

[Views on Jesus' Second Coming]

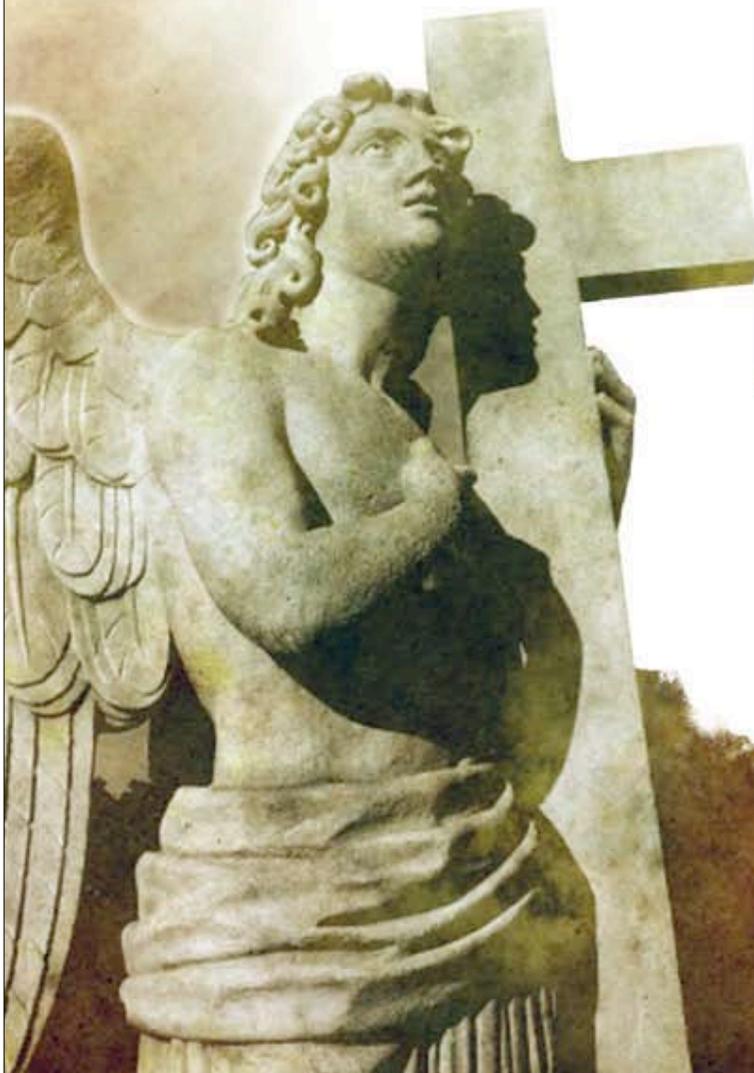
Four Views of *the* End Times

Historical
Premillennialism

Amillennialism

Dispensational
Premillennialism

Postmillennialism



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The End Times Intrigue

For 2,000 years people have wondered about the events of the end times and when Jesus will return. Terms such as *millennium*, *tribulation*, *666*, and *antichrist* are used in the media and the supermarket tabloids, but questions remain:

- Will Jesus return physically and reign on earth for 1,000 years?
- Will Christians go through a seven-year tribulation?
- Will the second coming of Christ occur at the same time that believers meet Christ in the air (the rapture)?
- Will Christians be raptured (removed from this earth) and other people “left behind”?
- What does the nation of Israel have to do with the end times?

There are four different views of end-times events, but all share some key points:

- Jesus will come again for those who love him.
- Jesus calls his followers to be ready all the time.
- No one knows the day or the hour.

What JESUS Taught about the End

Jesus promised his disciples that he would come again. Before his return there would be:

“Birth Pains” (Events before the “signs” of the end)

- Many will claim to be the Messiah.
- People will be deceived by these messiahs.
- Wars, famine, earthquakes, pestilence.
- Believers in Christ persecuted and killed.
- Believers will be witnesses of Jesus to kings.
- Many will turn away from the faith.
- Betrayals by parents, brothers, and friends.
- Increase in wickedness.
- Fearful events and signs from heaven.

