Theological Views of Eschatology (Future Things & Prophesies)

**Futurism** is a [Christian eschatological view](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_eschatology) that interprets portions of the [Book of Revelation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Revelation), the [Book of Daniel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Daniel), and other prophecies, as future events in a literal, physical, [apocalyptic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocalyptic), and global context.[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-1) By comparison, other Christian eschatological views interpret these passages as past events in a symbolic, historic context ([Preterism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preterism%22%20%5Co%20%22Preterism) and [Historicism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christian_eschatology%29)), or as present-day events in a non-literal and spiritual context ([Idealism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idealism_%28Christian_eschatology%29)).

Futurist beliefs usually have a close association with [Premillennialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Premillennialism) and [Dispensationalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dispensationalism). Futurist beliefs were presented in the [Left Behind](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Left_Behind) series.

The futurist view assigns all or most of the prophecy to the future, shortly before the [Second Coming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Coming); especially when interpreted in conjunction with [Daniel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Daniel), [Isaiah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Isaiah) 2:11-22, [1 Thessalonians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1_Thessalonians) 4:15–5:11, and other [eschatological](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eschatology) sections of the Bible.[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)]

Futurist interpretations generally predict a [resurrection of the dead](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resurrection_of_the_dead) and a [rapture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rapture) of the living, wherein all true Christians are gathered to Christ prior to the time [God's kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_God) [comes on earth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_to_Come). They also believe a [tribulation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribulation) will occur - a seven-year period of time when believers will experience worldwide persecution and martyrdom, and be purified and strengthened by it. Futurists differ on when believers will be raptured, but there are three primary views: 1) before the tribulation; 2) near or at the midpoint of the tribulation; or 3) at the end of the tribulation. There is also a fourth view of multiple raptures throughout the tribulation, but this view does not have a mainstream following.[*[citation needed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3ACitation%20needed)*]

[Pretribulationists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dispensationalism) believe that all Christians then alive will be taken up to meet Christ before the Tribulation begins. In this manner, Christians are "kept from" the Tribulation, such as [Enoch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enoch_%28ancestor_of_Noah%29) was removed before God judged the [antediluvian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antediluvian) world, in contrast with [Noah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noah) who was "kept through" wrath and judgement of God in the flood of Genesis.[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)]

[Midtribulationists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rapture#Mid-tribulation) believe that the rapture of the faithful will occur approximately halfway through the Tribulation, after it begins but before the worst part of it occurs. Some midtribulationists, particularly those[[*who?*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3AManual_of_Style/Words_to_watch#Unsupported_attributions)] holding to a "pre-wrath rapture" of the church, believe that God's wrath is poured out during a "Great Tribulation" that is limited to the last 3½ years of the Tribulation, after believers have been caught up to Christ.[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)]

[Post-tribulationists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post_Tribulation_Rapture) believe that Christians will be gathered in the clouds with Christ and join him in [his return to earth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Coming_of_Christ). (Pretribulationist [Tim LaHaye](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tim_LaHaye) admits a post-tribulation rapture is the closest of the three views to that held by the [early church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Christianity).)[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)]

All three views hold that Christians will return with Christ at the end of the Tribulation. Proponents of all three views also generally portray Israel as unwittingly signing a seven-year peace treaty with the [Antichrist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antichrist), which initiates the seven-year Tribulation. Many also tend to view the Antichrist as head of a revived Roman Empire, but the geographic location of this empire is unknown. [Hal Lindsey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hal_Lindsey) suggests that this revived Roman Empire will be centered in western Europe, with Rome as its capital. Tim LaHaye promotes the belief that [Babylon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylon_%28New_Testament%29) will be the capital of a worldwide empire. Joel Richardson and [Walid Shoebat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walid_Shoebat) have both recently written books proposing a revived eastern Roman Empire, which will fall with the boundaries of the [Ottoman Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire). ([Istanbul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istanbul) also has seven hills, was a capital of the Roman Empire as [Constantinople](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantinople), known as the [Byzantine Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_Empire), and a body of water in the city is known as the [Golden Horn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Horn) - notable given the eschatological references to the "Little Horn"[Daniel 7:8](http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Daniel&verse=7:8&src=%21),[8:9](http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Daniel&verse=8:9&src=%21).)[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)]

The futurist view was first proposed by two Catholic Jesuit writers, [Manuel Lacunza](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manuel_Lacunza) and [Francisco Ribera](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco_Ribera). Lacunza wrote under the pen name "Ben-Ezra", and his work was banned by the Catholic Church. It has grown in popularity in the 19th and 20th centuries, so that today it is probably most readily recognized. Books about the "[rapture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rapture)" by authors like [Hal Lindsey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hal_Lindsey), and the more recent [Left Behind](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Left_Behind_%28series%29) novels (by [Jerry Jenkins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerry_Jenkins) and [Tim LaHaye](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tim_LaHaye)) and movies, have done much to popularize this school of thought.[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)]

The various views on tribulation are actually a subset of theological interpretations on the Millennium, mentioned in Revelation 20. There are three main interpretations: [Premillennialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Premillennialism), [Amillennialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amillennialism), and [Postmillennialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmillennialism).[*[citation needed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3ACitation%20needed)*]

Premillennialism believes that Christ will return to the earth, bind Satan, and reign for a literal thousand years on earth with [Jerusalem as his capital](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem_in_Christianity). Thus Christ returns before ("pre-") the thousand years mentioned in chapter 20. There are generally two subclasses of Premillennialism: Dispensational and Historic. Some form of premillennialism is thought to be the oldest millennial view in church history.[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-5) [Papias](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papias_of_Hierapolis), believed to be a disciple of the Apostle John, was a premillennialist, according to [Eusebius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eusebius). Also [Justin Martyr](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justin_Martyr) and [Irenaeus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irenaeus) expressed belief in premillennialism in their writings.

Amillennialism, the traditional view for Roman Catholicism, believes that the thousand years mentioned are not (["a-"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Privative_a)) a literal thousand years, but is figurative for what is now the [church age](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dispensation_%28period%29), usually, the time between [Christ's ascension](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ascension_of_Christ) and [second coming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Coming_of_Christ). This view is often associated with [Augustine of Hippo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustine_of_Hippo). Amillennialists differ on the time frame of the millennium. Some say it started with [Pentecost](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pentecost), others say it started with the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy regarding the [destruction of the temple in Jerusalem (70)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_%2870%29), and other starting points have also been proposed. Whether this eschatology is the result of [caesaropapism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caesaropapism), which may have also been the reason that premillennialism was condemned, is sharply disputed.[*[citation needed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3ACitation%20needed)*]

Postmillennialism believes that Christ will return after ("post-") a literal/figurative thousand years, in which the [world](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_%28theology%29) will have essentially become a [Christendom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christendom). This view was held by [Jonathan Edwards](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_Edwards_%28theologian%29).[*[citation needed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3ACitation%20needed)*]

**Great Tribulation**

Main article: [Great Tribulation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Tribulation)

In the futurist view of [Christian eschatology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_eschatology), the Tribulation is a relatively short period of time where anyone who chose not to follow [God](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_in_Christianity) before the [Rapture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rapture) and was left behind (according to [Pre-Tribulation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rapture#Pre-tribulation) doctrine, not [Mid-](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rapture#Mid-tribulation) or [Post-Tribulation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post_Tribulation_Rapture) teaching) will experience worldwide hardships, disasters, famine, war, pain, and suffering, which will wipe out more than 75% of all life on the earth before the [Second Coming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Coming_of_Christ) takes place.[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)]

