Thessalonians** *which is* in God the Father and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

c. The significance of this concept:

* *Only* New Testament believers will be raptured. Unbelievers will not be. Old Testament saints will not be. Tribulation saints will not be

* *All* New Testament believers will be raptured. (“the dead in Christ;” “we shall all be changed”)

6. The Rapture brings immortality

* “So shall we ever be with the Lord” - I Thess 4:17b

* “That where I am, there ye may be also” - Jn 14:3

* An incorruptible body! - I Cor 15:52-58

B. Five Views Concerning The Time Of The Rapture In Relation To The Tribulation

1. Pretribulation Rapture - The church will be raptured before the Tribulation begins, and will not go through any of the Tribulation.

2. Midtribulation Rapture - The church goes through the first half of the Tribulation, and is raptured at the mid-point (3½ years)

3. Pre-Wrath Rapture - The church goes through approximately ¾ of the Tribulation, and is raptured before the outpouring of God’s wrath. This occurs about halfway through the second half of the Tribulation. (This view has been popularized over the past 15-20 years by Marvin Rosenthal and Robert Van Kampen.)

4. Posttribulation Rapture - The church goes through the Tribulation, and is Raptured just before Christ comes to rule and reign. (When would there be time for the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb? Who would populate the Millennial Kingdom?)

5. Partial Rapture - Only those who are watching and waiting and ready for Christ’s return will be raptured. This view sees several Raptures taking place during the Tribulation.

C. Arguments For The Pretribulation Rapture: Eleven Reasons Why The Church Will Not Experience The Tribulation

1. The Tribulation is a time of God’s wrath and judgment (Isa 13:9-13; Zeph 1:14-18; Rev 6:15-17; 11:18; 14:10, 19; 15:7; 16:1, 19; 19:15. The church is not subject to God’s wrath (Rom 5:9; I Thess 1:10; 5:9-10). Therefore, the church must be gone before God’s wrath begins.

* The Church has been promised deliverance from the very “hour of temptation” - The time period in which God’s judgments will fall - Rev 3:10

2. The Tribulation is focused primarily on God’s plan for Israel, and secondarily on the judgment of the Gentiles. There is no Biblical purpose for the church to go through the Tribulation.

* Daniel’s 70 weeks are appointed for Israel (Jews) - Dan 9:24-27

* The Tribulation is a time of “Jacob’s trouble” - Jer 30:7

* The Tribulation will be a time in which the wickedness of mankind will be judged and the “Times of the Gentiles” will be brought to an end - Isa 26:21; Jer 25:32-33; Lk 21:24

3. The church is not mentioned in any passage dealing specifically with the Tribulation.
 - * The words “church, pastor, bishop, deacon, Christian, disciple, believer, body of Christ” or those “in Christ” are not found in any Tribulation passage. The term “saints” can refer to believers of any era, and in the Tribulation passages this word refers to Tribulation saints.
4. The Tribulation is not mentioned in key passages that teach the Rapture of the church.
 - * The rapture is taught in key passages such as Jn 14:3, I Cor 15:51-58 and I Th 4:13-18. The tribulation is not mentioned in these contexts. If the rapture could not happen until after the tribulation, it should have been clearly prophesied (just like Jesus told of the judgments and trials during the Tribulation that precede His second advent in Mt 24).
5. God’s program for the church is distinct from His program for Israel. The “parenthesis” of the Church Age must end before God’s program with Israel can begin again.
 - * God’s Millennial promises to Israel await fulfillment. They have not been rescinded. God’s 70-week program for Israel in Daniel 9:24-27 must still be completed. We are currently in the gap between the 69th and 70th week (9:26-27). The church is a “mystery,” not revealed in the Old Testament. Its time period takes place during the gap in Daniel 9. The church age will end before God begins His program with Israel again (Rom 11:24-31).
6. The church’s intimate and special union with Christ argues that the church will not go through God’s judgments during the Tribulation.
 - * The church is portrayed as Christ’s body (Eph 1:22-23) and bride (Eph 5:32). Christians are identified as being “in Christ” (II Cor 5:17). Christ promised the church His continuing presence (Heb 13:5).
 - * If the church were subject to the wrath and judgment of God, Christ would have to face these as well. But Christ suffered once and for all and will never suffer again - I Pet 3:18.
 - * Due to our identity with Christ, the church is not subject to judgment - Rom 8:1
 - * Instead, the church will appear with Christ, sharing His glory - Col 3:4
 - * Tribulation or Millennium saints are not described as sharing in this intimate relationship.
7. The Pretribulation view sees the “24 elders” in Revelation as representing the church in Heaven. They are pictured as rewarded, ruling, and reigning with Christ before the Tribulation begins. The references mentioning them all speak of them in Heaven, not on earth, during the Tribulation - See Rev 4-5; 7:11, 13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4
8. The Pretribulation view sees the “Restrainer” in II Thessalonians 2 as the Holy Spirit resident in the church. His restraining ministry must end (with the Rapture) before the Tribulation can begin.
 - * It is also possible that the “falling away” in II Th 2:3 could be translated “departure.” If so, it refers to the rapture, clearly placing the rapture prior to the Tribulation.
9. The New Testament teaches that Christ’s coming for the church is imminent. The Rapture could not be imminent if seven years of Tribulation must be experienced first. (See Scriptures listed under 4A3 above.)
10. If the Rapture occurred at the end of the Tribulation, who would be left to populate the earth during the Millennial Kingdom? Who would be judged in the judgments of Matthew 25?

- a. The judgments of Israel and the Gentiles indicate that there are humans in unglorified bodies living on the earth at the close of the Tribulation. Some are believers, some are not. If the rapture occurs as Christ is returning to earth at the close of the Tribulation, all the believers would be raptured and given glorified bodies. Who would be left to be judged? - See Ezek 20:33-44; Mt 25
 - * Judgment on Jews - Ezek 20:37-38; Mt 25:1-13 (10 virgins) & Mt 25:14-30 (talents). Conclusion: Believing Jews enter the Millennial Kingdom; Unbelieving Jews are sent to hell.
 - * Judgment on Gentiles - Mt 25:31-46 (sheep & goats). Conclusion: Believing Gentiles enter the Millennial Kingdom; Unbelieving Gentiles are sent to hell.
 - b. The Millennial Kingdom will be populated by humans in unglorified bodies who will be capable of having children (raising families) and dying - Isa 65:18-25; Rev 20:7-9
 - * The lost at the end of the Tribulation are judged with death - Ezek 20:33-44; Mt 25
 - * If the rapture happens at the end of the Tribulation, who would populate the Millennium?
11. The imminent return of Christ for the church is the church's "blessed hope" that should bring comfort to Christians. What kind of hope would it be if there must be seven years of suffering and martyrdom first?
- * This hope is blessed (Titus 2:11-13), purifying (I Jn 3:1-3) and comforting (I Th 4:13-18).

5. THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

A. Its Identification

1. The term "Millennium" is not found in Scripture.
2. The term comes from the Latin words for "thousand years." (The Latin for "thousand" is *mille*, and the Latin for "year" is *annus*.)
3. The period of a thousand years is mentioned specifically 6 times in Rev 20:1-7.
4. The concept of the Millennium is found throughout both Testaments of Scripture through the teaching concerning the Kingdom. The Millennium is Christ's 1,000-year reign on earth from the throne of David in Jerusalem, fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies and covenants.

B. Its Inhabitants

1. Jesus Christ will be King - Isa 9:6-7; Lk 1:30-33
2. The church will rule and reign with Christ - Rev 5:8-10; II Tim 2:11-12
 - * The twelve Apostles will rule over the twelve tribes of Israel - Mt 19:28; Lk 22:29-30
3. Tribulation martyrs will rule and reign with Christ - Rev 20:4
4. Old Testament saints will be resurrected and will take part in the Millennium - Dan 7:18, 27; 12:2-3
 - * David will have a special position of authority - Jer 30:9; Ezek 37:24-25
5. Satan will be bound - Rev 20:1-3

6. Humans will populate the Millennial Kingdom.

- * At the end of the Tribulation, when Christ returns to earth, all who followed the Antichrist will be cast into hell. Believing Jews and Gentiles will remain on the earth and will begin repopulating the earth during the thousand-year reign of Christ. The Millennium will begin with a population of all believers, but many will be born during this period. Some will surrender to Christ, and some will refuse to yield to Him - Rev 20:7-9
- * Israel will take her place as the premier of all nations - Ps 72:10-11; 86:9