The Signs of the End

- Jerusalem surrounded by armies.
- The “abomination of desolation.”
- Great tribulation like never before.
- Jerusalem will be trampled on by Gentiles.
- False prophets perform signs, miracles.
- Sun darkens, moon doesn’t shine, stars fall.
- Severe ocean activity disturbs the nations.
- People will faint with terror.
- Jesus will appear in the sky.
- The trumpet will sound.
- Angels will gather God’s elect.

(Matthew 24–25; Mark 13; Luke 21)

Jesus said, “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” —Matthew 24:36

“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

—Matthew 24:12–13

What PAUL Taught about the End

- 1] The Lord will descend.
- 2] The dead in Christ will rise first.
- 3] The living will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord and be with him forever.
- 4] Don’t believe those who say the Day of the Lord has already come.
- 5] The Day of the Lord will be preceded by:
 - Rebellion
 - The revelation of the man of lawlessness who will:
 - *Oppose and exalt himself over God*
 - *Set himself up in God’s temple*
 - *Proclaim to be God*
 - *Be revealed when the one holding him back is taken out of the way*
 - *Be accompanied by satanic, counterfeit miracles*
 - *Deceive those who do not love the truth*
- 6] When Jesus comes, the man of lawlessness will be overthrown and destroyed.
(1 Thessalonians 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 2)

[The Book of Revelation]

The Book of Revelation was written by Jesus' disciple, the apostle John, and tells of a vision he was given from the Lord. The book addressed seven churches in Asia Minor (Turkey today). It encouraged believers who were experiencing persecution. Revelation illustrates that God is in control and that all people were created to love and worship God their creator.

[Terms in the Book of Revelation]

666 Number of the beast, spelled out in Revelation 13:18 as *six hundred sixty-six*.

Greek and Hebrew didn't have a written system of numbers. Instead, they would either spell out the number, or they would write out the number using the letters in the alphabet.

For example, the first letter of the alphabet might represent the number one, and so on.

Many scholars have pointed out that, in Hebrew, the number of Caesar Nero's name can be 666 if written using "Neron," the Latin spelling of the name. (Nero reigned AD 54–68. He was the first emperor to engage in specific persecution of Christians.)

Perhaps the best approach to the number is to remember that *six* is a symbol of incompleteness; 666 would, therefore, indicate complete imperfection.

144,000 Group of believers who endure the great tribulation (Revelation 7:14).

Some believe that these persons are literally 144,000 Jewish persons—12,000 from each tribe—who embrace Jesus Christ as their Lord (Revelation 7:4–9).

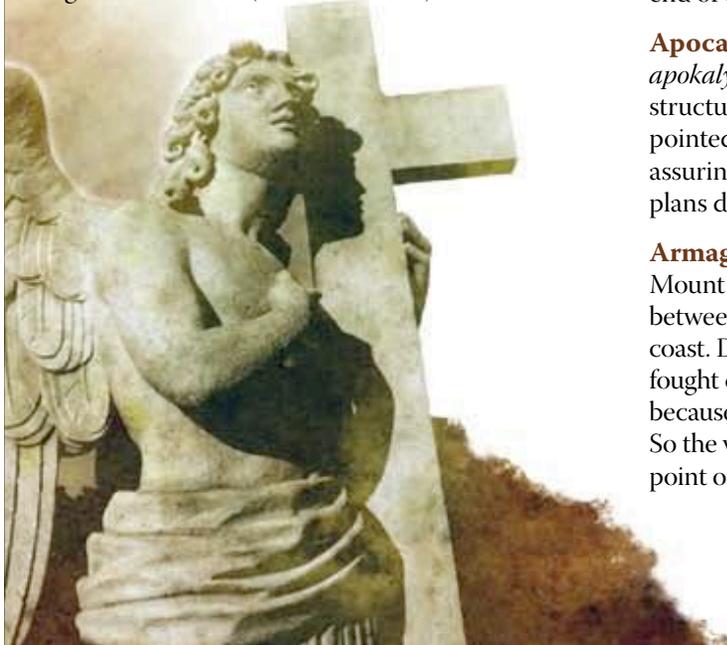
Others suggest that *Israel* and *twelve tribes* often refer to Christians (Romans 9:6–8; Galatians 6:16; James 1:1). Therefore, the number would point to God's people (symbolized by twelve tribes, twelve apostles, or both) multiplied by 1,000 (a number that symbolizes an extreme multitude or length of time)—in other words, the full number of those that belong to God.

