

Pre-Millennial Views, Part 2 - by Pastor Phil

A. Texts besides Rev 20 suggesting earthly kingdom after 2nd coming before the final state

1. The future new earth in Isa 65:17-23 seems to begin with a time not yet the Rev 21 eternal age (note 'moon' in Isa 66:23 and 'sea' in Ezekiel 47:10-12 which aren't in final state, Rev 21:1, 23)
2. Mt 19:28 *'in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel* [parallel Rev 20:4]
3. Rev 20:8-9 unsaved alive after Rev 19 to be judged is like Zech 14:16-19, Isa 24:6, 66:19, 24
4. Isa 24:19-23 parallels Rev 19-21 in the same order, God coming in judgment to earth, demons imprisoned many days as Lord reigns (Rev 20:3-4) then ends death and tears (Isa 25:8, Rev 21:4)
5. 1 Cor 15:23 says of the future resurrection: *each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.* ²⁴ *Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.* ²⁵ *For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.* ²⁶ *The last enemy to be destroyed is death* [the end is after He destroys others in His kingdom (v. 24, note *then* in v. 23 covered 2,000 years), reigns till all enemies are destroyed, and defeats death last of all (same order as Rev 19, 20:6-9, 21:4)]

B. Notable differences between dispensational premillennial view and all other views

- separate plans for church and Israel, which it sees distinct in great tribulation and millennium (historic pre-mil and others who see a future for Israel see it *with and as the church*, not separate)
- a rapture separate from and before the 2nd Coming (note: dispensationalists before 1910 didn't always see a pre-tribulation rapture, ex: 3 of 7 editors of 1909 Scotfield Bible, a few disp. today)

C. Notable distinct views of dispensationalism that are similar to others within other views

- agree with some preterists on 2 'stages' of Christ's coming, 1 part-way, 1 all the way to earth (preterist 1st coming 70 AD on clouds in judgment, then will come down to earth at end, Rev 19; dispensational 1st coming is *for* the church at pre-trib rapture, later *with* them to earth in Rev 19)
- share with preterists more literal fulfillment of Rev 6-18 than other views (ex: preterist Gentry sees 144,000 as ethnic Jews, but other non-dispensational views usually see more symbolically)
- agrees with some on 7 years prophesied as a great tribulation (preterist say happened 63-70 AD, some historic pre-mil writers also see a future 3.5 or 7 years, ex: Irenaeus, Hippolytus, 100s AD)
- agree with some historic pre-mil and a few amillennialists (ex: Storms, Poythress, Hoekema) that there will be an earthly kingdom after Christ returns, but these others see it as the new earth (or *renewed* earth) for all the church, while most of disp. view focus on Israel for the 1,000 years
- agree with some of other views that God has a future salvation for national Israel (ex: *Geneva Bible Notes* of 1560 [amil?] R.C. Sproul [preterist?], Edwards, Hodge [postmil], Puritans, etc.)¹

D. Key verses to dispensationalists on rapture (usually separate event before 2nd coming):

1 Thess. 4:16-17, 5:9 *'the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.* ¹⁷ *Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up* ['rapture' from Latin] *together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord ...*
... For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation... [the pre-tribulation rapture infers God will keep the church from His wrath by *the church caught up before* wrath is poured out in the judgments of Rev 6-18, rather than other views of God keeping His church *through it*]

Rev 3:10 *'... I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world...'* [pre-trib view infers this promises the future church will be kept *out from* the great tribulation by rapture]

1 Cor 15:51 *'we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed'*

E. Why historic premil view sees rapture as post-tribulational (same event as 2nd coming)

1. Revelation 20:5-6 says '*the first resurrection*' will be at the start of the millennium when Jesus returns in Revelation 19. In both pre-millennial views, unbelievers will be resurrected and judged at the end (20:11-15). The text the Latin word rapture comes from ('*caught up*' 1 Thess. 4:14-17) puts the rapture's timing at the resurrection of Christians. To consistently literally interpret both passages, '*the first resurrection*' of Rev 20:5-6 and rapture must be *after* the Rev 6-18 tribulation (a pre-trib rapture view has to make Rev 20:5 *the 2nd resurrection after a 1st one 7 years earlier*). The key OT passage on the resurrection (Dan 12:2) also places it after the great tribulation (v. 1).

