These days the people know more about eschatology through Hollywood movies and best seller fiction books than the Bible itself. Our libraries are filled with the books topically written on the book of Revelation in the attempt of revealing the future to curious man. Whatever is the reason, man is very curious about his future and such books and films some how provides remedy for his deep longing desire in knowing the unknown. Having the most symbolic language of the Bible, Revelation has opened the door not only for fiction writers but for several different approaches to prophetic/eschatological texts. Before going to these approaches, let us see what Christian eschatology is.

**Christian Eschatology**

Christian eschatology is a major branch of study within Christian theology. Eschatology, from two Greek words meaning *last* (ἔσχατος, last) and *study* (λογία, lit. discourse), is the study of "end things", whether the end of an individual life, the end of the age, the end of the world and the nature of the Kingdom of God. Broadly speaking, Christian eschatology is the study of the destiny of humankind as it is revealed by the Bible, which is the primary source for all Christian eschatology studies.

The major issues and events in Christian eschatology are death and the afterlife, Heaven and Hell, the Second Coming of Jesus, the Resurrection of the Dead, the Rapture, the Tribulation, Millennialism, the end of the world, the Last Judgment, and the New Heaven and New Earth of the world to come. Eschatological passages are found in many places in the Bible, both in the Old and the New Testaments. There are also many extra-biblical examples of eschatological prophecy, as well as church traditions.

Eschatology is an ancient branch of study in Christian theology, informed by Biblical texts such as the Olivet discourse, The Sheep and the Goats, and other discourses of end times by Jesus, with the doctrine of the Second Coming first discussed by Paul of Tarsus and Ignatius of Antioch († AD), then given more consideration by the Christian apologist, Justin Martyr († AD). Treatment of eschatology continued in the West in the teachings of Tertullian († AD), and was given fuller reflection and speculation soon after by Origen († AD). It was increasingly recognized as a formal division of theological study during the th century.

The following approaches arose from the study of Christianity's most central eschatological document, the Book of Revelation, but the principles embodied in them can be applied to all prophecy in the Bible. They are by no means mutually exclusive and are often combined to form a more complete and coherent interpretation of prophetic passages. Most interpretations fit into one, or a combination of, these approaches.

**Preterism**

Preterism (from the Latin praeteritus, meaning "gone by") is an approach which sees prophecy as chiefly being fulfilled in the past, especially (in the case of the Book of Revelation) during the first century. Prophecies in general, therefore, have already been fulfilled. In particular, many Preterists (whether they be Full Preterists or Partial Peterists), view The Book of Revelation, as a text employing symbols in its communication of prophecy
to the Early Church regarding the actors and events involved during the destruction of Jerusalem in the year AD. Other Preterists consider the Book of Revelation to be a symbolic prophetic presentation of the struggle of Christianity to survive the persecutions of the Roman Empire. There are two major views within Preterism, that of Partial preterism (that many of the Bible's prophecies were fulfilled during the life and time of Jesus and the Early Church) and Full preterism, (that all of the Bible's prophecies were fulfilled during the life and time of Jesus and the Early Church). Preterist beliefs usually have a close association with Amillennialism, the belief that the Millennial reign of Christ began during the establishment of the Early Church. Preterists usually consider events such as the Great Tribulation as having occurred during the siege and destruction of Jerusalem from 66-70.

Historicism

Historicism says that Biblical prophecies provide us with a broad view of history, as well as an explanation of the religious significance of historical events. Historicians attempt to identify prophetic passages with major events in history.

Futurism

In Futurism, parallels may be drawn with historical events, but most eschatological prophecies are chiefly referring to events which have not yet been fulfilled, but will take place at the end of the age and the end of the world. Most prophecies will be fulfilled during a global time of chaos known as the Great Tribulation and afterwards. Futurist beliefs usually have a close association with Premillennialism and Dispensationalism. Futurist beliefs were presented in the Left Behind series.

Idealism

In Idealism, also known as "spiritual" or "symbolic", the events described in prophecy are neither past, present, nor future, but are representative of larger ideals and principles. Because apocalyptic literature was historically a symbolic genre, this view attempts to be true to the style of the writing, symbolic. Eschatological prophecy deals with the ongoing struggle between the forces of light and darkness, and the ultimate triumph of good over evil. Its message is purely a spiritual one, an allegory symbolic of the spiritual path, which is equally relevant in all ages and for all people.

Many who hold a symbolic view do so because it can also include all views in one, past, present and future. Prophecies which were already fulfilled in early history, were fulfilled throughout history and which are yet to be fulfilled can be included in a broader, symbolic view. This also includes terms like type and ante-type, whereby earlier fulfillment of a prophecy can be seen as a forerunner of a later, perhaps more complete fulfillment of the same prophecy. Those who hold to a symbolic view may believe in an end-time Great Tribulation but may equally see the suffering of Christians in countries like North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia as living symbolically through their Great Tribulation now.

**Major Mainstream in interpretation of Prophetic Texts**
Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism is an evangelical, futurist, Biblical interpretation that understands God to have related to human beings in different ways under different Biblical covenants in a series of "dispensations," or periods in history.

As a system, dispensationalism is expounded in the writings of John Nelson Darby and the Plymouth Brethren movement, and propagated through works such as Cyrus Scofield's Scofield Reference Bible. The theology of dispensationalism consists of a distinctive eschatological end times perspective, as all dispensationalists hold to Pre-Millennialism and most hold to a Pre-Tribulation rapture. Dispensationalists believe that the nation of Israel is distinct from the Christian Church, and that God has yet to fulfill his promises to national Israel. These promises include the land promises, which in the future world to come result in a millennial kingdom and Third Temple where Christ, upon his return, will rule the world from Jerusalem for a thousand years. In other areas of theology, dispensationalists hold to a wide range of beliefs within the evangelical and fundamentalist spectrum.

One of the most important underlying theological concepts for dispensationalism is progressive revelation. While some non-dispensationalists start with progressive revelation in the New Testament and refer this revelation back into the Old Testament, dispensationalists begin with progressive revelation in the Old Testament and read forward in a historical sense. Therefore there is an emphasis on a gradually developed unity as seen in the entirety of Scripture. Biblical covenants are intricately tied to the dispensations. When these Biblical covenants are compared and contrasted, the result is a historical ordering of different dispensations. Also with regard to the different Biblical covenant promises, dispensationalism emphasises to whom these promises were written, the original recipients. This has led to certain fundamental dispensational beliefs, such as a distinction between Israel and the Church.

Another important theological concept is the emphasis on what is referred to as the historical-grammatical method of interpretation. This is often popularly referred to as the "literal" interpretation of Scripture. Just as Israel was said to have literally experienced the curses spoken of in the Old Testament, dispensationalists believe that they will one day, literally, receive the blessings spoken of in the Old Testament. Just as it is with progressive revelation, the historical-grammatical method is not a concept or practice that is exclusive just to dispensationalists. However, a dispensational distinctive is created when the historical-grammatical method of interpretation is closely coupled with an emphasis on progressive revelation along with the historical development of the covenants in Scripture.

All dispensationalists hold to a clear distinction between Israel and the Church. Israel is an ethnic nation consisting of Hebrews (Israelites), beginning with Abraham and continuing in existence to the present. The church consists of all saved individuals in this present dispensation—i.e., from the "birth of the Church" in Acts until the time of the Rapture. The distinction between Israel and the Church is not mutually exclusive, as there is a recognized overlap between the two. The overlap consists of Jewish Christians (such as Peter and Paul—although the Apostle Paul was also a Roman citizen, by birth, he was of the tribe of Benjamin
and a strong Jewish nationalist in heart (Rom 9:1-11) who are ethnically Jewish and also have faith in Jesus Christ. Dispensationalists also believe that toward the end of the Tribulation, Israel as a nation will turn and embrace Jesus as their messiah right before his second coming during the Great Tribulation. Classical dispensationalists refer to the present day Church as a "parenthesis" or temporary interlude in the progress of Israel's prophesied history. Progressive dispensationalism "softens" the Church/Israel distinction by seeing some Old Testament promises as expanded by the New Testament to include the Church. However, progressives never view this expansion as replacing promises to its original audience, Israel.

