

The Futurist View of End-Time Events

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Introduction

The Futurist approach is pre-millennial, which means that Jesus will return before the literal 1,000 years rule begins. However, there are four versions of Futurism:

- #1. Pre-tribulation Rapture Futurism (Dispensationalism).
- #2. Mid-tribulation Rapture Futurism.
- #3. Pre-Wrath Futurism.
- #4. Post-tribulation Rapture Futurism.

Unfortunately the overemphasis on the term ‘rapture’ diminishes the fact that the more important event will be the “first resurrection” which is immediately followed by the rapture. As can be seen from the four descriptions the prime issue is when the resurrection/rapture will occur in relation to the time of the Great tribulation. However, there are also a number of other differences among these 4 positions as presented in the following questions:

- Is there a distinction between “the gospel of the Kingdom” and “the gospel of grace?”
- Are Christians to be raptured to God’s location in heaven for 7 years (or a few years) or will it be simply a catching away into the earth’s atmosphere for a relatively short time as part of Jesus’ descent to earth?
- Are “the Day of the Lord”, “Armageddon”, and the Great Tribulation” all at the same time? (See STUDY 15).
- Will the Tribulation be for 7 or for 3½ years?
- Are the foretold wars, famines, lawlessness, and earthquakes described by Jesus global and general or are they specific to certain nations at a particular time?
- Do Britain and the USA fulfil any major role in these prophecies?
- Will it be the European Community or Middle-eastern nations that fulfil the role of the final antichrist empire?
- Does the A.D.70 destruction of Jerusalem actually fulfil Jesus’ words concerning the future destruction of Jerusalem (See STUDY 2).

The Biblical Position Is That of a Post-Tribulation Rapture

These studies take the biblical position to be #4 and the problems with #1 and #2 are discussed in STUDIES 14-17. However, there is a great deal held in common with all four of these positions:

1. All or almost all end-time prophecy is viewed as yet to be fulfilled during the few years of the end-time so that large sections of the book of Daniel, most sections of the book of Revelation, the Olivet discourse and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 are yet to be fulfilled.
2. The prophetic portions of the book of Daniel are taken as the basis for the Olivet discourse.
3. In contrast to the Historicist position Futurism understands the parenthesis or gap between the 69th and 70th seven (heptad) of the Daniel 9 prophecy.

Jesus Gets His Information from Daniel

- ❖ “Therefore when you see the **Abomination of Desolation** which was spoken of through the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the *reader* understand) ... For then there will be **great tribulation** such as has
- ❖ Not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, **nor ever will**” (*Matt. 24:15, 21*).

- ❖ “And on the wing of Abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on **the desolator**” (*Dan. 9:27*).
- ❖ “...there will be a **time of distress** such as has not occurred since...and at that time every one who is found written in the book will be rescued” (*Dan. 12:1*).
- ❖ “Forces from him [*antichrist*] will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and **do away with the regular sacrifice**. And they will set up the **Abomination of Desolation**” (*Dan. 11:31*).

The Basic Evidence for the Futurist Interpretation

1. There is a gap between the 69th and the 70th *seven* of Daniel 9. This shows that the 70th *seven* was not completed in the 30s/40s A.D. We will look at proof of this gap in a moment.
2. Jesus links “**the end of the age**” (Matt. 24:3, 13, 14) with the event of “**the Abomination of desolation**” which Christians will “**see**.” Because the “end of the age” has not yet occurred and “the Abomination of desolation” is shown in Daniel 9 to appear in the last half of the 70th *seven* this period must be yet future.
3. The rapid fire eschatological events described by Jesus in the Olivet discourse show that Jesus’ return will follow “**immediately after**” the Great Tribulation that will be triggered by the setting up of “**the Abomination of desolation**.” Hence both events must be yet future unless one believes that Jesus has already returned invisibly.
4. Luke 21:22 speaks of the “**final days of vengeance when all these things which are written may be fulfilled**.” Therefore the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem could not be part of the scheme that Jesus expounded in the Olivet Discourse.
5. The writings of the Apostolic Fathers show that they took the Futurist view e.g. Irenaeus:

But when this antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for **three years and six months** and sit in **the temple at Jerusalem**. And then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire but bringing in for the righteous the times of **the kingdom**...
6. There is no 7 year period in the Bible or history which has fulfilled this last 7 year unit of Daniel’s prophecy. So it must be yet future.

