

## WILL THE CHURCH GO INTO THE TRIBULATION – Part B

We are trying to answer the very critical question as to whether or not the church will go into the Tribulation, and in that process I want to look at the three prevailing views. We are not trying to answer the question as to whether or not there will even be a Tribulation. For me personally, it is a given that there will be a Tribulation and there will be a Great Tribulation, even though there are views that deny both of those realities. If the church does go into the Tribulation, then the question is how long will the church be there. Will it only be for a short period of time, will it be there until the midpoint of the Tribulation, or will it be there all the way until Jesus comes back in the Second Coming, or will it be something in between all of those options. You can add some other options into the mix if you want to, but it gets very complicated and unconvincing if you do. Since it seems that end time type events are becoming much more prevalent in our lifetime, the issue of whether the church will go into the Tribulation certainly should not be something that you just take lightly.

Let us just assume that the Tribulation does happen in our lifetime and that the rapture does take place, but you have never been truly saved. You may have attended church and done some church things, but your life simply does not have much evidence of genuine salvation. Your “perceived” salvation has never really changed your life. It only changed a few areas of your behavior, but nothing that would be considered a real life transforming experience where you literally became “**a new creation in Christ**” – which by the way is what should happen. What all of that would mean for you is that you would be left behind to go through the seven years of Tribulation and Great Tribulation if you would actually be able to live that long – which honestly is very, very doubtful. Let us say that you are not willing to take this seriously, and you do end up in the Tribulation, then all I have to say to you is “good luck” because you will need all the luck you can find to make it through that period of God’s judgment on the earth – which may not be that far away.

Now, just to refresh our minds, there are three prevailing views relative to the end times, and it is important that you clearly understand what they are. Two are very similar except for the timing, and one is completely different from the other two. There is the pre-millennial view, the a-millennial view, and the post-millennial view. It is important to understand that the actual word “millennium” is not actually used in the Bible, but it comes from two Greek words meaning “*a thousand*” and “*years*”. This comes from [Revelation 20:1-6](#).

Rev 20:1 (NKJV) **Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup> He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; <sup>3</sup> and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. <sup>4</sup> And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. <sup>5</sup> But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup> Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the**

**second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.**

What distinguishes these three views basically turns on how each view interprets the Scriptures, or what kind of rules they use in the interpretive process. The reality of interpretation is that if you have an interpretive system that makes assumptions and does not handle the Scriptures properly, then there is no telling what kind of conclusion you may end up with for a passage.

The pre-millennial view which I hold interprets Scripture based on the historical / grammatical approach – which I believe is the correct methodology to interpret the Bible. Basically what that approach does is that it interprets Scripture literally, except for the recognized figures of speech – such as an allegory, a parable, or a hyperbole (exaggeration). However, both the amillennial view and the post-millennial view do not feel obligated to interpret Scripture literally, so they take the freedom to interpret certain portions allegorically which simply means that they are inclined to spiritualize the Scriptures and can give them whatever meaning they want that will fit into their theology. This approach allows them to spiritualize not only the terms, but also the sequence, or timing of various events. For instance, in both of these views, a thousand years is not a literal thousand years, but rather an undefined long period of time. It could be any length of time – 500 years, 5000 years, or 50,000 years based on their interpretive methodology. The only limit in this approach is someone's imagination. The 144,000 Jews mentioned in [Revelation 14:1-6](#) are not necessarily Jews and there are not necessarily 144,000 of them. Personally I struggle with the idea that 144,000 does not mean 144,000 in this passage. In both views, most of the events of Revelation are interpreted to have already taken place. So, neither of these two positions interpret Scripture literally.

The pre-millennial view says that Christ will return before the millennium, or before this thousand years identified in Revelation 20 actually begins. However, the view teaches that the millennium will be preceded by seven years of great tribulation under the Antichrist, that Christ will return at His Second Coming with His bride the church, and then Satan will be bound for a thousand years and then loosed for a short period of time where he will draw vast multitudes to himself. The pre-millennial view also teaches that the millennium will then be followed by “**a new heaven and a new earth**” described in [Revelation 21:1](#) which says,