Covenant Theology is the alternative view to dispensationalism that holds that God has one people Israel and the promises to Israel made in the Old Testament were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the new Israel, and the object of Abraham's hope. Dispensationalists have often criticized Covenant Theology as being identical with what they call "Replacement Theology" or Supersessionism, the concept that the Church has replaced Israel. However, in Covenant Theology, the church is not a replacement for the nation of Israel but an expansion of it where Gentiles are "grafted into" the existing covenant community. Jewish Christians are included in the spiritual Israel.

The label "dispensationalism" is derived from the idea that Biblical history is best understood through division into a series of chronologically successive dispensations. The number of dispensations held are typically three, four, seven, or eight. The three- and four-dispensation schemes are often referred to as minimalist, as they recognize the commonly held major breaks within Biblical history. The seven- and eight-dispensation schemes are often closely associated with the announcement or inauguration of certain Biblical covenants.

Mainstream dispensationalists such as Scofield and Ironside identify Pentecost, in the second chapter of Acts, with the start of the Church as distinct from Israel; this may be referred to as the "Acts 2" position. Grace Movement Dispensationalist believe that the church started after Acts 7, focusing primarily on the ministry of Paul. Advocates of the "mid-Acts" position, such as Darby identify the start of the church after the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7, or with the salvation of Saul in Acts 9, or with Paul's first missionary journey in Acts 13. The 'Acts 7-10' position, most notably expounded by E. W. Bullinger, posits the beginning of the church after the 10th and concluding chapter of Acts.

Hyper-Dispensationalists are considered divisive notably because they reject the rite of water baptism practiced by almost all Christian denominations. They do practice baptism, but instead of water baptism (which is sometimes considered the only baptism), they believe in Baptism with the Holy Spirit, which occurs when a person becomes saved by believing that Jesus Christ died for our sins. Grace Movement Dispensationalists do not condemn water baptism but see it as not being necessary for salvation.

Dispensationalists are Pre-Millennialists who affirm a future, literal 1000-year reign of Jesus Christ which merges with and continues on to the eternal state in the "new heavens and the new earth", and they hold that the millennial kingdom will be theocratic in nature and not mainly soteriological, as it is viewed by George Eldon Ladd and others who hold to a non-
dispensational form of premillennialism. Dispensationalism is known for its views respecting the nation of Israel during this millennial kingdom reign, in which Israel as a nation plays a major role and regains a king, a land, and an everlasting kingdom. The vast majority of dispensationalists hold to the pretribulation rapture, with small minorities holding to either a mid-tribulation or post-tribulation rapture.

A Brief look at its history

Early Church and Pre-Millennialism

If millenarian beliefs have fallen into disfavor in mainstream Christian theology today, this was not the case during the Early Christian centuries. At least during the first four centuries, millennialism was a well-known doctrine in both East and West. Tertullian, Commodian, Lactantius, Methodius, and Apollinaris of Laodicea all advocated premillennial doctrine. In addition, according to religious scholar the Rev. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee the following is true, "Justin's 'Occasional Chiliasm' sui generis which was strongly anti-pretribulationistic was followed possibly by Pothinus in A.D. �� and more probably (around ��) by Irenaeus – although Justin Martyr, discussing his own premillennial beliefs in his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, Chapter ��, observed that they were not necessary to Christians:

"I admitted to you formerly, that I and many others are of this opinion, and [believe] that such will take place, as you assuredly are aware; but, on the other hand, I signified to you that many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians, think otherwise."

