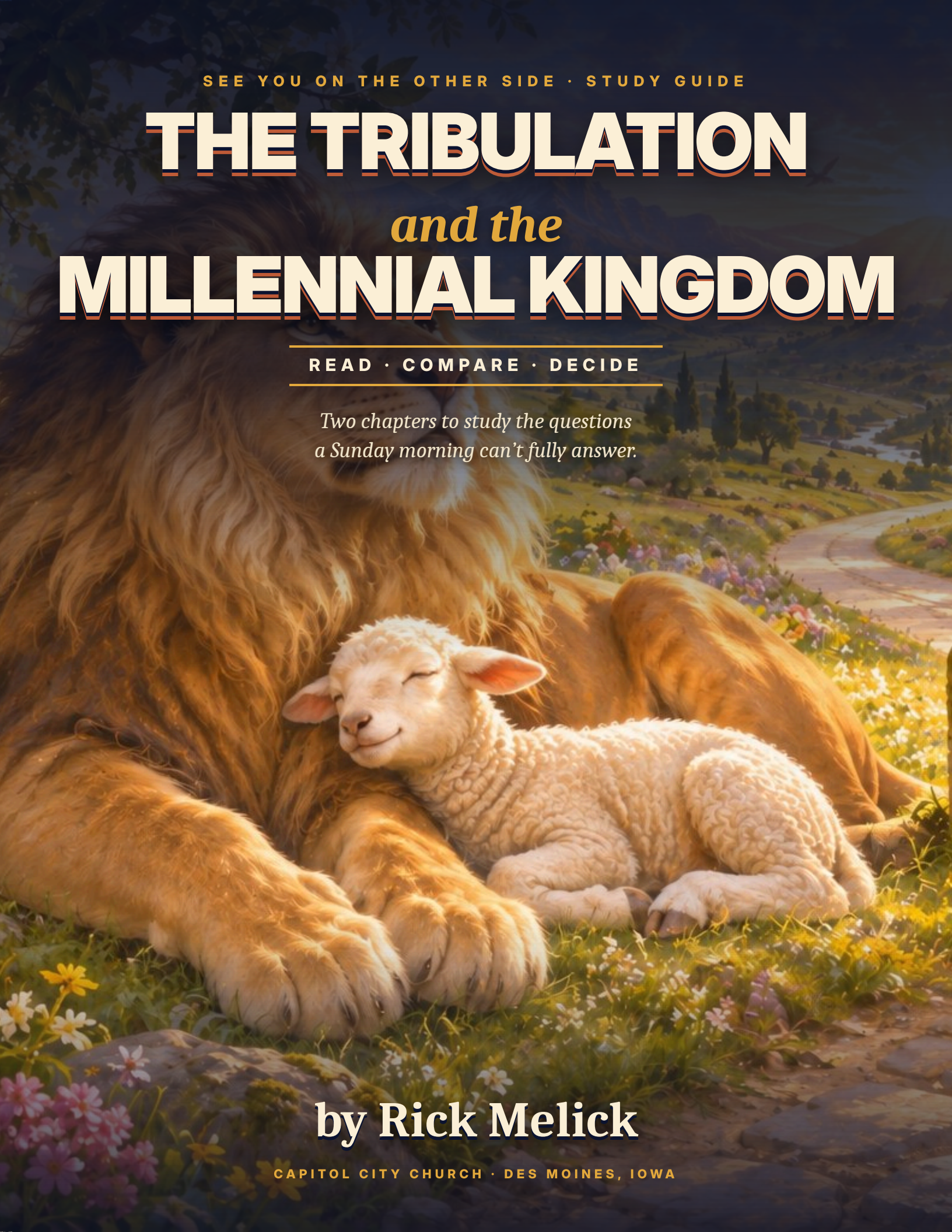
SEE YOU ON THE OTHER SIDE · STUDY GUIDE

THE TRIBULATION *and the* MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

READ · COMPARE · DECIDE

Two chapters to study the questions a Sunday morning can't fully answer.



by Rick Melick

CAPITOL CITY CHURCH · DES MOINES, IOWA

START HERE

About This Guide

Some questions need more room than a Sunday morning allows.

When *See You on the Other Side* reached the tribulation (Chapter 3, “Meeting in the Middle”) and Christ's thousand-year reign (Chapter 6, “Highway to Heaven”), I told you the truth: faithful Christians land in different places on these questions. I didn't want you to take my word for it. I wanted you to study them for yourself.

This guide is how you do that. It sets the main views side by side, gives you the passages to read, explains the setting, answers the questions people ask most, and then asks you to decide, with reasons you can support from Scripture.

HOW IT FITS

Every teaching series I preach becomes an interactive book, with each chapter linked to the sermon it came from. When a topic deserves deeper study than a sermon can give, I write a companion guide like this one. The book tells you what I preached. The guide helps you work it out for yourself.

How to use it

- **Take one chapter at a time.** Chapter 1 asks when Christians meet Jesus. Chapter 2 asks what the thousand years mean.
- **Read the Bible first.** Every Scripture reference is a link that opens the full passage.
- **Answer honestly.** Each chapter opens with a short questionnaire and closes with pages to write your conclusion. Print them, or reflect as you read on a screen.
- **Study together.** Work through it with your spouse, a friend or your City Group. The questions are built for conversation.

Your salvation does not depend on choosing the right timeline. It depends on Jesus (Ephesians 2:8–9). Study these questions with curiosity and charity, and hold your conclusions with humility.

Contents

Tap any title to jump there.

About This Guide

Before You Begin

Chapter 1 · The Tribulation and the Rapture

What Do You Currently Believe?

1. Why This Matters
2. Key Words Explained
3. Read the Scripture
4. Compare the Views
5. Understand the Setting

Frequently Asked Questions

6. Test the Evidence
7. Form Your Conclusion
8. Apply What You Learn
9. Sources and Further Reading

Chapter 2 · The Millennial Kingdom

What Do You Currently Believe?

1. Why This Matters
2. Key Words Explained
3. Read the Scripture
4. Compare the Views
5. Understand the Setting

Frequently Asked Questions

6. Test the Evidence
7. Form Your Conclusion
8. Apply What You Learn
9. Sources and Further Reading

How the Two Chapters Fit Together

Connect Your Conclusions

Before You Begin

Read the Bible, compare the interpretations, and form conclusions you can support with Scripture.

Two related questions

Chapter 1 asks when Christians will meet Jesus in relation to the tribulation. Chapter 2 asks what Christ's thousand-year rule means and when it occurs.

The questions connect through Jesus' return, resurrection, judgment, and the new creation. Study each on its own, then test whether your answers fit together.

Key Words Explained

Tribulation means severe trouble or suffering. The rapture means believers being caught up to meet Jesus when he comes. Resurrection means God raising people who have died to bodily life again. The Millennium is the thousand-year period described in Revelation 20. Each chapter explains these terms and the ways Christians understand them.

How to study

Read the full linked Bible passages first. Notice what each passage states directly. Then compare the explanations, test their difficult questions, and complete the response prompts.

Both chapters follow the same nine sections and use the same navigation. The footer links return to the main contents or the opening of your current chapter. Page numbers run continuously through the guide.

Form a conclusion you can support with Scripture

You do not need certainty about every future event to reach a thoughtful conclusion. State your evidence, represent other views fairly, and remain willing to reconsider. Forgiveness and life with God depend on Jesus Christ, not on choosing the right timeline (Ephesians 2:8–9).



CHAPTER

1

The Tribulation and the Rapture

When will Christians meet Jesus?

READ · COMPARE · TEST · DECIDE · APPLY

Will Christians be on earth during the tribulation? Both main views place our future with Jesus. This chapter helps you weigh them.

IN THIS CHAPTER

What Do You Currently Believe?
1. Why This Matters
2. Key Words Explained
3. Read the Scripture
4. Compare the Views
5. Understand the Setting
Frequently Asked Questions
6. Test the Evidence
7. Form Your Conclusion
8. Apply What You Learn
9. Sources and Further Reading

REMEMBER

Your salvation does not depend on choosing the right timeline. It depends on Jesus.

CHAPTER 1

What Do You Currently Believe?

This is an ungraded starting questionnaire. Circle or note your answer before studying. “Not sure” is a useful answer. Revisit these questions after completing the chapter.

1. When do you currently think Christians will meet Jesus?

- ◯ A. Before the tribulation
- ◯ B. After the tribulation
- ◯ C. Another view or not sure

2. How do you understand the seven-year period?

- ◯ A. A future seven-year period
- ◯ B. Another interpretation of Daniel’s prophecy
- ◯ C. Not sure

3. Who do you think the believers attacked by the beast—a powerful enemy of God—are?

- ◯ A. People who believe after an earlier rapture
- ◯ B. Christians who remain through the trouble
- ◯ C. Not sure

4. What do you think Jesus’ promise of protection means?

- ◯ A. Being taken away before the trouble
- ◯ B. Being protected while facing the trouble
- ◯ C. Not sure

5. How confident are you in your present view?

- ◯ A. Strongly convinced
- ◯ B. Leaning toward a view
- ◯ C. Still undecided

CHAPTER 1

1 Why This Matters

When Will Christians Meet Jesus?

