

# Catholic & Dispensationalist End Time Beliefs Compared

Topic	Premillennial Dispensationalists	The Catholic Church
<b>Antichrist</b>	The Antichrist—also known as “the beast” and “the man of lawlessness”—will be the leader of a one world religion and a one world government during the Tribulation period. He will be an atheistic messiah, intent on destroying Christianity and the Jewish people. At some point he will die and then, by the power of Satan, be restored to life. He will also make a covenant with Israel which he will break in the middle of the Tribulation period. He will demand that all people to worship him and declare their allegiance to him by receiving the Mark of the Beast, the infamous “666” (see below).	There have been many Antichrists, but there will also be the Antichrist who leads a worldwide system of anti-Christian belief and will oppose Christ at Armageddon. The <i>Catechism</i> states that “...The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh [Cf. 2 Thess 2:4-12; 1 Thess 5:2-3; 2 Jn 7; 1 Jn 2:18, 22]” (CCC 675). “The Antichrist’s deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realize within history that messianic hope which can only be realized beyond history through the eschatological judgement . . .” (CCC 676).
<b>Mark of the Beast</b>	A sign of identification which people will be forced to accept during the Tribulation as a mark of allegiance to the Antichrist and in order to remain members of society. Ideas as to how this Mark will be applied have included UPC codes, credit cards, Social Security numbers, and computer chips.	The Church makes no official statement about the Mark of the Beast. Different scholars have speculated it refers to Nero or another Roman emperor of St. John’s time, or it symbolizes those who rebelliously grasp at perfection (symbolized by “7”) and oppose the Christian Faith.
<b>Book of Revelation</b>	The Book of Revelation is primarily a book about the future and most of the events described in it have yet to occur. The exception to this are the first three chapters, which refer to things that have already taken place. This book, while difficult and full of symbols, should be interpreted literally. The <i>Left Behind</i> books are one attempt to provide a fictional narrative explaining what the Book of Revelation describes. Other works interpreting it include Hal Lindsey’s bestselling <i>There’s A New World Coming</i> and <i>The Late Great Planet Earth</i> , both published in the 1970s.	The Book of Revelation is meant first for St. John’s first century readers, but also has great significance, as inspired Scripture, for Catholics of every age. The primary message is that Jesus Christ is King and Conqueror, evil has been overcome, the martyrs will receive a great reward, the earthly liturgy is a partaking of the heavenly liturgy, and the Church—Christ’s Bride—will reign with Him (see CCC 2642). While some portions of Revelation refer to the future, the Church has officially said little about probable interpretations, even while there are a variety of viewpoints among Catholics.
<b>The Church</b>	The Church consists of both Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The Church does not consist of any outward form, but is the invisible union of all “true believers,” regardless of denomination. The invisible Church has no need for sacraments, ordained priesthood, or hierarchy. The Church is God’s “heavenly people,” formed after the nation of Israel—God’s “earthly people” rejected Jesus Christ as Messiah. The Old Testament prophets knew nothing of the Church, nor were any of their prophecies about it. It is a parenthetical insert between the time of Christ and the Rapture which has stopped the “prophetic clock.” Once the Church is removed from earth, via the Rapture, God will once again address his prophetic plan for his earthly people, the Jews.	God has only one people, and that people is the Church. “Christians of the first centuries said, ‘The world was created for the sake of the Church’ . . . The Church is the goal of all things.” (CCC 760). “The Church is ultimately one, holy, catholic, and apostolic in her deepest and ultimate identity, because it is in her that ‘the Kingdom of heaven,’ the ‘Reign of God,’ already exists and will be fulfilled at the end of time.” (CCC 865) The Church is both visible and spiritual (CCC 771). The Church is the New Israel, under the guidance of the bishops directed by the Holy Spirit (CCC 877). The fullness of the Christian faith “subsists” in the Catholic Church (CCC 816, 830); other baptized Christians have a “certain, although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church” (CCC 838). The Church cannot apostatize; guided by the Holy Spirit, the “gates of Hades shall not overpower” her (Mt 16:19).
<b>Interpretation of Scripture</b>	Scripture is to be interpreted in a literal manner, according to a “plain” reading of the text. According to Charles Ryrie, a prominent dispensational theologian, this means “interpretation which gives to every word the same meaning it would have in normal usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking. This is sometimes called the principle of grammatical-historical interpretation since the meaning of each word is determined by grammatical and historical considerations.” ( <i>Dispensationalism Today</i> , 86-87).	There are different “senses” of Scripture, the most important being the literal sense. “According to an ancient tradition, one can distinguish between two <i>senses</i> of Scripture: the literal and the spiritual . . . The profound concordance of the . . . senses guarantees all its richness to the living reading of Scripture in the Church. The <i>literal sense</i> is the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis, following the rules of sound interpretation: ‘All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal.’” (CCC 115-116).

