

**DISPENSATIONS**

The doctrines and scriptural interpretations espoused in this study represent the author's best understanding at this stage in his growth. Please keep the following things in mind:

- (1) I have refined my position before and, presumably, will do it again.
- (2) I am not aware of ANY eschatological<sup>1</sup> view that does not, in all objectivity and fairness, include SOME weaknesses.
- (3) While all scripture is given for our instruction, the Great Commission does not call us to major in minor doctrines.
- (4) No amount of arguing about what the future holds will actually change the future.
- (5) The fact that there is so much disagreement today about doctrine, particularly prophecy, at least shows that more people are taking the subject seriously.
- (6) This study promotes a pro-dispensationalist viewpoint without apology. You may not think of yourself as a dispensationalist. The bottom line is that if you believe in an Old Covenant and a New Covenant then you are a dispensationalist (albeit with only two dispensations).

Dispensationalism is simply a tool. It does not supplant Scripture as the final authority. It functions as a tool to help understand the Scriptures—placing them chronologically by God's revealed plan for mankind. It is simply an extension of any good hermeneutical approach to the study of Scripture.

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<sup>1</sup> The theological study of future events



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## Introduction

- ‘Time’ is a recent development. In eternity past God had no need for it. God created time as one parameter for dealing and relating with His creation, which includes mankind.
- ‘Time’ is part of the system of natural laws set in place by God to govern the physical realm in which we live. God uses aspects of the physical creation and its laws to relate his supernatural nature to mankind. This is necessary since mankind has no frame of reference by which we can understand, directly, the supernatural.
- Time is temporary. It is necessary only as long as physical creation exists.
- For our benefit God has divided ‘time’ into segments (sometimes referred to as ‘worlds’). These segments represent periods of human history expressed in terms of divine revelation. God has pre-planned these segments prior to the institution of the physical creation [1 Cor.2:7] and has sole authority to work out His purpose [Eph.3:11] throughout all of these segments—from eternity past to eternity future [1Tim. 1:17].

Dispensations are discussed in the following additional verses:

- [Acts 1:6,7] (time, times and seasons). The Greek word for ‘time’ is ‘chronos’ and indicates a succession of events. ‘Seasons’ is translated from the Greek word ‘kairos’ meaning a categorization of time by events.
- [1Cor.9:17; Eph.1:10; 3:2; Col.1:25] (dispensation, stewardship, administrations). The Greek word here is ‘oikonomia’ and literally refers to a steward’s administration of a household or estate. Here it emphasizes the structured, overseen, but revocable characteristic of a dispensation.
- [Mk.10:30; 1Cor.10:30; Eph.2:7; 3:21; Col.1:26; Heb.1:2; 6:5; 11: 3] (age/era/world). The Greek word is ‘aion’ and refers to ‘dispensation(s)’.
- [Eph.3:5,21] (ages). The Greek word is ‘geneai’ and literally means ‘generations’, but refers to dispensations since the references are “in” other generations rather than “of” other generations.

After studying God’s use of ‘dispensations’ the following truths become evident:

- (1) Each dispensation in scripture is marked by a change in God’s method of dealing with mankind’s responsibility for fellowship.
- (2) Mankind fails in every economy in which he is placed. For this reason no one will ever be able to say, “If the situation had been different I wouldn’t have failed.” [Rom.3:10-20].
- (3) God hasn’t given up. His ‘long-suffering’ is very evident in all the dispensations [2Pet.3:9,15].
- (4) Salvation from the *penalty* of sin has always been through trusting in God’s ability to save regardless of the dispensation. It is by God’s grace that the relationship is established (by our trust in His ability to save). Relationship is different than fellowship, however. The daily *defilement* of sin is what causes a break in our fellowship with God. Dispensations address God’s various means of addressing our relationship to Him through the ages.

- (5) Any promise of God justified by His grace alone applies equally in any dispensation [i.e. Isa.41:10]. Any promise that is dependent on our work *usually* applies only to a particular dispensation.

*“Distinguish the ages and the scriptures become plain”* (St. Augustine)

Understanding the parameters of the different dispensations makes the study of scriptures (particularly prophecy) much easier. It is a ‘help’ to your study much the same way that godly concordances, interlinears, lexicons, etc. are helps. Because of the difficulty in defining all the parameters of all the dispensations it cannot be considered a ‘final authority.’ Rather, as knowledge of scripture grows, I have found modifications to the parameters necessary so that the dispensational model more closely fits God’s Word. In *all* cases and at *all* times God has the final ‘Word.’

Herein lays the problem. While dispensations *do* exist and *are* taught by scripture, it isn’t always clear in scripture how those dispensations are to be divided. As a result, there are a few different models that are popular. The differences between the models are primarily in the names given to the dispensations and not to the parameters. The only areas where significant differences appear are typically in the treatment of the transitional period of the Church and in the timing of the rapture. Fortunately, there is a good understanding of this time period. This means that the differences are based not so much on the lack of information as on doctrinal viewpoints.

Presented here is a dispensational model that (in the opinion of the author) represents the best fit to scripture.

## **DISPENSATIONS AND MAJOR MILESTONES**

### ***ETERNITY PAST***

#### ***AGE OF INNOCENCE (or EDENIC COVENANT)***

- **DESCRIPTION:** God deals with mankind on an individual basis. Salvation is by individual trust. Fellowship is through continued individual reliance on God.
- **DURATION:** Creation of man to expulsion from the garden. Notice that the dispensation did not end when one person sinned (Eve offering the fruit to Adam). Rather, it ended after the entire human race (Adam and Eve) failed to meet God’s standard of fellowship.
- **MANKIND’S RESPONSIBILITY:** God created man in innocence. Man was not dumb, only ignorant of good versus evil. God put man in a perfect environment and established a relationship by His grace. He told Adam not to eat the fruit [Gen.2:15-17] as the condition of fellowship.
- **MANKIND’S FAILURE:** Eve was not around to hear the condition of fellowship given to Adam [Gen.2:17]. She was only around to hear that every tree’s fruit was okay to eat [Gen.1:28-29]. However, it is clear that Adam (as a prophet of God) told her of this other

condition [Gen.3:2-3]. Eve was deceived [2Tim.2:14] into eating the fruit. This was accomplished by Satan (the Father of Lies [Jn.8:44]) first telling her a half-truth [Gen.3:1a]. This is Satan's first means of attack—false doctrine (a method that still works today). When this didn't work he simply dropped all pretense of truth. Note that Satan didn't lie to her about what she had heard directly from God, but discredited Adam as a spokesman for God. That is Satan's second means of attack. If he can't change your mind about what was said, then he will attempt to change your mind about the credibility of who said it. Her sin was not in eating the fruit. Paul is very clear on this. She was deceived into eating the fruit. Although her action was wrong, it was not accounted to her as sin since it was not a willing violation ('children' are not held accountable for sins done in ignorance). Her sin, after knowing good and evil, was choosing evil in giving the fruit to Adam also. Adam knew first hand that he was not to eat the fruit, but ate anyway (jealousy?) willingly disobeying God [Gen.3:1-6].

- **JUDGEMENT:** Mankind was driven out of the garden and the thermodynamic laws<sup>2</sup> are instituted. Man must toil for a living. Women give birth in pain [Gen.3:7-19; Rom.8:22]. The Garden of Eden is moved from the face of the earth to hell. This results in hell having three distinct areas: (1) the bottomless pit (as of yet unused), (2) the lake of fire (where unbelievers will go when they die), and, (3) "paradise" (where all believers will go when they die). [Lu.23:43; 2Cor.12:4; Rev.2:7]
- **APPLICATION:** Mankind cannot say that their sin is a result of his imperfect environment (raised in a ghetto, father was a drunk, parents beat me, abused, etc.). This has serious implications on the credibility of some psychological theories.

### **AGE OF CONSCIENCE (ADAMIC COVENANT)**

- **DESCRIPTION:** One is still saved individually (by trust), but during this age God deals with mankind on a family basis concerning fellowship. The man is established as the routine head of the family. This is not done because he has a more godly nature than the woman. If anything, the opposite has been demonstrated. Rather, the roles are (apparently) established on the basis of who was deceived. The head of the family is directly responsible to God for the fellowship of his (primarily), or her (occasionally) family. It's not that God no longer deals individually. Rather, God has added an additional degree of responsibility. This would be similar to us expecting a school age son or daughter to watch over a preschool sibling while the two are in the playroom. What might that school age son or daughter be expected to do? In the same way God had placed a small amount of responsibility on the head of the family.
- **DURATION:** From the expulsion through the flood.
- **MANKIND'S RESPONSIBILITY:** The knowledge of good and evil gave man's conscience the basis for right moral judgment. Conscience tells you to do right, but it does not tell you *what* is right. Now that man has the knowledge of good and evil he is accountable to do right [Gen.3:5,7,22]. Since God deals with man on a family basis, the faith (or lack

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<sup>2</sup> The easy way to remember the laws of thermodynamics: (1) you can't get something for nothing, (2) you can't break even, either, and (3) the first two rules don't count at absolute zero temperature.

of faith) of the head of the family resulted in blessings (or consequences) visited on the family.

