Unraveling the End
A Biblical Synthesis of Competing Views
“Few doctrines unite and separate Christians as much as eschatology...

...One of the most divisive elements in recent Christian history.”

Christianity Today
February 6, 1987; p-1-1
Foundational Beliefs:

- Inspiration, Inerrancy & Infallibility
- Trinity
- Deity of Christ
- Test everything, hold on to the good
  1 Thess. 5:21
- More noble character
  Acts 17:11
What is eschatology?

• **Technical**: A subset/branch of Theology
  Gr. *Theos* (God) + Latin suffix- *logy* = the study of God and his relations with man and the universe.

  **Eschatology**: Gr. *Eschatos* (last) + *logy* = the study of last things.

• **Practical**:

  **Eschatology** = the study of the completion of God’s plan of redemption (salvation).
Four Chief Moments (Events)

1) The Return (Second Coming) of Christ
2) The Judgment
3) The Resurrection of the Dead
4) The Consummation – or “end of the world”
5) *The Afterlife
7 Reasons Why Your E/T View (or Non View) Is So Vital

1) How much of the Bible is involved?
7 Reasons Why Your E/T View (or Non View) Is So Vital

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“It has been argued that no less than two thirds of the content of the New Testament is concerned directly or indirectly with eschatology.”

7 Reasons Why Your E/T View (or Non View) Is So Vital

1) *How much of the Bible is involved?*

“an eschatological dimension to every aspect of Christian faith and reflection . . . . because it touches so many of the central themes of faith.”

7 Reasons Why Your E/T View (or Non View) Is So Vital

1) How much of the Bible is involved?
2) How much salvation do we currently have?
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1) *How much of the Bible is involved?*
2) *How much salvation do we currently have?*
3) *How much of the kingdom do we currently have?*
7 Reasons Why Your E/T View (or Non View) Is So Vital

1) How much of the Bible is involved?
2) How much salvation do we currently have?
3) How much of the kingdom do we currently have?
4) What do you do with the modern-day nation of Israel?
7 Reasons Why Your E/T View (or Non View) Is So Vital

5) It’s the focal point of the liberal-skeptic attack on the Bible and Deity of Christ.
7 Reasons Why Your E/T View (or Non View) Is So Vital

5) It’s the focal point of the liberal-skeptic attack on the Bible and Deity of Christ.

6) It makes a difference in your worldview.
“If we think we are facing an irresistible cosmic force of evil, it will invariably lead to giving in and giving up - usually with very little resistance. If you can convince yourself that you are helpless, you can then stop struggling and just "let it happen." That will seem a great relief - for a while...But then you will have to deal with the consequences. And for normal human beings those are very severe.”

7 Reasons Why Your E/T View (or Non View) Is So Vital

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7) It makes a difference in your life and family.
SUMMARY: 7 Reasons Why Vital

1) How much of the Bible is involved?
2) How much salvation do we currently have?
3) How much of the kingdom do we currently have?
4) What do you do with the modern-day nation of Israel?
5) It’s the focal point of the liberal-skeptic attack on the Bible and Deity of Christ.
6) It makes a difference in your worldview
7) It makes a difference in your life and family
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Four Views

A Modern-day Parable
Four Abuses

1) Tendency to **import** or **add** things not there in the text.

2) **Inconsistently** applying literal or symbolic meanings.

3) Accepting a belief because it was simply “**told us.**”

4) Stubborn **resistance** to **change** when confronted with scriptural evidence.
Millennialism

Only mentioned in one place in the Bible

Revelation 20:1-10

The centerpiece

Another modern-day parable
a Second Coming, a temple, a re-built temple, re-institution of animal sacrifices, or Jesus sitting on an earthly throne?

Israel, an earthly Jerusalem, a gathering of the Jews back to Palestine, a revived Jewish kingdom, an earthly utopian paradise, or material prosperity on the earth?
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Four Abuses

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Four Views
(in order of prominence)

#1 – Premillennial (Dispensational)
#2 – Amillennial
#3 – Postmillennial
#4 – Preterist
Christ’s Second Coming/Return is **FUTURE.** (happens **BEFORE** the 1,000 years).

“the hope of every true believer.”

#1 – Premillennial (Dispensational) View

THREE VARIETIES:

- Dispensational Premillennialism or Classic Dispensationalism
- Classic or Historic Premillennialism
- Progressive Dispensationalism
#1 – Premillennial (Dispensational) View

- Agreement – all four chief moments are future.
- Agreement on the millennium.
- Disagreement on the 7-year Tribulation and Rapture.

PRE-trib, MID-trib, 2/3s [pre-wrath], = two future comings

POST-trib. = one future coming.
#1 – Premillennial (Dispensational) View

Three Resurrections for Pre-Tribbers:

1) Prior to G.T. – all the righteous dead of history and the Rapture of those alive on planet Earth.

2) At the beginning of 1,000 years – all the righteous who died during G.T.

3) At end of 1,000 years – all the wicked.
More Problems

1) What does the Bible say about a future 7-year period of tribulation?
   NOTHING

2) The Antichrist making a 7- or 3 ½-year covenant with the Jews?
   NOTHING!

3) God withdrawing Jesus’ kingdom because most of the Jews rejected Him?
   NOTHING!
More Problems

4) The world getting worse and worse?
   NOTHING!