THE QUESTION THIS STUDY HELPS YOU DECIDE

When you imagine Jesus returning, do you picture being rescued before the world's greatest trouble - or meeting Him as that trouble ends?

THE QUESTION YOU WILL EXPLORE

A Christian is a person who has asked forgiveness for sins, believes in Jesus - who He is and what He did - and has decided to become a follower of Jesus Christ. The church means all these Christians together. Will Christians be here during the tribulation? Both views place their future with Jesus.

Your goal: reach a conclusion you can support with Scripture. Do more than learn the names of the two views. Read the passages, compare the reasons, and decide which explanation you find most convincing. You can reach a conclusion while continuing to test it against Scripture.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Read the full linked passages before considering the explanations. Then compare the reasons, examine the questions, and test the assumptions. Use the response pages in print, or reflect on the questions while reading in the app.

A suggested pace: Start with the basics, word guide, and method for comparing the views. Read the Bible comparisons, then explore temple worship, the teachers' explanations, and the Antichrist. Finish with the shared hope of life with God forever, test your leading view, and choose your present position.

Why your belief matters. Your answer shapes what you expect before meeting Jesus, how you understand His warnings, and how you prepare to stay faithful. The before view expects the church to be taken to Jesus before the tribulation; the after view expects Christians to endure it before meeting Him. Both allow suffering today and call for continued trust in Jesus. Take the question seriously: let Scripture shape your expectation, rather than fear, familiarity, or a favorite teacher.

CHAPTER 1

2 Key Words Explained

The Two Views Explained

BEFORE OR AFTER THE TRIBULATION

Tribulation: In this study, a seven-year period of trouble sometime in the future before Jesus returns to earth. This is one common way to understand Daniel 9:24-27; Christians do not all agree about it.

Great tribulation: Severe trouble described in Matthew 24:21. In the seven-year view, this usually refers to the final three and a half years.

Rapture: Being caught up to meet Jesus, described in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The Bible describes this event; Christians disagree about when it happens.

Pretribulation: Christians meet Jesus before the tribulation; Jesus returns to earth afterward.

Posttribulation: Christians face the tribulation and meet Jesus when he returns afterward.

THE SEVEN-YEAR PICTURE USED HERE

Beginning: The agreement in Daniel 9:27. Midpoint: Animal offerings at the temple stop; something offensive to God takes place there (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15-21). Final half: The beast's 42 months and persecution (Revelation 13). End: Jesus' return and believers meeting him (Matthew 24:29-31).

Keep the distinction clear: Calling this ruler the Antichrist and connecting the agreement to Israel are ways people explain the passage. Daniel does not call it a modern peace treaty. Headlines alone do not establish a start date.

Bible Words Explained

PLAIN-LANGUAGE DEFINITIONS

Christian: A person who has asked forgiveness for sins, believes in Jesus - who He is and what He did - and has decided to become a follower of Jesus Christ.

Church: All these Christians together, from every nation and Christian group. The people, not a building.

Saints: God's people. In the New Testament, this commonly means believers in Jesus, not just unusually holy people.

Elect: God's chosen people. The disagreement here is which believers a particular passage describes.

Resurrection: God raising people who have died to bodily life again.

Wrath: God's righteous anger and judgment against sin. It is different from people attacking Christians.

Persecution: Mistreating people because of their faith: threats, restrictions, imprisonment, or violence.

Antichrist / beast: Antichrist means an opponent of Christ. In the future view used here, it refers to an evil leader associated with the beast in Revelation 13.

Covenant / agreement: A serious promise or agreement. Daniel 9:27 does not call it a modern peace treaty.

Sacrifices / holy place: Animal offerings made to God at the temple; the holy place refers to a sacred place associated with worship.

Meeting Jesus: Being caught up to Jesus when he comes. Christians disagree about whether some passages describe the same event or different events.

Israel: The Jewish people or their nation; the context determines which meaning is intended.

Satan: The devil, an enemy of God who deceives people and opposes Jesus.

CHAPTER 1

3 Read the Scripture

Read these passages before the comparisons. Bible links open the NIV; explanations in this guide are summaries rather than Bible quotations.

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 5:1–11

Daniel 9:24–27

Revelation 3:7–13

Matthew 24:4–44

Revelation 13:1–18

2 Thessalonians 1:6–10; 2:1–12

For each passage ask: Who is addressed? What comes before or after what? Does it directly tell us when Christians meet Jesus, or do we need to connect it with another passage?

What do the passages establish clearly before you read the arguments?

CHAPTER 1

4 Compare the Views

Jesus Raises the Dead and Brings Believers Together

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18; READ 5:1-11 TOO

Will Christians who have died miss Jesus' return? Paul, an early Christian leader writing to a church, says they will not.

What the text states: Jesus comes down from heaven. Christians who have died are raised to life, and living Christians join them to meet Him. This paragraph does not say whether this happens before or after the tribulation.

PRETRIBULATION: THREE REASONS

1. We meet Jesus in the air. Verse 17 describes meeting Him above the earth. People who hold the before view see this as a different event from His later return to earth.

2. No earlier signs are listed. Paul does not list troubles that must happen first. Before-view readers connect this with the belief that Jesus could bring Christians to meet him at any time.

3. God promises rescue from judgment. In 5:9, Paul says Christians are not appointed to God's wrath - His judgment against sin. If the whole tribulation is that judgment, they reason that Christians leave beforehand.

POSTTRIBULATION: THREE REASONS

1. This sounds like Jesus' great return. The command, angel's voice, and trumpet resemble Jesus' return in Matthew 24:30-31. After-view readers see one event described in two places.

2. Meeting a returning King. In Matthew 25:6 and Acts 28:15, people go out to welcome someone arriving. After-view readers understand believers meeting Jesus and accompanying Him to earth. The word meeting alone does not prove this.

3. No long gap is mentioned. Paul describes Jesus coming, the dead being raised, and Christians meeting Jesus together. After-view readers see no stated seven-year gap before He reaches earth.

Think it through: Does meeting Jesus in the air tell us where next? Does rescue from God's judgment mean Christians cannot experience persecution?

Your assessment: Which reason best fits the passage? Which reason needs more evidence?

Where The Seven Years Come From

DANIEL 9:24-27

Where does the idea of seven years come from? What does Daniel actually tell us?

What the text states: This prophecy concerns Daniel's people, Israel, and their city, Jerusalem. Verse 27 describes a period of seven, an agreement, and sacrifices stopping halfway through.

PRETRIBULATION: THREE REASONS

1. The focus is on Israel. Before-view readers see this final period as mainly about God's work with Israel. They distinguish that from His present work through the church.

2. The final seven years are future. They commonly place a gap before the final seven years and identify the ruler as the Antichrist, a leader who opposes Jesus.

3. The church has a different role. They connect this Israel-focused period with other promises of rescue for Christians. Together, these ideas support Christians meeting Jesus before the seven years.

POSTTRIBULATION: THREE REASONS

1. Daniel does not describe a rapture. The passage never says Christians are taken away. After-view readers argue that a prophecy about Israel does not require the church to be absent.

2. Seven years can fit either view. A person can accept a future Antichrist and seven-year period while believing Christians meet Jesus at its end.

3. Jesus links Daniel to later events. Matthew 24:15 points to Daniel, then describes severe trouble and believers being brought together afterward (24:29-31). After-view readers use that sequence to help explain Daniel.

Think it through: Does a prophecy about Israel require the church to be absent? Does Daniel say that, or is it a conclusion drawn from other ideas?

> **Your assessment: Which reason best fits the passage? Which reason needs more evidence?**

Limit: A future seven-year framework does not itself establish when Christians meet Jesus. Not all posttrib readers accept it.

What Does Jesus' Protection Mean?

REVELATION 3:7-13; FOCUS ON VERSE 10

Does Jesus promise to take believers away, or to protect them while they remain?

What the text states: Jesus promises the faithful church in Philadelphia protection from a worldwide time of testing. He does not directly describe a rapture here.

PRETRIBULATION: THREE REASONS

1. Protection from the time itself. Jesus promises protection from the hour, not just from trouble. Before-view readers understand this as being absent during the whole period.

2. The trouble reaches the world. They understand this worldwide testing as the future tribulation, rather than trouble affecting only one local church.

3. Jesus speaks to a church. They see this promise to one church as showing how Jesus will protect His whole church before the tribulation begins.

POSTTRIBULATION: THREE REASONS

1. Protection can happen without leaving. In John 17:15, Jesus asks God to protect His followers while they remain in the world. After-view readers see that as a possible way to understand this promise.

2. Jesus does not say how. The verse does not mention being caught up, the dead being raised, or seven years away. After-view readers hesitate to add those details.

3. Jesus calls them to keep trusting. The surrounding verses call believers to endure and hold on. They understand the promise as Jesus keeping His people faithful despite the trial.