- **MANKIND'S FAILURE:** Mankind goes on sinning, not only individually, but also on a family scale. In fact, things goes from bad to worse [Gen.6:4,5,11,12] (where 'giants' = physical bullies; 'sons of God' = mature believers; 'daughters of men' = unbelievers [Rom.8:14]).
- **JUDGEMENT:** The flood [Gen.7:11,12,23].
- **APPLICATION:** Man can't say that sin is the result of ignorance. While there *are* sins performed in ignorance, God has not charged that to our account. Rather, we answer for the sin willingly performed on our part.

### **AGE OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT (NOAHIC COVENANT)**

- **DESCRIPTION:** God deals with mankind on a species wide basis during this age. One is still saved individually (by trust) and the head of the family is still held responsible for that family, but the sins of mankind are now visited on mankind as a whole.
- **DURATION:** From the flood to the call of Abraham [Gen.12: 3].
- **MANKIND'S RESPONSIBILITY:** After the flood God gives man a purified earth with rules and authority to spread out and govern it [Gen.9:1,2].
- **MANKIND'S FAILURE:** They fail to spread out [Gen.11:2]. Mankind then tries to become independent of God as manifested at Babel [Gen.11:3-4].
- **JUDGEMENT:** Confusion of tongues and mankind is scattered throughout the earth [Gen.11:5-9].
- **APPLICATION:** The view that if there were no individual nations (one world government view held by humanists) that there would be no war holds little promise of success. The last 'world government' failed miserably by trying to go it alone. Man can't say that his failure was due to a lack of Godly guidance' since mankind has shown a propensity to go it alone regardless of God's ever present guidance.

### **TIME OF ISRAEL (see also below)**

### **AGE OF PROMISE (ABRAHAMIC COVENANT)**

- **DESCRIPTION:** God now deals with mankind on a national basis.
- **DURATION:** To the call of Abraham to Moses on Mt. Sinai [Ex.19:1-8].
- **MANKIND'S RESPONSIBILITY:** Some of the promises to Abraham were purely gracious and unconditional while others were conditioned upon faithfulness and obedience. In this case, the nation of Israel was to remain in the land (Canaan) [Gen.26:1-3,4,5].
- **MANKIND'S FAILURE:** They went down to Egypt [Gen.12:10; 46:6; 47:1].

- **JUDGEMENT:** They were placed in bondage [Ex.1:13,14].
- **APPLICATION:** In *any* deal with God man will *always* fail to fulfill his end of the bargain. This should be recognized as the error in all modern versions of works for salvation—primarily Lordship salvation. Man will not be able to say that if God had given him a better deal, then he would have been able to meet God’s requirement. He would fail in *any* deal.

### **AGE OF THE LAW (Part #1) (MOSAIC COVENANT)**

- **DESCRIPTION:** God is still dealing on a national basis (Israel). Salvation is still by individually trusting in God’s ability to save. The Law was given for two reasons. The first was to show the unsaved that in their own strength they would never be able to meet the criteria for fellowship with God (perfection). For the person who recognized this and threw himself or herself on God’s mercy (trust), then the Law also provided the ‘household rules’ for that child of God. Fellowship is now manifested through obedience to the Law, but the Law isn’t equal to fellowship. This is very much like being a small child under the tutelage of a nanny. The Law was the Jew’s ‘nanny’ [Gal.4: 1-3].
- **DURATION:** From Mt. Sinai to the crucifixion. While it is true that the contrary portion of the Law was nailed to the cross at Calvary, a demonstrated change in God’s dealings with mankind isn’t seen until Pentecost.
- **MANKIND’S RESPONSIBILITY:** God redeemed the people of Israel out of bondage in Egypt. He then brought them to Mt. Sinai and gave them the law covenant [Ex.19:1,2;20:1-17]. In order to maintain fellowship with God (following a relationship established by God’s grace) man was to obey all of the Law as his end of the fellowship covenant [Ex.19:3-6]. The people of Israel agreed to do as God had directed [Ex. 19:7,8].
- **MANKIND’S FAILURE:** Israel violated all the commandments that God gave them [2Ki.17:6-17].
- **JUDGEMENT:** A worldwide dispersion [Deut.28:63-68; 2Ki. 17:18-23]. It is important to note that while the post-captivity period was prophesied to last 490 years [Dan.9:24-27] it lasted only 483 years before Pentecost. The first 7 weeks (49 years) refers to the rebuilding of Jerusalem under Ezra and Nehemiah [Dan.9:25]. The 62 weeks (434 years) covers the bulk of the Law age up to the cross [Dan.9:24]. This is followed by a period of undetermined length (“unto the end”) that refers to the Church Age [Dan.9:26]. The other 7 years will be made up during the tribulation period—a time of return to the Law and temple worship [Dan.9:27].
- **APPLICATION:** All means of reaching God via mankind’s effort are doomed to failure. Mankind violates not only parts of the agreement, he violates all of it [James 2:10]. Man will not be able to say that he deserves ‘partial’ treatment due to partial compliance with God’s requirement.

## **TIME OF THE CHURCH (AGE OF GRACE)**

### **APOSTOLIC AGE (Jewish Period)**

- **DESCRIPTION:** This period is characterized by the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit to any Jew who believed the Gospel *and* had hands laid on him/her. This means God still is dealing on a national scale. The permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit is manifested by Spiritual gifts (See SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND CHARASMATICS). This period is very similar to the previous. We are still saved individually by trusting in God's mercy. God still (as always) establishes and maintains the relationship of Father to child. In the previous age fellowship *within* that relationship was manifested by adherence to the Law. When one failed to adhere to the law it was the physical evidence that the fellowship (not the relationship) was broken. Amends were made through sacrifice to reestablish the fellowship. Now the Jews have a big advantage. They have an indwelling Comforter (Holy Spirit) to guide them into all truth. They are no longer under the 'nanny' (Law), but have direct access to God [Gal.4:4-7].

Another significant change is in what happens to people when they die.

Until now, hell consisted of three distinct areas: (1) the bottomless pit, (2) the lake of fire (where the soul & spirit of unbelievers go when they die), and, (3) Paradise (a.k.a. Abraham's bosom, the Garden of Eden). [Following the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, the Garden was relocated to hell.] The soul and spirit of believers who died prior to Christ's death on the cross could not yet go to heaven since the penalty for their sin had not yet been paid. Instead, they went to this paradise/Eden to await final disposition (Lu.23:43, 2Cor.12:4; Rev.2:7).

When Christ died, he went to paradise/Eden where he stayed for three days and nights (Mat.12:40) preaching God's now fully revealed plan of salvation to those who had trusted in God to save them, but were ignorant as to how it was to be done.<sup>3</sup> No doubt, the unsaved also heard this preaching (Lu.16).