According to some [Dispensationalists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dispensationalism) who hold the futurist view, the Tribulation is thought to occur before the Second Coming of Jesus and during the [End Times](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/End_Times). Another version holds that it will last seven years in all, being the last of [Daniel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Daniel)'s [prophecy of seventy weeks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophecy_of_Seventy_Weeks). This viewpoint was first made popular by [John Nelson Darby](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Nelson_Darby) in the 19th century and was recently popularized by [Hal Lindsey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hal_Lindsey) in [*The Late Great Planet Earth*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Late_Great_Planet_Earth). It is theorized that each week represents seven years, with the timetable beginning from [Artaxerxes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artaxerxes_I_of_Persia)' order to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem (the [Second Temple](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Temple)). After seven plus 62 weeks, the prophecy says that the [messiah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messiah) will be "cut off", which is taken to correspond to the death of [Christ](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ). This is seen as creating a break of indeterminate length in the timeline, with one week remaining to be fulfilled.[*[citation needed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3ACitation%20needed)*]

This seven-year week may be further divided into two periods of 3.5 years each, from the two 3.5-year periods in Daniel's prophecy where the last seven years are divided into two 3.5-year periods, ([Daniel 9:27](http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Daniel&verse=9:27&src=%21)) The time period for these beliefs is also based on other passages: in the book of Daniel, "[time, times, and half a time](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time%2C_times%2C_and_half_a_time)", interpreted as "a year, two years, and half a year," and the Book of Revelation, "a thousand two hundred and threescore days" and "forty and two months" (the prophetic month averaging 30 days, hence 1260/30 = 42 months or 3.5 years). The 1290 days of [Daniel 12:11](http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Daniel&verse=12:11&src=%21), (rather than the 1260 days of [Revelation 11:3](http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Revelation&verse=11:3&src=%21)), is thought to be the result of either a simple [intercalary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intercalation_%28timekeeping%29) leap month adjustment, or due to further [calculations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calculations) related to the prophecy, or due to an [intermediate](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/intermediate) stage of time that is to prepare the world for the beginning of the millennial reign.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-6)

**Events**

Among futurists there are differing views about what will happen to Christians during the Tribulation:[*[citation needed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3ACitation%20needed)*]

* [Pretribulationists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dispensationalism) believe that all Christians (dead and alive) will be taken bodily up to [Heaven](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heaven) (called the Rapture) before the Tribulation begins.[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-7)[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-8)[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-9) According to this theory, every true Christian that has ever existed throughout the course of the entire Christian era will be instantaneously transformed into a perfect resurrected body, and will thus escape the trials of the Tribulation. Those who become Christians after the rapture will live through (or perish during) the Tribulation. After the Tribulation, Christ will return to establish His Millennial Kingdom.
* [Prewrath Tribulationists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prewrath) believe the Rapture will occur during the tribulation, halfway through or after, but before the seven bowls of the [wrath of God](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divine_retribution).
* [Midtribulationists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midtribulationism) believe that the Rapture will occur halfway through the Tribulation, but before the worst part of it occurs. The seven-year period is divided into halves - the "beginning of sorrows" and the "great tribulation".
* [Posttribulationists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post_Tribulation_Rapture) believe that Christians will not be taken up into Heaven, but will be received or gathered by Christ into the Kingdom of God on earth at the end of the Tribulation. "Immediately after the tribulation ... then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man [Jesus] ... and he shall gather his elect" (Matthew 24:29–31; Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-27). The idea of a post-tribulation rapture can also be read into 2 Peter 3:10-13 where Christ's return is equated with the "elements being melted" and "the earth also and the works therein shall be burned up."[[*improper synthesis?*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ANo_original_research#Synthesis_of_published_material)]

In pretribulationism and midtribulationism, the Rapture and the [Second Coming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Coming) (or [Greek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language), *par[a]ousia*) of Christ are separate events, while in post-tribulationism the two events are identical or simultaneous. Another feature of the pre- and mid-tribulation beliefs is the idea that after the Rapture, Christ will return for a third time (when also counting the first coming) to set up his kingdom on the earth.[*[citation needed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3ACitation%20needed)*]

Some, including many [Roman Catholic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic) theologians,[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)] do not believe in a "time of trouble" period as usually described by tribulationists, but rather that there will be a near [utopian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopia) period led by the [Antichrist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antichrist).

Many other groups, such as [Jehovah's Witnesses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses), do not believe in a Rapture at any point.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-10) According to Jehovah's Witnesses, the Great Tribulation is soon to arrive. This period will see the fall of [Babylon the Great](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whore_of_Babylon#Jehovah.27s_Witnesses), the [Great Harlot](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Harlot&action=edit&redlink=1), as spoken of in Revelation. After Babylon the Great has been removed, they say, the world powers shall move against God's chosen people for a short while. This will then usher in the ending of this "world" (not the earth, but the removal of all those who do not wish to follow God by standards) according to their understanding of [Proverbs 2:21-22](http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Proverbs&verse=2:21-22&src=%21). The Great Tribulation ends with the battle of [Armageddon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armageddon).[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-11)[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-12)

**70th week of Daniel**

Main article: [Prophecy of Seventy Weeks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophecy_of_Seventy_Weeks)

According to Futurism, the 70th week of Daniel will occur at some point in the future, culminating in seven years (or 3.5 years depending on denomination) of [Tribulation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribulation) and the appearance of the [Antichrist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antichrist).

Such a thesis is paradigmatic for Dispensational Premillennialism. In contradistinction, [Historic Premillennialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historic_Premillennialism) may or may not posit Daniel's 70th week as future yet retain the thesis of the future fulfillment of many of the prophecies of Major and Minor Prophets, the teachings of Christ (e.g., Matthew 24) and the book of Revelation.

**Dispensationalist interpretation**

[Dispensationalists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dispensationalism) typically hold that a 'hiatus', which some refer to as a 'biblical parenthesis', occurred between the 69th and 70th week of the prophecy, into which the "church age" is inserted (also known as the "gap theory" of Daniel 9). The seventieth week of the prophecy is expected to commence after the [rapture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rapture) of the church, which will incorporate the establishment of an economic system using the number '666', the reign of the beast (the [Antichrist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antichrist)), the false religious system (the harlot), the [Great Tribulation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Tribulation) and [Armageddon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armageddon).[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-13)

Controversy exists regarding the antecedent of *he* in Daniel 9:27. Many within the ranks of [premillennialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Premillennialism) do not affirm the "confirmation of the covenant" is made by Jesus Christ (as do many [Amillennarians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amillennialism)) but that the antecedent of "he" in vs. 27 refers back to vs. 26 ("the prince who is to come"—i.e., the Antichrist). [Antichrist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antichrist) will make a "treaty" as the Prince of the Covenant (i.e., "the prince who is to come") with Israel's future leadership at the commencement of the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy; in the midst of the week, the Antichrist will break the treaty and commence persecution against a regathered Israel.[[14]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-14)

**Historicism** is a method of interpretation in [Christian eschatology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_eschatology) which associates [biblical prophecies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible_Prophecy_%28Eschatology%29) with actual historical events and identify symbolic beings with historical persons or societies. The Historicist school of prophetic interpretation results in a progressive and continuous fulfillment of prophecy and contained the viewpoint of almost all Protestant Reformers from the Reformation into the 19th century.[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-1) The main texts of interest are [apocalyptic literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocalyptic_literature), such as the [Book of Daniel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Daniel) and the [Book of Revelation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Revelation), and historicist methods have been applied to ancient [Jewish history](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_history), the [Roman Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Empire), [Islam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam), the [Papacy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_papacy), the [Modern era](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_era) and even into the [End time](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/End_time).

