

Apocalypse

Our word “apocalypse” comes from the greek word “apokalupsis” which means “an uncovering,” “an unveiling,” or “a disclosure.”

We find the word “apokalupsis” as part of the title of the book of the Bible we call “Revelation.” The book’s full title is: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.”

In all its uses, “revelation/apokalupsis” refers to something or someone, once hidden, becoming visible.

The Antichrist

Both the Old Testament and New Testament describe an individual who will come to power in the “last days” and who will be a human adversary to God and to Jesus the true Christ. The Antichrist is sometimes referred to as the “Man of Sin,” “Son of Perdition,” “Man of Lawlessness,” or “Willful King.” Although the Antichrist will be empowered by Satan, he will be overthrown by God and ultimately cast into the lake of fire in Revelation 19.

The term “antichrists” is also used by John in describing false teachers who distort the truth of the scripture and who oppose Christ.

The Church Age

The church age is a time in which the “new covenant” is in effect and it is marked by the Holy Spirit’s permanent indwelling of the called out ones while still on earth, those who have been redeemed by grace through faith in Jesus.

The Day of the Lord

The phrase “day of the Lord” usually identifies events that take place at the end of history (Isaiah 7:18-25) and is often closely associated with the phrase “that day.” One key to understanding these phrases is to note that they always identify a span of time during which God personally intervenes in history, directly or indirectly, to accomplish some specific aspect of His plan.

Most people associate the day of the Lord with a period of time or a special day that will occur when God’s will and purpose for His world and for mankind will be fulfilled. Some scholars believe that the day of the Lord will be a longer period of time

than a single day—a period of time when Christ will reign throughout the world before He cleanses heaven and earth in preparation for the eternal state of all mankind.

Other scholars believe the day of the Lord will be an instantaneous event when Christ returns to earth to redeem His faithful believers and send unbelievers to eternal damnation.²

The Intermediate State

The Intermediate State refers to “the conscious existence of people between physical death and the resurrection of the body.”³

At death the souls of believers are immediately glorified. They are made perfect in holiness and enter immediately into glory. Their bodies, however, remain in the grave, awaiting final resurrection.⁴

The Eternal State

The new heaven and new earth are the final destiny of redeemed humanity. The millennium is past. The great white throne judgment has occurred. Satan and all unbelievers have been cast into the lake of fire forever. A glorious destiny awaits God’s saints when they will live on a new earth with direct access to God, who will then live among them. This is what John the apostle explains: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away” (Revelation 21:1).³

The Rapture

The Rapture is an event, described from a Pre-Millennial viewpoint, wherein the church is physically caught up to meet the Lord in the air. This catching away includes both the church which is alive at the time as well as those of the church who have already died in Christ.

The word rapture is derived from the Latin word *rapiō* (to seize or to snatch). This Latin word has meaning similar to the Greek word *harpazo* which Paul uses in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17.

gr: *harpazo*; to seize, catch up, snatch away: — carry off(1), caught up(4), snatch(2), snatched away(1), snatches(1), snatches away(1), snatching(1), take away by force(1), take by force(2).

The Rapture cont

Timing of the Rapture

Views regarding the timing of the Rapture event break down into three categories in relation to the seven year period alternatively known as:

- The Time of Jacob's Trouble
- Daniel's Seventieth Week
- Tribulation Period.

Pre-Tribulation Rapture

The Rapture of the church will take place before the beginning of the seven year tribulation.

Mid-Tribulation / Pre-Wrath Rapture

The Rapture of the church will take place after the seven year tribulation has begun but before the wrath of God comes upon the earth.

Post-Tribulation Rapture

The Rapture of the church will take place simultaneously with the second coming of Jesus. The elect of the ages will meet Jesus in the air and will accompany Him as He comes to rule His Earthly kingdom.

(Refer to the section on this handout entitled "Four Major Views of the Millennium" to see where the Rapture fits into these understandings)

The Tribulation

The Tribulation is a term primarily used in a Pre-millennial understanding. This term describes a period of seven years which comes immediately before the Day of the Lord and before Jesus' physical return to earth. The severity of the trials which come during this time will exceed anything the people of the earth have ever experienced.

This seven year period is variously described in scripture as:

- A week of years
- Two "time, times, and half a time" periods
- Two 3 1/2 year periods
- Two 42 month periods
- Two 1,260 day periods

It is also known from scripture as:

- The Time of Jacob's Trouble.

(Refer to the section on this handout entitled "Four Major Views of the Millennium" to see where the Tribulation fits into these understandings)

Four Major Interpretative Approaches to the Book of Revelation

Agreements and Differences

Bible-believing people all agree that at some future time Jesus Christ will appear openly and bodily to the world in the Second Coming and will begin visibly to reign. But they do not all agree on the exact character of all the events preceding and following the Second Coming, nor do they all agree on the order of events.

