

# 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians

## Week 2 – “Down the Rabbit Hole”

### Key Verse - 1 Thessalonians 5:9

*“God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

### **The Rapture – What is it and why do we care?**

- ❖ Deut. 29:29 - *The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.*
- ❖ Eschatology: The study (Greek logos) of last things (Greek eschaton), i.e., the end of the world, the Last Judgment, the Second Coming of Christ, the resurrection of the body and, in general, anything relating to the future.

**Question 1** - *How well do Christians handle disagreements that may be important but are secondary issues to salvation - issues that matter but are not tied to whether we're saved or not?*

- ❖ John 13:35 – All men will know that you are my disciples if you.....?
- ❖ Last week - Most Bible scholars agree that in context of all the discussion and papers written about the second coming of Christ, **the Church will be rescued prior to the Tribulation.**

#### ❖ **LC-MS FAQ Sheet:**

- **QUESTION: Does The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod believe in the rapture?**
- **ANSWER: The answer to your question depends on what you mean by "the rapture." The English word "rapture" is derived from the Latin translation of the verb "caught up" in 1 Thess. 4:17**

Lutherans certainly believe what Paul teaches in this passage, namely, that those who are still living on earth when Christ returns visibly on the last day "will be caught up" ("raptured") together with "the dead in Christ" to "meet the Lord in the air."

Some Christians teach, however, that the "rapture" will take place not on the last day but in connection with an "invisible" coming of Christ occurring before a seven-year period of "tribulation" on earth, allowing Christians to "escape" this tribulation and then later return to earth for a literal "1,000-year reign of Christ."

Lutherans do not believe that these teachings are based on a proper understanding of Scripture. Scripture teaches that all Christians will endure varying degrees of "tribulation" until the last day, that Christ will

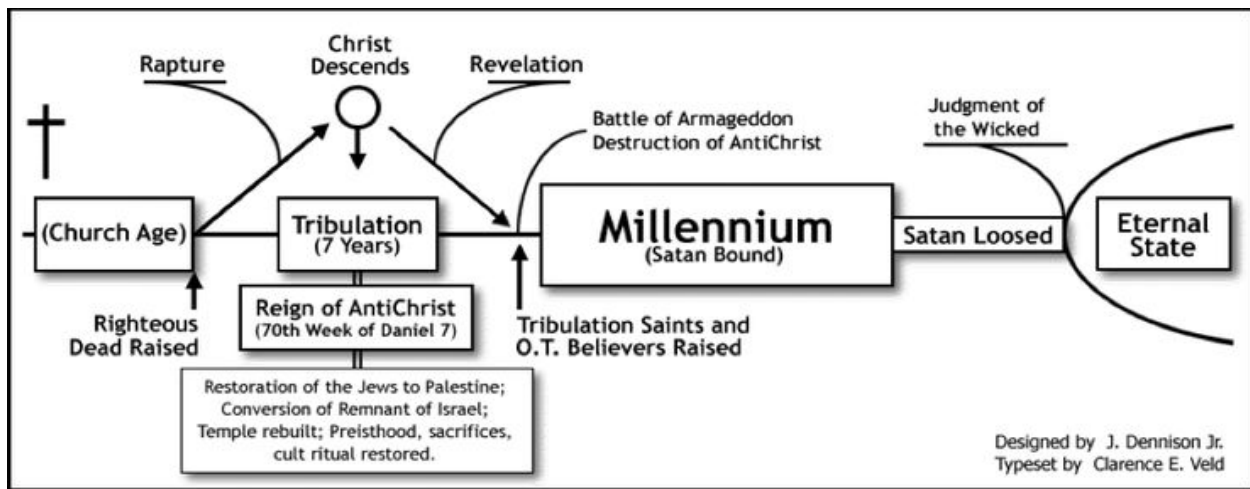
return only once (visibly) to "catch up" ("rapture") all believers, living and dead, into heaven, and that all believers will reign forever with him in heaven.

Lutherans understand the "1,000 years" of Rev. 20:11-15 to be a figurative reference to Christ's reign here and now in the hearts and lives of believers, which will culminate in our reigning with Christ forever in heaven following his return on the last day.