At the end of that period, Christ was gathered up all of paradise/Eden and delivered it personally to His Father in heaven (Ps.68:18 w/ Eph.4:8). The phrase "led captivity captive" is very important. In ancient times, when a military leader won a war, he would do two things: (1) sack the defeated city of all their valuables and (2) liberate all the POWs. The leader would take personal responsibility for valuables and POWs in such a manner that the two were indistinguishable (the POWs were also a 'treasure') and would care for and protect them until they could return to their home city. Upon return, there would be a triumphant march through the city where the leader would display both the spoils of war AND parade the prisoners (where the prisoners would receive the accolades of joy from the city that also praised the victory of the military leader). The image is that Christ liberated and took possession of all of paradise/Eden (and everyone there at the time), and delivered all personally to

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<sup>3</sup> Even today, we don't fully understand some of the details of the plan of salvation. For example, we do not understand the mechanics of how blood covers sin. The point is that it is not the full *understanding* that matters in salvation, but the placing of one's full *hope and trust* upon God as the only means of addressing their sin debt. God will explain all the details when we meet Him face-to-face. For the believers who had died and whose soul and spirit were residing in paradise/Eden at that time I'm sure it was their very teachable moment.

heaven. All those in 'paradise' (the POWs of hell) are escorted to heaven where the host of heaven cheered the 'victory in Christ' and Christ—who has now defeated death—is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Paradise/Eden is now in heaven (2Cor.12:4; Rev.2:7). Beginning with Christ's resurrection, all believers go immediately to heaven when they die (2.Cor.5:6-8; Rev.2:7)

- **DURATION:** This first period takes place from the cross (33 AD) to the conversion of Cornelius (about 41 AD). However, any Jew who believed the Gospel prior to 41 AD, and did not have hands laid on him/her would still have to have hands laid on, even if the 41 AD time limit passed [Acts 19:1-7].
- **MANKIND'S RESPONSIBILITY:** God still deals with mankind on an individual basis for salvation and a national scale (Jews) otherwise. In many respects it is the same as the Law. Now, however, those portions of the Law that were contrary to grace have been removed (i.e. sacrifices, feast rules, etc.) [Col.2:14]. Not all of the Law has been removed—only those portions that were incompatible with grace.
- **MANKIND'S FAILURE:** As a nation Israel has already rejected Christ [Matt.27:1-25]. This rejection continues throughout Peter's first use of the keys [Jn.5:39,40; Acts 9:23-25,29].
- **JUDGEMENT:** Eternal damnation at the Great White Throne Judgment (GWTJ) for those who have never believed in Christ's Gospel [Rev.20:5a,11-15]. Loss of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ (JSoC) for those who have believed the Gospel, but have shown the wrong motives for their 'good' works (wood, hay and stubble [1 Cor.3]).
- **APPLICATION:** God makes it clear that no one can say that they deserve to go to heaven. Rather, it is purely an act of grace. Specifically, you do not *make* Jesus your Lord as a prerequisite to salvation (that would be incompatible with grace). Rather, you recognize Christ's authority to die for *your* sins because He *is* Lord, regardless of whether you have chosen to submit to Him (which, nonetheless, is required for one's growth) or other, so-called, prerequisites to salvation (prayer, confession, personal invitations, turning from sin, etc.).

### ***APOSTOLIC AGE (Gentile Period)***

- **DESCRIPTION:** The only difference between this period and the previous period is due to Peter's second use of the keys. The permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit is now available to Jew and Gentile alike through belief in the Gospel *without* the laying on of hands.
- **DURATION:** From Cornelius (about 41 AD) to the completion of the canon (Bible) around 96 AD (some believe even earlier).
- **MANKIND'S RESPONSIBILITY:** God still deals with mankind on an individual basis. Anyone believing the Gospel is immediately 'baptized' (indwelt) by the Holy Spirit—sealing him/her until the day of redemption. They are placed into the universal church and given selected Spiritual gifts.
- **MANKIND'S FAILURE:** Apostasy and heresy in the professing church. Satan is still at work not only trying to prevent people from believing the Gospel, but also in turning

churches to error [2 Tim.3:1-13; 4:2-5].

- JUDGEMENT: Eternal damnation upon the unbelieving world [2Thes.1:7-9] and loss of reward for believers with self-centered motives [1Cor.3:15].
- APPLICATION: Apostasy in the professing church continues to this day (see CHURCH EXPERIENCE; GALATION ERROR: THE NEOEVANGELICAL MOVEMENT, BIBLE). The church in our day suffers from the same errors that Judaism suffered from in Christ's day. The Jews had superimposed a false system of human interpretation on the Law elevating it to the position of final authority (we have done the same with textual criticism—new name, same game). The Jews established and rationalized their own tradition and imposed compliance as evidence of righteousness (we have done the same with our forms of worship, water baptism, dedications, tithing, etc.--new names, same game). Then, as now, most believers are numbed through the practice of these traditions and don't recognize the legalistic elements.

This work of Satan is both covert and overt. Some churches err blatantly in doctrinal misinterpretation (particularly the Gospel). Others err, not in doctrine, but in focusing on the mechanics of the Christian life as the source of Spiritual power instead of their relationship with God as the source of power. In either case, their effect on the community is mitigated consistent with the degree of Satan's influence.

### **POST CANON AGE**

- DESCRIPTION: This is the age in which we are currently living. The difference between this age and the previous is that *some* Spiritual Gifts that were active during the Apostolic Age are now either inactive, or limited. Tongues, interpretation of tongues, prophecy, and supernatural knowledge gifts are now limited only to those areas that do not have the completed canon. Other gifts that were exhibited only in the presence of, or by the apostles have stopped altogether. These include Apostleship, healing and miracles (see SPIRITUAL GIFTS). These gifts were given to authenticate the role and authority of the Apostles and to communicate God's Word that had not yet been written down. Once the canon was completed, it became the final authority. 'Tongues' and 'interpretation of tongues' and 'prophecy' serve no purpose to a congregation that *already has the complete Word of God*. The exercise of these gifts, as well as the others listed here, after God's Word was complete would only serve to compete with the Bible for preeminence (see SPIRITUAL GIFTS study).
- DURATION: From the completion of canon (about 96 AD.) to the 'rapture' [1Thes.4:16-18]. More on this later.
- MANKIND'S RESPONSIBILITY: Same as above.
- MANKIND'S FAILURE: Same as above [Jer.23: 2Tim.3:1-13].
- JUDGEMENT: Same as above.
- APPLICATION: same as above.

## **TIME OF ISRAEL (continued)**

### **AGE OF THE LAW (Part #2) / TRIBULATION**

- **DESCRIPTION:** This period is the last 7 years of the Age of the Law (the 484BC-490BC years). It is also called the “seventieth week of Daniel” [Dan.9:24-27]. It revolves around Jerusalem, Israel and the Jews who have returned to Israel in unbelief. It begins with the ‘rapture’ of the universal church (see Appendix for a description of the rapture and various rapture interpretations). It is also marked by the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple where the ‘Dome of the Rock’ (the Mosque of Omar a Moslem mosque) now stands and reestablishment of temple worship [Dan.9:27; 11:31-45; Rev.11:21-30]. It is split into two 3.5-year segments. The first 3.5 years is marked by the ‘seal judgments’ [Rev.4-6,8:1]. The second 3.5-year period is referred to as the ‘time of Jacob’s trouble’ (also called the ‘great tribulation’) [Jer.30:7; Dan.12:1; Matt.24:21]. This includes the rule and worship of the Antichrist (the “beast out of the sea” [Dan. 9:27; Matt.24:15; 2Thess.2:4; Rev.13:1-6; 14:9-11]), the trumpet judgments [Rev.8-9] and the bowl judgments [Rev.15,16]. The Tribulation ends with and the second advent of Christ (Armageddon) [2Thess.2:8; Rev.19:11-20:3] and the marriage of the lamb [Rev.19:1-10].
- **DURATION:** Rapture through Armageddon (7 years.).
- **MANKIND’S RESPONSIBILITY:** See ‘Age of the Law (part 1).’
- **MANKIND’S FAILURE:** See ‘Age of the Law (part 1).’
- **JUDGEMENT:**
  - **SEAL JUDGEMENTS** [Rev.5,6,8,9,11:15-19]: God the Father holds forth a book sealed with seven seals. It is the book of mankind’s judgment. No one in God’s creation is found who is righteous enough to open the book and sit in judgment of mankind except the Lamb (Jesus Christ). The first six seals (below) present severe judgments on mankind. The seventh seal consists of seven trumpet judgments.
    - (1) [Rev.6:2] The antichrist is allowed to go forth into the world and conquer it by peace imitating Christ. Thus begins the tribulation events by elevating the antichrist to a position of great prestige for having, apparently, brought world peace and, presumably, significant disarmament [Dan.7:8; 8: 23-25; 9:26,27; 11:36-45].
    - (2) [Rev.6:3,4,8b] The false peace of the antichrist is replaced with worldwide war.
    - (3) [Rev.6:5,6,8b] War is accompanied by a great famine. Food becomes so expensive (a day’s wage for a meal) that only the rich have can afford to eat as they have been. The rest of the world’s population begins starving.
    - (4) [Matt.24:7; Rev.6:7,8] Death is widespread. As a result of these first four judgments 25% of the population of the world dies. The consequence of these deaths for most (but not all) is Hell (since believers were recently raptured).
    - (5) [Rev.6:9-11] Describes evangelists during the tribulation period will suffer death later at the hands of the antichrist’s world government and the antichristian hysteria it fosters.
    - (6) [Matt.24:7; Rev.6:12-17] The war and famine are forgotten when the people are

faced with severe worldwide geological and climatic upheavals.