Think it through: Does protection from the hour require leaving? Does John 17:15 help explain it, even though the two passages describe protection from different things?

> **Your assessment: Which reason best fits the passage? Which reason needs more evidence?**

Who Meets Jesus After the Trouble?

MATTHEW 24:4-31; FOCUS ON VERSES 29-31

The order is clear. The question is which people Jesus is bringing together.

What the text states: After the distress - the severe trouble - Jesus appears and sends angels with a trumpet to gather His elect, meaning His chosen people. Both views place this bringing together of believers after the trouble.

PRETRIBULATION: THREE REASONS

1. The setting points to Israel. Jesus mentions Judea, the region around Jerusalem; the Sabbath, the Jewish day of rest; and the holy place associated with temple worship (24:15-20). Before-view readers see a focus on Israel rather than Christians meeting Jesus earlier.

2. Chosen people could mean another group. They understand the elect as Israel and/or people who believe during the tribulation, rather than the Christians who met Jesus before it.

3. Some details differ from Paul's account. Matthew mentions angels bringing people together but does not directly mention the dead being raised or meeting Jesus in the air. They see a different event in which believers are brought together.

POSTTRIBULATION: THREE REASONS

1. The bringing together of believers comes after the trouble. Verses 29-31 give that order directly. If this is the rapture, it happens after the tribulation.

2. The events resemble Paul's account. Jesus' coming, the trumpet, and believers brought together resemble 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. They see two descriptions of the same return.

3. Jesus warns His own followers. Jesus speaks to His disciples and describes believers staying faithful (24:9-13). After-view readers understand the warnings as relevant to Christians who may face the trouble.

Think it through: Who are the chosen people here? Do Matthew and Paul describe two events, or different parts of one event?

> **Your assessment: Which reason best fits the passage? Which reason needs more evidence?**

Who Are The Believers The Beast Attacks?

REVELATION 13:5-10, 16-18

The beast attacks God's people. Are they Christians already present, or people who believe after an earlier rapture?

What the text states: The beast - a powerful enemy of God - rules for 42 months and attacks the saints, meaning God's people. Buying and selling are restricted, and believers are called to remain faithful.

PRETRIBULATION: THREE REASONS

1. Saints is a broad term. Saints means God's people. Before-view readers note that the word alone does not tell us whether these are Christians who belonged to the church before the rapture.

2. People can believe after the rapture. They understand these believers as people who trust Jesus after the earlier group of Christians has been taken to meet Jesus. Their presence fits the before view.

3. The word church disappears for a time. Church is used often in Revelation 1-3, but not in chapters 4-18. They see that change as a clue that the Christians have already met Jesus.

POSTTRIBULATION: THREE REASONS

1. These people are faithful to Jesus. Revelation 14:12 describes saints as people faithful to Jesus. After-view readers understand them as Christians, without assuming they all began believing after a rapture.

2. Believers are told to endure. Revelation 13:10 calls God's people to keep trusting through suffering. They see this as preparing Christians for trouble they may experience.

3. An earlier departure is not mentioned. This chapter does not say the church has already left. After-view readers think an earlier rapture needs evidence from other passages.

Think it through: Does a change in words prove a change in people? Where are these believers identified as people who began trusting Jesus after an earlier rapture?

> **Your assessment: Which reason best fits the passage? Which reason needs more evidence?**

Why the Two Views Disagree

THEIR BASIC REASONS

A Christian is a person who has asked forgiveness for sins, believes in Jesus - who He is and what He did - and has decided to become a follower of Jesus Christ. The church means these Christians together. Meeting Jesus means being caught up to him when he comes.

One word needs care: church. This study uses church broadly for people who belong to Jesus. Many before-view teachers use it more narrowly in this discussion: the group who met Jesus before the tribulation. They believe people saved afterward still belong to Jesus, but distinguish them from that earlier group. That distinction is part of the interpretation, not a claim that later believers have a different Savior.

When do Christians meet Jesus?

After view: After the tribulation, the coming time of severe trouble. Christians rise to meet Jesus and come with Him to earth.

Before view: Before the seven-year tribulation. Jesus takes Christians to heaven. They return with Him when He comes to rule on earth.

Why does each view hold this?

After view: Paul places relief for Christians and judgment on evil together when Jesus returns. After-view readers see one event. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8

Before view: Before-view readers distinguish the church from the nation of Israel. They see the tribulation as a time to bring Israel to faith and judge evil. Jeremiah 30:7

Consider: Does a prophecy about Israel mean Christians must be absent? Does Paul put relief and judgment at the same time?

How Each View Reads the Text

THEIR READING OF KEY PASSAGES

Compare how each view connects the Bible passages. These are summaries of each interpretation, not direct quotations.

Must the Antichrist appear first? 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, 8

After view: Yes. This enemy of Jesus must appear before the day Paul describes. After-view readers connect that day with Christians meeting Jesus.

Before view: Not before Christians meet Jesus. Before-view readers understand Paul to describe events before God's coming judgment, which follows the rapture.

How will God protect Christians? Revelation 3:10

After view: God can keep his people faithful through the trouble without taking them away. After-view readers compare this with Jesus's prayer in John 17:15.

Before view: Jesus promises to keep the church out of the worldwide time of testing. Before-view readers see this as removal before the tribulation.

Consider: Is Paul describing one event or different events? Must God take people away to protect them?

How the Two Views Explain Readiness and Believers

READINESS AND BELIEVERS

Both views encourage continued trust in Jesus. They disagree about which events Christians will experience before meeting Jesus.

What does being ready mean? James 5:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:3

After view: Stay faithful to Jesus. Being ready does not mean that no predicted events can happen before He returns.

Before view: Jesus could bring Christians to meet him at any moment. No predicted event, including the Antichrist appearing, must happen first.

Why are believers in the tribulation? Matthew 24:9-31; Revelation 7:9-14

After view: Christians remain on earth. After-view readers connect Jesus bringing his people together after the trouble in Matthew 24 with the rapture.

Before view: People begin trusting Jesus after the church has been taken away. Their presence does not mean the church remained.

CHAPTER 1

5 Understand the Setting

How Temple Worship Worked

PRIESTS, SACRED PLACES, AND ANIMAL OFFERINGS

Start with what you know You may picture worship as people singing, praying, and listening to a sermon. The temple worship described in the Bible involved something very different: priests, places set apart for worship, and offerings made at an altar.

A temple is not simply another church building In ancient Israel, the temple in Jerusalem was a central place of worship. Its different areas had rules about who could enter. It carried deep religious meaning for the people. An attack on it could feel like an attack on their faith and identity.

What did priests do? Priests were people assigned to lead particular acts of worship and handle offerings. They were not simply pastors using a different name. Some duties and areas were reserved for particular priests. Hebrews 9:1-14 describes the earlier worship system in the tabernacle, the sacred tent used before the temple.

What was an altar? An altar was a place where offerings were presented to God. Animal sacrifices involved real animals being killed and their blood used in worship. This can be difficult to picture if your experience of worship has never involved animals or blood.

How this connects to the future view People who read Daniel 9:27 as a future event expect sacrifices to be happening before they are stopped. Many connect this with a future temple. The passage does not tell us when a building is constructed, what it looks like, or how everything becomes possible.

Think about it Which part feels unfamiliar because it is outside your experience? Which part needs more biblical evidence? Those are different questions.

Why Would Sacrifices Return?

JESUS HAS ALREADY PAID FOR OUR SINS

The question many Christians ask If Jesus died for our sins, why would anyone return to animal sacrifices? It sounds like going backward.

What the earlier offerings taught The earlier sacrifices reminded people that sin is serious and that people need forgiveness. Hebrews 10:1-4 says those repeated offerings could not finally remove sin. They pointed beyond themselves to what Jesus would accomplish.

What Jesus has already done Hebrews 10:10-18 teaches that Jesus offered Himself once for all. Christians do not need animal sacrifices to add to His death or complete it. Our forgiveness rests on

Jesus, not on another offering.

Who would offer the proposed future sacrifices? In this future interpretation, some Jewish worshipers would resume temple offerings. That would be Jewish temple worship, not a command for Christians to return to sacrifices. It does not mean that all Jewish people share the same beliefs or would participate.

A prediction is not an instruction Saying that people may offer sacrifices is different from saying God requires Christians to do so. The before and after views both leave Christians dependent on Jesus for forgiveness and life with God. Temple rituals would not replace Him.

Make the connection Picture two groups living in the same world but understanding worship differently: some offering sacrifices at a temple, and believers trusting Jesus' completed sacrifice. Sharing a place in history does not mean sharing the same way of worshiping.

Read for yourself Hebrews 10:1-18. Ask: What has Jesus completed that repeated animal offerings could never accomplish?

The First Half Of The Tribulation

WHAT THIS INTERPRETATION EXPECTS - AND WHAT IS UNKNOWN

Why ordinary life may be hard to imagine When we hear tribulation, we may picture nonstop chaos from the first day. In the seven-year view used here, sacrifices are happening before the midpoint. That suggests some organized worship can take place even while the larger situation is troubling.