Historicism was the belief held by the majority of the Protestant Reformers including [Martin Luther](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther), [John Calvin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Calvin), [Thomas Cranmer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Cranmer), and others including [John Thomas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Thomas_%28Christadelphian%29), [John Knox](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Knox), and [Cotton Mather](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cotton_Mather) while the Catholic church tried to counter it with alternative views such as those put forward by the Jesuit [Luis de Alcasar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luis_de_Alcasar) during the [Counter Reformation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counter_Reformation).[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-Spanish_Jesuit_Alcasar_1614-2)[[*page needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACiting_sources)].[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-3) This alternate view served to bolster the Catholic Church's position against attacks by Protestants,[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-Protestants_page_464-4)[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-Newport_page_74-5) and is viewed as a Catholic defense against the Protestant Historicist view which identified the Roman Catholic Church as a [persecuting apostasy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Apostasy) and the Pope with the Anti-Christ.[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-Newport_page_74-5)

Historicists claim that prophetic interpretation reveals the entire course of [history of the church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Christianity) from the close of the 1st century to the [end of time](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/End_time).[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-6) Historicist interpretations have been criticized for inconsistencies, conjectures, and speculations. There is no agreement about various outlines of church history. Historicist readings of the Book of Revelation have been revised as new events occur and new figures emerge on the world scene.[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-7)

One of the most influential aspects of the Protestant historicist [paradigm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradigm) was the speculation that the [Pope](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope) could be [Antichrist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antichrist). [Martin Luther](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther) wrote this view, which was not novel, into the [Smalcald Articles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smalcald_Articles) of 1537. It was then widely popularized in the 16th century, via sermons and drama, books and [broadside](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Broadside_%28printing%29) publication.[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-8) [Jesuit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesuit) commentators developed alternate approaches that would later become known as [preterism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preterism) and [futurism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism_%28Christianity%29), and applied them to apocalyptic literature;[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-FOOTNOTENewport200021.E2.80.932-9)[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-10) [Francisco Ribera](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco_Ribera)[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-11) developed a form of futurism (1590), and [Luis de Alcazar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luis_de_Alcazar) a form of preterism, at the same period.[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-12)[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-13)[[14]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-14)

The historicist approach has been used in attempts to predict the date of the [end of the world](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_dates_predicted_for_apocalyptic_events). An example in [post-Reformation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Reformation) Britain is in the works of [Charles Wesley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Wesley), who predicted that the end of the world would occur in 1794, based on his analysis of the Book of Revelation.[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)] [Adam Clarke](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam_Clarke), whose commentary was published in 1831, proposed a possible date of 2015 for the end of the papal power.[[15]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-sacred-texts-15)

In 19th-century America, [William Miller](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Miller_%28preacher%29) proposed that the end of the world would occur on October 22, 1844, based on a historicist model used with Daniel 8:14. Miller’s historicist approach to the Book of Daniel spawned a national movement in the United States known as [Millerism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millerism). After the [Great Disappointment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Disappointment) some of the Millerites eventually organized the [Seventh-day Adventist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seventh-day_Adventist) Church,[[16]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-FOOTNOTENewport200022-16) which continues to maintain a historicist reading of biblical prophecy as essential to its [eschatology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seventh-day_Adventist_eschatology).[[17]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-FOOTNOTEHolbrook1983-17)[[*page needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACiting_sources)]

**Early interpretations**

Prophetic commentaries in the early church usually interpreted individual passages rather than entire books. The earliest complete commentary on the Book of Revelation was carried out by [Victorinus of Pettau](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victorinus_of_Pettau), considered to be one of the earliest historicist commentators, around 300 AD.[[18]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-18)[[19]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-19) [Edward Bishop Elliott](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Bishop_Elliott), a proponent of the historicist interpretation, wrote that it was modified and developed by the expositions of [Andreas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andreas), [Primasius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primasius) (both 6th century), [Bede](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bede) (730 AD), [Anspert](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anspert), [Arethas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arethas_of_Caesarea), [Haimo of Auxerre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haimo_of_Auxerre), and [Berengaudus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berengaudus) (all of the 9th century).[[20]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-ReferenceB-20) The 10th-century Catholic bishop [Arnulf of Orléans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arnulf_of_Orl%C3%A9ans) was, according to Elliott, the first to apply the [Man of Sin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Man_of_Sin) prophecy in [2 Thessalonians 2:3–9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Thessalonians+2%3A3%E2%80%939&version=ESV) to the [papacy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papacy).[[20]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-ReferenceB-20)[[21]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-FOOTNOTEFroom1950541.E2.80.9342-21) [Joachim of Floris](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joachim_of_Floris) gave the same interpretation in 1190,[[20]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-ReferenceB-20) and the archbishop [Eberhard II](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Eberhard_II,_Archbishop_of_Salzburg&action=edit&redlink=1), in 1240.

**Protestant**

[Protestant Reformers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant_Reformers) had a major interest in historicism, with a direct application to their struggle against the Papacy. Prominent leaders and scholars among them, including [Martin Luther](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther), [John Calvin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Calvin), [Thomas Cranmer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Cranmer), [John Thomas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Thomas_%28Christadelphian%29), [John Knox](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Knox), and [Cotton Mather](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cotton_Mather), identified the Roman Papacy as the Antichrist.[[22]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-22) The Centuriators of [Magdeburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magdeburg), a group of Lutheran scholars in Magdeburg headed by [Matthias Flacius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthias_Flacius), wrote the 12-volume "[Magdeburg Centuries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magdeburg_Centuries)" to discredit the papacy and identify the pope as the Antichrist. The fifth round of talks in the [Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutheran-Roman_Catholic_dialogue) notes,

[William Tyndale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Tyndale), an English Protestant reformer, held that while the Roman Catholic realms of that age were the empire of Antichrist, any religious organization that distorted the doctrine of the Old and New Testaments also showed the work of Antichrist. In his treatise *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon*, he expressly rejected the established Church teaching that looked to the future for an Antichrist to rise up, and he taught that Antichrist is a present spiritual force that will be with us until the end of the age under different religious disguises from time to time.[[24]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-24) Tyndale's translation of 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2, concerning the "man of lawlessness" reflected his understanding, but was significantly amended by later revisers,[[25]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-25) including the [King James Bible committee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Authorized_King_James_Version#Committees), which followed the Vulgate more closely.

Rather than expecting a single Antichrist to rule the earth during a future [Tribulation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Tribulation) period, Luther, [John Calvin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Calvin) and other Protestant reformers saw the Antichrist as a present feature in the world of their time, fulfilled in the papacy.[[26]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-FOOTNOTEFroom1948244.E2.80.9345-26) Debated features of the Reformation historicist interpretations were the identification of; the Antichrist (1 and 2 John); the [Beasts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Beast_%28Bible%29) of Revelation 13; the Man of Sin (or Man of Lawlessness) in 2 Thessalonians 2; the "Little horn" of [Daniel 7](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_7) and [8](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_8), and the [Whore of Babylon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whore_of_Babylon) (Revelation 17).

[Isaac Newton's religious views](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Newton%27s_religious_views) on the historicist approach are in the work published in 1733, after his death, *Observations upon the Prophesies of the Book of Daniel, and the Apocalypse of St. John*.[[27]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-27) It took a stance toward the papacy similar to that of the early Protestant reformers. He avoided predictions based on prophetic literature, taking the view that prophesy when it has been shown to be fulfilled will be proof that God's providence has been imminently active in the world. This work regarded much prophesy as already fulfilled in the first millennium of the Christian era.

**Modern**

The 19th century was a significant watershed in the history of prophetic thought. While the historicist paradigm, together with its pre- or [postmillennialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmillennialism), the [day-year principle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Day-year_principle), and the view of the papal Antichrist, was dominant in English Protestant scholarship during much of the period from the Reformation to the middle of the 19th century (and continues to find expression in some groups today), it was not the only one on offer in the broader pre- or non-critical marketplace.[[28]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-FOOTNOTENewport200014.E2.80.9315-28) Arising in Great Britain and Scotland, [William Kelly](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Kelly_%28Bible_scholar%29) and other [Plymouth Brethren](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plymouth_Brethren) became the leading exponents of dispensationalist [premillennial](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Premillennialism) eschatology.[[29]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-29) By 1826, [literalist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_literalism) interpretation of prophecy took hold and [dispensationalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dispensationalism) saw the light of day.[[30]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-30) The dispensationalist interpretation derived from the historicist model of interpreting Daniel and Revelation and the theory that there was a gap in prophetic fulfillment of prophecy proposed by Futurism, but dispensationalism took a decidedly anti-Catholic position.