Proofs of the Interval between the 69th and the 70th ‘Seven’

The Bible provides a number of **precedents for intervals** within prophetic passages. Examples are Isaiah 9:6, 7; Isaiah 61:1, 2; and Zechariah 9:9, 10, all with reference to the first and second comings of Christ. However, the gap in these instances did not become evident until the first fulfilment. From this we can understand the possibility of gaps within other prophetic passages of which the 70 ‘sevens’ prophecy is one. The proofs for its gap are:

- The historical fact of the long period of Gentile supremacy beyond 490 years must create, of necessity, a break in those 490 years.
- The firmly locked together 7+62 presentation and the separated 1 *seven* of these 70 *sevens* indicates that there is a gap.
- In Daniel 9:26 **Messiah is cut off after the (7+) 62 sevens**. This statement would be an unusual phrase if the 70th *seven* were to follow on immediately. More naturally it would say ‘during the 70th *seven*’ or ‘in the middle of the 70th *seven*’. So this, too, indicates that there is a gap.
- The **ONE SEPARATED ‘SEVEN’** is not picked up for mention until verse 27 is reached, at which point it is introduced by a **waw consecutive**. This indicates that the beginning of the 70th *seven* in verse 27 is subsequent to **Messiah’s being cut off** in verse 26. Hence there is a gap.

NOTE: *Waw consecutive* is “and” prefixed to a verb in such a way as to indicate a close consequential relation to a preceding verb.

- A. Daniel asks: **When will the City and the Sanctuary be restored?** “*Let your face shine on your desolate sanctuary*” (Dan. 9:17) and “*do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name*” (verse 19). Daniel is given an answer listing **6 blessings of restoration** (9:24).
- B. Although the basis for these blessings has been laid in Christ’s sacrifice, yet none of these 6 blessings has yet been accomplished and will only be accomplished with the **arrival of the Kingdom**. This indicates that the 490 years have not concluded. Hence there is a gap.

NOTE: The city, the sanctuary and the people were **not restored at any time between A.D. 30-36 or A.D. 70** and are not yet restored. It would certainly be an **anticlimax** if the 70th ‘seven’ had ended with the **destruction** of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 rather than with its restoration. It would also be an anticlimax for such a grand prophecy to terminate simply with the acceptance of Gentiles into the congregation in about A.D.36.

- C. Jesus’ statement at Matthew 24:15 that the appearance of the **Abomination of Desolation** (9:27) is connected with **his Second Coming** proves there is a gap because the Second Coming evidently has not yet occurred.
- D. **Titus** did not fulfil the role of “*The Prince who is to come*”(9:26) because he **did not die** in A.D. 70. Yet this Prince “comes to his end” as further indicated in 11:45; 9:26 “*even to the end there shall be war; desolations are determined.*” Once the destruction of Jerusalem has begun there will be no respite until Antichrist is destroyed. This was not the case in A.D.70 and there were no wars from A.D 30-40. So “*The Prince who is to come*”has not yet come.
- E. The prophecy chapters 2, 7, 8 and 10/12 all terminate with **the end of the age**. This unity would be disturbed if the 4th prophecy in chapter 9 did not also terminate at the same point. This, of necessity, pushes the 70th seven into the future. The terminating comments in each of the 5 prophecies are given below:

1. Daniel 2: 44:

“In the days of those kings the God of heaven will **set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed...**it shall break in pieces all these kingdoms...”

2. Daniel 7:25, 27:

“He [*Little horn*] shall wear down the saints for **3½ years ... His [God’s] kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom** and all the dominions will serve and obey him.”

3. Daniel 8:13, 17:

“How long will the vision about regular sacrifice apply, while **the transgression causes horror ...** the vision pertains **to the time of the end.**”

4. Daniel 9:26, 27 NASB:

“70th week...and to **the end** there shall be war **Abomination** [*shown by Jesus to be future*] ... one who makes desolate...**until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.**”

5. DANIEL CHAPTERS 10 to 12

10:14: “...what will happen to your people **in the latter days**, for the vision pertains to the days yet future.” *This relates to what is described in chapters 11 and 12 where the King of the North comes to his end after the great tribulation.*

Logically vision 4. maintains the same pattern and is also completed at the time of the end and not in the 1st century.

Jesus Returns “Immediately after the Tribulation”

This means that the 70th ‘Seven’ begins relatively shortly (about 7 years) before Jesus returns and that the Olivet discourse events as recorded in Matthew 24:9-28, Mark 13:12-23 and Luke 21:16-24, and the first six seals of Revelation 6 are all within the time-frame of Daniel’s 70th ‘seven.’