What is actually stated? Daniel 9:27 describes an agreement and sacrifices stopping halfway through the period. It does not describe every year, explain everyone's daily routine, or promise that the whole world enjoys peace during the first half.

What people holding this view often infer They commonly understand the agreement as allowing Israel some security and freedom for worship until the ruler breaks it. That is an explanation connecting the passage's details, rather than a full description given directly in the verse.

Which worship would Christians experience? In the before view, the church has already been taken to meet Jesus. In the after view, Christians remain on earth and continue trusting Him. Neither view means that Christians must participate in animal offerings. Believers' exact meeting places and worship routines are not supplied.

Why the change at the midpoint matters If people believed their worship was protected, stopping it would be more than canceling a service. It would threaten what they understood as their religious duties and expose the ruler's hostility. This helps explain why the event is treated as serious.

Leave room for unanswered details We do not know from these passages how buildings, laws, public opinion, or political agreements would develop. A situation being hard to imagine today is not proof

that it cannot happen; an imaginable scenario is not proof that it will.

Pressure To Worship The Beast

WHAT PRESSURE TO WORSHIP THE BEAST COULD MEAN IN EVERYDAY LIFE

What does worship mean here? Worship means giving someone the devotion and honor that belong to God. Revelation 13 describes pressure to worship the beast, a powerful enemy of God. This is more than liking a leader or agreeing with a policy.

What happens to the place set apart for worship? Second Thessalonians 2:4 describes an opponent who sets himself up in God's temple and claims to be God. Desecration means treating something sacred in an offensive way. In the physical-temple interpretation, this turns a place devoted to God into a stage for an enemy's claims.

Why buying and selling matters Revelation 13:16-17 connects the beast's mark with permission to buy and sell. Picture needing food for your family or trying to earn a living while being pressured to show loyalty to God's enemy. These are illustrations of the pressure, not predictions about particular businesses or technology.

The mark is more than a mystery to solve The passage connects the mark with the beast and pressure to worship him. It does not identify a modern product or payment system. Guessing about devices can distract from the clearer issue: who receives your deepest loyalty.

What is persecution? Persecution is mistreating people because of their faith. It can involve threats, exclusion, imprisonment, or violence. Revelation 13 calls God's people to remain faithful; it does not give them a comfortable picture of life under the beast.

Bring the connection home Most readers have faced some pressure to fit in. This passage describes pressure with far greater stakes. The personal question is not only what system might exist, but whether we will stay faithful when loyalty to Jesus becomes costly.

What Scripture Says About the Antichrist

HIS OPPOSITION TO JESUS, CLAIMS, POWER, AND DECEPTION

The Bible describes a pattern to recognize, rather than a name to guess. This study uses a future interpretation that connects the final Antichrist with Paul's man of lawlessness - a leader rebelling against God - and Revelation's first beast. The passages use different names; connecting them is an interpretation.

Opposes Jesus Antichrist means an opponent of Christ. John describes people who deny that Jesus is the Christ, God's promised Savior. 1 John 2:18-22

Claims God's place

He raises himself above every object of worship and claims to be God. The temple's meaning is debated. 2 Thessalonians 2:4

Receives Satan's power

Satan, pictured as the dragon, gives the beast power and authority. Revelation 13:2-4

Deceives people His coming involves Satan's power and misleading signs. An impressive miracle is not proof that someone speaks for God. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10

These traits concern opposition to Jesus and claims to divine authority. Being a powerful or disliked leader is not enough to identify someone as the final Antichrist.

The Antichrist's Actions And Defeat

ATTACKS ON BELIEVERS, PRESSURE TO WORSHIP THE BEAST, AND JESUS' VICTORY

Attacks God's people

The beast speaks against God and fights His people. Christians are called to endure and remain faithful. Revelation 13:5-10

Forces people to show loyalty. The second beast pressures people to worship the first beast and enforces a mark tied to buying and selling. A helper carries out this pressure. Revelation 13:11-17

Is defeated by Jesus

His power is limited. Jesus ends his rule at His coming. Evil does not control the final outcome. 2 Thessalonians 2:8

Look at the whole picture

The Bible describes worship, deception, attacks on believers, and pressure to give loyalty to God's enemy. It does not name a modern politician, business, or payment device. Similarities to one detail do not establish someone's identity.

Keep the roles clear

Revelation 13 describes two beasts. The second promotes the first and carries out the pressure to worship and receive the mark. We should not put every action onto one person.

The hope to remember

The enemy's power has a limit. Jesus wins. Studying these warnings should help us remain faithful, rather than live in fear.

An Antichrist In Every Generation?

DOES SATAN ALWAYS HAVE SOMEONE READY?

What does the suggestion mean? Some people suggest that Satan might always have a person ready to become the final Antichrist, the future enemy of Jesus. That person is what they mean by a candidate. It does not mean an election candidate. Scripture does not say Satan prepares such a person in every generation.

Many opponents of Christ does not mean one final leader is prepared in every generation. John describes people already opposing the truth about Jesus. Paul says rebellion against God was already at work. Neither statement establishes one specially prepared final Antichrist in every generation. 1 John 2:18-22; 2 Thessalonians 2:7

Does Satan know the date? Matthew 24:36 says the Father knows the day and hour. Acts 1:7 says the Father sets the times. Revelation 12:12 says Satan knows his time is short. These passages do not explain everything Satan knows or say that he keeps replacement people ready.

What determines when the final enemy appears? Paul says he is held back until the proper time. What or who holds him back is debated. Jesus defeats him at His coming. 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8

What should we do now? Test what people teach about Jesus. Popularity, political power, or impressive signs do not prove someone is the final Antichrist. Keep trusting Jesus, and do not identify someone as the Antichrist on the basis of a guess. 1 John 4:1-3; Matthew 24:4-5, 23-25

Does this settle before or after? No. A theory about Satan having someone ready does not establish when Christians meet Jesus. Decide from the passages about Jesus' return and the bringing together of believers.

CHAPTER 1

Frequently Asked Questions

Read each passage, distinguish its statements from the proposed explanations, and consider the reflection question.

1. What is the rapture?

Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

Paul describes Jesus coming, believers who have died being raised, and living believers being caught up with them to meet him. They will be with him forever.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

Before-tribulation readers place this meeting before the future trouble. After-tribulation readers understand it as part of Jesus' return after the trouble. This paragraph does not directly name its relationship to the tribulation.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is certain about the event, even before you decide its timing?

2. Does the Bible directly teach seven years of tribulation?

Read: Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24:15-21

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

Daniel describes a final period of seven and the stopping of sacrifices halfway through it. Jesus connects Daniel's warning with severe trouble.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

Many future-focused readers understand this as seven years still to come, separated from earlier periods by a gap. Other Christians connect it with events surrounding Christ's first coming or later historical events. Calling the whole final seven years the tribulation is part of a framework, rather than a phrase Daniel uses.

THINK IT THROUGH

Which parts of the seven-year framework come directly from Daniel, and which require additional connections?

3. Does God's judgment mean Christians must leave before the trouble?

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10; John 16:33; Revelation 13:5-10

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

Paul says believers are not appointed to God's wrath, meaning his judgment against sin. Jesus warns that his followers will face trouble, and Revelation describes attacks on God's people.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

Before-tribulation readers identify the coming tribulation with God's judgment and expect the church to leave beforehand. After-tribulation readers distinguish persecution by God's enemies from God's judgment and argue that believers can be protected from judgment while facing persecution.

THINK IT THROUGH

Does the passage you are reading describe God judging evil, people attacking believers, or both?

4. Does Jesus promise removal or protection through the trouble?

Read: Revelation 3:7-13; John 17:15

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

Jesus promises the church in Philadelphia protection from a worldwide time of testing. In John 17 he prays that his followers be protected while remaining in the world.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

Before-tribulation readers emphasize protection from the time itself. After-tribulation readers point out that protection need not always mean removal. John 17 provides a comparison, but does not automatically settle what Revelation 3 means.

THINK IT THROUGH

What in Revelation 3 establishes how the promised protection happens?

5. Who are the people brought together after the trouble?

Read: Matthew 24:29-31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

Matthew places the Son of Man's appearance and the bringing together of his chosen people after the distress. Paul describes believers being raised and meeting Jesus.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

After-tribulation readers identify these as descriptions of the same event. Before-tribulation readers understand Matthew's chosen people as Israel and/or believers during the tribulation, distinct from the church's earlier meeting with Jesus.

THINK IT THROUGH

What evidence identifies the chosen people and connects or separates the two accounts?

6. Who are the believers the beast attacks?

Read: Revelation 13:5-10; 14:12

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

The beast attacks God's people. Revelation calls them to endure and describes believers who remain faithful to Jesus.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

Before-tribulation readers understand them as people who believe after the church is taken to meet Jesus. After-tribulation readers understand them as Christians who remain on earth. These passages do not directly describe an earlier departure of the church.

THINK IT THROUGH

Where does each explanation get its claim about when these people began believing?