❖ **Apostle, Nicene and Athanasian Creeds do not** teach of a **"Two Stage"** coming of Christ

- *"I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting."*
- *"I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come."*
- *"At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life eternally, and they who indeed have done evil into eternal fire. This is the catholic faith, which except a man shall have believed faithfully and firmly he cannot be in a state of salvation."*

**Two-Stage Coming of Christ**  
**NOT LC-MS VIEW**  
**Some Mainstream Protestant churches**



**Question 1** – Why are the teachings of Purgatory/Rapture considered by the LC-MS to be false teachings?

- ❖ “Purgatory” – Payment for the sins before entering into eternal life. There will be suffering for the sins not covered by Christ death.
- ❖ “Rapture” is the thought that Christians will be taken into heaven and the unbelievers that are left behind will go through much suffering, which is another chance to be saved for eternal life.
- ❖ Theory of the “Rapture began in 1862 - John Nelson Darby. chief founders of the Plymouth Brethren movement.
- ❖ Prior to 1862 – Christians believed an event that would happen of the believers and unbelievers at the same time as the final resurrection and the end of time here on earth.

### Read 1 Thess 4:16-18

**Question 2** – *How will Christians know that Christ has returned? Is it a secret? How many times will a person have a chance for repentance?*

### Read Matt: 25:31-46

- ❖ The Lord will separate the Sheep (Believers) from the Goats (Unbelievers)

### **The 1000-year Reign of Christ “The Millennium”**

- ❖ People have longed for the concept of utopia. The perfect society. Plato (The Republic), Sir Thomas Moore (Utopia), Hitler, Meo Tse-tung.
- ❖ Christ also taught us to pray for world peace – “Thy Kingdon Come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”
- ❖ **Idea of “Millennial Kingdom” is a theological battleground.**
  - There are few verses in the Bible are more crucial to the interpretation of the Bible as a whole than the opening verses in **Revelation Chapter 20: 1-6.**

### **Millennialism Theories**

- **Dispensational Premillennialism** - Divide God's dealings with humanity into seven distinct "dispensations." A dispensation is defined as "a period of time during which man is tested in respect to his obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God." In each of these periods, a distinct revelation of God's will be dominant and tests mankind's obedience to God. At the end of this seven-year period, dispensationalists teach, Christ (together with the church) returns in glory and destroys His enemies. The vast majority of Israelites will be converted. Satan will be bound for 1000 years. Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Kenneth Copeland, and Jack Van Impe, Hal Lindsey's The Late Great Planet Earth
  1. Innocence (Gen. 1:28 - 3:6)
  2. Conscience or Moral Responsibility (Gen. 4:1 - 8:14)
  3. Human Government (Gen. 8:15 -11:32)
  4. Promise (Gen. 12:1-Ex. 18:27)
  5. The Law (Ex. 19:3 - Acts 1:26)
  6. The Church (Acts 2: 1 - Revelation 19)
  7. Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20)

- **Historic Premillennialism** - That Christ's second advent will be a one-stage event after the tribulation. The vast majority of Jews will be converted. Believers who have died will be raised, those alive will be transformed, and all believers will meet Christ in the air and then descend with Him to earth. Christ will then slay the Antichrist, bind Satan, and set up His millennial kingdom on earth. Christ and His redeemed, both Jews and Gentiles as one people of God, will reign visibly over the unbelieving nations still on earth.

### Read Luke 24:13-31

- **Post Millennial View** – Christ comes back after **we** Christianize the world. Seen as literal. Christ returns after the thousand years and thought to be the time of the **greatest harvest of souls** leading up to the return of Christ. The entire world will eventually be Christianized to the point that the Christian belief and value system will become the accepted norm for all nations. Matthew 28:18-20 will become a reality. The problem with this one is that the Bible actually teaches that there will not be a great harvest as we get closer to the return of Christ. The Bible teaches there will be a great apostasy as we get closer to the return of Christ

**Question 3** – Why was the Post Millennial view popular during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century?

- **Amillennial View** – The period in which we are presently living. Christians, those who adhere to this position agree that the "thousand-year" reference in Revelation 20 is a figurative expression for the present reign of Christ which began upon His ascension into heaven and will be fully manifested at His second coming. Christ's second coming will be one event at which time He will, in the words of Martin Luther, "*raise up me and all the dead, and give unto me and all believers in Christ eternal life*" (Explanation to Third Article of the Apostles' Creed).

### Read Amos 9:13

- ❖ Most of both the major and minor prophets are written in poetry, with their characteristic figurative and picturesque language.
- ❖ Symbolic language of this kind is especially common in apocalyptic literature such as Daniel and Revelation
- ❖ Certain prophetic texts are best interpreted according to what has commonly been called the "*shortened perspective*."
  - The prophets focus on the immediate future and at other times on the distant future; however, both are seen at the same time.
- ❖ Biblical prophecy often does not picture for us the intervening centuries which lie as valleys between the high points of salvation history.