**Daniel**

**Visions of Daniel**

Main article: [Four kingdoms of Daniel § Traditional views](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_kingdoms_of_Daniel#Traditional_views)

The Protestant historicist interpretation of the [four kingdoms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_kingdoms_of_Daniel), in the [Book of Daniel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Daniel), is the following traditional view: [Neo-Babylon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Babylon), Medo-Persia, Greece under Alexander the Great and the [Roman Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Empire).[[31]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-31) Additionally, the "little horn" in [Daniel 7](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_7):8 and [Daniel 8](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_8):9 is viewed by historicists as the [Papacy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papacy).

[Adam Clarke](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam_Clarke), writing in 1825, offered an alternative 1260-year period from 755 AD to 2015, based upon the Pope's elevation from being a subject of the [Byzantine Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_Empire) to being the independent head of the [Papal States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papal_States) by means of the [Donation of Pepin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donation_of_Pepin).[[15]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-sacred-texts-15)

**Prophecy of Seventy Weeks**

Main article: [Prophecy of Seventy Weeks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophecy_of_Seventy_Weeks)

The vision of the *70 weeks* is interpreted as dealing with the Jewish nation from about the middle of the 5th century BCE until not long after the death of Jesus in the 1st century CE and so is not concerned with current or future history. Historicists consider Antiochus Epiphanies irrelevant to the fulfillment of the prophecy.

The historicist view of Adventists on the [prophecy of seventy weeks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophecy_of_Seventy_Weeks#Seventh-day_Adventist_interpretations), in Daniel 9, stretches from [457 BCE](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8b/Ezrachonology.jpg) to [34 CE](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/0f/TwentySevenAD.jpg), and that the [final "week" of the prophecy](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/06/2300days.jpg) refers to the events of Jesus Christ's ministry.[[32]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-32) The Seventh-day Adventist interpretation of Daniel chapter 9 presents the 490 years as an uninterrupted period. Like others before them they equate the beginning of the 70 weeks "from the time the word goes out to rebuild and restore Jerusalem," of Daniel 9:25[[33]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-9:25-33) with the decree by Artaxerxes I in 458/7 BCE which provided money for rebuilding the temple and Jerusalem and allowed for restoration of a Jewish administration.[[34]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-34) It ends 3½ years after the crucifixion.[[35]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-GC-35) The appearance of "Messiah the Prince" at the end of the 69 weeks (483 years)[[33]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-9%3A25-33) is aligned with Jesus' baptism in 27 CE, in the fifteenth year of [Tiberius Caesar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiberius_Caesar#Heir_to_Augustus). The 'cutting off' of the "anointed one"[[33]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-9:25-33) refers to the crucifixion 3½ years after the end of the 483 years, bringing "atonement for iniquity" and "everlasting righteousness".[[36]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-36) Jesus is said to 'confirm' the "covenant"[[37]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-bibleref2.7CDaniel.7C9:27.7CNIV-37) between God and mankind by his death on the cross in the Spring (about Easter time) of 31 CE "in the midst of"[[37]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-bibleref2.7CDaniel.7C9:27.7CNIV-37) the last seven years. At the moment of his death the 4 inch (10 cm) thick curtain between the Holy and Most Holy Places in the Temple ripped from top to bottom[[38]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-38)[[39]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-39)[[40]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-40) marking the end of the Temple's sacrificial system. The last week ends 3½ years after the crucifixion (i.e., in 34 CE) when the gospel was redirected from only the Jews to all peoples.

Some of the representative voices among exegetes of the last 150 years are E. W. Hengstenberg,[[41]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-41) [J. N. Andrews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._N._Andrews),[[42]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-42) E. B. Pusey,[[43]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-43) J. Raska,[[44]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-44) J. Hontheim,[[45]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-45) Boutflower,[[46]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-46) [Uriah Smith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uriah_Smith),[[47]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-47) and O. Gerhardt.[[48]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-48)

The historicist view of [Jehovah's Witnesses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses) on the *prophecy of seventy weeks* is that the timeframe spanned from 455 BCE to 29 CE, with the final "week" being fulfilled by 36 CE.[[49]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-49)[[50]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-JW.2C_70-50)[[51]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-51)

**Matthew**

Great Tribulation

Main article: [Great Tribulation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Tribulation)

Most historicists see [Matthew](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Matthew_the_Evangelist)'s reference to "great tribulation" ([Matthew 24:29](http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Matthew&verse=24:29&src=%21)) as parallel to Revelation 6:12–13, having an end when Christ returns.[[52]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-52)

Historicists believe that mankind has always been in the Tribulation and point to the following in the rest of the New Testament which shows the "tribulation", that almost every reference applies to what true Christians go through, rather than what they escape from.

([John 16:33](http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=John&verse=16:33&src=%21)) - Jesus Christ said to His followers, "In the world YOU shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

([2Thessalonians 1:4](http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=2Thessalonians&verse=1:4&src=%21)) - Paul wrote of the many "persecutions and tribulations" which "the churches of God" were enduring in the 1st century (Christians were thrown to the lions in the coliseum, eaten by wild dogs, burned at the stake and lit up as torches in Nero's garden).

([Revelation 7:14](http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Revelation&verse=7:14&src=%21)) - God's final people "came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." They did not escape it, but endured through it, being purified.

This gives clear biblical evidence that Christians have always gone through "tribulation" and will endure tribulations until the end.

This view is also called Classical Posttribulationism, an original theory of the [Post-tribulation rapture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-tribulation_rapture) view which holds the position that the church has always been in the tribulation because, during its entire existence, it has always suffered persecution and trouble. They believe that the tribulation is not a literal future event.[[53]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-53)[[54]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christianity%29#cite_note-54)

Historicist have also applied the Tribulation to the period known as "persecution of the saints" as related to [Daniel 7](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_7) and Revelation 13.

**Idealism** (also called the **spiritual approach**, the **allegorical approach**, the **nonliteral approach**, and many other names) in [Christian eschatology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_eschatology) is an interpretation of the [Book of Revelation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Revelation) that sees all of the imagery of the book as [symbols](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symbol).[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idealism_%28Christian_eschatology%29#cite_note-1)

[Jacob Taubes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob_Taubes) writes that idealist eschatology came about as [Renaissance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance) thinkers began to doubt that the [Kingdom of Heaven](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_God) had been established on earth, or would be established, but still believed in its establishment.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idealism_%28Christian_eschatology%29#cite_note-2) Rather than the Kingdom of Heaven being present in society, it is established subjectively for the individual.[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idealism_%28Christian_eschatology%29#cite_note-3)

[F. D. Maurice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F._D._Maurice) interpreted the Kingdom of Heaven idealistically as a symbol representing society's general improvement, instead of a physical and political kingdom. [Karl Barth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Barth) interprets eschatology as representing existential truths that bring the individual hope, rather than history or future-history.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idealism_%28Christian_eschatology%29#cite_note-4) Barth's ideas provided fuel for the [Social Gospel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Gospel) philosophy in America, which saw social change not as performing ["required" good works](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legalism_%28theology%29), but because the individuals involved felt that Christians could not simply ignore society's problems with future dreams.[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idealism_%28Christian_eschatology%29#cite_note-5)

Different authors have suggested that [the Beast](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Beast_%28Revelation%29) represents various social injustices, such as exploitation of workers,[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idealism_%28Christian_eschatology%29#cite_note-6) wealth, the elite, commerce,[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idealism_%28Christian_eschatology%29#cite_note-7) materialism, and imperialism.[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idealism_%28Christian_eschatology%29#cite_note-8) Various [Christian anarchists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_anarchism), such as [Jacques Ellul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques_Ellul), have identified the [State](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_%28polity%29) and [political power](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_power) as the Beast.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idealism_%28Christian_eschatology%29#cite_note-9)

It is distinct from [Preterism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preterism), [Futurism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism_%28Christian_eschatology%29) and [Historicism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_%28Christian_eschatology%29) in that it does not see any of the prophecies (except in some cases the [Second Coming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Coming), and [Final Judgment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Final_Judgment)) as being fulfilled in a literal, physical, earthly sense either in the past, present or future,[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idealism_%28Christian_eschatology%29#cite_note-10) and that to interpret the eschatological portions of the Bible in a historical or future-historical fashion is an erroneous understanding.[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idealism_%28Christian_eschatology%29#cite_note-11)

**Preterism**

**Preterism** is a view in Christian eschatology which holds that some or all of the biblical prophecies concerning the *Last Days* refer to events which took place in the first century after Christ's birth, especially associated with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The term preterism comes from the Latin *praeter*, meaning *past*, since this view deems certain biblical prophecies as *past*, or already fulfilled.

