

Orthodox Christian Views of the End Times

Note: Two separate questions are often blended together: the nature of the millennium, and the timing/nature of the tribulation and rapture.

View	Basic Sequence	Millennium	Tribulation / Rapture	Key Texts	Commonly Associated With
Historic Premillennialism	Church age → Tribulation → Christ returns → Resurrection → Millennium → Final judgment → New creation	Literal/future reign of Christ, usually understood as 1,000 years	Church generally goes through tribulation; believers gathered to Christ at His return	Rev. 19–20; Matt. 24; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; 1 Cor. 15	Early church fathers; George Eldon Ladd; some evangelicals
Dispensational Premillennialism	Church age → Rapture → Tribulation → Christ returns → Millennium → Final judgment → New creation	Literal future 1,000-year reign centered particularly on promises to Israel	Usually pre-tribulation rapture : Christ gathers the church before the seven-year tribulation	1 Thess. 4:13–18; Dan. 9; Matt. 24; Rev. 4–20	John Nelson Darby; Scofield; Dallas Seminary; many modern evangelicals
Amillennialism	Church age / Millennium → increasing opposition → Christ returns → Resurrection & judgment → New creation	Revelation 20 describes Christ's present heavenly reign and the church age, not a future earthly 1,000 years	No separate secret rapture; believers meet Christ at His single visible return	Rev. 20:1–10; John 5:28–29; Matt. 24–25; 1 Thess. 4	Augustine; Reformed tradition; many Lutherans, Catholics, Orthodox
Postmillennialism	Gospel increasingly advances → prolonged era of kingdom blessing → Christ returns → Resurrection & judgment → New creation	A future historical period of extraordinary gospel flourishing, not necessarily literally 1,000 years	No separate secret rapture; Christ returns after the gospel's widespread triumph	Matt. 13:31–33; 28:18–20; Ps. 2; Isa. 2; Rev. 20	Some Puritans; Jonathan Edwards; some Reformed theologians

How Should We Read Revelation and End-Times Prophecy?

Approach	Basic Idea
Futurist	Much of Matthew 24, 2 Thessalonians 2, and Revelation 6–22 describes events still in the future immediately preceding Christ's return. Common among premillennialists.
Partial Preterist	Many prophecies—especially portions of Matthew 24 and Revelation—were substantially fulfilled in the events surrounding Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70 , while Christ's bodily return, resurrection, and final judgment remain future. Found among some amillennialists and postmillennialists.
Idealist	Revelation portrays recurring spiritual realities throughout the entire church age: persecution, deception, judgment, gospel victory, and Christ's ultimate triumph. Common within amillennialism.
Eclectic	Combines elements of futurist, preterist, and idealist readings depending on the particular passage. Increasingly common among evangelical scholars.

What Orthodox Christians Agree On

Despite significant disagreement over the sequence of end times events, historic Christian orthodoxy affirms that:

Jesus Christ will personally and bodily return →

the dead will be bodily raised →

Satan and evil will finally be defeated →

every person will face God's judgment →

believers will live eternally with Christ in the renewed creation.

Texts such as **Acts 1:11; John 5:28–29; 1 Corinthians 15:20–28, 51–55; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Revelation 21–22** exemplify that common ground.

One important boundary: **full preterism**—the belief that Christ's second coming, the resurrection, and final judgment were all completely fulfilled in AD 70—is **outside historic Christian orthodoxy**, because it denies the future bodily resurrection and return of Christ.

We must emphasize that **premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism can all be held faithfully within historic Christianity**. While the return of Christ and bodily resurrection are **first-order doctrines**, the **precise timeline of them is not**.