

CONTEMPORARY OPTIONS IN ESCHATOLOGY II

(another way to consider various end-time positions—initially described as ways to go about interpreting the Book of Revelation, but now holistically applied)

Idealist

The Idealist position is in one sense correct in that “good” will indeed eventually prevail over “evil.” After the final white-throne judgment, time without end will not include evil darkness and judgment for those whose names have been written in Jesus Christ’s Book of Life. Those who reject God’s provision for forgiveness of sin through the atoning blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross will exist eternally in dark judgment—in the lake of fire. The Idealist position is incomplete in that there are many more specific details God has communicated concerning the overcoming of evil.

Preterist

The Preterist position is in one sense correct in that the first century A.D. did include the closing of the *end of the age* of the First Covenant, but neglects the eschatological revelation of the age of the New Covenant. At best, the days of the early church only foreshadow the final generation living prior to the (yet future) return of Jesus Christ much like the King of Salem prefigured the Messiah. The end-time Second Coming passages that speak to Jesus Christ’s return were incorrectly believed by some in the first few centuries (A.D.) to be speaking to historical events which had taken place during the period of the early church. The Preterist position is incorrect in that Biblical prophecy concerning the end of humanity (when Jesus Christ returns) was not fulfilled in the first century, A.D. Eschatological fulfillment of these end-time passages is not realized in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Historicist

The Historicist position is in one sense correct in that as the church through history was to be looking for Jesus Christ’s return, so too are we today clearly commanded to be looking for His return. While some historical signs were general and could have been (and could be) applied to certain events through the last 2,000 years of history (but were then determined not to be final *eschatological* signs due to His return not immediately taking place), contemporary signs are clearly signaling the soon return of Jesus Christ. The Historicist position is incorrect in that the assigned fulfillments of end-time prophecies through the past two thousand years do not speak to the final eschatological generation.

Futurist

The Futurist position is in one sense correct in that most of the *eschatological* content of the Bible is, as of today (2006), yet future. The great tribulation, the trumpet blasts, the gathering of God’s people in Jesus Christ (i.e., the rapture) and the bowl judgments are yet future. The Futurist position is incorrect when certain pronouncements from within the viewpoint assure us the end is still very distant from us today—i.e., they say the end of human history is yet a long way off. Our Lord Jesus Christ continues to command us to be watching and waiting for His return.

The Final Trumpet position believes the early prophecies concerning the days just prior to the Return of Jesus Christ are upon us **today**, thus this view is not adequately expressed by the views above, although, once again, to some degree, each position contains elements of God’s big-picture program for mankind.

Presentist

If one were to attempt to bring an introductory description of the Premillennial, Final Trumpet Rapture position in this context, it would look something like this: The Word of God includes information concerning the days prior to the return of Jesus Christ. Because we (believe there are strong grounds to believe we) are in those days, we are privileged with contemporary happenings that are actually clear fulfillments of Bible prophecy. As a result, those who believe the Scriptures teach the Premillennial Return of Jesus Christ—including the Final-Trumpet Rapture of His people—are *presentists*, believing our present generation is actually experiencing the beginning of the very *last days* before the Lord Jesus Christ’s glorious return. Even so, come Lord Jesus!

Note: To see how another scholar (Dr. Robert Mounce) has shown how the first four views can all be expressed to hold a degree of truth without becoming a relativistic contradiction, see pp. 41-45 of *The Book of Revelation* in the series, *The New International Commentary of the New Testament* by Eerdmans Publishing Company (1977).