

## **Table 1: Glossary of Terms Related to Apocalyptic Writings**

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**Antichrist:** In millennial belief, the evil human who will rule during the Tribulation, only to be defeated by the returned Christ in anticipation of the millennium. Biblically, the term is used only in 1-2 John. However, it has come to refer to “the beasts” in Rev. 13. It is often expected that this individual will come from Europe as head of a restored Roman Empire. He will be the leader of a movement toward a world government that ostensibly eases human suffering and creates peace, but which will turn out to be hell on earth.

**Apocalypse:** A text written from an apocalyptic perspective, generally categorized as either “historical” (in which the narrator is shown a review and interpretation of some or all of human history by an angelic interpreter) or “other” (in which only personal experience is reported). Apocalypses can have a wide range of characteristics, but commonly include: 1) a dream or vision that requires interpretation by a “heavenly” agent; 2) complex symbolic characters and events that relate to the seer’s world, past, present and/or future; 3) an assurance that evil will be punished by God and good rewarded at the end of time, which is coming “soon.”

**Apocalyptic:** a worldview characterized by one or more of the following elements: 1) an expectation that the present world situation will come to an abrupt end and be replaced by a new, better world; 2) a belief that things are likely to get worse in the current age before the “new age” comes; 3) the worldview that life takes place on two levels simultaneously: an “earthly” level in which evil or Satan temporarily reigns over sinful humanity and a “heavenly” level in which God reigns; the “heavenly” level is already victorious over the “earthly” level. In this book, the term is used to refer to a worldview consisting of the third element without the first and second.

**Armageddon:** In millennial belief, the final battle between good and evil, based on Rev. 16:16, which is to take place after the Tribulation and before the millennium. Literally, the word refers to Mt. Megiddo, a mythical mountain in Palestine derived from texts such as Zech 12:11 (“plain of Megiddo”) and others.

**Beast(s), The:** Two symbolic creatures named in Rev 13 as the powers that control Babylon, under the central authority of “the Dragon” described in Rev 12. The Beast(s) are often used interchangeably with “Antichrist” as a label to demonize individual or institutional opponents or to refer to the demonic figures that fit the prophecy “puzzle” within the understanding of premillennialist writers.

**Dispensationalism:** the belief that history is divided into fixed units, called “dispensations,” in which God has particular plans for humanity. The idea was developed and popularized by John Darby in the 1840s. The current dispensation is “the Church Age,” which is sometimes known as “The Great Parenthesis,” because believers see it as an interim between the first and second comings of Jesus.

**Eschatology:** In traditional theology, the study of “last things,” i.e., heaven, hell, purgatory and judgment. In millennial belief, the concern with the specific events supposed to happen at the literal “end of time.”

**Millennium:** Based on Rev 20:4-6, the belief that Christ will return to earth for a literal 1,000 year peaceful reign, accompanied by “the saints,” i.e., the “true believers.”

**Postmillennialism:** a branch of millennial Christianity in which believers expect the Rapture to take place *after* the 1,000 year reign of Christ, which will require preparation on the part of Christians to make the world worthy of Christ’s return. Thus, postmillennialists see social action as an important element of their faith practice.

**Premillennialism:** a branch of millennial Christianity in which believers expect that they will be “raptured” by Jesus *prior* to a 1,000 year reign by Christ (“the millennium”) in which peace will reign. Most premillennialists believe that the Rapture will occur prior to “the Tribulation.” Others believe that the Rapture will take place after the Tribulation, but before the millennium. Both groups of premillennialists see social action, as well as all human endeavor, as doomed to failure and thus the work of Antichrist when seen as the means to solve social problems and to hasten the Second Coming.

**Rapture:** A doctrine based on a literal interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 4:17: “Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever.” All millennialists believe that “true believers” will be lifted up from earth to escape the difficulties of this world, while all others will be left behind.

**Scofield Reference Bible:** a text developed by Cyrus Scofield in 1909, in which the author’s premillennialist cross-references and interpretations are included alongside the biblical texts, often confusing readers as to which is which. It has sold over 10 million copies since its publication and is the root source for millennial interpreters.

**Tribulation:** in millennial belief, the anticipated 7-year reign of Antichrist, based on Dan 11:35, 12:1 and Rev 7:14, 13:5, which will begin with a period of apparent peace, and then turn hellish. Believers in the Tribulation divide themselves into three groups:

*Pretribulationists:* these believe that the Rapture of the “saints” will come before the Tribulation begins.

*Midtribulationists:* these believe that the Rapture will come at the middle of the Tribulation, i.e., after the period of apparent peace and before the hellish conclusion.

*Posttribulationists:* these believe that Christians will have to survive the entire Tribulation before they will be raptured. This leads to survivalist movements, which prepare themselves for the Tribulation by gathering caches of food and weapons in underground or remote locations.