Abomination of desolation An event that desecrates the temple in Jerusalem and is a signal to Jesus' followers that soon Jerusalem will be ruined. Mentioned in Matthew 24:15, it may refer to the destruction of the temple in AD 70 by the Romans, or Roman plans to set up a statue of the emperor in the temple in AD 40, or some future event.

Antichrist (from Greek, *antichristos*, in place of Christ) Anyone who denies what the apostles taught about Jesus Christ (1 John 2:18–22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7). Specifically, the antichrist is a Satanic counterfeit of Jesus Christ, described as "lawless" and as a "beast" (2 Thessalonians 2:3–8; Revelation 13:1–18; 17:3–17). The antichrist could be a specific person who rises to power during a time of tribulation, or a symbol of false teachers and leaders who will arise when the end of the age draws near.

Apocalyptic literature (from Greek, *apokalypsis*, revealing) Jewish genre of writing, structured around visions that figuratively pointed to hidden truths for the purpose of assuring God's people of the goodness of God's plans during periods of persecution.

Armageddon (from Hebrew, *Har-Megiddon*, Mount Megiddo) The city of Megiddo was located between the Plain of Jezreel and Israel's western coast. Deborah, Gideon, Saul, Ahaziah, and Josiah fought decisive battles near Megiddo—largely because the area around Megiddo is broad and flat. So the valley of Megiddo became the symbol of a point of decisive conflict.



Some believe that a literal battle will occur near Megiddo near the end of time. Others view the reference to Armageddon as a symbol of an ultimate conflict between spiritual forces of good and evil.

Babylon In the book of Revelation, the name “Babylon” is symbolic, yet interpretations vary:

1. **Jerusalem:** Jewish persons assisted the Romans in their persecution of Christians after AD 64. The fall of Babylon in Revelation 18 could be a symbolic reference to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.
2. **Rome:** After AD 70, Jewish writers often referred to Rome as “Babylon.”⁴ Babylon may symbolize the political and religious powers in every age that attempt to defy God and to persecute his people.
3. **One-world government and church:** “Babylon” may be a reference to a one-world government and one-world church that will emerge near the end of time.

Beasts, two Symbolic creatures described in Revelation 11:7 and 13:1–18.

The first beast: This creature rises from the sea and has ten horns and seven heads. The seven heads seem to point to Rome, the city known for its seven hills. Some interpreters understand this reference to Rome as a literal reference to a power that will arise from Rome near the end of time; others view it as a symbolic reference to the powers in every age that defy God’s dominion and persecute God’s people. The beast claims blasphemous names for itself—much like Domitian, emperor from AD 81 until 96, who demanded that he be addressed as “Lord and God.” One of the horns seemed to have died but then returned to life—much like the false rumor that emerged after the death of Nero that he had come back to life.⁵

The second beast: This creature rises from the earth with horns like a lamb and a voice like a dragon—in other words, a satanic parody of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. Some interpreters understand this creature as a literal leader who will encourage people to worship the first beast. Others view the second beast as a symbol of any

religion in any time period that focuses worshipers on anything other than Jesus Christ.

Final judgment The event described in Revelation 20:11–15, when God resurrects all people, judges them from the great white throne, and delivers them to their eternal destinies.