People have held three primary positions over the course of church history, namely premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism.

The differences among these positions are complex, involving questions concerning the interpretation of a considerable body of OT prophecy as well as various NT passages. Revelation 20:1-10 is only one of the passages involved in the discussion. It just happens to be the case that the names of the positions have been derived from the Latin word "millennium," meaning 1000 years, because of the mention of a period of 1000 years in Revelation 20:2-7.

Historicist

Fulfillment is in process and Revelation chapter 6 to roughly chapter 18 presents a chronological outline of the course of church history from the first century until the return of Jesus.

Preterist

Fulfillment occurs in the fall of Jerusalem and/or the fall of the Roman empire.

Idealist or Symbolic

Fulfillment is current and ongoing as various scenes depict not specific events but principles of the war from heaven's perspective. This is in operation throughout the church age and may have repeated embodiment.

Futurist

Fulfillment occurs in a period of final crisis just before the second coming.

Four Major Views of the Millennium¹

Historic Premillennialism

Sees the following series of events.

- (1) The present age continues to be a mixture of good and evil, believers and unbelievers.
- (2) Christ returns (the Second Coming). Christians living and dead receive resurrection bodies. There is a judgment on the unbelievers who are alive.
- (3) Christ inaugurates a visible reign over the nations, a time of great peace and prosperity lasting for 1000 years (some think longer).
- (4) Shortly before the end of this period, Satan instigates a great rebellion (described in Rev. 20:7-10).
- (5) God puts down the rebellion, and there is a final judgment of those alive and of the wicked dead.
- (6) The eternal reign of God begins.

Amillennialism

Sees the following series of events.

- (1) The present age continues with a mixture of good and evil.
- (2) Satan instigates a final rebellion near the end of the age.
- (3) Christ returns (the Second Coming). Christ judges all people, living and dead. Believers receive resurrection bodies, and unbelievers are cast into hell.
- (4) The eternal reign of God begins.

Postmillennialism

Sees the following series of events.

- (1) The present age becomes better and better as more people become Christians and the blessing of God is poured out on them. There will come a future age of spiritual prosperity when Christian faith will dominate in this world.
- (2) Christ returns (the Second Coming). Christ judges all people, living and dead. Believers receive resurrection bodies, and unbelievers are cast into hell.
- (3) The eternal reign of God begins.

Dispensational Premillennialism

A variation of premillennialism arising in the 19th century sees the following series of events.

- (1) The present age continues with a mixture of good and evil.
- (2) Christ comes to rapture the church. Believers are caught up to heaven and receive resurrection bodies. Unbelievers are left on earth and do not see Christ.
- (3) Seven years of tribulation begin, during which God's wrath is poured out on unbelievers and a Jewish remnant converted to faith in Christ bears witness to the truth.
- (4) At the end of the tribulation Christ appears visibly, unbelievers are cast into hell, and believers living on earth enter a period of 1000 years during which Christ rules over the nations visibly.
- (5) Satan instigates a rebellion near the end of the period (Rev. 20:7-10).
- (6) God ends the rebellion and judges all the dead and all the people who lived in the 1000 year period.
- (7) The eternal reign of God begins.

Old Testament Connections

It is important to remember that much of what is in Revelation is not new as John is seeing some things that have been seen before by Old Testament prophets or he is using Old Testament language to communicate things he is seeing that are hard to understand.

Exodus / Daniel / Ezekiel / Zechariah / Joel

Numbers / Numerals

Sometimes the numbers (and multiples and derivatives) used in Revelation are to be taken literally and sometimes they are symbolic. At times they may be both. The challenge is discerning when and how to distinguish between literal and symbolic.

Other patterns in Scripture become invaluable in this process. Below is a list of numbers and some symbolic meanings that are utilized at times.

#7 – Completeness, fullness, perfection, and salvation.

#4 – Completeness in universal, global, or universal sense.

#12 – Speaks of completeness in terms of the community of God's people.

#3 – Emphatically points to the essence of something, to the completeness of something, or harmony.

#6 – Incompleteness and humanity

#3½, 42 months, 1,260 – may represent a period shortened, overseen, or limited (half of 7 or complete) testing or suffering.

#1,000 – Possibly referring to a long and determined period of time, the exact number needed.

Resources

These resources come from various perspectives but were found particularly helpful.

Revelation A Shorter Commentary by G.K. Beale

A Commentary on the Revelation of John by George Ladd

Blessed by Nancy Guthrie

Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches by James Hamilton

Because the Time is Near by John MacArthur

Revelation: Four Views by Steve Greg and Robert Clouse

Footnotes

¹<http://campus.wts.edu/~vpoythress/nt311/nt311.html>

²<https://www.gotquestions.org/day-of-the-Lord.html>

³Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth," MacArthur, J., & Mayhue, R.

⁴Essential Truths of the Christian Faith. Sproul, R.C.