2. Revelation doesn't mention trumpets or the rapture before or at the start of the tribulation, but 7 trumpets occur during the tribulation (Rev. 8-11). As he teaches on resurrection events, Paul says the rapture/resurrection will be at the '*last trumpet*' (1 Cor 15:50-52) not '*the first of many*' trumpets. The last trumpet in Revelation is *after* wrath, arguably as earthly kingdom reign begins (11:15-19), so if the '*last trumpet*' sounds the rapture (1 Cor 15:52) it can't be pre-tribulational.

3. If the purpose of a pre-trib rapture is to remove the church (currently mostly Gentile) to focus on Israel again, or to keep Christians from a coming tribulation, why after the tribulation starts in Rev 6 are a massive multitude of Christians seen saved in the great tribulation from every nation (Rev 7:9-14, 13:7, 14:11-13)? If these Gentile Christians aren't *the church*, what are they and are NT letters to the church for them? Do the 144,000 of Israel and a far greater number of Gentiles saved in the tribulation fit the theory Gentile Christians must go so God can focus on Israel? If 1 Thess 5:9 applies to saints *in the tribulation* (protected from wrath *on earth*) why not before it, just like *keep from* in Rev 3:10 is used in Jn 17:15 (safe *on earth*, only other use of Grk phrase)?

4. 1 Cor. 15 is the most detailed NT text on the Christian's resurrection/rapture and describes its nature and order and says the rapture/translation will happen at the resurrection (v. 52). It speaks of *one resurrection for all in Christ at His 2nd coming at the end and kingdom* (v. 23-24), then it says He'll reign till all enemies are under His feet (v. 25, same order as Rev 19-20). The historic view takes the clear teaching of NT epistles as key for less clear apocalyptic passages, so 1 Cor 15 and 1 Thess 4 about resurrection/rapture best fit Rev 19-20, not before tribulation of Rev 6-18

C. Other reasons other views (not just historic premil) believe the rapture is the 2nd coming
Jesus said in Mt 24: '*There will be great tribulation...after the tribulation [Latin post tribulation] of those days ... they will see the Son of Man coming ... And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet, and they will gather together [same word as 1 Thess 4:14] His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other*' (v. 21, 29-31 NASB). Interpreting Scripture literally, if the rapture is at the '*last trumpet*' (1 Cor. 15:52), it's not a pre-tribulational gathering, because the key text mentioning '*the great tribulation*' lists a trumpet and gathering *after that tribulation*. Also Mt 25:6 uses the same word for "meeting" the Lord in the air in 1 Thess 4:17 in the context of the 2nd coming, meeting to accompany him back (same sense in only other use in Acts 28:15)

John Piper argues that 2 Thess 1:4-10 shows the church's relief from tribulation comes 'at the same time and in the same event that he expects the unbelievers to receive punishment [the 2nd coming]...Paul did not expect an event at which he and the other believers would be given rest 7 years before the glorious appearing of Christ in flaming fire. Vengeance on unbelievers and rest for the persecuted church come on the same day in the same event ... [but he adds] disagreement over pre- and post-tribulationism is not one that I think should threaten our fellowship. It should not be divisive. The things on which we agree are so stupendous as to overwhelm our hearts in common love for the Lord and his appearing. Let us not make the second coming a center of controversy, but a cause for worship and earnest hope and...confidence...' www.desiringgod.org

D. How is the Historic Premil View Different than the Others?

Ryle: 'I believe that after our Lord Jesus Christ comes again, the earth shall be renewed, and the curse removed; the devil shall be bound [in contrast to amillennialism], the godly shall be rewarded, the wicked shall be punished; and that before He comes, there shall be neither resurrection, judgment, nor millennium [in contrast to postmil view He returns after millennium or dispensational view of a resurrection and judgment 7 years before], and that not until after He comes, shall the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord [again in contrast to postmillennialism] (Acts 3:21; Isaiah 25:6-9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; Revelation 20:1, etc.).