**Rev 21:1 (NKJV) Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.**

This view says that the kingdom of God is not just some kind of spiritual kingdom, but is a literal kingdom with a literal king – Christ reigning and ruling on the earth for 1000 years. The pre-millennialists are divided into pre-tribulational, mid-tribulational, and post-tribulational. I.e., does Christ come for His church BEFORE the tribulation, in the MIDDLE of the tribulation, or AFTER the tribulation. I hold to a Pre-millennial, pre-tribulational view – and I believe that is the correct view. To make it even a little more complicated, there is also the “partial rapture” concept which states that only the godly Christians looking for the return of Christ will be raptured. I think that much of this is based on what Jesus said to the church of Philadelphia in [Revelation 3:10](#) which says,

**Rev 3:10 (NKJV) Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.**

That view carries no weight because if it did, then what it would be saying is that God measures our life by our good works and not by the death and sacrifice of His Son. If God only raptures a few select Christians and leaves the rest behind, then in a sense He would be judging those that did not make the cut. The problem with that position is simple - God has already judged us for every sin that we have ever committed. If we have to be a “super Christian” to make the rapture, then I doubt that many of us will make it, myself included. The so-called “super Christian” will be rewarded for all that he has done for Christ at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and so will every other believer.

The amillennial view literally means “no millennium”. The prefix “a” is a negative prefix and simply means “no” or “none”. This view believes that the thousand years is symbolic rather than literal. I.e., it is just representative for an undisclosed period of time, and really is not even an approximation. So the term “a thousand years” in [Revelation 20:1-6](#) does not mean 1000 years, but is simply a long period of time – which is very relative. They simply believe that the Millennium is a symbolic, heavenly reality and not an earthly one. I.e., there will never be a Millennium on the earth. They believe that Satan was bound ([Revelation 20:1-3](#)) at the cross of Christ, and the entire Christian era between the first coming and the second coming is the time of the heavenly millennium – which now is nearly 2000 years. I have to read these three verses to you to see if you think “in the context” of [Revelation 19 and 20](#), that this is even feasible.

**Rev 20:1 (NKJV) Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup> He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; <sup>3</sup> and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.**

So, to say that [Revelation 20:1-3](#) happened when Jesus died on the cross and there is no other mention of anything that resembles that doctrinally anywhere else in the Scriptures, in my mind that position is not plausible, reasonable, or even believable. It simply cannot carry any credibility if we are going to interpret the Scriptures by the laws of hermeneutics. Context governs the interpretation of a passage more than any other factor, and in this context it simply cannot be talking about Jesus dying on the cross. He has just returned back to the earth at the Second Coming. Now, it is not my intention to belittle those who take this position, but this happens immediately after [Revelation 19:11-16](#) which speaks specifically of Jesus Christ returning to the earth with His new bride. Listen to what this passage says,

**Rev 19:11 (NKJV) Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. <sup>13</sup> He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. <sup>14</sup> And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. <sup>15</sup> Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. <sup>16</sup> And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**

This is as good as it gets for the believer, and you should be overwhelmed for what this means for you as a believer – coming back with Him at His Second Coming. Then to digress and regress back nearly 2000 years or more with an explanation that Satan is going to be bound for 1000 years, or some long period of time, simply does not compute hermeneutically. So what kind of explanation do the amillennial theologian give to support his position. Well, they say, the question relative to Satan being “bound” rests on what you mean by the word “bound”, and their position is that he is bound from preventing the gospel to be both communicated and accepted. So, how did that happen? What in the world does that mean? Honestly, and I am not trying to be facetious or flippant or even judgmental, but I literally have no idea how they can justify that position. The obvious meaning, and the one that I believe is absolutely correct is that Satan is bound for a thousand years after the Second Coming of Christ and not at His death. I will let you decide what you think.

So, if the Millennium is a heavenly millennium as they claim, and it is not an earthly one, then I would ask the question as to “*why does heaven even need a Millennium*”? I mean, what is it missing that it has to have a formal Millennium where prosperity and peace reigns? Heaven does not need any prosperity or peace, so what would heaven actually gain by having a Millennium? According to the amillennialists we are now in this symbolic millennial era where Christ is reigning and ruling over those on the earth from heaven alongside the saints who have already died. If that is the case, then when did He begin to do that? I assume that it would have to be immediately after His ascension into heaven, so rather than 1000 years, He has been governing the church in the heavenly Millennium for the last 1,988 years.