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE 70th ‘SEVEN’

- ❖ “He [*antichrist*] will make a firm covenant with the many for one ‘seven’ [7 years], in the **middle of the ‘seven’** he will put a stop to sacrifice...on the wing of **abominations** will come one who **makes desolate**”
(Dan. 9:27).

- ❖ “When you see the *abomination of desolation*...spoken through Daniel ... then there will be *great tribulation* ... *immediately after the tribulation* ... see the **Son of Man coming** ...” (*Matt. 24:15, 21, 29, 30*).

So the Son of Man comes immediately after the end of the tribulation that had been triggered by the abomination of desolation at the mid-point of the 70th ‘seven.’

Why It Must Involve a Future Temple Structure

In Matthew 24:2 Jesus said: “You see all **these** [*the temple buildings*]...there will not be left here one stone upon another.” Yet, because “the day and hour” were unknown to Jesus, he did not know whether it would involve those actual buildings that were being viewed or not. Nevertheless, in modern Western thinking one would be inclined to imagine that the exact buildings that Jesus referred to must be those which were brought down in 70 AD. However, for the following reasons this has proved to be not the case and, in fact, ancient Jewish thinking, based on God’s way of thinking, is involved here.

- I. Firstly please note that Jesus did not say “You see all these **stones**” but rather “You see all **these**” *temple buildings* and so it is quite feasible that a different set of stones would be the ones that “will not be left here one stone upon another.”
- II. Please also note that Jesus did not state **the means** by which “there will not be left here one stone upon another” i.e. it did not have to be by means of the Roman army (although an army will invade it).
- III. So what is **the Jewish way of thinking** that allows for the destruction of the temple as Jesus spoke of it, but with a different and yet future set of buildings? It was God’s stating through Haggai that two different structures on the same site are viewed as one particular temple when he said:
 - ❖ “Who is left among you who saw **this house** in its **former glory**? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes?...I will fill this house with glory...**the latter glory** of **this house** shall be greater than **the former**? (*Haggai 2:3, 7, 9*).

God is clearly speaking of three separate structures, one of which had been built by Solomon and had “its **former glory**,” and which in Haggai’s time had been destroyed; the second was that which recently had been built by Zerubbabel and was despised in the eyes of the people. The third is a future structure having “**the latter glory** of **this house**” and which “**shall be greater than the former**.” Yet they are all viewed as “this house” i.e. ‘this temple’—the same temple. The ‘glory’ varies from former to latter, but the house does not vary. This also fits with the passage in 2 Thessalonians 2 concerning “the man of lawlessness” as one who sits in God’s temple sanctuary and who is soon destroyed by Messiah (2 Thess. 2:8, 9).

As an example, if a modern-day school burned down and is rebuilt, although it may be called ‘the new school’ it hasn’t become a different school. It is in the same location with the same name, same staff, same pupils and operating in the same or a similar way as prior to the destruction. It is the same school.

A further example to make about the Jerusalem temple is that if, at some point, an enemy had knocked down only a corner of the temple building and the stones were later replaced by the Jews, no one would imagine it had become a different temple.

- IV. As shown earlier, Jesus answers the particular question from the disciples which links destruction of the temple **with the end of the age** and for which he offers only a single sign, namely the seeing of the “abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be” (Mark 13:14 NAB). This is all yet future, especially in view of the fact that one cannot separate, by a large gap of time, the events of Matthew 24:4-28 involving the Great Tribulation, from the future return of Christ as described in Matthew 24:29-31. This is because the return follows on “*Immediately after the tribulation of those days*.”
- V. As shown in STUDY 2, the **historic events** leading up to the destruction of the temple in AD 70 do not fit the picture Jesus gives of the attack upon Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple at the end of the age. For these reasons it must refer to the temple in the future.

Further Factors Concerning Post-Tribulation Futurism

Although the major things set out above is common to all forms of Futurism we must now state the areas wherein Post-tribulation Futurism differs with the other approaches. But first we must note the Scriptures that are most relevant to this subject:

The Main/Plain Scriptures for the End-Time Chronology

The Olivet Discourse (Matt.24, Mark 13, Luke 21, Rev. 6); Joel 2:31; 1 Cor. 15:20-56; Daniel 9:24-27, 11:35-36, 12; All of Revelation; 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11; 2 Thess. 2:1-12.