7. Must the Antichrist appear before Christians meet Jesus?

Read: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

Paul introduces Christ's coming and believers meeting him, then says the day of the Lord will not come before rebellion and the revealing of the man of lawlessness.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

After-tribulation readers connect the coming, meeting, and day closely, placing the enemy's appearance first. Before-tribulation readers distinguish the earlier rapture from the day of the Lord and place the enemy's appearance before that later period. Both must explain how Paul connects the statements.

THINK IT THROUGH

Does the passage describe one connected event or distinguish events? What supports your answer?

8. Can the numbered days reveal the date of Jesus' return?

Read: Daniel 12:11-12; Revelation 13:5; Matthew 24:32-36

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

Daniel gives 1,290 and 1,335 days; Revelation gives the beast 42 months. Jesus says signs indicate nearness, but no one knows the day or hour.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

A clearly identified starting event and a fixed period ending exactly at the return would allow a narrow prediction. That creates a real tension with Jesus' warning. The passages do not directly label these numbers a rapture countdown. Some readers expect greater understanding later; others interpret the periods less rigidly. Posttribulation belief alone does not establish an exact date.

THINK IT THROUGH

What assumptions would be needed to turn these passages into a calendar prediction?

9. Why would animal sacrifices return if Jesus died for sins?

Read: Daniel 9:27; Hebrews 10:1-18

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

Daniel describes sacrifices being stopped. Hebrews teaches that Jesus' once-for-all offering provides what repeated animal offerings could not.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

Future-focused readers infer that sacrifices must first be taking place before they stop. This expectation is a prediction about religious practice, not a command for Christians to offer animals or a claim that Christ's work is incomplete. Other readers understand Daniel's sacrifices in a historical setting.

THINK IT THROUGH

Does describing a future practice mean that God requires Christians to participate?

10. Does staying ready mean nothing must happen first?

Read: Matthew 24:36-44; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

Jesus commands readiness because the time is unknown. Paul warns readers about claims that the day has already arrived and identifies events connected with it.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

Before-tribulation readers generally expect an any-moment rapture without preceding predicted events. After-tribulation readers understand readiness as ongoing trust and obedience even if events must occur first. The command to be ready and the question of preceding signs must both be explained.

THINK IT THROUGH

Does being ready require the absence of signs, or can readiness include recognizing them?

11. Does rapture timing decide what the thousand years mean?

Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20:1-15

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

Paul describes believers meeting Jesus; Revelation describes a thousand-year period, resurrection, and judgment.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

Before- and after-tribulation premillennial views both expect a future earthly kingdom. Other Christians expect believers to meet Jesus at his return while understanding the thousand years as the present age. These questions connect, but one answer does not settle the other.

THINK IT THROUGH

How does your explanation of meeting Jesus fit your explanation of resurrection in Revelation 20?

12. Does choosing the wrong view change our life with God?

Read: Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18; Revelation 21:1-4

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

Life with God is a gift through faith, believers will be with Jesus forever, and God's new creation will be free of death and suffering.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

Neither before- nor after-tribulation belief earns forgiveness or a better eternal home. The study matters because it shapes how we understand Scripture, anticipate suffering, and prepare to remain faithful.

THINK IT THROUGH

What should this study change in your expectations and actions, while leaving your trust in Jesus secure?

CHAPTER 1

6 Test the Evidence

How To Compare The Two Views

READ THE PASSAGES, TEST THE REASONS, FORM AN OPINION

As you weigh the arguments, pause and notice your starting point. Were you taught one view? Does fear or familiarity make it seem more likely?

1. Read the whole passage Notice the audience, purpose, timing words, and sequence of events. Ask what the author was helping the original readers understand.

2. Identify the kind of evidence A direct statement is stronger than a conclusion based only on silence. A connection to another passage may be persuasive, but must be demonstrated.

3. Test the key connection Examples: Does elect, meaning God's chosen people, mean the church here? Do Matthew and Paul describe the same event? Does protection require removal? Is all tribulation the same as God's judgment against sin?

4. Compare the explanations Which view explains more of the evidence with fewer ideas the passage does not clearly state? Test its hardest passage, rather than only its strongest one.

5. Allow different levels of confidence You can affirm what Scripture states clearly while remaining less certain about how the passages fit together.

Remember: Three reasons for each view do not mean both views have equally strong evidence. Weigh the reasons; do not simply count them.

Test the View You Find Most Convincing

CONSIDER ITS HARDEST QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU DECIDE

Once one view begins to seem more persuasive, give its most difficult questions your full attention.

IF YOU LEAN TOWARD BEFORE

Ask: What shows that Matthew 24's chosen people are a different group from the Christians who met Jesus earlier?

Ask: What requires the protection in Revelation 3:10 to mean taking believers away rather than protecting them while they remain?

Ask: Where is the separation between the meeting with Jesus in 1 Thessalonians 4 and Jesus' later return established?

IF YOU LEAN TOWARD AFTER

Ask: What shows that the event Matthew describes and the event Paul describes are the same event, despite their differing details?

Ask: How do you explain the promise of protection from the hour itself in Revelation 3:10?

Ask: How does your view distinguish believers' suffering from God's judgment against sin, in light of 1 Thessalonians 5:9?

If you remain undecided: Identify the one unresolved question that most affects your decision. Re-read its passage in context before adding more opinions.

Which explanation accounts for the most evidence? Which assumption needs support?

CHAPTER 1

7 Form Your Conclusion

Return to the opening questionnaire. Which answer changed, and which passage most influenced that change?

State Your Current Conclusion

BEFORE, AFTER, OR UNDECIDED FOR A SPECIFIC REASON

You have compared the passages and heard both explanations. Now choose the position you find most convincing. The aim is a decision based on reasons, not a vote for your favorite teacher.

1. Choose your present position. Before: Christians meet Jesus before the tribulation. After: Christians meet Jesus as He returns afterward. Undecided: name the specific question that prevents a decision.

2. Name your strongest passage. Identify the verse and what it actually says. Explain why it supports your view. Distinguish the wording from a connection you are making to another passage.

3. Identify the question that most affects your decision. Do Matthew 24 and 1 Thessalonians 4 describe the same event? Does Revelation 3:10 require removal? Does Paul place the enemy's appearance before our meeting with Jesus in 2 Thessalonians 2? Explain which answer you find most convincing and why.

4. Face the strongest objection. State the other view's best reason fairly. Explain your response, or what you still need to study. Having an unanswered question does not automatically cancel your conclusion.

5. State your confidence and next step. Are you strongly convinced, leaning one way, or still undecided? Name what evidence could change your mind. Choose the next passage you need to examine.

Say your conclusion simply: I currently believe Christians meet Jesus before / after the tribulation because of this passage and reason. My confidence is strong / moderate / tentative. The strongest challenge is this, and my next step is this.

Take the next step. Choose the view best supported by the passages, and explain why. If you remain undecided, name the question preventing a decision and the passage you will study next. Continue examining Scripture. If a question remains unresolved, identify the passage you will study next and what evidence could change your conclusion.

My present position is before, after, or undecided because…

My strongest passage and reason are...

The strongest objection, my confidence, and my next study step are...

CHAPTER 1

8 Apply What You Learn

Does When We Meet Jesus Change Our Future with God?

WHAT DIFFERS - AND THE FUTURE BOTH VIEWS SHARE

Your opinion does not determine the outcome. Believing before or after does not change God's plan, earn forgiveness and life with God, or decide whether a Christian belongs in His kingdom. Christians depend on Jesus for forgiveness and life with God, not on getting every detail of the timetable right.

What does the timing question change? The two views describe different expectations about when Christians are raised, receive changed bodies, and meet Jesus - and whether the church experiences the tribulation on earth. This can shape how people think about readiness and suffering.

Before the tribulation. In the usual before view, Jesus raises Christians who have died and brings living Christians to meet him before the seven years. They are with Him and return with Him when He comes to rule on earth. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53

After the tribulation. In the after view used here, Christians remain through the trouble. Those who have died are raised, living believers are changed, and they meet Jesus as He returns to earth. Matthew 24:29-31; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Neither view ends with Christians missing out. Both affirm that Christians will be with Jesus forever. Neither teaches that enduring persecution means losing life with God forever or that escaping the tribulation earns a better life with God forever. 1 Thessalonians 4:17

Keep two different questions separate. Before or after the tribulation concerns the rapture. Before or after the millennium concerns Jesus' return in relation to His rule. Posttribulation does not mean postmillennialism. Deciding when Christians meet Jesus does not settle every question about the kingdom.

The Millennium And The New Earth

WHERE THE TWO PREMILLENNIAL VIEWS COME TOGETHER

What is the millennium? Millennium means a thousand years. Revelation 20:1-6 describes Satan being bound and believers ruling with Christ. Premillennial means Jesus returns before this rule. The comparison below concerns before- and after-tribulation views that both accept a future period when Jesus rules on earth; other Christians interpret the millennium differently.