(7) The seventh seal consists of seven trumpet judgments.

Thus ends the first 3.5 years of the Tribulation [Rev.6:17].

- **TRUMPET JUDGEMENTS** [Rev.8:2-21; 11:15-19]: The trumpet judgments occur during the second 3.5-year period of the tribulation and comprise the last (seventh) of the seal judgments. Prior to commencing the trumpet judgments, God identifies 144,000 Jewish evangelists (12,000 from each of the twelve tribes) [Rev.7:1-8]. Their job is to save as many as possible during the second 3.5 years (1260 days) [Dan.7:25; 12:7; Rev.13:5; 19:19,20] of the tribulation. They are very successful [Rev.7:9-17;14:1-5].

This is also the point at which the Antichrist demands to be worshipped as God (a satanic theocracy) by sitting on the throne of the temple in Jerusalem [Rev.11:1-2]. It also the period of time that God raises up two special prophets who have the power to prevent rain and cause various plagues [Rev.11].

Set in Chapter 12 of Revelation is a symbolic description of the history of Israel. The following symbols are used: woman (Israel), sun (righteousness), crown (authority), twelve stars (twelve tribes of Israel), dragon (Satan), seven (# of completion), stars of Heaven (angels), child (Christ), Lamb (Christ). It describes a war in Heaven during the first 3.5 years between the forces of God (Michael is the captain of the host) and Satan's forces. The war is over at the end of the first 3.5 years (Satan's forces loose) and Satan is cast back to the earth. Israel flees into hiding during the second 3.5 years, but the 144,000 male, virgin, Jewish evangelists remain behind to spread the Gospel.

Chapter 13 of Revelation describes how Satan's wrath is visited on earth following his recent defeat in Heaven. The following symbols are used: beast (Antichrist), horns (kingdoms), leopard (Macedonian swiftness), bear (Persian tenacity), lion (Babylonian veracity), and the beast [13:11] (false prophet). [The Lamb's book of life contains the names of all those who put their trust in His ability to save.]

The TRUMPET JUDGMENTS are outlined below.

- (1) [Rev.8:7] A third of the world's trees and grass are burned up. This would result in: global cooling and less rainfall, further skyrocketing food prices, and upheavals in the animal food chain.
- (2) [Rev.8:8] The second trumpet poisons one third of the world's oceans and its ships (incl. fishing fleets). The last great food source is hurt badly.
- (3) [Rev.8:10,11] This trumpet poisons a third of the remaining fish and water supplies.
- (4) [Rev.8:12] Over one third of the earth is darkened totally (making it very difficult to grow any food). In other areas the coverage is less extensive.
- (5) [Rev.9:1-12] A plague of stinging locusts unlike any locusts with which we are currently familiar. They are directed by Satan (allowed by God) to attack only those who are unsaved. The torment to the unsaved is sufficient to make them wish

they were dead.

- (6) [Rev.9:13-21] An army of 200 million kill a third of the remaining population (leaving <50% of the population which existed immediately after the rapture). This army begins its mission from the Euphrates River. It is said that despite the successes of the army, unbelievers still don't give up their idol worship.
- (7) [Rev.11:15-19; 15,16] The seventh trumpet becomes the seven bowl (or vial) judgments.

**BOWL/VIAL JUDGEMENTS** [Rev.15:1-16:21]: The last of the wrath of God poured out on the earth before Armageddon (and the seventh of the trumpet judgments)

- (1) [16:2] A sore upon those who had the either the mark of the beast or who worshipped his image.
- (2) [16:3] The Sea becomes poisoned (blood) killing *all* remaining life in the sea. Only about one third were killed by the previous judgment.
- (3) [16:4] The remaining rivers and surface springs become poisoned (blood). This would kill the remaining natural sources of meat.
- (4) [16:8,9] Unrepentant man is scorched by great heat from the sun. The gathered remnant is unaffected (perhaps having gone underground, possibly at, or near Mt. Carmel).
- (5) [16:10] This is followed by total darkness and a time for unrepentant people to focus on their continued suffering.
- (6) [16:12-16] The way is prepared for the "Battle of Armageddon."
- (7) [16:17-18] The worst earthquake in all the history of mankind occurs with unheard of devastation both directly and due to tsunamis and terrible hailstorms. It is important to note here that the true temple and throne are still in heaven at this time [16:17].

**BABYLON** [Rev. 17,18]: Babylon is used in two ways in these two chapters. The first use of the word is to represent apostate Christianity (also called the 'great whore'). This 'great whore' is pictured as wearing purple and much jewelry (sign of riches) and scarlet (sign of Christianity [Matt.27:28]). Herein is described the state of organized Christian religion—a believing remnant operating, many times, within an infrastructure of a 'so-called' Christian church (either local or denominational sized). Church organizations who teach their missionaries works for salvation (Lordship, etc.) and then send these well meaning, but misinformed people (who believe they are out doing God's work) out into the world to 'win' (?) souls. This 'Christian' (?) religion is pictured as sitting on and carried along by the beast (Satan). [Don't think it's only in *other* churches. Satan seeks to rule *your* local church too and, to some extent, may already be doing so!] The church is said to "become the habitation of devils" [18:2]. Don't think that hasn't already become a well-established trend.

This 'harlot' (Babylon) effectively rules the world [17:18] until she is overthrown by the political 'Babylon' described next.

The second use of the term 'Babylon' refers to the nations under the whore (Satan's confederated empire) who revolt to destroy the whore [17:16-18] so that Satan himself can be the object of worship during the second half of the tribulation [2Thes.2:3,4; Rev.13:15]. This political 'Babylon' is destroyed at Armageddon.

The great whore (false Christianity) is down, but not out. She is finally judged by God as part of the seventh vial judgment [Rev.17: 18 w/ 16:17-19] just prior to Armageddon.

**MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB [19:1-10]:** The tribulation is nearing completion. The seventh vial has been poured out and apostate Christianity has been judged [19:2]. At this point the marriage supper of the Lamb takes place in Heaven. The bride is the universal body of believers from the Age of Grace [2Cor.11:2,4; Heb.12:22,23; Rev.21:24,26]. Not included here is Israel (the wife of Jehovah) [Isa.54:1-10; Hos.2:1-17,23]. Israel, as the adulterous wife, is not a 'virgin' bride [2Cor.11:2,3].

**ARMEGEDDON [19:11-20:3]:** Following the marriage supper of the Lamb Christ returns to earth with an army of his glorified saints for the final judgment ("the wrath of Almighty God"-19:15). The birds of the earth are assembled in anticipation of a great feast of flesh (shades of Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds"). The armies of both sides face off at the valley of Megiddo, west of Jordan. One army is comprised of the forces of the unrepentant world led by Satan through the Beast (antichrist) and the false prophet. The other army comprised of glorified believers, flesh and blood believers still on earth and the host of angels. The initiating event is the removal of the anti-christ (beast) and false prophet from their position as leader of the kings of the earth and their armies and their placement in the lake of fire. This leaves the world's armies without effective leadership. In an instant the armies of the world are then slain by the Word of God spoken by Christ. Before the slain soldiers can even fall to the ground the waiting birds consume them. The 'armies' of God merely witness the ease with which Christ dispatches of his foes [Dan.2:34,35]. Finally, Satan is cast into the abyss for 1000 years.

**APPLICATION:** Mankind won't be able to say that he hadn't been warned of the consequences of failing to believe God. For seven years God puts the thumbscrews to mankind and most still won't see God's plan in effect, nor turn to God for mercy and salvation.

### **JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST**

- **DESCRIPTION [Dan.12:2,3; 20:4-10]:** Believers (both living and glorified) are rewarded for their stewardship/discipleship at the Judgment Seat of Christ (JSoC). The pattern is described in 1Cor.3: 13-15 (gold, silver, precious stones = proper motives; wood, hay and stubble = wrong motives for 'apparently' good works). This is for all the saved to this point [Rom.14:10; 2Cor.5:10]. Most of the saved will be those who have traded in their vile bodies for one like Christ's. Some will be flesh and blood believers who survived the tribulation. The temple (and throne) is moved to earth (Jerusalem). The JSoC takes place on earth. Believers are rewarded with crowns of gold [Rev.4:4]. These are specified as:  
(1) Crown of (practical) righteousness [2Tim.4:7,8].

(2) Crown of Joy (for soul winning) [Phil.4:1; 1 Thes.2:19].

(3) Crown of Glory (good shepherding) [1Pet.5:4].

(4) Crown of Life (endurance) [Jam.1:12; Rev.2:10].

They are symbols of authority that will be exercised beginning in the millennial reign [Rev.20:6].

- **DURATION:** Some finite, but unknown length of time is required after Satan is placed in the abyss. No one I know of has claimed to have determined the exact length. It *may* be that it lasts for 45 days (following Armageddon) based on Dan. 12:12 (1290 days to Armageddon, + 45 days for the JSoC = 1335 days?).
- **MANKIND'S RESPONSIBILITY:** Believers are to remain in fellowship, placing themselves at the disposal of God's will in all areas of their life, at all times of their life.
- **MANKIND'S FAILURE:** Because of our Old Sin Nature we, as individuals and as church infrastructures, tend to slip back from Christianity to religion. That is, we perform human good, but not divine good. Our motivation for such human good is not from God.
- **JUDGEMENT:** It is this human good (self-directed good) that will be judged at the JSoC as wood, hay and stubble. Sin is not judged here since it is covered by Christ's blood. Rather, it is our lifestyle/works as one who has believed. Not the works themselves (that was the work of God through you), but of your attitude of remaining submissive to God so that He could use you that results in "gold, silver and precious stones."

### **MILLENNIAL REIGN OF CHRIST**

- **DESCRIPTION:** Immediately following the JSoC (Judgment Seat of Christ) the saved will reign as priests (a theocracy) of God and of Christ [20:5,6] in a restored Davidic monarchy. The temple of God will be on earth (at Jerusalem). Flesh and blood believers who survived the Tribulation Period will repopulate the earth [Ez.33:2137:28; 40:1-48:35; Dan.2:44,45; Amos 9:11-15].
- **DURATION:** 1000 years [Rev.4:4-6].
- **MANKIND'S RESPONSIBILITY:** Flesh and blood believers will repopulate the earth [Eze.20; Matt.25; Isa.65:18-25]. It will be the responsibility of these new citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven to place their trust in Christ for salvation.
- **MANKIND'S FAILURE:** Satan was cast into the abyss for 1000 years—the same length as the millennial reign, but they didn't start at the same time. The JSoC delayed the millennial reign for a length of time (perhaps 45 days?). Satan will be loosed from the abyss after his 1000 years. His release will come before the end of the Millennial reign by whatever length of time it took to accomplish the JSoC (45 days?). Satan starts his last rebellion by influencing flesh and blood non-believers [Isa.66:1-21; Jer.23:3-8; Eze.38; 39; Rev.20:8,9].
- **JUDGEMENT:** God devours those rebelling with fire [Rev.20: 9] and sends them to Hell. Satan is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone for good.

- **APPLICATION:** Again the conditions of Eden exist, but this time the flesh and blood people have Old Sin Natures and a theocracy. Despite their universal knowledge of God and the perfect conditions some still fall (does that come as any surprise?). No one will be able to say, “I only fell because of the situations I faced and the lack of guidance provided by God in those situations.”

### **GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGEMENT**

- **DESCRIPTION:** All the unbelievers throughout history will be judged.
- **DURATION:** From the close of the Millennial reign to the destruction of the earth.
- **JUDGEMENT:** Referred to as the “day of God”, this judgment is of all history’s unbelievers. They will be judged out of two books—the book of life (which, from the beginning of time, contained the names of all those people who will trust in God’s ability to save them) [Rev.3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 21:27 w/ 1Jn. 5:4,5] and the book(s) of works (many volumes). The latter book(s) contain a list of all the works performed by unbelievers throughout history [Rev.20:12]. At the GWTJ (Great White Throne Judgment) the names of the unbelievers are checked against the book of life to see if they are listed therein. They won’t be found in the book of life, so the next step is to check the books of works to see if the person has performed a work of sufficient value to pay off their sin debt [20:13]. Since *no* work is sufficient to pay off one’s sin debt, then all those who relied on works to earn, assure, prove, or, otherwise impact on their salvation will be in for a real surprise Hell (including some pastors, evangelists, etc.) [Matt. 7:15-23]. This is what is called the ‘second death’.

### **NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH**

- **DESCRIPTION:** The old heavens (referring to atmosphere and space) and earth are destroyed by fire [2Pet.3:10; Rev.21:1]. This includes Jerusalem and the millennial temple. God creates (Hebrew ‘barah’ – ‘create from nothing’ [Isa.51:16; 65:17]) new heavens, earth and a new Jerusalem with Himself and Christ as the temple [21:2,22]. It is at this point that there is no more sadness, death, etc. [2Pet.3:13; Rev.21:4] since all unbelievers being are already in Hell for eternity [Isa.66:22-24; Rev.21:8].
- **DURATION:** From the end of the GWTJ throughout eternity.

## **APPENDIX A: ESCHATOLOGICAL VIEWPOINTS**

In order to understand the various interpretations of tribulation scriptures an understanding of overall prophetic viewpoints is necessary. Beginning below is a listing of the various viewpoints and notes concerning their position.

### ***NON-EVANGELICAL***

This position encompasses a wide variety of thought, but all of the different versions have a common denominator of discrediting scripture as, literally, God's Word, or, admitting its authorship, but denying its authority. One view that is popular among non-evangelicals is called 'realized eschatology.' This view holds that Christ's incarnation was the fulfillment of all (incl. future) prophecy. This is sometimes referred to as the 'historical view' and was popular during the middle ages.

Subscribers to this position include C. H. Dodd.

### ***AMILLENNIALISM (REALIZED MILLENNIALISM)***

The view that when Christ returns eternity will begin without a pre-eternity 1000 year reign. The word 'millennium' is Latin meaning one thousand years. The word isn't actually in the Bible, but its Greek equivalent shows up frequently [Rev.20]. The 'a' placed in front means 'no.' Very few 'amillennialists' would tell you that the Bible does not teach a 1000 yr. period. Rather, they would say that the difference in their position is in the nature and the chronological position of this period. Instead they contend that the millennium is a present reality and is not the earthly utopia that many claim it to be.

This view of prophecy holds that the scriptures should not be interpreted literally, but symbolically (they reject dispensationalism). According to this view, Satan is now bound and the church is experiencing the millennium. The difficulties with this view are numerous, but center around the following:

- (1) The two resurrections referred to in Rev.20 (the Judgment seat of Christ and the Great White Throne Judgment) have significantly different interpretations even though they use the same word in both cases and no weighty scriptural support exists to substantiate a difference (Rev.20:4,6 is interpreted as a spiritual resurrection while Rev.20:5,11 as a physical resurrection).
- (2) In order to make the amillennial position plausible, ever expanding circles of spiritualization of non-Revelation scriptures also become necessary (e.g., Acts 3:19-21; 1Cor.15:23-26; etc.).
- (3) Since we are supposed to be in the millennial period now, then what was the mark of the beast that was placed on people's hands, or forehead [Rev.20:4]?

Amillennialists, then, focus on devotional aspects of scripture since they have little to offer in the form of ordered doctrinal position.

Some famous amillennialists include Charles R. Erdman, George N. M. Collins, L. Berkhof, J. G. Voss, Augustine, B. Warfield, O. T. Allis, Floyd E. Hamilton and Jay Adams.

### ***AUGUSTINIANISM (Roman Catholicism)***

This is a division within amillennialism. This view holds that the millennium is being fulfilled on earth presently and when Christ returns He will usher in the eternal state. The church is the kingdom on earth. Augustine (354-430) seems to be the first recorded amillennialist. As a student of Origen, this might seem to be the natural outgrowth of Origen's spiritualization / allegorical methods of hermeneutics (interpretive methodology). The Roman Catholic Church embraced this view from the beginning as did the majority of Protestant reformers (who concentrated on the means of salvation and the authority of scripture and rarely discussed eschatology). Augustine was wrong, of course. Adding 1000 years to the date of his death would mean that the millennial reign would have been completed prior to 1430 and we are currently living in a perfect, recreated world.

### ***CONTEMPORARY AMILLENNIALISM***

This too is a division of amillennialism. It holds that the millennium is being fulfilled presently in heaven and when Christ returns He will usher in the eternal state. Church members are citizens of the heavenly kingdom and it is Christ's current position that is said to be the fulfillment of the millennial prophecies. This view became popular after World War II and is the most common variety of Amillennialism found today.