- ❖ Readers should recognize the "historical times-coloring" of the prophetic message. We need to ascertain what the text meant in its historical situation.
  - Example - Obadiah predicts that those in Mount Zion will escape God's wrath (Obadiah 17). The New Testament indicates that this prophecy is ultimately realized in the promise that the people of God, that is, all believers (the church), will be saved (e.g., Heb. 12:22). However, Obadiah does not say "the Christian church will be saved" simply because these words are not in the Old Testament vocabulary.
- ❖ God has to bind Satan before the millennium and then release him for a short time after it's finished.
  - Without God binding Satan, there is no millennium.

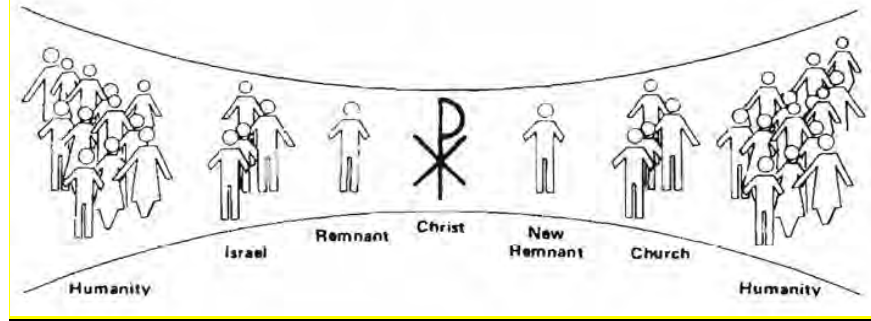
**Question 4** – *What is the purpose of Christians having to endure the Millennium?*

**Question 5** - *If we take man out of the sinful environment, will we take the sin out of man?*

### **Now what is the official LC-MS view of Millennialism**

- ❖ “The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod rejects all forms of millennialism. The ‘thousand years’ of Revelation 20 is a symbolic number representing the complete time of Christ’s reign from His ascension until His return. We look for one future coming of Christ, not a thousand-year reign on earth.”
  - LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR)
- ❖ **Amillennialism from the LCMS (Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod) Perspective:**
- ❖ The LCMS officially holds to amillennialism as its eschatological (end-times) view. Here’s a concise explanation of what that means and how it contrasts with other views:
- ❖ **What is Amillennialism?**
  - The term “amillennial” literally means “no millennium,” but more accurately, it teaches that the “millennium” mentioned in Revelation 20 is not a literal 1,000-year earthly reign of Christ, but a symbolic period.
  - This period is understood to be the entire New Testament era, from Christ’s ascension until His second coming.
  - Christ rules now from heaven, and His kingdom is present in the Church.
- ❖ **LCMS Viewpoint Highlights:**
  - Rejects Premillennialism and Postmillennialism: The LCMS rejects the idea of a literal future 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth (premillennialism) or a golden age of Christian dominance before Christ returns (postmillennialism).
  - Interprets Revelation Symbolically: Revelation is seen as apocalyptic literature with symbolic meaning, not a chronological timeline of end-time events.