Melito of Sardis is frequently listed as a second century proponent of premillennialism. The support usually given for the supposition is that Jerome [Comm. on Ezek. ��] and Gennadius [De Dogm. Eccl., Ch. ��] both affirm that he was a decided millenarian.”

In the early third century, Hippolytus of Rome wrote:

And �� years must needs be accomplished, in order that the Sabbath may come, the rest, the holy day "on which God rested from all His works." For the Sabbath is the type and emblem of the future kingdom of the saints, when they "shall reign with Christ," when He comes from heaven, as John says in his Apocalypse: for "a day with the Lord is as a thousand years." Since, then, in six days God made all things, it follows that �� �� years must be fulfilled (Hippolytus. On the Hexaëmeron, Or Six Days' Work. From Fragments from Commentaries on Various Books of Scripture).

Around ��, there were some similar influences on Tertullian though only with very important and extremely optimistic (if not perhaps even postmillennial modifications and implications). On the other hand, 'Christian Chiliastic' ideas were indeed advocated in �� by Commodian; in �� by the Egyptian Bishop Nepos in his Refutation of Allegorists; in �� by the almost unknown Coracion; and in �� by Lactantius.
Into the late fourth century, the bishop known as Ambrose of Milan had millennial leanings (Ambrose of Milan. Book II. On the Belief in the Resurrection, verse 1–8).

The first known opponent of Christian chiliasm was Marcion, in the 2nd century, who most Christians feel was an early heretic. The Catholic Encyclopedia noted that in the 2nd century proponents of "Gnosticism rejected millenarianism".

Chiliasm was, however, according to the interpretation of non-chiliasts, condemned as a heresy in the 4th century by the Church, which included the phrase *whose Kingdom shall have no end* in the Nicene Creed in order to rule out the idea of a Kingdom of God which would last for only \(n\) literal years. Despite some writers' belief in millenialism, it was a decided minority view, as expressed in the nearly universal condemnation of the doctrine over a gradual period of time, beginning with Augustine of Hippo.

Millennialism is strongly rejected as a heresy by the Orthodox Church. In AD 530, the Synod of Iconium declared that baptisms performed by the Montanist sect were invalid. The Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in AD 331 supported the Synod of Iconium and further declared millennialism to be a heresy.

In a letter to Queen Gerberga of France around 1050, Adso of Montier-en-Der established the idea of a "last World Emperor" who would conquer non-Christians before the arrival of the Antichrist.

Reformation and Beyond

Christian views on the future order of events diversified after the Protestant reformation (c.1517). In particular, new emphasis was placed on the passages in the Book of Revelation which seemed to say that Satan would be locked away for \(n\) years, but then released on the world in a final battle (Rev. 20:2–7). Previous Catholic and Orthodox theologians had no clear or consensus view on what this actually meant (only the concept of an end of the world coming unexpected, "like a thief in a night", and the concept of "the antichrist" were almost universally held). Millennialist theories try to explain what this "\(n\) years of Satan in chains" would be like.

Various types of millennialism exist with regard to Christian eschatology, especially within Protestantism, such as Premillennialism, Postmillennialism, and Amillennialism. The first two refer to different views of the relationship between the "millennial Kingdom" and Christ's second coming. Premillennialism sees Christ's second advent as preceding the millennium, thereby separating the second coming from the final judgment. In this view, "Christ's reign" will be physical. Postmillennialism sees Christ's second coming as subsequent to the millennium and consequent with the final judgment. In this view "Christ's reign" (during the millennium) will be spiritual in and through the church. Amillennialism basically denies a future literal \(n\) year kingdom and sees the church age metaphorically described in Rev. 20:1–7 in which "Christ's reign" is current in and through the church.