## **MILLENNIALISM (CHILIASM)**

### ***PREMILLENNIALISM***

The view holds that Christ will return and institute a kingdom (Kingdom of Heaven) that emulates His character. This Kingdom will last for 1000 yrs. and then eternity begins. Adherents to this view believe that theirs is the historical, traditional view held by the early church. While a viewpoint's age is no guarantee of accuracy, it's true that premillennialism seems to be the oldest viewpoint. It's said, almost without debate, that this view held sway in the early church until Origen (185-254). Origen influenced the church in the direction of amillennialism, which held sway until the revival of the 1830's and its interest in Bible study (particularly prophecy). It's a literal (more, or less) interpretation of scripture, which generally holds that the Abrahamic [Gen.12] and Davidic Covenants [2Sam.7] were unconditional in nature and will be fulfilled in the future. The Church is a distinct body not to be confused with Israel's destiny. Christ will rapture His church, meeting it in the air. Following this will be Christ's Second Coming (Second Advent) to establish His kingdom on earth for 1000 years. It is during this 1000-year reign that the promises to Israel will be fulfilled.

Subscribers to this view will be identified below by their particular subdivisions of premillennialism.

### ***Pretribulationism***

This view holds that the entire church will be raptured before the beginning of the 7-year tribulation and that Christ's Second Advent will commence at Armageddon when He returns *with His church*. The return will come at the close of the 7-year tribulation to usher in the 1000-year

reign. It may also be said that the vast majority of pretribulationists are also dispensationalists (a person who sees a distinction in God's program for Israel and that of the Church and that God has dealt with His people through various economies throughout man's history). This view holds to the doctrine of imminency (that no prophecy remains to be fulfilled prior to Christ's return, so His return could be at any moment).

Subscribers to this view include this author, John F. Walvoord, J. Dwight Pentecost, Hal Lindsey, Taylor (The Living Bible), C. I. Scofield, E. Schuyler English, William Pettingill, Charles Feinberg, Robert G. Clouse, Alvin J. McClain, Leon J. Wood, Robert L. Saucy, H. Wayne House and Charles C. Ryrie.

### ***Midtribulationism***

This view holds that the last 3.5 years of the tribulation is sufficiently more severe than the first 3.5 yrs. Therefore, they define God's wrath as only occurring during the last 3.5 years. They still call themselves 'pretribers' since they don't believe the first 3.5 years is bad enough to be called part of the 'great tribulation.' Some overlapping of God's agendas for the church and Israel are inevitable in this view since the church participates in the 'time of Jacob's trouble' and the '70th week of Daniel'

The notable differences include:

- (1) The word 'elect' always refers to the Church [i.e. Matt.24:22; Mk.13:20]. It is argued by midtribulationists that in Paul's time he was writing to Church Age believers and used the term elect. If he had meant to include believers of other ages he should have said so. This would be similar to saying that Eskimos can't participate in church activities because they are never specifically mentioned in scripture as involved in church activities. It is an example of supporting a doctrine based on what the Bible doesn't say (hermeneutically ill advised). Paul means in all cases 'saved' when he uses the term elect. Naturally, he doesn't include believers from other ages in his discussion because that's not the topic of discussion.
- (2) A link is sometimes made between Matt.24:15 and 2Thes.2:4. However, upon closer inspection one is more likely to conclude that Matt. is a warning to Jewish believers, but that 2Thes. corrects a false teaching in the local church. They are not, as some midtribers suppose, placing the Church in the tribulation.
- (3) The word 'church' is not used in tribulation scriptures. If the Church indeed goes through part of the tribulation., then why isn't it specifically mentioned? The term elect is used, but this term denotes believers of any age (in this case, tribulation. believers) and not of Church Age believers only.
- (4) It is sometimes said that the lot of the church in any age is tribulation. The problem with this is that the 'church' occurred in only one age (the present Church Age, or Age of Grace). While believers of any age may expect some tribulation and persecution that is not to say that the first 3.5 years of the tribulation are simply more of the same past experience. In what past age did believers experience all of the following: a blackened sun, the moon becoming like blood, stars falling to the ground, departed heavens, every mountain and island moving, mass destruction of world's greenery, mass poisoning of the oceans, lakes and rivers of the world?

(5) Midtribers see the rapture referred to in Rev.11:15. However, neighboring passages reveal quite a different story. They state that;

- At the 'midtrib' point, the 'nations' have not yet submitted to the kingship of God and Christ, yet 11:15,17 indicate that the kingship is past tense.
- The time of the judgments (Judgment Seat of Christ followed by the Great White Throne Judgment) has already arrived according to 11:18. But, the millennial reign has not yet begun since the temple is still in heaven [11:19]. Yet there are still 3.5 years left in the tribulation. To accommodate this, midtribers would have to say that the Judgment Seat of Christ occurred at the midtrib position also (along with the rapture) and, by necessity, would apply only to Church Age believers. However, if this were true, then only non-believers and Church Age believers would have the opportunity to give an account before God. Non-Church Age believers would not give an account of themselves either at the Great White Throne Judgment (for unbelievers), or at the Judgment Seat of Christ (by necessity for Church Age believers only). When this topic is discussed by Paul [Rom.14:7-12] it seems clear that all believers are discussed [Rom.14:11].
- To support their assertion that the rapture occurs at midtrib, the adherent may bring up the fact that while in Egypt the Israelites were not the target of the plagues. This may, at first glance, seem to be a valid point. However, it should be remembered that the Israelites were *not* untouched by the process even if they weren't 'targets' [Ex.5:7,9,22,23; 6:5; 7:3].

It should also be remembered that there is no scriptural link between the events of Exodus and the last times (except, perhaps, those imagined by midtrib adherents). There is no reason to suppose the events of Exodus will be replayed in a similar fashion during the tribulation (for example, during the tribulation believers are told to head for the hills—an option not available to those in Exodus).

Subscribers to this view include James O. Buswell (d.1976), Norman B. Harrison (d.1960), Gleason L. Archer and Norman B. Harrison.

### ***Prewrath Rapturism***

This view is similar to the midtribulation view in many respects, but the rapture doesn't take place at the exact midpoint. Rather, it places the rapture at the sounding of the 1st trumpet (and has timed this to be 18 months before the end of the tribulation). The seal judgments do not represent the wrath of God, only the trumpet judgments do (according to this view). It also holds that the rapture and the Second Coming occur at the same time. The trumpet judgments are part of the Second Coming, which reaches its climax at Armageddon. This view too does not distinguish well between the typical premillennial view of the distinct natures of the church and Israel. It also does hold to the doctrine of imminency.

This view appears to have initiated with Marvin Rosenthal. To the best of my knowledge he remains the sole published proponent.

### ***Partial Rapturism***

This view holds that the tribulation will be a time of trouble for Israel, a means of destroying

the wicked and for trying the faith of the church. It is expected that 'Laodiceans' (lukewarm) believers will be left behind to endure the tribulation. This view holds that the rapture occurs before the 7-year tribulation.

The problem with this view seems to be that our 'translation' to heaven is based on reward for our works rather than on God's grace.

"Those who expect all in the real Church to be translated at once, think of translation as wholly of grace. Salvation is of grace, but after people are saved, they are rewarded for faithfulness and watchfulness. Believers are repeatedly warned against the lack of these. In 1Cor.3:14,15, we are told of rewards for believers. Now, is translation a reward? "We believe that frequent exhortations in the Scriptures to watch, to be faithful, to be ready for Christ's coming, to live Spirit-filled lives, all suggest that translation is a reward." (Ira E. David: 'Translation: When Does It Occur?' pp.358-359).

It should be obvious to evangelical Christians that this is nothing more than works for salvation. One might possibly liken it to 'Lordship Salvation' (see LORDSHIP SALVATION). It would appear that in their zeal to use 1Cor.3 they have overlooked the last half of verse 15. Clearly (to me, at least) it declares that even without any works a believer would still be saved. The 'Good News' is that through our salvation we are declared righteous (washed in the blood). Our righteousness in the blood of Christ exempts us from the wrath of God in the tribulation (the alternative is double jeopardy we pay *and* Christ pays).

Subscribers to this view include Ira E. David, Robert C. Govett (d.1901), Ray Brubaker and George H. Lang.

### ***Posttribulationism***

This view holds that the church will not be raptured prior to the completion of the 7-year tribulation. It's their contention that the entire church must pass through this period of God's wrath, but will have God's protection to enable them to do so. While it is certainly true that the focus of God's wrath is on unbelievers, it is difficult to imagine tribulation believers (as fellow earth dwellers) escaping the wrath of God [Rev.6:4,8,12-17]. By necessity, it also holds that the return of Christ is not imminent. There are few in this position that hold to dispensationalism and there is very little offered in the way of a detailed explanation of future events.