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<b>Israel</b>	Israel is the earthly people of God and all promises to her are separate from any made to the Church. The “national Israel continues in her own promises and the Church is never equated with a so-called ‘new Israel’ but is carefully and continually distinguished as a separate work of God in this age” (Ryrie, 140). The Old Testament promises made to Israel regarding ruling the earth and unparalleled prosperity will be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom, following the Tribulation and Christ’s Second Coming.	Israel was a precursor to the Church: “By calling itself ‘Church,’ the first community of Christian believers recognized itself as heir to that assembly [Israel]. In the Church, God is ‘calling together’ his people from all the ends of the earth.” (CCC 751; see CCC 759). Israel will return to God in the last days: “The glorious Messiah’s coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by ‘all Israel’, for ‘a hardening has come upon part of Israel’ in their ‘unbelief’ toward Jesus [Rom 11:20-26; cf. Mt 23:39]” (CCC 674).
<b>Judgment and Resurrection</b>	There will be two judgments and two resurrections. The first, called the Judgment Seat of Christ, will be for the saints and will occur prior to the Millennium. The second, known as the Great White Throne Judgment, will be for unbelievers and will take place at the end of the Millennium, when Satan is loosed for a short while and deceives many.	There will be one judgment on the last day for all mankind: “Following in the steps of the prophets and John the Baptist, Jesus announced the judgment of the Last Day in his preaching. Then will the conduct of each one and the secrets of hearts be brought to light. Then will the culpable unbelief that counted the offer of God’s grace as nothing be condemned. Our attitude about our neighbor will disclose acceptance or refusal of grace and divine love. . . .” (CCC 678).
<b>The Kingdom and the Millennium</b>	The Kingdom is the earthly reign of Jesus Christ which will take place during the Millennium: a thousand year period of unparalleled peace and prosperity. Jerusalem will be the center of this reign and animal sacrifices will be offered at the restored Temple as memorials recognizing the salvific work of Jesus Christ. The Kingdom/Millennial reign will be largely Jewish in character, being a fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies and promises of such a kingdom for the nation of Israel. People born during this period will have the free will to choose or reject Christ.	The Catholic Church rejects the belief of an earthly Millennial reign by Christ. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith warned against “. . . the system of mitigated Millenarianism, which teaches . . . that Christ the Lord before the final judgment, whether or not preceded by the resurrection of the many just, will come visibly to rule over this world. . . . The system of mitigated Millenarianism cannot be taught safely” (Decree of 19 July 1944). The Kingdom will commence at the Second Coming, the end of time, and will consist of the just reigning with Christ (CCC 1060), experiencing the Beatific Vision and participation in the Divine Nature (CCC 1726).
<b>Rapture and the Second Coming</b>	The majority of dispensationalists (pre-trib) teach that the Rapture and the Second Coming are separate events, the first being a secret snatching away of true believers from the earth, while the latter is the public and victorious return of Christ to earth. Most would say that the Rapture occurs immediately prior to the Tribulation and the Second Coming ends the seven years of Tribulation. The distinction between the two is clearly taught by LaHaye and Hal Lindsey: “All who interpret the Bible in a literal sense believe in the fact of the Rapture and that it is distinct from the second coming of Christ” (Lindsey, [The Rapture, 1983], 29).	The Church does not teach about a “Rapture,” but teaches that Jesus Christ will return, just as the Nicene Creed, recited at Mass, declares: “He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.” The <i>Catechism</i> states: “On Judgment Day at the end of the world, