

Introduction

Eschatology refers to the study of end-times. The eschatological view presented in this book reveals that the kingdom of God will grow and advance until it fills the earth. The Church will rise in unity, maturity, and glory before the return of Jesus. We will present to you a victorious eschatology.

Most of the great leaders throughout Church history held to a victorious eschatology.

However, during the twentieth century, Christians became increasingly skeptical and pessimistic about the future. During World War I, Christians in Europe began to embrace a negative view of the world. Christians in North America followed suit during the Depression and World War II. As the world was thrust face-to-face with challenges and the wickedness of war, people embraced a negative view of humanity and a pessimistic view of the future.

It was during those trying periods when many Christians embraced a more pessimistic eschatology. They came to believe that the world gradually is slipping under the influence of wicked leaders and eventually Satan will take control of the economic and religious systems of the world. Preachers who embraced that pessimistic view began to teach that an anti-christ figure will soon rise to prominence and then deceive most of humanity. They also taught about a coming great tribulation during which God will pour out His wrath, judging and destroying the earth.

As we mentioned, most of the great leaders in Church history held to a more victorious eschatology.

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The pessimistic view did not enter into Christianity in any significant way until the publication of the *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909), which proposed in its footnotes a very negative scenario of future end-time events. Since that time, hundreds of scary end-time books have been promoted within Christianity. The most widely read are known as the *Left Behind* series, written by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. Such books and the associated teachings have become so commonly accepted in the modern Church that the negative eschatology has become the most popular view. It is important to note, however, that this view has been popular in Christianity for only the past 60 years. It reached its zenith of acceptance just before the close of the last millennium, when Christians became fascinated with the possibility of the world ending in the year 2,000.

Now that we have crossed into the new millennium, Christians are lifting their eyes to the future. Many leaders are discovering that the Scriptures give us a more optimistic view than they previously had believed. They are embracing a victorious eschatology that teaches that Jesus Christ and His Church are going to take over this world, not Satan.

The theological label that is used to refer to the victorious eschatology presented in this book is the *partial preterist view*. In contrast, today's popular view is called the *futurist view*.

<u>Eschatological View</u>	<u>Theological Name</u>
Victorious View	Partial Preterist View
Popular View	Futurist View

These theological labels, the partial preterist view and the futurist view, refer to when the prophecies in Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation are fulfilled. The word “preterist” comes from the Latin *praeteritus*, meaning “that which has past.” So the partial preterist view is that which sees part of the prophecies in Matthew 24 and part of the book of Revelation as already fulfilled. In contrast, the futurist sees virtually all of the prophecies in Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation fulfilled in the future.

<u>Theological Name</u>	<u>Matthew 24 & Revelation</u>
Partial Preterist View	Part Past, Part Future
Futurist View	All Fulfilled in the Future

This is what we will be showing you as we proceed. In section 1 we go through the prophecies recorded in Matthew 24. In section 2 we discuss some issues that are key in considering the partial preterist view. In section 3 we study the prophecies in chapters 2 and 9 of the book of Daniel. In section 4 we work through the book of Revelation. Then in sections 5, 6, and 7 we present the partial preterist views concerning the Jews, the antichrist, and the rapture. Finally, in section 8 we clarify what is meant by “the end-times.”

As pastors, we (Harold Eberle and Martin Trench) used to believe and teach the futurist view. However, even as we taught our church congregations the related ideas, we both realized that there are many scriptures that simply do not fit into the scenario of events proposed by the futurists. After several years

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of in-depth study, we have come to believe that the partial preterist view is more true to the Scriptures. This we will show you in the pages to follow.

In addition to studying specific Bible passages, we will insert a few quotes from well-known preachers, teachers, and reformers that show how the fathers of the faith shared a victorious eschatology. Not every leader throughout Church history would explain every verse of the Bible the same as we will; however, the fundamental view that the Church will rise in victory and power before the return of Jesus Christ has been the predominant view of the Church for the past 2,000 years.

Charles Spurgeon

I myself believe that King Jesus will reign, and the idols be utterly abolished; but I expect the same power which turned the world upside down once, will still continue to do it. The Holy Ghost would never suffer the imputation to rest upon His holy name that He was not able to convert the world.
(The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, 1992, 4:210)

Jonathan Edwards

The visible kingdom of Satan shall be overthrown, and the kingdom of Christ set up on the ruins of it, everywhere throughout the whole habitable globe.
(The Works of Jonathan Edwards, 1974: 488)

Origen

It is evident that . . . every form of worship will be destroyed except the religion of Christ, which will alone prevail. And indeed it will one day triumph, as its principles take possession of the minds of men more and more every day.

(Origen Against Celsus, 1660, 8:68)

John Wesley

All unprejudiced persons may see with their eyes, that he [God] is already renewing the face of the earth: And we have strong reason to hope that the work he hath begun he will carry on unto the day of the Lord Jesus; that he will never intermit this blessed work of his Spirit until he has fulfilled all his promises, until he hath put a period to sin and misery, and infirmity, and death; and re-established universal holiness and happiness, and caused all the inhabitants of the earth to sing together "Hallelujah."

(The Works of John Wesley, 1985, 499)