- Second Coming is One Event: Christ will return once, visibly and gloriously, to raise the dead, judge all people, and usher in the new heaven and new earth.
- No Secret Rapture: Unlike dispensational premillennial views (common in some evangelical circles), the LCMS teaches there is no “rapture” separate from Christ’s visible return.
- Satan Bound Now: Satan is currently “bound” in the sense that he cannot prevent the spread of the Gospel (Revelation 20:1–3).
- ❖ **Key LCMS References:**
  - Book of Concord (Confessions of the Lutheran Church): Especially the Augsburg Confession and the Apology reject Jewish and chiliastic (millennialist) views.
  - LCMS Doctrinal Statements: Consistently affirm an amillennial view, maintaining that speculative end-times teachings (e.g., dispensationalism) are contrary to Scripture.
- ❖ **Amillennialism in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS): Theological Foundations and Interpretive Framework**
- ❖ ***The LCMS firmly adheres to amillennialism as its official eschatological stance, rejecting both premillennialism and postmillennialism. It views the thousand-year reign mentioned in Revelation 20 as symbolic and fulfilled in the present reign of Christ through the Church. This position is rooted in historic Lutheran theology and maintains a literal, grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture, filtered through confessional Lutheran hermeneutics.*** (The theory and methodology of interpretation, particularly of texts, including biblical and philosophical works. It helps us understand the meaning of communication, especially when cultural contexts differ)
- ❖ **Core Teachings of LCMS Amillennialism**
  - Symbolic Millennium: Revelation 20 is interpreted symbolically, not literally. The “thousand years” refers to the current church age, from Christ’s ascension to His second coming.
  - Christ’s Reign Is Now: LCMS teaches that Christ reigns presently at the right hand of God and in the hearts of believers through His Word and Sacraments, not in a future earthly kingdom.
  - Rejection of Millennial Speculation: All forms of millennialism—especially dispensational premillennialism—are viewed as unbiblical and harmful, as they imply additional dispensations beyond the present age of grace and detract from the sufficiency of Christ’s first coming.
  - Single Second Coming: LCMS denies a pre-tribulation rapture or multiple future comings of Christ. There will be one visible second coming, final judgment, and then the new heavens and earth.
  - Historic Confessions: The LCMS bases its eschatology on Luther’s Small and Large Catechisms and the Augsburg Confession, which emphasize resurrection, judgment, and eternal life—not a temporal kingdom.

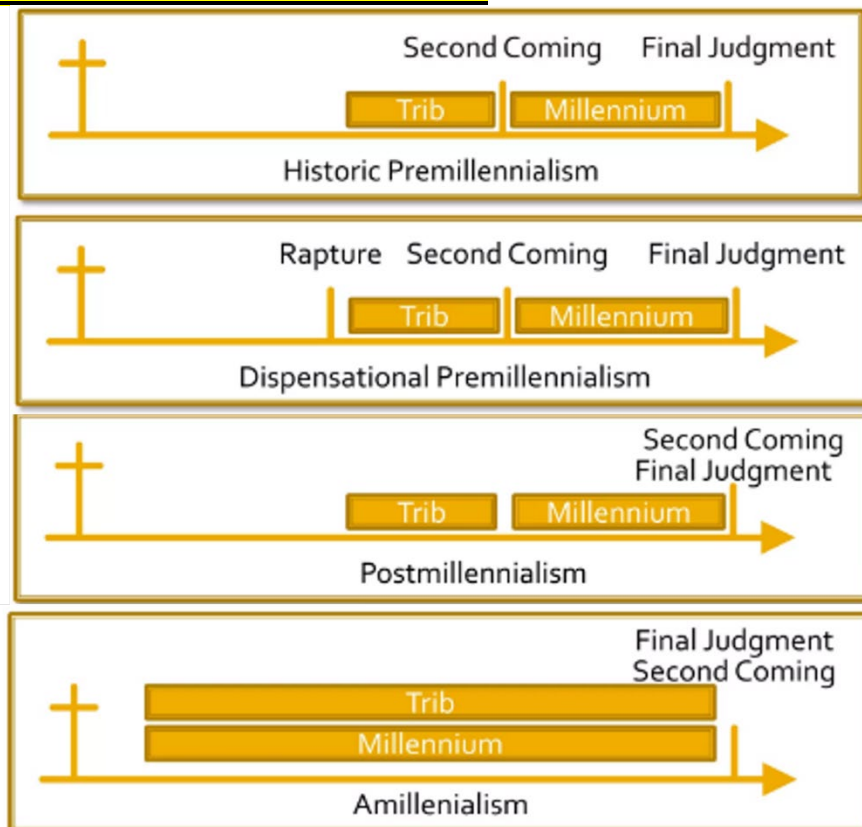


- ❖ This diagram illustrates God's plan for bringing back fallen creation into a proper relationship with Himself. His means for doing this narrowed from Abraham and all his descendants (Gen. 12:1-3) to the post-exilic remnant (Hag. 2:2; Zech. 8:6; Ezra 1-2) to Christ, Israel reduced to one. From there it broadened through the faithful remnant of the Jews to the whole church of believing Jews and Gentiles. The church, however, is not an end in itself but has been given the mission of making disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19-20).

### Final thoughts

**Christians will likely have disagreements that may be important but are secondary issues when it comes to our salvation. These disagreements are not tied to whether we're saved or not.**

### LC-MS Official View is Amillennialism



## Outline of 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians

- ❖ Three Main points of 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians
  - Trials will Come (Ch. 1-3)
  - Temptations will come (Ch.4)
  - Jesus will come! (Ch. 4-5)

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