5) Jesus coming back and setting up his kingdom in Jerusalem and giving it back to the Jews?
   NOTHING!

6) A rebuilding of a third Jewish Temple?
   NOTHING!
More Problems

7) A reinstitution of animal sacrifices in it?  
   NOTHING!

8) What did Jesus say about the Rapture 
   idea of a removal of believers (or a group 
   of) from planet Earth?

   He prayed against it. – John 17:15, 20
More Problems

9) An end-time Antichrist – “the Antichrist”?

1 John 2:18, 22; 4:2-3;
2 John 7
More Problems

10) “the most dangerous heresy currently to be found within Christian circles.”


The dichotomy between Israel and the Church.

- TWO different peoples of God.
- TWO different plans of salvation.
- TWO different destinies.
#2 – Amillennial View

The word “amillennial” is misleading and a misnomer.

- (prefix “a” means “no” or “not”) – not right.
- All amils believe we are currently living in the 1,000-year reign.
- Christ’s Second Coming and the other three chief moments are all future.
- No one can know when these will occur.
#2 – Amillennial View

“ambiguity” and “uncertainty.”

Amils Warn:

• “those who think they know will in all likelihood soon join the ranks of those who thought they knew in times past and lead others down that same misguided path.”

• “the details of His return are not fully clear in Scripture.”

• “the world may get both better and/or worse before the end comes. . . . it may get better and worse simultaneously.”

Jerry Newcombe, *Coming Again*
Amils Further Believe:

• “time seems to be of little importance in God’s kingdom.”
• “we can agree on this: Jesus is coming back one day. That will be the climax of history as we know it.”
• “the postmil and amil views of the end times are much more difficult to peg than the premil view because prophecies aren’t taken literally.”

Jerry Newcombe, *Coming Again*
One Thing Many Amils Know:

- The Church has replaced Israel in the plan of God.
- **Problem:** What does the Bible say about this?
- **NOTHING!**
- To the contrary, Paul teaches that we Gentiles were and are “grafted into” the “holy root” (Rom. 11:11-24)
#2 – Amillennial View

Summary

• The weakest interest in E/T prophecy.

• De-emphasize the importance of eschatology in the life of the believer.

• Differences among amils are not as precise or categorical as within the other views.

• Things are more difficult to pin down.
#2 – Amillennial View

- The four chief moments have been **partially fulfilled**.
- Happened during the Jewish-Roman War of A.D. 66-70 and in association with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.
- Called a “**partial preterist**” position.
“I am convinced that the substance of the Olivet Discourse as fulfilled in A.D. 70 and that the bulk of Revelation was likewise fulfilled in that timeframe. . . .

“While partial preterists acknowledge that in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was a parousia or coming of Christ, they maintain that it was not the parousia. That is, the coming of Christ in A.D. 70 was a coming in judgment on the Jewish nation, indicating the end of the Jewish age and the fulfillment of a day of the Lord, Jesus really did come in judgment at this time, fulfilling his prophecy in the Olivet Discourse. But this was not the final or ultimate coming of Christ. . . . [which will be] universal in scope and significance. It will come . . . at the end of human history as we know it. It will be, not merely a day of the Lord, but the final and ultimate day of the Lord.”

R.C. Sproul, The Last Days According to Jesus, 158.
#2 – Amillennial View

“End-of-Time” Paradigm

“final return”
“final consummation”
“final resurrection”
“last judgment” or “final judgment”

NOTHING! And for GOOD REASON.
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Preterist Views
of Early Church Fathers—Eusebius

• Jesus’ “great tribulation” was fulfilled in A.D. 70.
• World-wide preaching of the gospel and end of biblical Judaism.
• All Christians fled – none killed.
• Jesus “came” in the fall of Jerusalem.
Preterist Views of Early Church Fathers—Clement of Alexandria

- Placed the abomination of desolation of Daniel’s 70th week prophecy in the time of Nero (A.D. 37-68)
Preterist Views of Early Church Fathers—Athanasius

- Christ came again and fulfilled all of Daniel’s 70 weeks prophecy (Dan. 9:24-27)
- The things . . . pertaining to that time were fulfilled, and those which belonged to shadows [Jerusalem] had passed away.
Preterist Views
of Early Church Fathers—
Tertullian

• Also told of the coming of Christ during the destruction of Jerusalem and how this was a fulfillment of predictions made in Daniel 9:26
Preterist Views
of Four Early Church Fathers

No creed or confession of the undivided or divided Church teaches or even recognizes that any kind of judgment or coming, or anything of eschatological significance, occurred in association with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
...the destruction of Jerusalem [A.D. 70]...certainly spelled the end of a crucial redemptive-historical epoch. It must be viewed as the end of some age. It also represents a significant visitation of the Lord in judgment and a vitally important ‘day of the Lord.’ Whether this was the only day of the Lord about which Scripture speaks remains a major point of controversy among preterists.

R.C. Sproul,
*The Last Days According to Jesus*  
Futurist Views
of Early Church Fathers

- Justin Martyr
- Papias
- Tertullian?
- Irenaeus
- Hippolytus
- Methodus
- Commodianus
- Lactantius.
Two Questions:

Which view is right?

Which views are wrong?