The Catholic Church now strongly condemns millennialism as the following shows:
The Antichrist's deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realize within history that messianic hope which can only be realized beyond history through the eschatological judgment. The Church has rejected even modified forms of this falsification of the kingdom to come under the name of millenarianism, especially the "intrinsically perverse" political form of a secular messianism. (Catechism of the Catholic Church. Imprimatur Potest +Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. Doubleday, NY 1996, p. 194).

A millennium is a period of one thousand years, and, in particular, Christ's thousand-year rule on this earth, either directly preceding or immediately following the Second Coming (and the Day of Judgment).

The millennium reverses the previous period of evil and suffering; it rewards the virtuous for their courage while punishing the evil-doers, with a clear separation of saints and sinners. The vision of a thousand-year period of bliss for the faithful, to be enjoyed here on earth ("heaven on earth"), exerted an irresistible power. Although the picture of life in the millennial era is almost willfully obscure and hardly more appealing than that of, say, the Golden Age, what has made the millennium much more powerful than the Golden Age or Paradise myths are the activities of the sects and movements that it has inspired. Throughout the ages, hundreds of sects were convinced that the millennium was imminent, about to begin in the very near future, with precise dates given on many occasions.

**Premillennialism**

Premillennialism in Christian eschatology is the belief that Jesus Christ will literally and physically return to the earth and take the righteous back to heaven with him. This return is referred to as the Rapture, and rather than Jesus descending to touch the Earth, the righteous will be raised to meet Him in the air. Bible passages such as 1Th. 4:16-17 & Rev. 20:1-4 are cited as evidence. The doctrine is called premillennialism because it holds that Jesus' physical return to earth will occur prior to the inauguration of the millennium. It is distinct from the other forms of Christian eschatology such as postmillennialism or amillennialism, which view the millennial rule as occurring either before the second coming, or as being figurative and non-temporal. For the last century the belief has been common in Christian fundamentalism.

Premillennialism is based upon what is said to be a literal interpretation of Revelation 20:1-4 in the New Testament, which describes Jesus' coming to the earth and subsequent reign at the end of an apocalyptic period of tribulation. It views this future age as a time of fulfillment for the prophetic hope of God's people as given in the Old Testament. Others such as the Eastern Orthodox claim that this passage of Revelation describes the present time, when Christ reigns in Heaven with the departed saints; such an interpretation views the symbolism of Revelation as referring to a spiritual battle rather than a physical battle on earth.

The proponents of Amillennialism interpret the millennium as being a symbolic period of time, consistent with the highly symbolic nature of the apocalyptic genre of the book of Revelation, sometimes indicating that the thousand years represent God's rule over his
creation or the Church. Premillennialism is often used to refer specifically to those who adhere to the beliefs in an earthly millennial reign of Christ as well as a rapture of the faithful coming before (dispensational) or after (historic) the tribulation preceding the millennium. Post-millennialism, for example, agrees with premillennialism about the future earthly reign of Christ, but disagrees on the concept of a rapture and tribulation before the millennium begins. Postmillennialists hold to the view that the second coming will happen after the millennium.

**Postmillennialism**

In Christian end-times theology, (eschatology), postmillennialism is an interpretation of chapter 20 of the Book of Revelation which sees Christ's second coming as occurring *after* (Latin *post-* ) the "Millennium", a Golden Age in which Christian ethics prosper. The term subsumes several similar views of the end times, and it stands in contrast to premillennialism, and, to a lesser extent, amillennialism.

Postmillennialism holds that Jesus Christ establishes his kingdom on earth through his preaching and redemptive work in the first century and that he equips his church with the gospel, empowers her by the Spirit, and charges her with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19) to disciple all nations. Postmillennialism expects that eventually the vast majority of men living will be saved. Increasing gospel success will gradually produce a time in history prior to Christ's return in which faith, righteousness, peace, and prosperity will prevail in the affairs of men and of nations. After an extensive era of such conditions Jesus Christ will return visibly, bodily, and gloriously, to end history with the general resurrection and the final judgment after which the eternal order follows.

