

## Eschatology

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# Where Do You Stand on Eschatology?

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From the **TeachingtheWord** Bible Knowledgebase

**The question isn't so much where we stand, but where God stands.**

### Many Schools of Thought

Christians have many different ideas about the end times. Some commentators view the major prophecies in the Old Testament, the Gospels, and Revelation in one way, some another way, others yet another way, and on and on. There are at least four major views among Protestants - dispensational premillennialism, classic premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism. Among premillennialists of both kinds, there are those who view Christ's return for the Church as happening prior to the Tribulation, mid-Tribulation, or post-Tribulation. And then there's the guy I met who said he was a *pan-millennialist* - "I don't subscribe to any of those views," he said, "but I know it's all going to pan out alright in the end!"

While all sincere believers look forward to the Second Coming of Christ, we need to remember that honest disagreements about the details are as old as the church. A person is not born again because he takes a certain eschatological position. As long as we believe the one true Gospel of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in the person and finished work of Jesus Christ alone, those of all the various views are all part of the body of Christ.

### TeachingTheWord's Position

As an independent ministry, TeachingTheWord takes no official position on eschatology beyond that contained in our [doctrinal statement](#), in the section titled "The Resurrection and the Return of Christ" -

At death, men's bodies return to the earth and experience corruption, but their immortal souls return immediately to God who gave them. The souls of believers in Christ go immediately to be with the Lord in Heaven, awaiting the day when they will be reunited with their resurrected, glorified bodies. The souls of those

who do not believe in Christ are immediately cast into Hell, where they remain in darkness and torment awaiting the Last Judgment.

Jesus Christ will return, visibly and bodily, to gather believers to Himself for eternity, and to judge all men. The Scriptures teach the bodily resurrection of all mankind, both the saved and the lost.

Christ the righteous Judge will consign the lost to the Lake of Fire, into which they will be cast bodily to be punished for eternity. Those who are saved will be raised bodily to eternal life, and the Lord will welcome them into eternal glory with Him in the New Heavens and New Earth.

Elsewhere in our doctrinal statement we also say this: "Satan's ultimate defeat was pronounced by God after he deceived our first parents into sin; it was secured at the cross by Christ, and will be consummated when Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire for eternity."

We know for a fact that this ministry has, among its constituents, people of every eschatological persuasion that I named above.

### **Recognizing Our Limitations**

Although Christians legitimately differ on eschatology, God does not want us to operate in the realm of speculation. He wants us to recognize our limitations, and to stick to the authority of His Word.

We need to remember what happened back before His first advent. People who lived 2,000 years ago - people who knew the Scriptures - lived in anticipation of their Messiah's coming. The Old Testament gave them many specific prophecies about it.

But what happened when the time came? God placed a bright star in the heavens to guide the wise men to His Son. But where did these men go first? They went to the king's palace, because that's where they expected to find a king. And God had to send angels to tell shepherds to go and seek their Messiah in the most unlikely form - not a king on a throne or a prince in a palace, but a poor baby wrapped in swaddling clothes. And the angels had to tell them to look for Him in the most unlikely of places - not in Herod's palace, but in a manger where animals fed. And that was only the beginning - of prophetic points overlooked or misinterpreted, and of additional details not given in prophecy.

My point is this: The believers who looked for Christ's first coming really only understood what had happened, and how prophecy had been fulfilled, when they *looked back* on what had happened. Who knows, there may have been Hal Lindsays, Tim LaHayes, and Harold Campings in that day who thought they had it all figured out. But the point of prophecy, as we read in 2nd Peter 1:19, was its actual fulfillment - God's validation of the person and work of Jesus Christ. That, and nothing less, will also be the point when He comes again.

Like believers 2,000 years ago, we once again live in anticipation of Christ's coming. And just as it did 2,000 years ago, Bible prophecy gives us many indications of the events that will take place. Christ will come in glory with His saints. There will be a resurrection. There will be judgment. Satan's defeat will be consummated. This earth will pass away, and there will be new heavens and a new earth. Believers will dwell with Christ, free from both the power and the presence of sin, forever.

But Scripture also makes it clear to us that the time and circumstances of Christ's second coming will take this world by surprise. Scripture says that He will come suddenly, unexpectedly, as a thief in the night. In the meantime, the news headlines will tell us each day of the rise and fall of nations and alliances of nations, and of God's raising up of one ruler and putting down of another. This or that false religion will seem to gain the upper hand. Wars will be fought. Men will continue their futile efforts to bring lasting peace and order to this sin-cursed earth.

But God doesn't tell us to look to the news headlines in order to interpret His Word. He tells us to compare Scripture with Scripture. The Bible is our sole authority. Jesus may return today, or tomorrow. Or, He may not return for a thousand years. We have a hard time with that last possibility, don't we? We *want* Him to come - *now*. We long for the day when this conflict between good and evil will be over. We see what we believe are signs that it may be very soon. But no one knows the day or the hour of the Lord's return.

### **Confident Expectation**

Our interest as the redeemed of the Lord should not be in speculation and date-setting, but in understanding God's ultimate purpose in Christ's second coming - the re-gathering and reconciliation of all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:7-10), and the presentation of His saints, holy and without blame (Ephesians 5:27, Colossians 1:13-20). We must trust the details to

Him. As the believers of 2,000 years ago fully understood the prophecies of Christ's first coming only in hindsight, likewise we will only fully understand the prophecies of Christ's second coming from the vantage point of heaven.

But here and now, while we wait, we Christians are the only ones who can look at the state of this world, no matter how bad it may get, and have a calmness about the present in the midst of calamity, and a confidence about the future no matter what it may hold. Nothing can take us out of the Father's hand, no matter how He directs the future course of world events. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:18-39). We alone understand that whatever men and nations may do, they are completely under the control of the almighty and sovereign Lord Jesus Christ, who is working it all together to fulfill the Father's ultimate purpose.

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