The Secondary Scriptures for the End-Time Chronology

Daniel 2:19-45, Daniel 7 and 8, Zechariah 12-14, Matt. 13:37-43, Matt. 25, Luke 17:22-36, Romans 11:25, 26, 2 Peter 2:4-9, 3:3-13, Isaiah 2:10-22, 13:9-13, 24, 26:19-27:1, 28:15-22, 64:1-5; Psalms 18:1-20, 110, Ezekiel 37-39.

The Great Tribulation Lasts for About 3½ Years

PERSECUTION OF THE HOLY ONES

❖ “He [*The Little Horn*] will... **wear down the saints**...and they will be given into his hand for **3½ times**”
(*Dan. 7:25*).

The question: “How long will it be **until the end** of these wonders?”

The answer: “it would be for **3½ times**; and as soon as they finish **shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed**” (*Dan. 12:6, 7*).

Because tribulation means persecution, the Great Tribulation that Jesus spoke of refers to a time of final intense persecution of Christians lasting for 1,260 days:

THREE AND A HALF TIMES = 1,260 DAYS

❖ “the woman **fled to the wilderness**...there she would be nourished for **1,260 days** ... the 2 wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly away **into the wilderness** to her place, where she was nourished for **3½ times** [*the tribulation*] from the **presence of the serpent**” (*Rev. 12:6, 7, 14*).

Because each prophetic time = 360 days, and because each prophetic month = 30 days the total is a period of 1,260 days of persecution of ‘the holy ones.’ This ends with the rescue of ‘the holy ones’ by the returning Messiah. This means that as Jesus is descending the first resurrection occurs immediately followed by the rapture (1 Thess. 4) soon after the end of the 70th ‘seven.’

To The End of These Wonders

However, to complete the answer to the question in Daniel 12: “How long will it be **until the end** of these wonders?” Daniel is given the further information that:

❖ “From the time that the **regular sacrifice is abolished** and the **Abomination of Desolation** is set up, there will be **1,290 days**” (*Dan. 12:11*).

So all the described events of Daniel 11 and 12, including the Great Tribulation, the return of Messiah, the rescue and first resurrection of God’s people and **antichrist’s destruction**, will be completed by 1,290 days from when the **Abomination of Desolation** is set up that will bring sacrifices to an end. This also brings things to “the end of the age.” So the effect of the abomination lingers for another 30 days after the end of the 70th ‘seven’. This is because “**he is not destroyed** until the decreed **end** is poured out on the desolator” **thirty days after** the 1,260 days i.e. by the end of 1,290 days.

The Length of an Antichrist’s Rule

❖ “Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will **tread under foot the holy city** [*Jerusalem*] for **42 months**” (*Rev. 11:2*).

❖ “**The beast**...authority to act for **42 months** was given to him ... It was given to him to **make war with the saints** and to overcome them” (*Rev. 13:4, 5, 7*).

Hence antichrist controls Jerusalem for 1,260 days. This appears to be “*the times of the Gentiles*” as noted by Jesus in Luke 21:24. Since the length of the Great Tribulation given in Revelation was provided about 40 years

after Jesus' statement in Matthew 24:22, the 3½ years is probably the already “*cut short*” time period. Although the ‘Abomination of Desolation’ is mentioned by Daniel in connection with his people, the Jews; Jesus makes the connection also with Christians because he warns his disciples: “*When you see the Abomination of Desolation standing where he ought not...*”

The Length of Parallel Events Involving Christians

- ❖ “...*my two witnesses will prophesy 1,260 days*” (Rev. 11:3).
- ❖ “...the woman *fled to the wilderness*...there she would be nourished for **1,260 days**” (Rev. 12:6, 7).
- ❖ “But the 2 wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly away *into the wilderness* to her place, where she was nourished for **3½ times** [*the tribulation*] from the *presence of the serpent*” (Rev. 12:14).

The Olivet Discourse Events Start in Judea and Widen to Be Global Events

EVENTS IN JUDEA

In harmony with much that the prophets state, Jesus’ description in Matthew 24:4-28 and Mark 13: 5-23 has a general application to future events to occur in Judea:

- ❖ ¹⁵ “So when you see standing **in the holy place** ‘the abomination that causes desolation ... ¹⁶ then let those who are **in Judea** flee to the mountains ²⁰ Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or **on the Sabbath**.”