Postmillennialism was a dominant theological belief among American Protestants who promoted reform movements in the 19th and 20th century such as abolitionism and the Social Gospel. Postmillennialism has become one of the key tenents of a movement known as Christian Reconstructionism. It has been criticized by 20th century religious conservatives as an attempt to Immanentize the eschaton.

Although some postmillennialists hold to a literal millennium of 1,000 years, other postmillennialists see the thousand years more as a figurative term for a long period of time (similar in that respect to amillennialism). Among those holding to a non-literal "millennium" it is usually understood to have already begun, which implies a less obvious and less dramatic kind of millennium than that typically envisioned by premillennialists, as well as a more unexpected return of Christ.

Postmillennialism also teaches that the forces of Satan will gradually be defeated by the expansion of the Kingdom of God throughout history up until the second coming of Christ. This belief that good will gradually triumph over evil has led proponents of postmillennialism to label themselves "optimillennialists" in contrast to "pessimillennial" premillennialists and amillennialists.

Many postmillennialists also adopt some form of preterism, which holds that many of the end times prophecies in the Bible have already been fulfilled. Several key postmillennialists,
however, did not adopt preterism with respect to the Book of Revelation, among them B. B. Warfield, Francis Nigel Lee, and Rousas John Rushdoony.

**Amillennialism**

Amillennialism (Latin: *a-* "no" + millennialism) is the mainstream Christian end-times theology, named for its rejection of the theory that Jesus Christ will have a literal, thousand-year-long, physical reign on the earth. This is in opposition to premillennial and some postmillennial interpretations of chapter 20 of the Book of Revelation.

In contrast, the amillennial view holds that the thousand years mentioned in Revelation 20 is a symbolic number, not a literal description; that the millennium has already begun and is identical with the current church age, (or more rarely, that it ended with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70). Amillennialism holds that while Christ's reign during the millennium is spiritual in nature, at the end of the church age, Christ will return in final judgment and establish a permanent physical reign.

Many proponents dislike the name amillennialism because it emphasizes their differences with premillennialism rather than their beliefs about the millennium, and although they prefer alternate terms such as nunc-millennialism (that is, now-millennialism) or realized millennialism, the acceptance and widespread usage of the alternate names has been limited.

Amillennialism teaches that there will not be a future "millennium" in which Christ will reign on earth prior to the eternal state beginning, but rather

- that Jesus is presently reigning from heaven, seated at the right hand of God the Father,
- that Jesus also is and will remain with the church until the end of the world, as he promised at the Ascension,
- that at Pentecost, the millennium began, as is shown by Peter using the prophecies of Joel, about the coming of the kingdom, to explain what was happening,
- and that, therefore the Church and its spread of the good news is Christ's Kingdom and forever will be.

Amillennialists cite scripture references to the kingdom not being a physical realm: Matthew 12:28, where Jesus cites his driving out of demons as evidence that the kingdom of God had come upon them; Luke 17:20-21, where Jesus warns that the coming of the kingdom of God can not be observed, and that it is among them; and Romans 14:17, where Paul speaks of the kingdom of God being in terms of the Christians’ actions.

In particular, they regard the thousand year period as a figurative expression of Christ's reign being perfectly completed, as the "thousand hills" referred to in Psalm 23:5, the hills on which God owns the cattle, are all hills, and the "thousand generations" in 1 Chronicles 17:12, the generations for which God will be faithful, refer to all generations. (Some postmillennialists and nearly all premillennialists hold that the word *millennium* should be taken to refer to a literal thousand-year period.)
Amillennialism also teaches that the binding of Satan, described in Revelation, has already occurred; he has been prevented from "deceiving the nations" by the spread of the gospel. This is the first binding he suffered in history after his fall from heaven. Nonetheless, good and evil will remain mixed in strength throughout history and even in the church, according to the amillennial understanding of the Parable of the Wheat and Tares.