This view also believes that Christ could return at any time, but obviously this view does not believe in a rapture as we do. It is evident that Christians will have to be reunited with their bodies to receive incorruptible bodies, but they believe that that kind of event occurs in one of the end time resurrections and not in the rapture. So, if they do not believe in a rapture, and if the Tribulation spoken of in Revelation has already happened, then the book of Revelation literally has little to no value to any of us and we can just ignore the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments as already having happened. Those references in Revelation 6-19 to seal, trumpet, bowl judgments are just symbolic language that have no real significance for the Second Coming of Christ in terms of its timing. So if you are not a Christian, then you can sleep well tonight because in this view there will be no major end-time judgment.

This view believes that after Christ returns at His Second Coming that the resurrection of all of the saints and believers will occur. This is what we would call their “rapture”. Then the judgment of unbelievers will follow, and not at the end of the Millennium as we would say that it does. Then after those events are completed, the earth will be destroyed in accordance with 2 Peter 3:10-13 which says,

**2Pe 3:10 (NKJV) But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. <sup>11</sup> Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, <sup>12</sup> looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? <sup>13</sup> Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.**

After the existing earth is destroyed, then the eternal “**new heaven and new earth**” of [Revelation 21:1](#) will be created. We know that the existing earth will be destroyed and a new heaven and a new earth created, but it will happen at the end of the Millennium and not at the Second Coming as this view proposes. Then lastly, if there is no actual Millennium, then Christ simply does not rule and reign for 1000 years on the earth, and that part of Revelation can be removed as well. In my mind, this view actually makes the events of [Revelation 20](#), and most all of [Revelation](#) itself, as utterly obsolete.

The third view is the post-millennial view which says that Christ will return **after** the Millennium ends. So, it believes that the Millennium occurs before the Second Coming of Christ and not after He comes. Once again, the Millennium is believed to just be figurative of a long period of time that precedes the Second Coming. Since Scripture speaks of the Millennium as a time of great prosperity for the kingdom of God, the postmillennialists are inherently optimistic. The world, as they see it, is in an ongoing golden process of progress. Certainly we may be making technological type advances, but to say that this is a golden era for the spread of the gospel is taking that kind of assumption much too far.

Post-millennialism, like Amillennialism, also says that Satan was bound at the cross, but it goes on to say that the Millennium does not begin until most of the world is Christianized. In this view, it is believed that we are now in this millennial era, so that really confuses me even more. You have to think about this for a minute. How could they say that if only about 6% of the world’s nearly 8 billion population is actually considered to be evangelical born-again believers. That means that we still have 94%, or 7.5 billion people that need to be Christianized. If that is true and we are currently in the Millennium, then in my mind it will be an incredibly long, long time before the world will be “Christianized”. Maybe I am just missing something, but I do not think the current version of Christianity is headed in that direction, so we will have a very long wait to reach the milestone of the world basically being Christian.

This view also does not believe in a rapture as we do. During this millennial period that we are supposedly in, they believe that the gospel will increasingly prevail over the nations, and will establish a reign of peace, which will endure until Christ returns for the final judgment. If the world has finally reached a place of peace and most everyone is a Christian, then why would Christ return for a time of judgment. It just does not make sense. They also believe that it is through the preaching of the gospel that Christianity will expand throughout the earth, and the kingdom of Christ will steadily grow. Evil will be restrained throughout this allegorical thousand years, and at the end of the millennium or when the world has been brought to Christ, but before He returns, evil will be released upon the world for a short period of time. Once again, I have no idea how they have reached that conclusion, but they have.

Okay. Those are the three views, and each have subtleties that I simply have not addressed for obvious reasons, but I find it so very difficult to consider either the amillennial or the post-millennial view to even be viable positions. I certainly struggle with the fact that they are not willing to take Scripture literally, but find the freedom to spiritualize them to suit their doctrinal position. So, what should all of this mean for you? It means that Jesus Christ will come and receive you in the rapture if you are a believer and are still alive prior to the beginning of the Tribulation. You will not have to go through this amazing time of judgment where the “**wrath of God**” will be poured out on all of the ungodly. Their lot is not something that you ever want to experience, and the only way to know that you will not experience it is to make sure that your life is secure in the salvation that only Jesus Christ can provide.