Preterism is most dramatically contrasted with [Futurism](http://www.theopedia.com/index.php?title=Futurism&action=edit&redlink=1), the view that most prophecies regarding the [End times](http://www.theopedia.com/End_times), and passages referring to *Last Days*, *Great Tribulation*, and *Judgment* are still future and will immediately precede the [return of Christ](http://www.theopedia.com/Second_Coming). Proponents of preterist views generally fall in one of two categories: *Partial* Preterism or *Full* Preterism.

**Partial Preterists**

Partial Preterism, the older of the two views, holds that prophecies such as the destruction of Jerusalem, the [Antichrist](http://www.theopedia.com/Antichrist), the Great Tribulation, and the advent of the Day of the Lord as a "judgment-coming" of Christ were fulfilled circa 70 AD when the Roman general (and future Emperor) Titus sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Jewish Temple, putting a permanent stop to the daily animal sacrifices. It identifies "Babylon the great" (Revelation 17-18) with the ancient pagan City of Rome or Jerusalem.

Most Partial Preterists also believe the term *Last Days* refers not to the last days of planet Earth or the last days of humankind, but rather to the last days of the Mosaic [covenant](http://www.theopedia.com/Covenant) which God had exclusively with national Israel until the year AD 70. As God came in judgment upon various nations in the [Old Testament](http://www.theopedia.com/Old_Testament), Christ also came in judgment against those in Israel who rejected him. These *last days*, however, are to be distinguished from the "last day," which is considered still future and entails the [Second Coming](http://www.theopedia.com/Second_Coming) of Jesus, the Resurrection of the righteous and unrighteous dead physically from the grave in like-manner to Jesus' physical resurrection, the [Final judgment](http://www.theopedia.com/Final_judgment), and the creation of a literal (rather than covenantal) New Heavens and a New Earth, free from the curse of sin and death which was brought about by [the Fall](http://www.theopedia.com/The_Fall) of Adam and Eve.

Thus partial preterists are in agreement and conformity with the historic [ecumenical creeds](http://www.theopedia.com/Ecumenical_councils) of the Church and articulate the doctrine of the resurrection held by the [Early church fathers](http://www.theopedia.com/Early_church_fathers). Partial preterists hold that the [New Testament](http://www.theopedia.com/New_Testament) predicts and depicts many "comings" of Christ. They contend that the phrase [Second Coming](http://www.theopedia.com/Second_Coming) means second of a like kind in a series, for the Scriptures record other "comings" even before the judgment-coming in 70 AD. This would eliminate the 70 AD event as the "second" of any series, let alone the second of a series in which the earthly, physical ministry of Christ is the first. Partial Preterists believe that the new creation comes in redemptive progression as Christ reigns from His heavenly throne, subjugating His enemies, and will eventually culminate in the destruction of physical death, the "last enemy" (1 Cor 15:20-24). If there are any enemies remaining, the resurrection event cannot have occurred.

Nearly all Partial Preterists hold to [amillennialism](http://www.theopedia.com/Amillennialism) or [postmillennialism](http://www.theopedia.com/Postmillennialism). Many postmillennial Partial Preterists are also [theonomists](http://www.theopedia.com/Theonomy) in their outlook.

Partial Preterism is generally considered to be an historic orthodox interpretation as it affirms all items of the ecumenical Creeds of the Church. However, Partial Preterism is not the majority view among American protestant denominations and meets with significant vocal opposition, especially by those which espouse [Dispensationalism](http://www.theopedia.com/Dispensationalism). Additionally, concerns are expressed by Dispensationalists that Partial Preterism logically leads to an acceptance of Full Preterism, a concern which is denied by Partial Preterists.

**Full Preterism**

Full Preterism differs from Partial Preterism in that it sees all prophecy fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem, including the resurrection of the dead and Jesus' Second Coming or Parousia. Full Preterism is also known by other names, such as Consistent Preterism or Hyper-Preterism (a somewhat derogatory term). A related but more recent term is [Pantelism](http://www.theopedia.com/Pantelism), which some regard as an extension of Full Preterism rather than the same thing.

Full Preterism holds that Jesus' [Second Coming](http://www.theopedia.com/Second_Coming) is to be viewed not as a future-to-us bodily return, but rather a "return" manifested by the physical destruction of Jerusalem and her Temple in AD 70 by foreign armies in a manner similar to various Old Testament descriptions of God coming to destroy other nations in righteous judgment. Full Preterism also holds that the Resurrection of the dead did not entail the raising of the physical body, but rather the resurrection of the soul from the "place of the dead," known as Sheol (Hebrew) or Hades (Greek). As such, the righteous dead obtained a spiritual and substantial body for use in the heavenly realm, and the unrighteous dead were cast into the Lake of Fire. Some Full Preterists believe this judgment is ongoing and takes effect upon the death of each individual (Heb. 9:27). The New Heavens and the New Earth are also equated with the fulfillment of the Law in AD 70 and are to be viewed in the same manner by which a Christian is considered a "new creation" upon his or her conversion.

Although Full Preterism is viewed as heretical by many, this condemnation is not universal. Many of those who condemn Full Preterism do so not based solely upon the historic creeds of the church (which would exclude this view), but also from biblical passages that they interpret to condemn a past view of the Resurrection or the denial of a physical resurrection/transformation of the body, doctrines which many Christians (but not all) believe to be essential to the faith. Critics of full preterism point to the Apostle Paul's condemnation of the doctrine of Hymaneus and Philetus (2 Tim 2:17-18), which they regard as analogous to full preterism.

Adherents of Full Preterism, however, dispute this assertion by claiming that any biblical condemnation of a past resurrection was written during a time in which the Resurrection was yet future (i.e., pre-AD 70) as well as claiming different interpretations of other proffered biblical passages. Furthermore, Full Preterists reject the authority of the Creeds to condemn their view, stating that the Creeds were written by uninspired and fallible men and are simply in error on this point and need to be reformed. A growing movement, there has been a strong push by Full Preterists for acceptance as another valid Christian eschatological view; however, to date, no major conservative denomination or group has officially accepted this view as normative, though several have issued a condemnation.

**Example argument from Scripture**

The sayings in Matthew 24 concerning the "Great Tribulation" are seen in preterism as being fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem cuminating in AD 70. Support for this claim is drawn from Jesus' saying that "this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place," which has the appearance of limiting the events described to an event that was going to take place in the first century.

Potential difficulties arise when critics of preterism point out that Matthew 24 also refers to the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven. The claim is then made that since this refers to the return of Jesus in the air, and this never happened in the first century, the preterist approach must be mistaken. The preterist reply has been to point out that there is no reason to assume that this "coming" is the second coming of Christ hoped for in the New Testament. In the Old Testament God speaks of coming to His people in judgement. In Isaiah 19, as a striking example, the prophet refers to the impending judgement on Egypt, and we are told "See, the LORD rides on a swift cloud, and is coming to Egypt." The language of God coming to us, and even the language of riding the clouds, does not necessarily refer to the second coming of Christ that Christianity generally affirms.