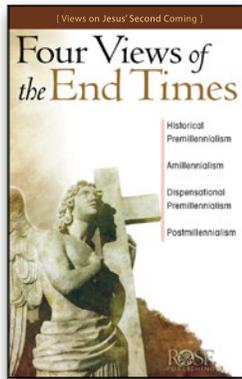
Mark of the beast Indication of a person’s allegiance to the teachings of the antichrist (Revelation 13:16–17). The people of God receive a similar mark, indicating their allegiance to Jesus (Revelation 7:3; 9:4; 14:1; 22:4). Some biblical students believe that the mark of the beast will be an actual mark, required by the antichrist. (Between the Old and New Testaments, some Jews were forced to be branded with the symbol of the god Dionysius.⁶) Other interpreters of Revelation understand the mark as a reference to someone’s *actions* (“hand”) and *beliefs* (“forehead”). Hand and forehead seem to carry this symbolic meaning in Exodus 13:9, 16.

Witnesses, two Two beings described in Revelation 11:1–14 who speak the truth about God before being killed and then resurrected. (1) Some believe that these two witnesses are two people who will appear during the tribulation, near the end of time. (2) Others view them as two biblical prophets—perhaps Moses and Elijah—that have been resurrected for the purpose of proclaiming God’s truth during the tribulation. (3) Other interpreters see the two witnesses as symbols of the Law and the Prophets—both of these testified about Jesus and yet, this testimony was rejected, even to the point of killing those that appealed to this testimony (for example, Stephen in Acts 7). If so, the “resurrection” of the two witnesses would point to a time of final vindication, a point at which God demonstrates that the Law and Prophets did indeed testify about Jesus Christ.

¹ Papias, “Fragments” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume 1, IV*: Retrieved 01 May 2006, <http://www.ccel.org> ² Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*, 20:9. ³ L. Boettner, *The Millennium* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1957) 14. ⁴ G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999) 19. ⁵ G.E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972) 178–179. ⁶ 3 Maccabees 2:29.

[Four Views of the End Times]

	Dispensational Premillennialism	Historical Premillennialism	Amillennialism	Postmillennialism
Will Jesus return physically?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
When will Jesus return?	After a 7-year tribulation; before the millennium.	After a 7-year tribulation; before the millennium.	Anytime; a detailed time frame is not important.	After the millennium.
Do the rapture and second coming of Christ occur at the same time?	No, they are events separated by either 7 years (pre-tribulation rapture) or 3½ years (mid-tribulation rapture).	Yes	Yes	Yes
Will there be a great tribulation?	Yes	Yes	The tribulation occurs any time Christians are persecuted or wars and disasters occur.	The tribulation is the conflict between good and evil since Jesus' death and resurrection.
Will Christians suffer during the tribulation?	Christians are either raptured before the tribulation (pre-tribulation rapture) or 3½ years into the tribulation (mid-tribulation rapture).	Yes, Christians will go through the tribulation and endure suffering and persecution for the cause of Christ.	Yes, Christians will suffer and endure persecution until Jesus returns; persecution will increase in the end.	Yes, Christians are called to share the gospel, and tribulation will occur when that gospel is opposed.
Will there be a literal 1,000-year millennium?	Yes, after the 7-year tribulation, Christ will return and reign for 1,000 years.	Yes, after the tribulation, Christ will return and reign for 1,000 years.	No, the millennium refers to the reign of Christ in the hearts of his believers.	No, the millennium refers to a period of peace when the gospel reaches all people.
Who is saved?	Christians only	Christians only	Christians only	Christians only
Is the modern state of Israel relevant to the prophecies in Revelation?	Yes	No	No	No
When was this view most held?	Became popular about 1860. Has increased in popularity.	The earliest view of the end times, emerging at the end of the first century.	Popularized in AD 400. Continues to be accepted today.	May have been popular as early as AD 300. Less popular today.



Four Views of the End Times

The *Four Views of the End Times* pamphlet outlines the four major interpretations held by Christians regarding eschatology, the study of the end times.

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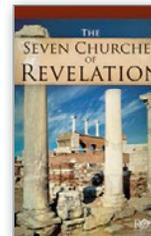
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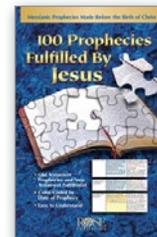
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