Subscribers to this view include Alexander Reese, George E. Ladd, Robert H. Gundry, Edward J. Carnell and Oswald T. Allis and J. Barton Payne (with respect to imminency).

Notable differences with this position include:

- (1) The rapture and Second Coming are said to be the same event by many posttribers. This presents a problem since believers can't be said to be both raising to meet Christ and returning from heaven with other Church Age believers at the same time [1Thes.4:16,17; Rev.19:14]. This would require one of two other beliefs to also be held:
  - Armageddon is not part of the tribulation (this would require it to be a second time of judgment [Rev.19:11,15] immediately preceding the tribulation. The author is not aware of any legitimate scripture that would support this view.
  - The marriage supper of the Lamb [Rev.19:1-10] could not take place until after the tribulation. This would require that 19:1-10 be repositioned at the end of chapter 19

without any known scriptural basis for doing so. It would also mean that the nations were first judged [Rev.19:15], then Babylon [Rev.19:2].

- (2) It also requires one to embrace some form of the 'soul sleep' doctrine (you may have heard this during your last visit by Jehovah's Witnesses). This means that believers who die do not immediately go to Heaven as required by scripture [2Cor.5:5-9].

For example, if the doctrine of soul sleep is true, then the rich man [Lu.16] was misled into believing that only scripture could adequately warn people of the coming judgment and belief in the scriptural Gospel could save. It is difficult to see the significance of the chapter if the discussion concerns a mute point.

If soul sleep was a true doctrine, then by the time the rich man awoke from his soul sleep his brothers were already dead and *no* amount of convincing would be sufficient (the rich man and his brothers would all have awakened at the same time in the same place). (c) There is no significant distinction between the Church and the nation of Israel. If this is the case, it is hard to imagine the need for Peter's 2nd key and how the posttriber addresses the various other distinctions between these two groups.

- (3) If the Church is to go through the tribulation, but be protected from the wrath of God, then it certainly is *not* protected from Satan's wrath (particularly during the second 3.5 years). The great persecution of believers during this period is said by Lactantius (circa 250-320 AD and an ardent supporter of the posttriber cause) to be something to be greatly feared (Fletcher, 'The Divine Institutes'). Where is the comfort to be found in that [1Thes.4:18]?
- (4) George Ladd (a leading contemporary proponent of posttribulationism) puts it best when he says, "God would purify the Church through suffering..." (Ladd, 'The Blessed Hope', p.31). Unfortunately, this belies an attitude of self-righteousness for the Church. We are not purified by our own suffering, but by Christ's. We are not saved by our own work of endurance, but by Christ's.
- (5) Posttribers will point out that the Bible never actually says that tribulation believers are the targets of God's wrath. This is an attempt to prove a position using what the Bible doesn't say (not exactly a pillar of hermeneutical methodology).
- (6) If the Church is to endure the tribulation, then why is the word never mentioned in tribulation scriptures?

## **POSTMILLENNIALISM**

The view that the Church will Christianize the world before Christ returns, then eternity begins. It may be said that the church is in the business of building the kingdom. When the kingdom has been established on earth, then Christ will return. This was a popular view until World War II dampened its rather optimistic viewpoint. Some contemporary ideas have modified the classic postmillennial view to include, on occasion, a call to establish a judicial system that emulates Old Testament law.

The difficulties with this viewpoint seem to be:

- (1) If the world becomes Christianized prior to Christ's return, then what is the Battle of Armageddon all about?
- (2) The extent of the call to judicial reform ignores the fulfilling of the law by Christ and its

impact on our relationship with God [Col.2:14].

Subscribers to this view include Daniel Whitby (d. 1726), Augustus Hopkins (a Baptist theologian), Loraine Boettner, Gary DeMar, H. Wayne House, Thomas Ice, Jay M. Kik, and J. Barton Payne. Judicial reforms are promoted by Chalcedon Foundation, the 'Journal of Christian Reconstruction', Greg Bahnsen, David Chilton and Rousas J. Rushdoony.

### ***Postribulationism***

This view holds that the tribulation began with the early church and is not a literal 7-year period. Some believe that it began with Adam.

Subscribers to this view include George L. Rose, George H. Fromow, Alexander Reese (who claims that the church is the true Israel) and J. Barton Payne (who spiritualizes the posttrib).

## APPENDIX B—A DEFENSE OF PRETRIBULATIONISM

Suffice to say that the author's position is;

- (1) Amillennial (in a sense) because I believe that believers *are* already members of the Kingdom of God by the influence of the indwelling and sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit [see Kingdom of Heaven Vs. Kingdom of God'].
- (2) Postmillennial (in a sense) because I believe that the professing church in the world represents a spiritual version and application of the Kingdom of Heaven [see Kingdom of Heaven Vs. Kingdom of God']. Some would refer to this, charitably, as 'developing dispensationalism.' Others, less charitable, would refer to this view as 'departing dispensationalism.'
- (3) Premillennial, obviously.
- (4) Pretribulational, obviously.
- (5) Dispensational, although I may not always agree with other dispensationalists on the particular breakdown of the dispensations [see Spiritual Gifts and Charasmatics']. Subscribers to the dispensational view include Walker W. Barndollar, Charles C. Ryrie, John F. Walvoord, Renald E. Showers and Lewis Sperry Chafer. Antidispensationalists include William Cox, Clarence B. Bass, Norman C. Kraus and Greg L. Bahnsen.

### **Concerning the other views;**

- (1) Pretribers will say that there isn't much comfort or hope in knowing that you or your family members, if alive at the time, will experience the first six (at least) seal judgments [1Thes.4:13-18; Rev.6].
- (2) Since the tribulation. is the last seven years of the age of the Law, then the Law will be in effect at that time [Matt.24:20; Rev.11: 1,2]. This means a return to sacrifices and ceremony. The church and the benefits it brings will be gone. The permanent indwelling of the HS will be gone (if the remainder of the Law Age is to be consistent with the original characteristics). Since believers in this age are sealed until the day of redemption [Eph.1:13,14], then that redemption must occur prior to the reinstatement of the Age of the Law.
- (3) If believers from this age were required to live through either the first half (mid-tribulation), or all of the tribulation. (post-tribulation), then the time of the rapture would not come as a surprise (as required) [Matt.24:39-44; 25:13; Lk.12:36-48]. Instead, we would have very clear milestones (e.g., 7 years from the establishment of OT law; 3.5 yrs. from the seating of the Antichrist on the throne; etc.).
- (4) The 24 elders [Rev.4:4,10,11; 5:8-10,14] represent the saved from throughout the world. They wear white raiment indicating that they are saved [Rev.3:5]. They wear crowns indicating authority and rewards.

In defense of the pretrib position the following information is offered against often made charges.

- (1) It is acknowledged that premillennialism was the dominant belief in early Christendom, but it is charged that pretrib was not an early belief. As evidence, Didache is usually quoted from “The Apostolic Fathers” presenting a belief that appears to support a posttrib position. However, further information reveals;
  - (a) Didache wrote as though he did not believe in the eternal security of every believer, and it is questionable what he believed was necessary for salvation (e.g., “many shall be offended and be lost, but they who endure in their faith shall be saved by the curse itself”). If that were the case, then he would hardly be a shining example of what early Christianity believed.
  - (b) At face value his writings do not present the clear posttrib view that many would like. Rather, they present a view that there will be Christians during the tribulation. So what? Everyone believes that.
  - (c) Some say that Didache’s quote, “then shall the creation of mankind come to fiery trial” means that all believers (posttrib) will be judged. The phrase “creation of mankind” does not appear to be a reference to all mankind as much as it seems to refer to the system mankind created (‘Babylon’).
  - (d) Didache appears to take a non-posttrib view when he says, “The Lord shall come and all his saints with him.”
- (2) It is said that other early writings (the Epistle of Barnabus and the Shepherd of Hermas), while appearing to support a pretrib position actually do not. The only evidence I can find that they don’t is the say so of one man, George E. Ladd, who is a committed posttriber. In addition, if the early works aren’t pretrib, then what are they? It’s not enough to go against prevailing opinion and not provide an alternative. The other scholars seem to be satisfied that those writings are pretrib. [Not that scholars are always correct, mind you.]
- (3) The overwhelming majority of early church writings that address the topic clearly support the doctrine of imminency. That doctrine is inconsistent with all non-pretrib views. Therefore, since the overwhelming evidence already suggests that the early church was premillennial and supported the doctrine of imminency, then the only available position left within that framework is pretrib.
- (4) It is said that the current pretrib position is a recent development. John Nelson Darby (d.1882) of the Plymouth Brethren movement is credited with its development. The Plymouth Brethren were a group of people who were concerned about the liberal direction that the Protestant church in Ireland was taking. The group formed to promote prayer, fellowship and study. Rather than lay the development of pretrib, dispensationalism at their feet I would think that it was prudent to assume that they were God’s remnant called out of a liberal situation—something many of us have seen take place.
  - (a) Claims circulate periodically that the whole idea originated with a Brethren preacher named Edward Irving. Based on what we have learned of the early church, I would think that a better description than ‘originated’ would be ‘re-

vived.’ Pretribulation was revived as a popular eschatology by a conservative group of Protestants bent on prayer, fellowship and study. [Reminiscent of how God has worked a number of times in the past.]