**Objections to Preterism**

Although Preterists are at general agreement among themselves regarding key eschatological issues, weighty objections have been brought against Preterism by advocates of Futurism.[Dispensationalists](http://www.theopedia.com/Dispensationalism) argue that the Preterist view of Christ's [Second Coming](http://www.theopedia.com/Second_Coming) is flawed, as it ignores the fact that God's covenant with [Israel](http://www.theopedia.com/Israel) was "everlasting," and therefore cannot have ended in A.D. 70. It is also asserted that Preterists confuse verses which speak of a "scattering" with those that predict a "restoration" of the covenant nation. (Deuteronomy 30: 1-10). Most Dispensationalists teach that Israel was dispersed in A.D. 70. However, textual support is brought in to show that a future regathering and national restoration of Israel is in order. Futurists have sometimes claimed that Preterism logically leads to Anti-Semitism and [replacement theology](http://www.theopedia.com/Supersessionism).

**Resources**

* Thomas Ice and [Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.](http://www.theopedia.com/Kenneth_Gentry) *The Great Tribulation: Past or Future? Two Evangelicals Debate the Question*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999.
* Stan Moody, *Crisis in Evangelical Scholarship: A New Look at the Second Coming of Christ*. Phoenix, AZ: ACW Press, 2001.
* Jerry Newcombe, *Coming AgainBut When? A Fascinating Look at the Beliefs Surrounding Christ's Return*. Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1999.

**Partial Preterism**

* Gentry, Kenneth L., Jr. *Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil*. Texarkana, AR: Covenant Media Press, 1999.
* Gentry, Kenneth L., Jr. *The Beast of Revelation*, Revised Edition. Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2002.
* [R. C. Sproul](http://www.theopedia.com/R._C._Sproul), *The Last Days According to Jesus: When Did Jesus Say He Would Return?* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998.
* Larry T. Smith, *The Coming of the Lord, the Last Days, and the End of the World as Taught by Jesus and His Apostles*. El Campo, TX: Rightly Dividing the Word, 2000.

**Full preterism**

* Kelly Nelson Birks, *The Comings of Christ: A Reformed and Preterist Analogy of the 70th Week of the Prophet Daniel*. 1st Books, 2002.
* John S. Evans, *The Four Kingdoms of Daniel: A Defense of the "Roman" Sequence with AD 70 Fulfillment*. Xulon Press, 2004.
* Ward Fenley, *The Second Coming of Jesus Christ Already Happened*. Sacramento: Kingdom of Sovereign Grace, 1997.
* Samuel M. Frost, *Misplaced Hope: The Origins of First and Second Century Eschatology*. Colorado Springs: Bimillennial Press, 2002.

**Critics of Full Preterism from Partial Preterist viewpoint**

* Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology*, Second Edition. Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1997. [See Appendix C: A Brief Theological Critique of Hyper-Preterism.]
* [Mathison, Keith A.](http://www.theopedia.com/Keith_Mathison)
	+ *Postmillennialism: An Eschatology of Hope*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1999. [See Appendix C.]
	+ Editor, *When Shall These Things Be? A Reformed Response to Hyper-Preterism*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Co., 2003. [Mathison contributes one chapter to this work.]
* Jay E. Adams, *Preterism: Orthodox or Unorthodox?* Stanley, NC: Timeless Texts, 2003.

**See also**

* [End times](http://www.theopedia.com/End_times)
* [Second coming](http://www.theopedia.com/Second_coming)

**External links**

* [Eschatology in Church History](http://www.theologicalstudies.citymax.com/page/page/1572935.htm), by Michael J Vlach

**Partial Preterism**

* <http://www.apocalipsis.org/preterism.htm> (R. A. Taylor)
* <http://www.kennethgentry.com> (Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.)
* <http://www.preteristsite.com> (Dee Dee Warren)
* <http://www.tektonics.org> (J. P. Holding, Tekton Apologetics Ministries)

**Full preterism**

* <http://eschatology.org> (Don K. Preston)
* <http://www.preteristarchive.com> (Todd D. Dennis)
* <http://www.thereignofchrist.com> (Samuel Frost)
* <http://www.preterism.info> (Michael A. Fenemore)
* <http://www.preterism-eschatology.com> (Richard K. McPherson)
* <http://www.pantelism.com> (David G. Embury, Australia)
* <http://www.preteristcosmos.com/> (Dave Green)
* <http://www.eschatology.com/> (Ward Fenley)
* <http://www.preteristcentral.com/> (Kurt M. Simmons)

**Anti-Preterism**

* <http://www.biblestudying.net/> (Scott & Brian McPherson)
* <http://www.preteristheresy.blogspot.com>
* <http://bsimmons74.wordpress.com> (Brian Simmons)

**Pantelism**

**Pantelism**, is a recent term in Christian [eschatology](http://www.theopedia.com/Eschatology) that refers to what some see as an extension of Full [Preterism](http://www.theopedia.com/Preterism). This view maintains that the Scriptures both prophetically *and redemptively*, were entirely fulfilled in the person and work of Christ and consummated at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Accordingly, this consummation included not only Christs [Second Coming](http://www.theopedia.com/Second_coming), but the [final judgment](http://www.theopedia.com/Final_judgment), the [resurrection](http://www.theopedia.com/Resurrection) of the just and the unjust, and the reconciliation of all things. The unorthodox aspect of this view is that the reconciliation accomplished in 70 A.D was such that there no longer remains a lost condition in humanity and therefore no present need for [conversion](http://www.theopedia.com/Conversion) -- which reduces to a form of universalism where all are saved and one must simply realize what has been done for all humanity.

The term *pantelism* (from the Greek all and fulfillment) was apparently coined by Jonathan Seraiah, a preterist who has written against this view.^[[1]](http://www.theopedia.com/Pantelism#note-0)^ Seraiah prefers the title pantelism (over Hyper- or Consistent Preterism) as a neutral term that does not presuppose that non-pantelist preterists are somehow inconsistent.

According to David Embury, a self-proclaimed pantelist,

"This fulfillment completed all Biblical eschatology, being demonstrated in Christ and His elect first-fruits saints end-of-the-age ministry, finding consummation in His prophesied Second Coming [Parousia] and Judgment upon the Old Covenant Mosaic world of the Law and Temple, circa AD70. "Christ's coming in power was never about "the-end-of-the-world" as we know it, viz., the end of the material time-space universe. Nor was it ever about the end of the "Christian-age" followed by the endless utopian bliss of Heaven. No, Christ's Coming, also known as 'the Parousia' was all about the ending of the Mosaic world of the Law for righteousness, followed by the ageless world of the Gospel of Grace  our present time Rev 14:6. ^[[2]](http://www.theopedia.com/Pantelism%22%20%5Cl%20%22note-1)^

**Notes**

1. [?](http://www.theopedia.com/Pantelism#ref-0) C. Jonathan Seraiah, *The End of All Things: A Defense of the Future* (Canon Press, 1999). A critical review of this unorthodox position with a foreword by [R. C. Sproul](http://www.theopedia.com/R._C._Sproul).
2. [?](http://www.theopedia.com/Pantelism#ref-1) [Pantelism.com](http://pantelism.com/)

**External links**

* [A review of Jonathan Seraiah's *The End of All Things: A Defense of the Future*](http://answers.org/bookreviews/misstheend.html), by Bob Passantino.

**Amillennialism**

**Amillennialism** (Greek: a- "no" + millennialism) is the view in Christian eschatology which states that Christ is *presently* reigning through the Church, and that the "1000 years" of Revelation 20:1-6 is a metaphorical reference to the present church age which will culminate in Christ's return. It stands in contrast to [premillennialism](http://www.theopedia.com/Premillennialism), which states that Christ will return *prior to* a literal 1000 year earthly reign; and [postmillennialism](http://www.theopedia.com/Postmillennialism), which states that Christ's return will *follow* a 1000 year golden age ushered in by the church.