C. Its Character

1. Righteousness and justice - Isa 9:6-7; 32:1; Ps 45:6-7; Jer 23:5-6
 - * Christ will rule with a “rod of iron” - Ps 2:9; Rev 2:27; 12:5; 19:15
2. Peace - Isa 9:7; 11:6-9; 65:25
 - * There will be no war - Ps 46:9; Isa 2:4
3. Prosperity - Isa 35; Amos 9:14
4. Removal of the curse and restoration of the earth - Col 1:20; Rom 8:20-25
5. Spirituality - Micah 4:1-7

D. Its Conclusion - Rev 20:7-10

1. Satan will be loosed from the Abyss - 7
2. Satan will lead in one final rebellion against Christ - 8-9a
 - * There will be multitudes born during the 1000 years of the Millennium. Each individual will be responsible for his personal relationship to Christ. Obviously, many will not trust Him!
3. God will judge Satan and the rebels with fire from Heaven - 9b-10
 - * The human rebels will briefly be sent to Hell (cf. 9b with 11-15)
 - * Satan will be cast into the Lake of Fire - 10
4. Following the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11-15), eternity will begin (Rev 21-22)
 - * God will destroy the present physical universe (II Pet 3:10) and create a new heaven and new earth (Rev 21:1)

6. JUDGMENTS IN PROPHECY

A. The Judgment Seat Of Christ - I Cor 3:11-15; II Cor 5:10; Rom 14:10-12

1. The participants at this judgment will be Christians (the New Testament church)
2. The purpose of this judgment will be to test the believer’s works. Those that are worthy (done for Christ’s glory through His power) will result in rewards. Those works that are unworthy will be burned up, and the believer will suffer loss.
 - * Salvation is not an issue at this judgment! Everyone at this judgment is saved and guaranteed of Heaven!

B. The Judgment Of Israel - Ezek 20:34-38; Mt 25:1-30

- * God will judge individual Jews during and at the conclusion of the Tribulation. The “rebels” and “transgressors” will be sent to Hell. Believing Jews that survived the Tribulation will enter the Millennial Kingdom in their earthy bodies.
- * Many believe that all Jews who are still alive when Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation will be saved (Rom 11:25-29). If this is true, the judgments in Ezekiel 20 and Matthew 25 must take place at some time during the Tribulation.

C. The Judgment Of Gentiles - Mt 25:31-46

- * Following the Tribulation the Gentiles who survive will also be individually judged. Those who are believers (the sheep) will enter the Millennial Kingdom in their earthy bodies. Those who are unbelievers (the goats) will be cast into Hell.

D. The Judgment Of The Antichrist, The False Prophet, Satan, And The Fallen Angels

1. The Antichrist and False Prophet will be cast alive into the Lake of Fire when Jesus returns - Rev 19:20; 20:10
2. Satan will be cast into the Lake of Fire following his final rebellion at the end of the Millennium - Rev 20:10
3. The fallen angels will be judged and cast into the Lake of Fire - Mt 25:41; II Pet 2:4; Jude 6
 - * The time of this judgment is not clear - Are they bound with Satan during the Millennium and judged with Satan at the end? Or are they judged and cast into the Lake of Fire at the beginning of the Millennium?

E. The Great White Throne Judgment - Rev 20:11-15

1. The participants of this judgment will be the lost of all time.
2. The purpose of this judgment is to show the righteousness of God in judging the lost, and to condemn them to the Lake of Fire to suffer for all eternity (cf. Lk 16:19-31).
 - * The lost are judged “according to their works.” This seems to imply that there will be degrees of punishment in Hell just like there are degrees of reward in Heaven. (See also Mt 11:23-24)

7. ETERNITY

A. Heaven

- * The new heavens and the new earth and the new Jerusalem are described in Rev 21-22.
- * Heaven is where believers will have a place prepared by Christ and where we will be with Christ and the Father forever - Jn 14:1-3
- * Heaven is a glorious place:
 1. It is prepared by Christ - Jn 14:2; Rev 21:1-2
 2. It is made of glorious materials - Rev 21:10-21
 3. It is the home of God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the believers of all ages - Rev 21:22-24

4. It is glorious because of what will *not* be there:
 - a. Tears, pain and sorrow - Rev 21:4
 - b. Night - Rev 22:5
 - c. Sin - 21:8, 27a
 - d. The curse - 22:3
5. It is a place of spiritual blessings and service - Rev 22:1-5

B. Hell

- * The Lake of Fire is a place of eternal physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual torment. Those who abide there being in a condition of being separated from God forever (the second death). There is no hope of relief or escape - Rev 20:14-15; Lk 16:19-31