

Second Coming Eschatology: A Guide for Latter-day Saints

Millennial Views, Tribulation Timing, and the 19th-Century Rapture Invention

1. THE THREE MILLENNIAL VIEWS

Premillennialism

Christ returns BEFORE the millennium. Literal 1,000-year reign on earth. Satan bound. Resurrection of righteous at Christ's coming.

Who holds it: Evangelicals, Pentecostals, early church fathers (Irenaeus, Justin Martyr), **LDS Church**

Amillennialism

No literal millennium. "1,000 years" is symbolic for the church age. Christ reigns NOW through the Church. One resurrection/judgment at the end.

Who holds it: Catholics, Orthodox, Lutherans, Reformed (Augustine, Luther, Calvin)

Postmillennialism

Christ returns AFTER the millennium. Church gradually Christianizes the world. Golden age precedes Christ's return.

Who holds it: Some Reformed, Puritans, Christian Reconstructionists

View	Christ Returns...	Millennium Is...
Premillennial	Before millennium	Literal 1,000 years on earth
Amillennial	End of church age	Symbolic (now)
Postmillennial	After millennium	Golden age of church triumph

2. TRIBULATION TIMING VIEWS

Pre-Tribulation Rapture

Rapture → 7 yrs Tribulation → Second Coming → Millennium

Believers escape ALL tribulation. TWO separate comings. Most American evangelicals, *Left Behind*.

Mid-Tribulation Rapture

3.5 yrs Trib → Rapture → 3.5 yrs "Great Trib" → Second Coming

Believers experience first half only. Minority view.

Post-Tribulation Rapture

Tribulation → Second Coming/Rapture (SAME EVENT) → Millennium

THE HISTORIC VIEW. Believers endure tribulation, protected but not removed. Early church fathers. **LDS position closest to this.**

Key Distinction: Pre-trib = TWO returns (secret rapture + visible coming). Post-trib = ONE return (rapture IS the Second Coming).

3. RAPTURE DOCTRINE ORIGINS

FACT: The pre-tribulation rapture doctrine DID NOT EXIST before the 1830s. It is a 19th-century invention, not historic Christianity.

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)

"Father of Dispensationalism"

Anglo-Irish Bible teacher. First systematized pre-trib rapture (1830s). Invented "Church Age parenthesis" — God's prophetic clock stopped for Israel; separate program for Church.

How It Spread:

- **1909:** Scofield Reference Bible with dispensational notes
- **1970:** Hal Lindsey's *Late Great Planet Earth* (28M copies)
- **1995:** *Left Behind* series (80M copies)

Before 1830: Search Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Wesley — **ZERO references to secret pre-trib rapture. 1,800 years without this doctrine.**

Early Church Fathers

Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian: Premillennial but POST-tribulation. Expected to endure tribulation until Christ's visible return.

"There is NO document from early church history that shows the early church believed in a pre-tribulation rapture."

Who REJECTS Pre-Trib Rapture:

- Roman Catholic Church
- Eastern Orthodox Churches
- Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

4. WHAT THE BIBLE ACTUALLY TEACHES

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 — The Key Text

"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a **SHOUT**, with the **voice of the ARCHANGEL**, and with the **TRUMP of God**... we... shall be **caught up**."

Problem: This is LOUD, not secret. Matches visible Second Coming in Matt 24:30-31.

Matthew 24:29-31 — AFTER Tribulation

"**Immediately AFTER the tribulation**... they shall see the Son of man coming... with great glory... great sound of a trumpet... **gather together his elect**."

Clear sequence: Tribulation → Cosmic signs → Christ's coming → Gathering

Matthew 24:40-41 — "One Taken"

Context: Noah's flood (v. 37-39). Who was "taken away"? **The WICKED** (drowned). Who was "left"? **Noah** (safe).

Luke 17:37: "Where, Lord?" — "Where the body is, there will the **vultures** gather."

→ "Taken" = JUDGMENT, not rapture! **Opposite of Left Behind**

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

Paul: "Our gathering together unto him... shall **NOT come except there come a falling away first**, and that man of sin be revealed."

→ Rapture CANNOT happen until apostasy and Antichrist come first. No "any moment" secret rapture.

5. THE LDS POSITION

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:

- **Premillennial** — Christ returns before the millennium
- **Post-tribulation** — Saints remain through tribulation
- **ONE Second Coming** — not secret rapture + visible return
- **Caught up at His coming** — not years before
- **Gathering to Zion** — protection, not escape

Doctrine and Covenants 88:95-98

"The face of the Lord shall be unveiled... **the saints that are upon the earth, who are alive, shall be quickened and be caught up to meet him.**"

→ "Caught up" at Christ's visible return, not before tribulation.

D&C 63:34

"**The saints also shall hardly escape**; nevertheless, I, the Lord, am with them."

→ Saints will face tribulation. Protection DURING, not removal BEFORE.

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:27 (JST)

"**After the tribulation of those days**... then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man... they shall see the Son of Man coming."

→ Joseph Smith's inspired revision maintains POST-tribulation coming.

6. STEELMANNING OTHER VIEWS

Best Arguments for Pre-Trib:

- God protected Noah, Lot — maybe He'll protect Church from tribulation
- "Not appointed to wrath" (1 Thess 5:9)
- Christ's return should be "imminent" — always ready

Best Arguments for Amillennialism:

- Revelation is symbolic literature — why literal 1,000?
- "Kingdom of God is within you" — Christ reigns now
- Historic Christian consensus (Augustine, Reformers)

7. PHILOSOPHIES OF MEN MINGLED

Warning signs of mingled philosophy:

- Novel doctrine unknown to early church (invented 1830s)
- Elaborate systems from few proof-texts
- Newspaper exegesis (every crisis = prophecy fulfillment)
- Pop culture replacing scripture (*Left Behind* as doctrine)
- Failed predictions (Hal Lindsey, 88 Reasons, etc.)

What Scripture actually emphasizes:

- **Watchfulness** — "Know not what hour" (Matt 24:42)
- **Faithfulness** — "Faithful unto death" (Rev 2:10)
- **Readiness** — "Be ye also ready" (Matt 24:44)
- **Not calculating dates** — "No man knoweth" (Matt 24:36)

8. SUMMARY

Element	Dispensational	LDS
Rapture before trib	Yes	No
Saints experience trib	No	Yes
Secret coming first	Yes (two events)	No (one event)
Literal millennium	Yes	Yes
Christ reigns on earth	Yes	Yes

D&C 49:7: "The hour and the day no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor shall they know until he comes."

Our calling: **Stand in holy places** (D&C 87:8), not calculate timelines.
"If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30)