**Terminology**

Although the term *amillennialism* is widely used, some prefer the term *realized millennialism*, saying it describes the position more accurately than the former, which emphasizes what they do not believe about the millennium, rather than what they do believe. ^[[1]](http://www.theopedia.com/Amillennialism%22%20%5Cl%20%22note-0)^

**Overview**

Amillennialism teaches that the thousand year reign of Christ mentioned in Revelation 20:1-6 is symbolic of the current church age, rather than a literal future 1000 year reign. It contends that the period described in Revelation 20 was inaugurated (i.e. began) at [Christ's resurrection](http://www.theopedia.com/Resurrection_of_Jesus) and will continue until His [Second Coming](http://www.theopedia.com/Second_Coming). Amillennialism holds that while Christ's reign during the [millennium](http://www.theopedia.com/Millennial_kingdom) is spiritual in nature, at the end of the church age Christ will return in final judgment and establish a permanent physical reign. Also taught by amillennialism is that the binding of Satan in Revelation 20:1-3 has already occurred, and means that "he might not deceive the nations any longer" (Revelation 20:3) by preventing the spread of the [gospel](http://www.theopedia.com/Gospel). ^[[2]](http://www.theopedia.com/Amillennialism%22%20%5Cl%20%22note-1)^

**Principles**

There are several principles which, while not entirely unique to amillennialism, combine to form the grounding from which this understanding of eschatology springs.

**The analogy of faith and biblical theology**

The [analogy of faith](http://www.theopedia.com/Analogy_of_faith) is a Reformation principle for the interpretation of Scripture, which can be expressed as "Scripture interprets Scripture". The fundamental principle of [biblical theology](http://www.theopedia.com/Biblical_theology) is that of [progressive revelation](http://www.theopedia.com/Progressive_Revelation), which states that [God](http://www.theopedia.com/God) reveals Himself in increasing measure throughout history, and that His revelation climaxes in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

As a result of these principles, we expect the [New Testament to interpret to the Old](http://www.theopedia.com/NT_use_of_the_OT), all the while showing us God, in Christ, more clearly.

**Two-age theology**

One of the major contributions of Reformed theology to this area of eschatology, and allied areas, has been the application of the two-age framework. This New Testament paradigm looks at Christian experience in terms of the 'now' and the 'not yet'. Perhaps that most eloquent and well-known statement of this principle is the Apostle Paul's words to the Corinthian church, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12). An example of the way this framework is applied in the New Testament is in the theme of "new creation". Beloved of New Testament writers, this theme is often referred to in terms indicating that it is both a present reality (2 Corinthians 5:17) and a future hope (Romans 8:20-21); the message of the New Testament is that the new creation is something we taste now and will, one day, know fully.

**Covenant theology**

While the covenant theology in its most developed form is associated with the Reformed tradition, Lutheranism and Roman Catholicism both apply aspects of the covenant theology in their own expressions of eschatology, which are also amillennial. This is most clearly seen in the agreement between the three traditions that the church is, in some sense and by some means, the inheritor of the promises in Scripture — in short, that just as Israel *was* the people of God in the Old Testament, so the church *is* the people of God in the New Testament. Such a belief, called [supersessionism](http://www.theopedia.com/Supersessionism) and denigrated as "replacement theology" by its critics, has been the historic belief of the church.^[[3]](http://www.theopedia.com/Amillennialism%22%20%5Cl%20%22note-2)^

**Amillennialist theologians**

* [Augustine](http://www.theopedia.com/Augustine)
* [Louis Berkhof](http://www.theopedia.com/Louis_Berkhof)
* [Anthony Hoekema](http://www.theopedia.com/Anthony_Hoekema)
* [John Murray](http://www.theopedia.com/John_Murray)
* [Vern Poythress](http://www.theopedia.com/Vern_Poythress)
* [Geerhardus Vos](http://www.theopedia.com/Geerhardus_Vos)
* [Greg Beale](http://www.theopedia.com/Greg_Beale)
* [J. I. Packer](http://www.theopedia.com/J._I._Packer)

**Notes**

1. [↑](http://www.theopedia.com/Amillennialism#ref-0) Anthony Hoekema, Amillennialism, <http://www.the-highway.com/amila_Hoekema.html> (accessed March 8, 2010)
2. [↑](http://www.theopedia.com/Amillennialism#ref-1) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amillennialism> (accessed March 8, 2010)
3. [↑](http://www.theopedia.com/Amillennialism#ref-2) A related charge, that of anti-Semitism, must here be denied. Although it is true that some anti-Semites have attempted to use supersessionism to justify their wickedness, in fact it is precisely the succession of the covenants which shows such attitudes to be sinful.

**Resources**

* Hendriksen, W. *More Than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation*, Baker Book House, 1998. [ISBN 0801057922](http://www.theopedia.com/Special%3ABookSources/0801057922)
* [Hoekema, A. A.](http://www.theopedia.com/Anthony_Hoekema) *The Bible and the Future*, Eerdmans, 1979. [ISBN 0802835163](http://www.theopedia.com/Special%3ABookSources/0802835163)
* Riddlebarger, K. *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times*, Baker Book House, [ISBN 080106435X](http://www.theopedia.com/Special%3ABookSources/080106435X)

**See also**

* [Eschatology](http://www.theopedia.com/Eschatology)
* [Millennial Kingdom](http://www.theopedia.com/Millennial_Kingdom)
* [Premillennialism](http://www.theopedia.com/Premillennialism)
* [Postmillennialism](http://www.theopedia.com/Postmillennialism)

**External links**

* [Amillennialism](http://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/mill.html#amil)
* [A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism](http://www.prca.org/articles/amillennialism.html), by David J. Engelsma
* [Amillennialism](http://www.the-highway.com/amila_Hoekema.html), by Anthony Hoekema
* [2 Thessalonians 1 Supports Amillennialism](http://www.frame-poythress.org/poythress_articles/19952Thessalonians.htm), by Vern Poythress
* [What is Amillennialism?](http://www.theologicalstudies.citymax.com/amillennialism.html), by Michael J. Vlach
* [What's a Thousand Years Between Friends?](http://kimriddlebarger.squarespace.com/theological-essays/amilllecture%20revised.pdf), by Kim Riddlebarger - "Why amillennialism makes a whole lot more sense than premillennialism"
* [Eschatology Comparison](http://www.fivesolas.com/esc_chrt.htm)

**Premillennialism**

**Premillennialism** teaches that the [Second coming](http://www.theopedia.com/Second_coming) will occur before a literal thousand-year reign of Christ from Jerusalem upon the earth. In the early church, premillennialism was called *chiliasm*, from the Greek term meaning *1,000*, a word used six times in Revelation 20:2-7. This view is most often contrasted with [Postmillennialism](http://www.theopedia.com/Postmillennialism) which sees Christ's return *after* a golden "millennial age" where Christ rules spiritually from his throne in heaven, and [Amillennialism](http://www.theopedia.com/Amillennialism) which sees the millennium as a figurative reference to the current church age.

**Background**

Premillennialism was the most widely held view of the earliest centuries of the church. Philip Schaff has said, "The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene Age (A.D. 100-325) is the prominent *chiliasm*, or *millenarianism*, . . . a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers, such as Barnabas, Papia, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Methodius, and Lactantius." (*History of the Christian Church*, Scribner, 1884; Vol. 2, p. 614)

Premillennialism began to die out in the established Catholic Church during the life of Augustine (A.D. 354-430). Chiliasm was suppressed by the dominant Catholic Church, but survived through various "fringe" groups of Christians during the mediaeval period. During the Reformation, Anabaptists and Hugenots helped to revive premillennialism and it was adopted among some Puritans during the Post-Reformation era.