Amillennialism is sometimes associated with Idealism as both teach a symbolic interpretation of many of the prophecies of the Bible and especially the Book of Revelation. However, many amillennialists do believe in the literal fulfillment of Biblical prophecies; they simply disagree with Millennialists about how or when these prophecies will be fulfilled.

**Interpretation of the Book of Revelation**

**Judgments**

Chapters 1 - 19: Four views

- **Preterism**: Many prophecies have already occurred in the past; This view denotes a 1st-century fulfillment concerning the *literary text*; real events have already transpired. Some events may be symbolic of other fulfillments, thus taking a symbolic interpretation of the text.
  - Partial preterism: Most prophecies of Revelation were fulfilled in the 1st century. The "thousand years" generally spans from the 1st century up to the second coming and last judgment, thus often applying an allegorical interpretation.
  - Full preterism: All prophecies of Revelation have been fulfilled in the 1st century, *including* the second coming and the last judgment, with many Full preterists already applying an "Eternal State" to this present time.

- **Futurism**: Many prophecies will be fulfilled in the future, and in some cases might have an imminent fulfillment concerning the *literal text*; They believe in real physical events; Biblical literalism is emphasized.

- **Historicism**: Interprets the text as currently being fulfilled during the span of Christian History. Text is sometimes taken as symbolic of real events, rather than being literally true.

- **Idealism**: Present continual fulfillment of *symbolical or literary text*; spiritual events; Allegorical interpretation is emphasized.

**Millennium**

Chapter 20: Three views

- **Premillennialism**: Christ's Second coming before a literal one thousand year period, known by some as a thousand-year Sabbath, is preceded by a gradual deterioration of human society and behavior, and the expansion of evil through an end time government or kingdom. This school of thought can be divided into three main interpretations: Dispensational, Mid-tribulation/Prewrath and Historic Premillennialism or Post-Tribulation viewpoint.
o **Dispensational Premillennialism**: The rapture of the church occurs just prior to the seven-year tribulation, where Christ returns for his saints to meet them in the air. This is followed by the tribulation, the rise of the Antichrist to world-rule, the return of Christ to the Mount of Olives and Armageddon, resulting in a millennial reign of Messiah over the Jews, centered in restored Jerusalem.

o **Prewrath/Mid-tribulation View**: The rapture of the church occurs in the midst of the seven-year period. Mid-tribulation view holds that the rapture occurs halfway through; Prewrath holds that the rapture occurs some time in the midst of the tribulation in the latter years, but before God's wrath is poured out upon the nations.

o **Historic Premillennialism** or Post-Tribulation View: The rapture of the church (the body of true believers) happens after a period of great tribulation, with the church being caught up to meet Christ in the air and will accompany him to earth to share in his (literal or figurative) thousand year rule.

• **Postmillennialism**: Christ's Second coming is seen as occurring after the one-thousand years, which many in this school of thought believe is ushered in by the church. This view is also divided into two sub-schools of interpretation:
  o **Revivalist Postmillennialism**: the millennium represents an unknown period of time marked by a gradual Christian revival, followed by widespread successful evangelism. After these efforts is the return of Christ foreseen.
  o **Reconstructionist Postmillennialism**: the Church increases its influence through successful evangelism and expansion, finally establishing a theocratic kingdom of years duration (literal or figurative) followed by the return of Christ.

• **Amillennialism**: Non-literual "thousand years" or long age between Christ's first and second comings; the millennial reign of Christ as pictured in the book of Revelation is viewed now as Christ reigning at the right hand of the Father. It can be hard to draw a fine line between Amillennialism and Revivalist Postmillennialism. Amillennialism tends to believe society will, through growing rebellion, continue to deteriorate, while Postmillennialism believes the Church will influence the world producing greater righteousness.