- (b) Even George Ladd (postriber) admits that the doctrine swept America and was considered to be the ‘revival’ of conservative Bible study (Ladd, ‘The Blessed Hope’, p.43). In fact, it was through this revival in Bible study that the Bible Conference movement was established. The Bible Conference movement was for the fellowship of ministers and laypersons that believed in salvation by Grace, the final authority of God’s Word (KJV), non-allegorical Bible interpretation and promoted the increased study of scriptures by all Americans. It was a member of this group, meeting at Seacliff, Long Island in 1901, which had a most astounding impact on the body of believers. That person was a godly pastor named C. I. Scofield and his vision was for a study Bible for the layperson. By 1909, Scofield, with the help of numerous like-minded American and European contributing editors had produced the first (and, arguably, still the finest) study Bible available. This single, Spirit-led effort of Scofield has had a tremendous impact on the modern church member, whether that member uses the Scofield Bible, or not. It was this effort that, in large part, stimulated the interest in Bible study in churches across America today. [*Very* reminiscent of how God has worked in the past.]

It also was largely responsible for the formations of the ‘Bible Institute’ movement as an answer to liberalism. As more and more seminaries embraced liberalism conservative churches increasingly found their pastors among graduates of these institutes. As a result, most Baptist, conservative independent, Bible, or, free churches are pretrib almost exclusively.

Rather than a liability for pretribulation to shoulder, I find this aspect of its history to be an asset.

- (5) It is generally claimed that Matt.24:31 shows that the church exists during the last half of the tribulation (immediately prior to the 2ndcoming). That position presupposes that the term ‘elect’ refers only to the church. This is a poor presupposition for the following reasons:
  - (a) The use of the word ‘church’ in Rev. stops in Rev.3 with the last discussion of history. As soon as the topic of the tribulation begins (and throughout the rest of the prophetic passages) any references to the ‘church’ disappear. This is not a good sign for premillennialists who are not also pretribers.
  - (b) The term ‘elect’ (meaning ‘chosen’) is neither an expression, nor a term that is foreign to the nation of Israel [Deut.7:6; Ps.33:12; 105:43; 106:5; Isa.43:20; 45:4; 65:22], but frequently refers, instead, to believers of any specific age (where the context determines the scope of the term).
  - (c) Matt.24:31 could easily have used the expression ‘church’ if that was what was meant, but it didn’t. As a negative argument (based on what scripture doesn’t say) this could only be circumstantial, but nonetheless appears to support pretribers.

- (d) Certainly, the 144,000 would be considered as part of the 'elect' of Matt.24:31. Yet we see the 144,000 referred to as "the children of Israel" [Rev.7:4; 21:12] rather than "the children of Abraham" (a reference which includes the church [Rom.4:16]). Even the Gentiles saved during the Tribulation are never referred to as part of the 'church.'
  - (e) Note that in Matt.24:31 the disciples have asked Christ to provide information concerning the end of the 'age.' Since the 'age' currently in place is the Age of Israel (Christ hadn't died yet), then He provides information concerning the end of the Age of Israel, which just happens to be at the end of the tribulation. To take this verse out of context and force an interpretation that includes the church is to step outside of the intent of the disciple's question.
  - (f) Matt.24:31 refers to a time when the Holy Spirit is gone [2Thes.2:7]. Since the church is sealed until the day of redemption, then neither the Holy Spirit nor the church are around (by default).
- (6) Attacks on the pretribers position on imminency take the following form. "Why does the entreaty to watch for Christ's coming and the warning that the time of His coming is unknown require the conclusion that He could come at any moment? Could it not be simply that the number, nature, and duration of the intervening events are unknown?" (Erickson, '•Contemporary Options in Eschatology'')
- (a) Obviously, attacks on imminency require that the attacker hold that there is no real certainty concerning the length of the tribulation. or of the timing of milestones occurring during the tribulation. This seems impossible concerning the exact parameters we saw spelled out earlier in Daniel.
- (7) Sometimes the argument is used that Christ made certain statements that had to be fulfilled before His coming (e.g., that the Gospel had to be preached to all the nations, etc.). Knowing this, the early church could not have believed in imminency. If they didn't believe in imminency, then why should we interpret scripture any differently?
- (a) This argument ignores the dispensational viewpoint that statements made during a particular period must be taken in the context of that period (a basic hermeneutical concept). Since the referenced statements are made by Christ, then it is likely (and in these cases all but certain) that the scripture is referring to the Age of the Law when it is completed during the tribulation.
  - (b) This viewpoint flushes out another problem. This argument, that is so frequently used, often ignores the distinction between the rapture and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming as viewed by pretribers.
  - (c) Case in point: Erickson (ibid, p.142) advances the view that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming and the Rapture are the same event and that Christ said that all nations would hear The Gospel before His return. He then explains away pretrib theology using this paper tiger argument by saying, "If at the time the words were spoken and heard they did not require the concept of imminency, then the words do not require imminency at present either." Notice the use of the word 'If' in his statement. The implication is that the first part of the sentence is a given fact when, in reality, it is not. When the words were first spoken they *did* require imminency

because they were spoken during the Age of Israel. Since the Church Age was a mystery, Christ skipped the Church Age and spoke concerning the Second Coming during the close of the Age of Israel (what we call the tribulation). It is during the tribulation that the prophecy of all nations hearing the Gospel will be fulfilled and this will be followed by the Second Coming (a different event than the Rapture of the Church).

Using this ridiculous, forced view of pretribulationism Erickson then precedes to point out how absurd the viewpoint is. How could anyone disagree? He is right. The only problem is that he is not discounting the pretrib view he is, rather quite successfully, shooting down nothing more than his own concocted paper tiger. Not much of an accomplishment.

- (8) The second paper tiger advanced by many anti-pretribers (including Erickson) is that pretribulationism requires the Rapture to take place rather secretly. It is then said that this is inconsistent with the claims of scripture concerning supposed Rapture verses (e.g., “with a shout,” “voice of the archangel,” “trump of God” [1Thes.4:16]; etc.).
  - (a) The paper tiger in this case is that I know of no pretribers who claim that the rapture happens in secret. Since Erickson doesn’t provide any names, then perhaps he doesn’t know of any either. What pretribers *do* say is that the time of the rapture is secret, but when it happens there will be no doubt on earth that something supernatural has happened. While some religionists may recognize it for what it is, most people will simply believe the lie allowed by God and offered up by Satan to explain our departure [2Thes.2:11]. If the event were a secret, then there would be no reason to invent a story to explain it to the remaining unbelievers.
- (9) The third paper tiger involves the interpretation of 2Thes.2:3. A small minority of pretribers have expressed the view that the Greek word ‘apostasia’ (literally, ‘removal’), which is translated in 2Thes.2:3 as “falling away,” might just as well mean ‘departure.’ If this is what Paul meant, then it might be referring to the rapture of the Church. This view is attacked as a forced interpretation by pretribers to support their view. It is said that the proper interpretation should be consistent with the majority meaning of the term (apostasy, departure from the faith).
  - (a) While it might be possible that the minority view of 2Thes.2:3 is correct, neither view detracts from the pretrib position. So why all the vein popping? The majority of pretribers hold that this verse speaks of the great apostasy in religion following the Rapture (when the believers and Holy Spirit are removed from the earth). For the first 3.5 years of the tribulation religion (without God) will, no doubt, make great advances. Either interpretation fits snugly into the pretrib, dispensational understanding of scripture.