The greatest development and spread of premillennialism since the early church came in the late 1800's - early 1900's with the rise of U.S. Fundamentalism and [Dispensationalism](http://www.theopedia.com/Dispensationalism). Starting in the British Isles and spreading to America, premillennialism (in its dispensational form) has become prominent in the Evangelical faith.

**Two varieties of premillennialism**

Premillennialists fall into two primary categories: **historic premillennialism** and **dispensational premillennialism**. Historic premillennialism is so called because it is the classic form which may be found in writings of some of the [early church fathers](http://www.theopedia.com/Early_church_fathers) (mentioned above), although in an undeveloped form. Dispensational premillennialism is that form which derives from John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) and [dispensational](http://www.theopedia.com/Dispensationalism) theology. It is dispensational premillenialism that first taught the notion of a pre-tribulation [rapture](http://www.theopedia.com/Rapture).

Historic premillennialists reject the idea of a pre-tribulation [rapture](http://www.theopedia.com/Rapture) and the uniquely Jewish nature of the dispensationalist's millennial kingdom (see below). It is often assumed that all premillennialists are dispensational in their theology. This is a confusion that should be avoided. Historic premillennialists such as [George Eldon Ladd](http://www.theopedia.com/George_Eldon_Ladd) are consistent [Calvinists](http://www.theopedia.com/Calvinism) who did not accept the basic tenets of dispensationalism.

**Uniqueness of dispensational premillennialism**

Classic dispensationalists (ala [C. I. Scofield](http://www.theopedia.com/C._I._Scofield) and Lewis Sperry Chafer) are pre-tribulationists and believe that the [second coming](http://www.theopedia.com/Second_coming) will be in two stages separated by a 7-year period of tribulation. At the first he will return in the air to rescue those who are Christians at that time (the [rapture](http://www.theopedia.com/Rapture)). Then follows a seven-year period of suffering in which the Antichrist will conquer the world and kill those who refuse to worship him. At the end of the seven years, the final witness will go out before men and angels and Christ will return to the earth. He will defeat the Antichrist, and rescue the Jews and those who have converted to Christianity during the tribulation period.

Dispensationalism has also spawned Mid-tribulationists who believe that Christians will not be removed until 3-1/2 years of the final seven years have elapsed. They place the Rapture when the Temple sacrifices have been halted and the Antichrist has enshrined himself in the Temple, calling himself God.

By contrast, historic premillennialists would be generally categorized as "Post-tribulationists" because they see no appreciable difference in the timing of the rapture and the "official" second coming. Thus they hold that Christ will not return until the end of the Great tribulation and that Christians will suffer for the faith as they bring forth the final witness associated with the 5th seal of the book of Revelation.

The belief in the pretribulation or midtribulation rapture theories of dispensationalism is often criticized, on the grounds that it results in the division of Christ's single return into two stages. Some see it as an impossible "apartheid of the Elect" of sorts which is not seen in Scripture. Pretribulationists defend it on the basis of a Scripture passage which affirms that God has not appointed His people to wrath and the promise to the Philadelphian church: "I also will keep thee out of the hour of trial, which is about to come upon the whole habitable world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Post-tribulationists counter that the tribulation associated with the final witness of the saints is in no way connected to the wrath of God. This wrath of God will only only come at the last day and it will fall upon the heads of the wicked at the last judgment.

Some specifically criticize dispensational premillennialism for its uniquely Jewish character of the [Millennial Kingdom](http://www.theopedia.com/Millennial_Kingdom). Specifically for anticipating the rebuilding of the Hebrew Temple and the offering again of animal sacrifices during the millennial reign of Christ. In dispensationalism, the return of the sacrifices will be ceremonial in nature. Like the ceremony of Communion or the Lord's Supper they believe that the sacrifices will be performed on the appointed feast days in the future Millennium. They say that the reason the animal sacrifices will continue is because they will be enacted as a memorial to the Savior who came to earth as the Sacrifice Lamb. However, critics view the idea of blood sacrifices re-instututed after Christ's return as incompatible with Christ's completed work and find the idea abhorrent (O. T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, p.248).

**Resources**

* [Craig Blomberg](http://www.theopedia.com/Craig_Blomberg) and Sung Wook Chung, eds. *A Case for Historic Premillennialism: An Alternative to 'Left Behind' Eschatology*. Baker Academic, 2009. [ISBN 9780801035968](http://www.theopedia.com/Special%3ABookSources/9780801035968)
* [J. Dwight Pentecost](http://www.theopedia.com/index.php?title=J._Dwight_Pentecost&action=edit&redlink=1), *Things to Come*. Zondervan: 1965. [ISBN 0310308909](http://www.theopedia.com/Special%3ABookSources/0310308909).
* Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*. Presbyterian & Reformed, 1945; reprint: Wipf & Stock, 2001. [ISBN 1579107095](http://www.theopedia.com/Special%3ABookSources/1579107095)

**See also**

* [Millennial Kingdom](http://www.theopedia.com/Millennial_Kingdom)
* [Amillennialism](http://www.theopedia.com/Amillennialism)
* [Dispensationalism](http://www.theopedia.com/Dispensationalism)

**External links**

* [What is Premillennialism?](http://www.theologicalstudies.citymax.com/premillennialism.html), by Michael J. Vlach
* [International Conference on Historic Premillennialism at Denver Seminary, April 23-25, 2009](http://www.denverseminary.edu/resources/international-conference-on-historic-premillennialism/)

**Critical**

* [Problems with Premillennialism](http://eschatologystuff.wordpress.com/2007/03/13/problems-with-premillennialism-by-sam-storms/), by Sam Storms

**Postmillennialism**

"The **postmillennialist** believes that the millennium is an era (not necessarily a literal thousand years) during which Christ will reign over the earth, not from a literal and earthly throne, but through the gradual increase of the Gospel and its power to change lives. After this gradual Christianization of the world, Christ will return and immediately usher the church into their eternal state after judging the wicked. This is called postmillennialism because, by its view, Christ will return after the millennium." ^[[1]](http://www.theopedia.com/Postmillennialism#note-0)^

**Contrast with Premillennialism**

"In contrast to [premillennialism](http://www.theopedia.com/Premillennialism), the postmillennialists emphasize the present aspects of God's kingdom, which will reach fruition in the future. They believe that the millennium will come through Christian preaching and teaching. Such activity will result in a more godly, peaceful, and prosperous world. The new age will not be essentially different from the present, and it will come about as more people are converted to Christ. Evil will not be totally eliminated during the millennium, but it will be reduced to a minimum as the moral and spiritual influence of Christians is increased." Elwell, Walter A. (ed.): *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Second Edition, Millenium, Views of the (article), page 771.

**Postmillennial Theologians**

* Kenneth G Talbot
* [Kenneth L Gentry](http://www.theopedia.com/Kenneth_Gentry)
* Gary Demar
* [Greg Bahnsen](http://www.theopedia.com/Greg_Bahnsen)
* [Francis Nigel Lee](http://www.theopedia.com/Francis_Nigel_Lee)
* David Chilton
* [Rousas J. Rushdoony](http://www.theopedia.com/Rousas_J._Rushdoony)
* [R.C. Sproul](http://www.theopedia.com/R.C._Sproul)
* Gary North
* [Iain Murray](http://www.theopedia.com/Iain_Murray)

**See also**

* [Millennial Kingdom](http://www.theopedia.com/Millennial_Kingdom)
* [Theonomy](http://www.theopedia.com/Theonomy)
* [Premillennialism](http://www.theopedia.com/Premillennialism)
* [Amillennialism](http://www.theopedia.com/Amillennialism)
* [End times](http://www.theopedia.com/End_times)

**Notes**

1. [↑](http://www.theopedia.com/Postmillennialism#ref-0) [Blue Letter Bible FAQ](http://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/mill.html)