As with Mark 13:9, Luke 21:12 adds to this that “They will hand you over to **synagogues**.” Then Luke 21:20-24 gives the parallel account for Gentile readers as:

- ❖ ²⁰ “When you see **Jerusalem** being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. ²¹ Then let those who are in **Judea** flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. ²² For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. ²³ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be **great distress in the land** and wrath **against this people**. ²⁴ They will fall by the sword and will be **taken as prisoners to all the nations**. **Jerusalem** will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”

ASPECTS WHICH EXTEND OUT FROM JUDEA

However within Matthew 24:4-28 the events include such middle-Eastern and global things as:

- ❖ ⁷ **Nation will rise against nation**, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and **earthquakes in various places**. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains. ⁹ “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by **all nations** because of me. ... ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be **preached in the whole world** as a testimony **to all nations**, and then the end will come. ... ²¹ For then there will be **great distress, unequalled** from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. ... ²² “If those days had not been cut short, **no one would survive**, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.” *Mark 13: 5-23 follows the same pattern.*

EVENTS THAT ARE WORLDWIDE

Jesus’ next statements in Matthew 29-31 concern global events.

- ❖ ²⁹ “Immediately after the distress of those days “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ “Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then **all the peoples of the earth** will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.”

Again Mark 13: 24-26 follows the pattern in Matthew and Luke’s account adds the following details:

- ❖ ²⁵ “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the **roaring and tossing of the sea**. ²⁶ People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. ²⁷ At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

THE TIGHT CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THESE EVENTS

One cannot separate these events so as to propose that the early parts of Jesus' prophecy were fulfilled in AD 70 and the latter parts from Matthew 24:29 are yet future. This is because Jesus makes the tight connection of "immediately after the tribulation (distress) of those days" then "the Son of Man" returns at which point he destroys "the man of Lawlessness" (2 Thess. 2:8, 9).

In keeping with these tight connections if one proposes the Preterist scheme so that all these events did occur in AD 70 then, in contradiction of many Scriptures Jesus must have returned invisibly and the first resurrection has already taken place and the antichrist is slaughtered. Only a fully Futurist view fits Jesus' description of these events which have not yet happened.

Antichrist's Wars of Daniel 11

The world's wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes that have occurred since the 1st century are **not** to be taken as the so-called '**signs of the times**' or indeed any real part of **the sign**. However, the wars and famines that Jesus spoke of seem to be related to the future activities of antichrist (Dan. 11 and Rev. 6) and comprise the "beginning of the birth-pangs" (Matt. 24).

The Key Sign of Jesus' Return

The first precursor event to the return of Jesus is the future desolation of Jerusalem brought about by antichrist—"the Abomination of Desolation." This, then, triggers the 3½ year Great Tribulation, after which occur literal celestial phenomena as Jesus returns. The Great Tribulation is viewed as the final vicious burst of the 'birth pains' and not a protracted period since AD 70. (Please see STUDY 13, THE SIGN).

Devastation on Jerusalem in the Future

Because the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem does not fully fit the picture given by all the relevant Scriptures, it therefore can only be viewed as no more than a type of the coming desolation of Jerusalem. So, the fulfilment of Jesus' Olivet discourse, based on the statements of the OT prophets- in particular Daniel, Zechariah, Isaiah, Joel and probably Ezekiel, will occur on Jerusalem in the future.

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Summary of Post-Tribulation Futurism

1. The fulfilment of most of prophecy is yet future.
2. The future Great Tribulation will last literally approximately 3½ years.
3. The Great Tribulation will be triggered by the wicked work of a final Antichrist figure. (See STUDY 7).
4. The final Antichrist will lead a powerful Middle-Eastern coalition of nations.
5. This empire will destroy the 'Babylon the Great' religious system.
6. It will establish a new single religious system based in a literal rebuilt city of Babylon. (See STUDY 21),
7. Antichrist with many nations will attack and control literal Jerusalem.
8. Antichrist will desecrate a rebuilt Jewish temple.
9. Jesus will return before the Millennium begins, but after the Great Tribulation.
10. The first resurrection/rapture will occur after the Great Tribulation.
11. This first resurrection includes all the faithful ones of all time.
12. A remnant of literal Israel will repent at the time of Jesus' return and so survive.
13. A remnant of repenting Gentile nations will survive through into the Millennium.
14. At Jesus' return he will defeat Antichrist and recover Jerusalem.

15. The living wicked, including Antichrist and his false prophet, will then be destroyed.
16. Jesus will set up the Kingdom with literal Jerusalem as the capital city.
17. Satan and the demons will be incarcerated for 1,000 years.
18. The Millennium will be a literal 1,000 year period as the initial stage of God's Kingdom.
19. Jesus as King of the world works with the Christian immortal rulers in the Kingdom.
20. The remnant of mortal nations will form the basis for later subjects in the Kingdom.
21. Such mortal subjects will enjoy very long, prosperous and peaceful lives.
22. Earth's population will grow from the remnant of Israel and the Gentile survivors.
23. The second resurrection occurs after the end of the Millennium.
24. The Great White Throne judgement results in destruction of the resurrected wicked.
25. A future will be granted to resurrected ones who have their names in 'the book of life.'

Pre-Wrath Futurism

The concept of a pre-wrath resurrection/rapture harmonizes with the Scriptural Post-tribulation rapture teaching in as much as the rapture will occur after the Great tribulation. However, it may be that before their rapture, Christians will still be living on earth but given God's protection during the time of His pouring out of His wrath during "the day of the Lord." And so they are not resurrected and caught up pre-wrath, but near the end of that out-pouring of wrath. Furthermore, the main proponents of 'pre-wrath' (Marvin Rosenthal and Robert van Kampen) set the rapture at an unspecified time approximately half way into the latter half of Daniel's 70th 'seven,' as well as incorrectly placing the raptured Christians in God's location in heaven rather than in the 'air' as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

APPENDIX

Basic History of Prophecy Approach Positions

Early 2nd century. **The Didache** speaks of the 'fiery trial...but they who endure' before the Lord comes. This is therefore *Post-tribulation futurism*.

Late 2nd century. **Irenaeus** looked forward to a series of significant events before antichrist could arise and Christ return. "The Antichrist...will reign for 3 years and six months...and then the Lord will come from heaven..." *Post-tribulation futurism*.

The **first three centuries of Christian belief** were characterized by Pre-millennial *Post-tribulation futurism*.

Early 400s A.D. **Augustine** originates the concept of an early current Millennium—a form of **Amillennialism**.

Middle of the 12th century. The Cathari introduced the *Historicist* approach to interpreting prophecy. The Saracens were seen as being the antichrist.

1180. **Peter Waldo** identifies the antichrist with the Papacy. *Historicism*.

1202. **Joachim de Floris** assigned a day/year value to the 1,260 days of Revelation. *Historicism*. From then there have been 36 different starting points up to 1823 supposedly leading to the return of Christ. *Historicism*.

c.1350. The Waldenses publish a treatise to prove that **the system** of Popery was the Antichrist. *Historicism*.

1519. **Martin Luther** identifies antichrist with the Papacy. Protestants adopt *Historicism*.

1590. **Ribera**, a Spanish Jesuit, recovers the patristic *futurist* interpretation in his commentary on Revelation.

1604. The Jesuit **Luis De Alcasar** originates the concept of ‘Three Hundred Year Preterism’, now termed **Mild Preterism**. The first Protestants to embrace this concept were Hugo Grotius (d. 1645.) and Henry Hammond (d. 1660).

1706. **Daniel Whitby** originates the concept of **Post-Millennialism** leading to **Partial Preterism**.

1730. **Firmin Abauzit** (Swiss Protestant and Arian) wrote the first **Consistent Preterist** explanation (‘Essai sur l'Apocalypse’). He later changed his mind about it.

1826. **S.R Maitland** publishes a pamphlet entitled: “An enquiry into the ground on which the Prophetic Period of Daniel and St John has been supposed to consist of 1,260 years.” This was **Post-tribulation futurism**. He was supported by Professor of Hebrew **James H Todd**.

1830. **Margaret MacDonald** writes to **Edward Irving** describing her visions of a secret rapture before the revealing of antichrist. This is developed into **Pre-tribulation dispensationalism**.

1831. Irving subsequently introduces **Pre-tribulation dispensationalism** and **J.N. Darby** adopts it.

1835. **William Burgh** publishes lectures on the systematic treatment of futurist prophetic events. This is **Post-tribulation futurism**.

1845. **Robert Townley** was the first American to accept **Consistent Preterism**. He, too, later changed his mind about it.

1878. **James Stuart Russell** writes the book *Parousia* presenting the concept of **Consistent Preterism**.

1907. **Henry Barclay Swete** begins the **Consistent Preterist** school based on Modern Amillennialism.

As can be seen Post-Millennialism, Preterism, and Pre-tribulation dispensationalism were late on the scene of prophecy positions. However, Proponents of these approaches claim that their understanding can be found back to the early Church fathers. This has been well debated and been found to be unsubstantiated. Only the Post-tribulation futurist approach can genuinely be traced back to the early Church fathers.

SUGGESTED READING

The Church and the Tribulation by Robert Gundry

First the Antichrist by Robert Gundry

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