Do both views include Christians in Jesus' kingdom? Yes. In these two premillennial views, Christians share in Jesus' rule. The difference is when they meet Jesus, not whether faithful believers are excluded from His kingdom. Revelation 20:4-6 What about our bodies? Both expect raised and

changed bodies that will no longer die. The before view places this change before the tribulation; the after view places it at Jesus' return afterward. First Corinthians 15:42-54 describes the change, but does not directly locate it before or after the tribulation.

Are all the kingdom details identical? No. These views can explain the resurrection of people killed during the tribulation, and the people entering the kingdom in bodies that can still age and die that can still age and die, differently. Do not assume agreement about every detail just because both expect Jesus to rule.

What is the new earth? Revelation 21:1-5 describes a new heaven and new earth, God dwelling with His people, and death, mourning, crying, and pain being removed. In the order of events expected by those who believe Jesus returns before the thousand years, this permanent future follows the millennium and final judgment (Revelation 20:7-15). It is different from the thousand-year period when Christ rules.

Does the timing of meeting Jesus change that final home? No. These two views share the hope of everlasting life with God in His renewed creation. The timing debate changes how they describe the events leading there; it does not give Christians two different lasting homes with God.

As you decide: How does each view change what you expect before Jesus returns? Which promises remain certain in both views? Let those shared promises strengthen your hope.

How Your Conclusion Shapes Your Life

KEEP TRUSTING JESUS AND CARING FOR PEOPLE

Both views place your future with Jesus. Neither view promises that following Him will be easy today.

When the headlines feel frightening What does Jesus' promised return let you trust, even when you cannot place current events on a timeline?

When life brings suffering How can the certainty of resurrection and reunion help you endure? Who needs that encouragement from you?

When Christians disagree Can you explain another believer's view without misrepresenting it? Can you hold your belief while continuing to worship and serve together?

Your next step Choose one unresolved passage to study in context. Choose one way to keep trusting Jesus or encourage someone this week.

What will you do this week to prepare for Jesus' return, keep trusting him, or encourage someone?

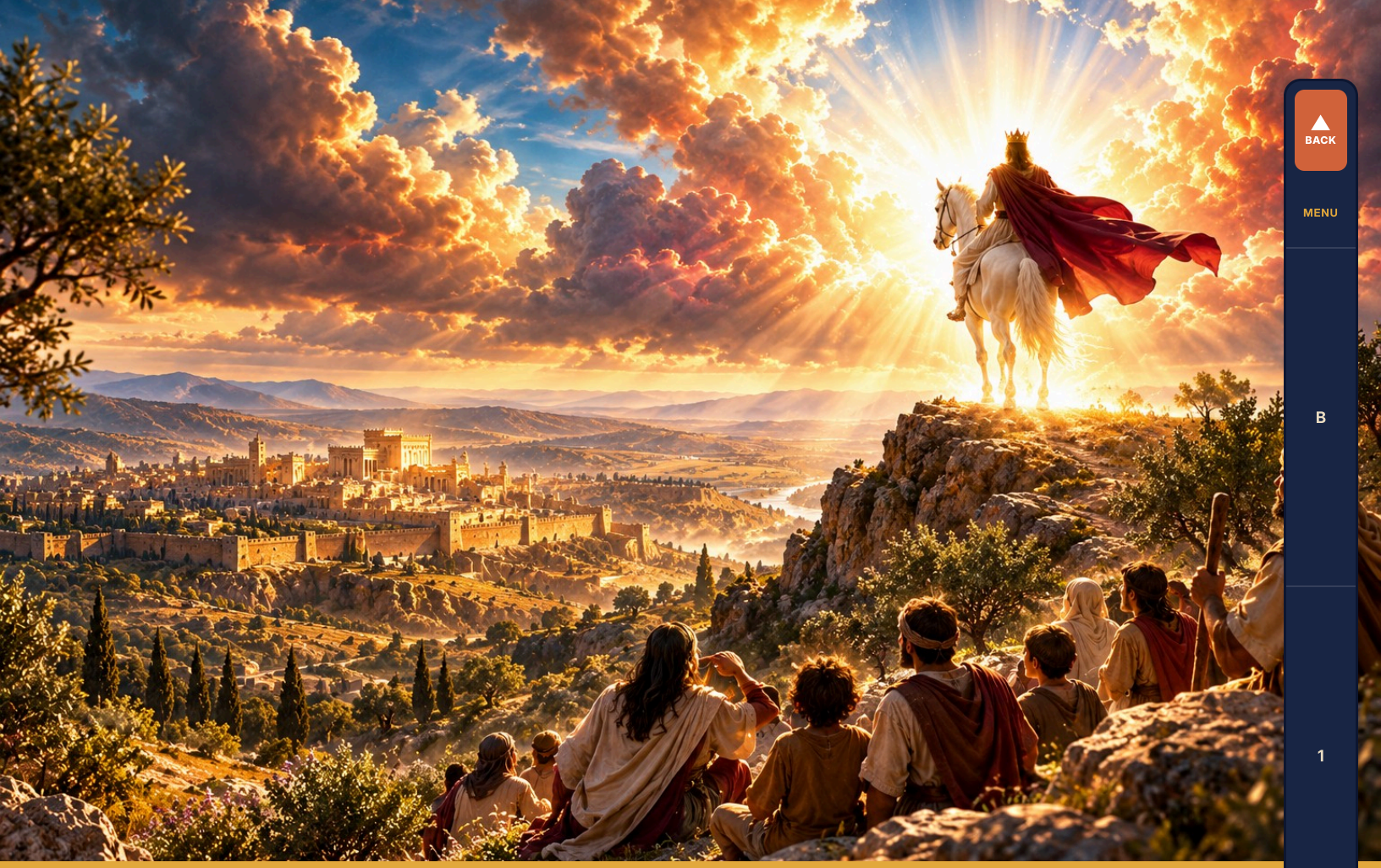
CHAPTER 1

9 Sources and Further Reading

Sources and Reading Notes

The comparison arguments are concise teaching summaries of how each view is commonly taught. Read the linked passages to evaluate the fuller case for yourself.

Scripture note: Bible links open the NIV. Passage explanations in this study are summaries, not Bible quotations.



CHAPTER

2

The Millennial Kingdom

What does Christ's thousand-year rule mean?

READ · COMPARE · TEST · DECIDE · APPLY

Revelation 20 describes a thousand-year reign. Christians read it in four main ways. This chapter helps you compare them.

IN THIS CHAPTER

What Do You Currently Believe?
1. Why This Matters
2. Key Words Explained
3. Read the Scripture
4. Compare the Views
5. Understand the Setting
Frequently Asked Questions
6. Test the Evidence
7. Form Your Conclusion
8. Apply What You Learn
9. Sources and Further Reading

REMEMBER

Your salvation does not depend on choosing the right timeline. It depends on Jesus.

CHAPTER 2

What Do You Currently Believe?

This is an ungraded starting questionnaire. Circle or note your answer before studying. “Not sure” is a useful answer. Revisit these questions after completing the chapter.

1. How do you currently understand the thousand years?

- ◯ A. A future period after Jesus returns
- ◯ B. The present age or a period before his return
- ◯ C. Not sure

2. Who do you think lives in a future earthly kingdom?

- ◯ A. Only people with resurrected bodies
- ◯ B. People with resurrected bodies and people in bodies that can still age and die
- ◯ C. I do not expect that kingdom, or I am not sure

3. What do you think the first resurrection means?

- ◯ A. People being raised bodily from death
- ◯ B. Life with Christ in heaven or new spiritual life
- ◯ C. Not sure

4. How do you understand God’s promises to Israel?

- ◯ A. A distinctive future fulfillment for the Jewish people as a nation
- ◯ B. Fulfillment in Christ shared by all his people
- ◯ C. Not sure

5. How confident are you in your present view?

- ◯ A. Strongly convinced
- ◯ B. Leaning toward a view
- ◯ C. Still undecided

CHAPTER 2

1 Why This Matters

What Is the Millennium?

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ will return, the dead will be raised, evil will be defeated, and God will make all things new. But what happens when Jesus returns? Does he establish a kingdom on this earth before the final judgment, or does the Bible describe a different sequence?

Revelation 20 describes a period called one thousand years. The Latin word for a thousand years gives us the term Millennium. Christians agree that this passage matters, but they disagree about what the thousand years represent and when they occur.

Why This Matters

Our understanding of the Millennium affects how we connect Christ's return, the resurrection, judgment, God's promises to Israel, and the future of the earth. These differences do not change the central Christian promise that God will bring his people into everlasting life with him.

Why Christians Disagree

The Bible contains prophecy—messages God gave through biblical writers that sometimes reveal future events. Revelation also uses vivid visions and symbols. Christians disagree about when those visions describe a sequence of events and when a later vision revisits something already described. They also differ on whether "one thousand years" names an exact duration or represents a complete, God-appointed period.

Is It Worth Reaching a Conclusion?

Yes. This is not a test of whether someone is a Christian, and the evidence is not equally clear on every point. Still, it is worth understanding the views, studying the passages, and reaching a thoughtful conclusion you can support with Scripture.

CHAPTER 2

2 Key Words Explained

Millennium

The thousand-year period described in Revelation 20. Christians disagree about its timing and character.

Premillennialism

Jesus returns before a future thousand-year period when he rules. Historic and dispensational versions differ especially over Israel's future role and often over when Christians meet Jesus.

Amillennialism

The thousand years describe Christ's present rule rather than a separate future earthly kingdom after his return.

Postmillennialism

Jesus returns after an extended period in which the good news about him brings widespread faith and positive change.

Resurrection

God raising people who have died to bodily life. Interpretations of the first resurrection in Revelation 20 differ.

Glorified body

The lasting, transformed body God gives believers, no longer subject to death.

Judgment

God holding people accountable and deciding justly. In the final judgment, evil is punished and God's people receive the life he has promised.

New creation

The new heaven and new earth where God lives with his people and death is gone.

Chronological sequence

A description in which one event happens after the previous event.

Repeated vision

A later vision describing the same period again from another angle.

Inference

A conclusion drawn by connecting evidence, rather than a direct statement in a passage.

CHAPTER 2

3 Read the Scripture

What Revelation 20 Describes

Read Revelation 20:1–15 before studying the interpretations. John describes several scenes:

20:1–3 — Satan is restrained so that he cannot deceive the nations in the same way during the thousand years.

20:4–6 — John sees thrones and people who come to life and rule with Christ. He calls this the first resurrection.

20:7–10 — After the thousand years, Satan is released, deceives the nations, and is finally defeated.

20:11–15 — The dead stand before God for judgment; death itself is finally abolished.

Notice the distinction: Those scenes appear in the text. Whether the scenes describe a future period when Jesus rules on earth following Jesus' return is an interpretation that requires additional argument.

Beliefs Christians Share

Across the four views in this guide, Christians who affirm the central teachings of the faith affirm that Jesus will return, God will raise the dead, judge evil justly, and bring his people into a renewed creation. See John 5:28–29, 1 Corinthians 15:20–28, and Revelation 21:1–5.

The dispute concerns the timing and character of the thousand years, not whether Jesus ultimately triumphs.

Read these complete NIV passages, then compare the explanations:

Revelation 19:11–21

Revelation 20:1–15

Revelation 21:1–5; 22:1–5

John 5:24–29

1 Corinthians 15:20–28, 42–54

What events does the text name, and which questions about their timing remain?

CHAPTER 2

4 Compare the Views

Four Interpretations

Four Ways Christians Understand the Millennium

Historic Premillennialism Jesus returns before a future period in which he rules with resurrected believers. It generally expects the church to endure severe end-time suffering.

Common biblical emphasis: Revelation 19–20 read in sequence; resurrection in 20:4–6. Question to test: Why would people who have not received resurrected bodies remain after Christ returns?

Dispensational Premillennialism

Jesus returns before a future earthly kingdom, with a distinctive future role for national Israel. Many people who hold this view expect believers to be taken to meet Jesus before a future tribulation.

Common biblical emphasis: Revelation 20 together with Old Testament promises to Israel. Question to test: Does the New Testament require a separate national fulfillment?

Amillennialism

The thousand years describe the present era in which Christ rules from heaven; he returns at its end, bringing resurrection and judgment.

Common biblical emphasis: Revelation's repeated visions; John 5; 1 Corinthians 15. Question to consider: How should the first resurrection and Satan's restraint be understood?

Postmillennialism

The good news about Jesus brings a long period of widespread faith and positive change before he returns. The thousand years need not be a literal count.

Common biblical emphasis: Kingdom growth texts alongside Revelation 20. Question to test: Does Scripture promise such an extended period before Christ returns?

These are summaries, not exhaustive definitions. Historic premillennialists differ among themselves, and not every dispensationalist holds the same view of when Christians meet Jesus.

CHAPTER 2

5 Understand the Setting

Israel, Earthly Life, and the New Earth

Israel, Earthly Life, and Satan's Release

God's Promises to Israel Some Christians expect Old Testament promises of land, restoration, and peace to receive a distinctive future fulfillment for ethnic Israel. Others understand those promises as fulfilled in Christ and ultimately shared by all God's people. Compare Romans 11:25–29; Ezekiel 37:21–28; Galatians 3:26–29.

Who Would Live in a Future Earthly Kingdom?

In views that expect Jesus to return before a future thousand-year kingdom, resurrected believers have new bodies that no longer die, while some other people are understood to enter the kingdom in bodies that can still age and die and have descendants. Revelation 20 does not directly explain where these mortal inhabitants come from. Interpreters build this explanation from other passages, including Matthew 25:31–46 and Isaiah 65:17–25. This is a significant unresolved question, not a detail to skip.

Why Would Satan Be Released?

Revelation 20:7–10 directly says Satan is released and gathers nations in rebellion before God defeats him. It does not directly explain why God permits the release. Suggestions about exposing rebellion or demonstrating God's justice are theological inferences, not stated explanations.

The New Earth and Eternal Life

Revelation 21–22 describes God living with his people, the removal of death and mourning, and a renewed creation. Premillennialists place the Millennium before that final new creation. Amillennialists and postmillennialists do not expect a separate future earthly kingdom after Jesus returns.

Does your view of the thousand years change eternity? It changes how you understand the route to the final new creation, not the final promise of life with God. None of the four views in this guide teaches that believers receive a better life with God forever because they selected the correct timeline.

Read Revelation 21:1–5 and Revelation 22:1–5.

CHAPTER 2

Frequently Asked Questions

Read each passage, distinguish its statements from the proposed explanations, and consider the reflection question.

1. Will Jesus rule on earth for a thousand years?

Read: Revelation 19:11-21; 20:1-6

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

John describes Christ's victory and then visions of Satan being restrained and people who come to life and rule with Christ for a thousand years.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

Premillennial readers place this rule after Jesus returns. Amillennial readers understand the thousand years as the present age. Postmillennial readers expect a long period of gospel growth before his return. Whether the order of visions is the order of events is a central question.

THINK IT THROUGH

What supports your reading of how Revelation 19 and 20 fit together?

2. Does a thousand years mean exactly a thousand years?

Read: Revelation 20:1-7

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

The passage repeatedly names a thousand-year period and describes events during and after it.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

Some readers take the number as a literal duration. Others understand it as a symbolic description of a complete period known to God. Repetition gives the number importance, but each view must explain how numbers work in Revelation.

THINK IT THROUGH

What evidence supports a literal or symbolic reading here?

3. Who would live in a future earthly kingdom?

Read: Revelation 20:4-9; Matthew 25:31-46; Isaiah 65:17-25

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

Revelation describes people ruling with Christ and nations present when Satan is released. It does not directly explain how every group entered the kingdom.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

Many premillennial readers expect resurrected believers alongside people who survive Christ's return in bodies that can still age and die and later have descendants. They connect several passages to explain this. Readers who understand the millennium as the present age do not expect that separate future arrangement.

THINK IT THROUGH

Which passage establishes who enters the kingdom, rather than merely assuming it?

4. Could anyone still sin or die during the millennium?

Read: Isaiah 65:17-25; Revelation 20:7-9; 21:1-4

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

Isaiah mentions long life and death within a vision of renewal. Revelation describes a final rebellion, then the removal of death in the new creation.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

Many premillennial readers understand Isaiah as describing conditions during a future kingdom in which ordinary people can still die. Others understand its imagery as a picture of the final new creation. Resurrected believers are promised bodies that no longer die in 1 Corinthians 15.

THINK IT THROUGH

How does your view distinguish the thousand years from the final new creation?

5. Will Christians have new bodies?

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:42-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

Paul promises that those who belong to Christ will be raised or changed and will no longer be subject to death.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

The views in this guide affirm this promise. They differ over how the resurrection relates to the tribulation and the thousand years. Glorified body is a term for that lasting, transformed body.

THINK IT THROUGH

Which part of this promise is clear even when the timetable is disputed?

6. What does ruling with Jesus mean?

Read: Revelation 20:4-6; 2 Timothy 2:12

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

These passages promise that Christ's people share in his rule. They do not describe a detailed daily schedule or list of duties.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

Premillennial readers expect service with Christ in a future kingdom. Amillennial readers commonly connect Revelation 20 with believers sharing in his rule from heaven now. Neither explanation supplies details the passages leave unstated.

THINK IT THROUGH

What can you affirm without inventing duties or daily routines?

7. Why would God release Satan again?

Read: Revelation 20:1-3, 7-10

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

Satan is released, deceives nations, gathers them in rebellion, and is finally defeated. The passage does not directly explain why God permits the release.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

Some teachers suggest that it exposes rebellion even under favorable conditions or demonstrates God's justice. These are proposed explanations. Readers also differ over whether this rebellion follows a future kingdom or describes the final opposition at the end of the present age.

THINK IT THROUGH

Which details are stated, and which explanation of God's purpose is inferred?