I believe that the Jews shall ultimately be gathered again as a separate nation, restored to their own land, and converted to the faith of Christ [in contrast to others who see God is through with the Jews as a nation], after going through great tribulation (Jer 30:10-11; 31:10; Rom 11:25-26; Dan 12:1; Zech 13:8-9). I believe the *literal* sense of OT prophecies has been far too much neglected by the churches, and is far too much neglected at the present day, and that under the mistaken system of *spiritualizing* ...Bible language, Christians have too often completely missed its meaning (Lk 24:25-26.) I do not believe that the *preterist* scheme of interpreting the Apocalypse, which regards the book as almost entirely fulfilled; or the *futurist* scheme, which regards it as almost entirely unfulfilled [dispensational view] are either of them to be implicitly followed. The truth, I expect, will be found to lie between the two.' -- Ryle, *Coming Events*

A key distinctive claimed by this view is that it's the earliest view taught by church fathers

- Papias (born in 60s AD, disciple of the apostle John): 'After the resurrection of the dead, there will be a Millennium, when the personal reign of the Messiah will be established on the earth.'
 - Justin Martyr (born 103 AD): 'I and others who are right-minded Christians on all points are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and one thousand years in Jerusalem, which will at that time be built, adorned and enlarged... The man of apostasy, who speaks strange things against the Most High, will venture to do unlawful deeds on the earth against us, the Christians.'
 - Irenaeus (born in 100s AD, passed on Polycarp's teachings from apostle John): 'kings shall give their kingdom to the beast and cause the church to flee... After the Antichrist has devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months.' [note: church on the earth]
 - Tertullian (born in 160 AD) said near the end 'antichrist will wage war on the church of God [church in tribulation] ... We agree that a kingdom is promised to us on earth, before heaven.'
- as cited by Timothy Paul George, *Rose Guide to End Times*, p. 327, underlines added

Who are other historic premillennialists in recent centuries (after Augustine and the dark ages)?

1600-1700s: Jeremiah Burroughs, Thomas Goodwyn, William Gouge, Increase Mather, etc.

1800s: Charles Spurgeon, J.C. Ryle, George Muller, Horatius Bonar, Newton, etc.

20th century: Francis Schaffer, John Piper, J. Boice, Al Mohler, Kent Hughes, W. Grudem, etc.

¹ Non-premillennial non-dispensational voices agreeing with and affirming a future salvation of national Israel:

- 1560 *Geneva Bible Notes* on Romans 11: 'He sheweth that the time shall come that the whole nation of the Jews, though not everyone particularly, shall be joined to the church of Christ.'

- Sproul: 'as there was a national judgment, so there will be a national restoration...restoration doesn't necessarily mean that every individual Jew will be saved, but the nation as a nation will be restored to God.' – *Romans*, ch. 11

- Jonathan Edwards: 'Nothing is more certainly foretold than this national conversion of the Jews in the eleventh chapter of Romans' – *The History of Redemption* (vol. 1 of 2 volume works of Jonathan Edwards)

- Charles Hodge: 'The second great event, which, according to the common faith or the Church, is to precede the second advent of Christ, is the national conversion of the Jews ... The future restoration of the Jews is, in itself, a more probable event than the introduction of the Gentiles into the church of God.'" - *Systematic Theology*, 3:270-85

- By the early 1600s 'belief in a future conversion of the Jews became commonplace among the English Puritans.' (Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope*). This era 'witnessed a dynamic interest in the Jews on the part of Continental and British Reformed theologians who hoped for a large-scale conversion of the Jews and, in some cases, for a restoration of the Jews to Palestine before or after their conversion.' *Westminster Theological Journal*, 46/2: p. 257.