



I've heard that NPC disagrees doctrinally with the *Left Behind* series.



Is this true?  
If so why?

Addressed by  
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## assumptions, assumptions everywhere...

Not everyone agrees on the exactly how the book of Revelation should be interpreted. In order to understand why NPC disagrees with the Left Behind series, it is important to understand the theological assumptions and interpretations which lie behind plot line of the book and how ours are similar to or different than those presented in the series.

Everyone, including NPC, makes some assumptions when it comes to interpreting the bible: how language works, the role of context, what words mean, how genre affects meaning etc. These assumptions become radically more important when we come to difficult to understand or obscure texts. When a text is unclear based on it's own internal reference (i.e. we can understand what the words say clearly, but we don't understand exactly what they mean), these assumptions become the determining factor in meaning.

Now don't get upset! Everyone makes these assumptions. I'm not here to tell you that only the Left Behind people make them and Reformed interpreters do not. But I am here to tell you that our assumptions are better than theirs, which then casts doubts on their interpretations. Just to be sure we've got all of the cards on the table, here are some of the Reformed key assumptions.

### first assumption

*When the meaning of a passage is not clear interpret the less clear by means of more clear passages. Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture, even when it comes to **how** to interpret Old Testament prophecy.*



### second assumption

***Any interpretation of prophecy must make sense in light of the passage's original meaning and context and its ultimate fulfillment. A passage cannot mean (today) what it has not meant (in the past). (two lenses need for telescope)***

### third assumption

***Any interpretation of prophecy must take into account the unique genre and features of prophetic literature. To insist on a "literal" interpretation which violates these features places "outlines" ahead of "apples." (two types of maps; need to know what type of map in order to read it correctly. God is the one choosing the type of map)***



**Figure #5**

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/9tc/9tc030.html> (link to "Apocalypse Now" by J. Nelson Kraybill. October 25, 1999 issue of *Christianity Today*)

### fourth assumption

***The basic relationship of the OT to the NT is one of promise and progressive fulfillment.***  
Isaiah 7:14ff

Context:

Promise: 7:7-10

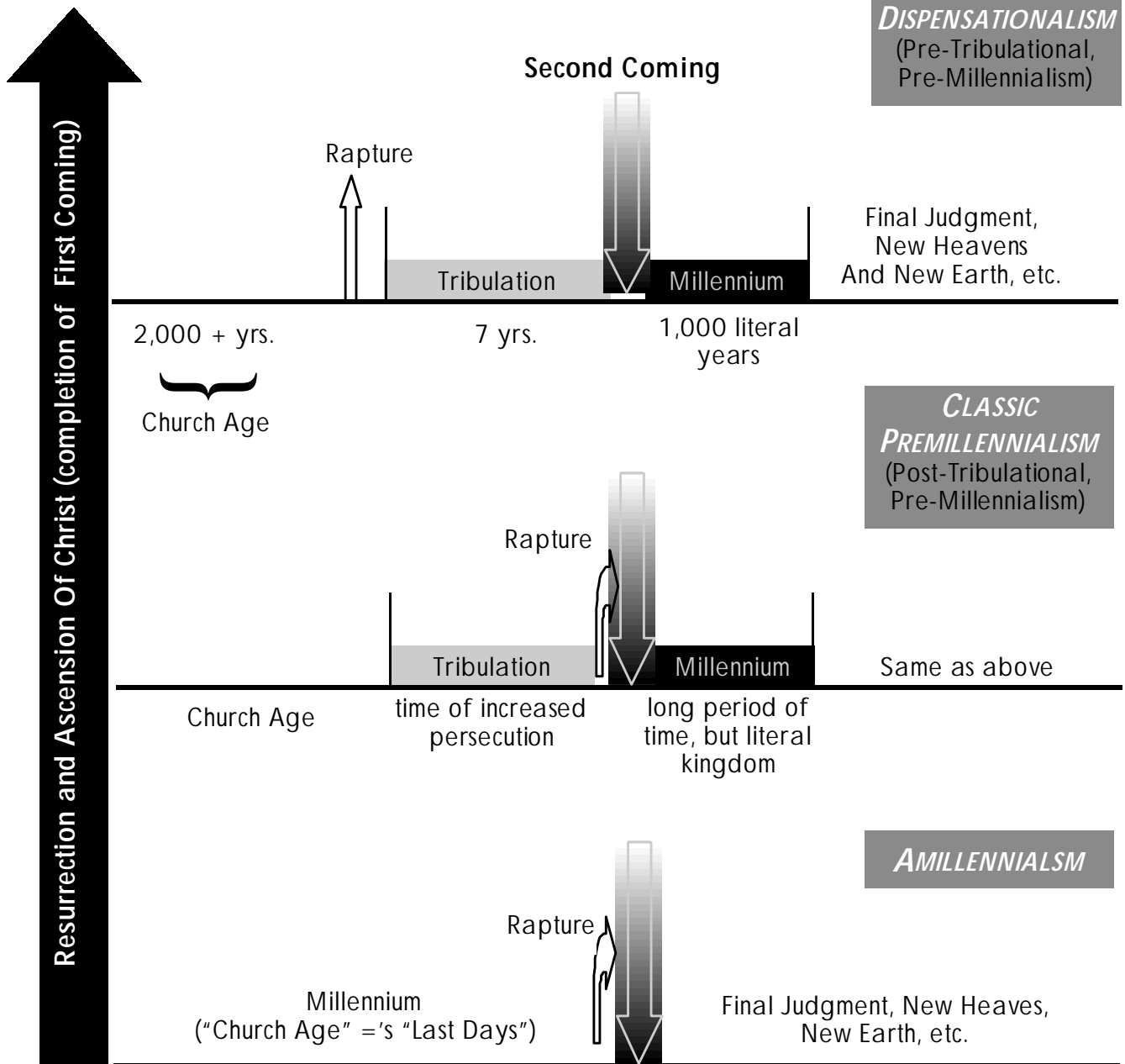
Sign: In order to strengthen your faith, here is a sign:

- Virgin (young woman; not yet married) will conceive
- Before child can choose right and wrong (12/13 according to Law); Northern Kingdom and Syria will be destroyed by Assyria: longest possible time frame—could happen sooner or in stages.

Fulfillment:

Fulfillment<sup>2</sup>:

# millennial madness



n o l i t e r a l r u l e

# why?

## dispensational plusses

Definite future dimension. It would be a mistake to assume that all of Revelation is allegorical or describing things which will have no future reference, regardless of their past importance. God is a God of history; the culmination will be historical.



Cool charts.

Seems to be passages which describe something beyond this current age, but not yet the eternal state.

Track record for producing NY Times Bestsellers . It pains me to say it, but no one is making a historical fiction, suspense thriller movie of Calvin's theological method.

## dispensational problems

Hard separation of church and Israel (the "church" gets taken out of the world so that the "fullness of the Jews" may be gathered to Christ, recognizing him as Messiah).

The "secret 2nd Coming" and 2 resurrections (a resurrection of believers before the millennium begins, and a resurrection of unbelievers to judgment after the end of the millennium).

Has tendency to restrict interpretation of Revelation, Kingdom of God and End Times to only future events.

## reformed plusses

A better theological understanding of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments (hence also between Israel and the church). This applies to not just the relationship of continuity and discontinuity, but also a genuinely Christian hermeneutic based on the NT for understanding the fulfillment of prophecy (typology).

Simplicity.

Great satire.



Better accounting for the scriptural idea of the “last days” as being the current time in biblical history.

### reformed problems

There aren't really any terribly strong interpretations of Revelation 20.

Even if there something is only mention in one place (i.e. the Millennium in Rev. 20) doesn't mean that it isn't true. Using a more historical hermeneutic, Revelation 20 seems to make good sense.

if-you-don't-know-anything-else-about-prophecy-this-is-all-you-really-need-to-know (sans chart)

Even though we will face difficult circumstances, God is in control of everything.

There is a point to history:  
God's ultimate triumph over evil and his complete redemption of all of creation.

Don't be fooled by appearances:  
there is an ultimate, infinite, eternal reality to our lives.

We should live every single minute of our lives in light of the reality that Christ will return, and it could be today.

## how then should we now witness?

**First**, if someone is a non-Christian, **don't get into all of the details** of the end times.

The issue is Jesus and his "I'd rather die than live without you" life, not inter-Christian squabbles. Jesus could have chosen to evangelize based on an "end times" strategy, but rather chose to discuss our sin, God's love, and his willingness to die for us.

**Second**, concentrate on the "**ultimate reality**" of Scripture (rather than this particular interpretation).

Regardless of when and how the rapture or 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming takes place, it **will** happen. Evil **will** be punished and destroyed. God **will** rule. We follow Jesus because he is the Way, the Truth and the Life, not because we are "scared" by the end times or eternal punishment and can't see any way to get out of it except this.

Sometimes it is hard to accept things we can't see. How does that effect your relationship with God?

Do you ever wonder "what the point" of it all is? The Bible tells us that some day all will be well, evil destroyed etc. ...

When Jesus was here on earth we got a particular picture of him (poor, humble, servant), but there is also another side to him. He is described as majestic, powerful, strong and coming to bring about his kingdom in completion. What do you think of this other view.

(If the person is obsessed with the end times and this particular view): Regardless of how things actually work out in the details, the fact remains each one of us will be responsible for how we've chosen to deal with God. How do you feel about your relationship with him right now? (Don't allow someone to put off their response to Jesus by drawing you into a detailed discussion of the end times.)

If you were on a plane tonight, and people started disappearing, do you think you would disappear? Would you be interested if I told you that I could guarantee you would disappear?

**Third**, have **better things** to turn the conversation toward.

Discuss how sin has impacted their life (where have they been hurt, where are they most broken, where have they hurt others, where do they feel least loved)

God's infinite love for us (retell the Prodigal Son, Cross etc.)

Freedom of our new identity (what has it meant for you to learn to live as a son/daughter, how has it changed relationships, what benefits have you experienced)