8. When are the dead raised and judged?

Read: Revelation 20:4-15; John 5:28-29

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

Revelation names a first resurrection, the rest of the dead, and a final judgment. Jesus promises a resurrection to life and a resurrection to judgment.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

Premillennial readers understand bodily resurrections separated by the thousand years. Other readers understand the first resurrection as life with Christ in heaven or new spiritual life, with a final bodily resurrection and judgment at his return.

THINK IT THROUGH

How does your explanation account for both life and death in Revelation 20?

9. How do God's promises to Israel fit?

Read: Romans 11:25-29; Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:26-29

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

Paul says God has not abandoned his promises to Israel and also describes people who belong to Christ as sharing in Abraham's promise.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

Dispensational readers commonly expect a distinctive future national fulfillment. Other readers emphasize fulfillment in Christ shared by all his people. Views also differ over whether Romans 11 predicts a future widespread turning of Jewish people to Jesus.

THINK IT THROUGH

How does your view account for both the promises to Israel and inclusion of people from every nation?

10. Is the thousand-year kingdom the same as the final new earth?

Read: Revelation 20:7-15; 21:1-5

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

After the thousand-year scenes, John describes final judgment and a new creation in which death and mourning are gone.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

Premillennial readers distinguish a future kingdom from the final new creation that follows. Amillennial and postmillennial readers do not expect a separate earthly millennium after Jesus returns. All affirm God's final promise of life with him.

THINK IT THROUGH

Which events does your view place between Jesus' return and the final new creation?

11. Does a millennial view decide when Christians meet Jesus?

Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 24:29-31; Revelation 20:4-6

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

These passages describe Christ's coming, believers meeting him, and people living and ruling with him.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

A future thousand-year kingdom can be combined with either before- or after-tribulation belief. Understanding the thousand years as the present age also allows believers to meet Jesus at his return. The two decisions should form a coherent explanation, but are not interchangeable.

THINK IT THROUGH

What additional evidence is needed to move from your conclusion about the thousand years to a conclusion about meeting Jesus?

12. Does getting this question wrong determine whether we belong to God?

Read: John 3:16-18; Ephesians 2:8-9; Revelation 21:1-4

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

Forgiveness and life with God come through Jesus. The final promise is God living with his people and removing death and suffering.

MAIN EXPLANATIONS

The millennial interpretations discussed here do not offer different ways to earn life with God forever. They differ over the route and order of events leading to the shared final hope. Studying them matters because we want to understand Scripture carefully.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can you hold a reasoned conclusion while treating Christians who disagree fairly?

CHAPTER 2

6 Test the Evidence

Why Revelation 19–20 Is Debated

Revelation 19:11–21 portrays Christ's victory over his enemies. Revelation 20 then opens with Satan being restrained. Does the order of John's visions give us the order of future events?

The Case for a Sequence of Future Events

Premillennial interpreters read chapter 20 as continuing the story after Christ's return in chapter 19. They argue that Satan's binding, the first resurrection, and the final rebellion fit naturally as events following that return. This reading understands the order of the visions as the order of the events.

The Case for a Repeated Vision

Amillennial interpreters argue that Revelation often returns to the same historical period from different angles. They note similarities between the final battles in Revelation 19 and 20 and interpret chapter 20 as a new vision covering the time between Christ's first and second comings.

Our assessment: The sequence reading is straightforward on a first reading, but the repeated-vision reading is a serious literary argument, not an attempt to dismiss Scripture. To evaluate either reading, consider how the whole book is organized, rather than relying only on the chapter break.

The First Resurrection and Final Judgment

Revelation 20:4–6 says some people "came to life" and calls this the first resurrection. The passage also speaks of the rest of the dead. What kind of life is in view?

Premillennial explanation: a bodily resurrection of believers before the thousand years, followed later by the judgment described in 20:11–15.

Two Explanations of the First Resurrection

Common amillennial explanation: believers who die are alive with Christ and rule with him before the final bodily resurrection. Some understand the first resurrection as new spiritual life through conversion instead.

Texts to compare: John 5:24–29; 1 Corinthians 15:22–26; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18.

John describes people who were killed and came to life. Premillennial readers understand this as bodily resurrection; other readers relate it to life with Christ in heaven or to new spiritual life. Each view must explain both John's wording and its connection with the rest of Scripture.

Questions to Keep in View

Seven Questions That May Change How You Think About the Future

• Does the Bible say that the final, perfect world begins the moment Jesus returns?

• Does Revelation 20 describe an actual thousand-year period on earth?

• Who are the people who come to life and rule with Christ?

• If Jesus rules over a future earthly kingdom, who lives there in ordinary human bodies?

• Why is Satan released after being restrained for a thousand years?

• Does the resurrection of believers happen before a millennium, or at the final judgment?

• What difference do these answers make for our understanding of eternity?

Evaluate the Evidence

Answer these questions in your own words:

Does Revelation 20 continue the events of Revelation 19, or revisit an earlier period? What details support your reading?

What does the first resurrection mean in your interpretation? Which passages support that meaning?

How does your view explain Satan's restraint, release, and final defeat?

How does your view account for Israel's promises and the new earth?

Which passage presents the strongest challenge to your view? What is your response?

Which interpretation best explains the sequence, resurrection, and Satan's restraint and release?

CHAPTER 2

7 Form Your Conclusion

Return to the opening questionnaire. Which answer changed, and which passage most influenced that change?

Choose historic premillennialism, dispensational premillennialism, amillennialism, postmillennialism, or remain undecided for a specific reason. Give the passage and detail that carry the greatest weight. Explain the other view's strongest objection fairly.

My present conclusion about the thousand years and strongest passage are…

My explanation of the first resurrection and the order of the visions is…

The strongest objection, my confidence, and my next study step are…

CHAPTER 2

8 Apply What You Learn

Hope That Shapes Daily Life

Your interpretation affects how you understand Christ's rule, resurrection, judgment, Israel's promises, and the future of the earth. It does not earn a better life with God forever.

Read Revelation 21:1–5 for the promised end of death and suffering. Read 2 Peter 3:11–14 for a call to live in a way that honors God as we await God's future. Ask how these promises should affect your priorities and treatment of others.

Explain another Christian's view fairly, remain attentive to difficult passages, and encourage someone who needs the hope of resurrection.

What will you do this week to encourage someone or live in a way that honors God?

CHAPTER 2

9 Sources and Further Reading

Historical Witnesses

Early Christian writers were not unanimous. Some expected a future thousand-year rule while openly acknowledging that other sincere Christians disagreed. Later, a nonliteral interpretation came to shape much of Western Christianity. Neither fact settles the biblical question; both correct simple claims that the church has always agreed.

Editorial note: The NIV is linked rather than reproduced at length. The explanations in this guide are original summaries of how each view is commonly taught.

Read every explanation alongside Scripture. Church history and the work of scholars can help, but they are not proof that one position must be correct.

Further Reading

The Bible is our starting point. As you keep studying, look for resources that present more than one view fairly, and test every explanation against the passages themselves.

Questions to ask while reading

Does Revelation 20 describe events after Revelation 19, or does it retell the same era from another angle? What does “first resurrection” mean? How do the promises to Israel fit with the promises to the church? Which explanation best accounts for all the passages, including those that seem difficult for it?

How the Two Chapters Fit Together

One return connects both questions

The rapture is believers being caught up to meet Jesus when he comes. The question about the thousand years concerns the thousand-year period when Christ rules. Both involve Christ's return and the resurrection of believers, so your explanation of one must fit your explanation of the other. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and Revelation 20:4–6.

Compare the sequences

Both of the following views expect a future thousand-year kingdom. In the before-tribulation view, Christians meet Jesus before the trouble begins and later return with him to earth. In the after-tribulation view, Christians meet Jesus as he returns after the trouble, before his thousand-year rule. Both place the final judgment and new creation after that rule. These are summaries of the two interpretations; compare Matthew 24:29–31 and Revelation 19–21.

How the answers affect one another

If believers are raised when Jesus returns, how does that resurrection relate to the first resurrection in Revelation 20? If a future earthly kingdom includes ordinary people as well as resurrected believers, where do those ordinary people come from? The timeline must account for the people and events described across the passages. No isolated verse supplies every detail.

Why one answer does not settle the other

The belief that Christians meet Jesus after the tribulation does not by itself establish a future thousand-year kingdom. Those who understand the thousand years as the present age can also expect Christians to meet Jesus when he returns. Posttribulation is not postmillennialism. Study each question separately, then test whether your answers form a coherent explanation.

Why both matter

These answers shape expectations about suffering, resurrection, Christ's rule, judgment, and the future earth. They should deepen hope and faithful living. Forgiveness and life with God depend on Jesus, rather than choosing the right timeline (Ephesians 2:8–9). God's final promise is life with him without death or mourning (Revelation 21:1–4).

YOUR TURN

Connect Your Conclusions

How do my conclusions about meeting Jesus and the thousand years fit together?

Which passages most strongly support the sequence I now believe?

Which difficulty remains, and what evidence could change my mind?

What difference should these studies make in my life this week?

See you on the other side.

RICK MELICK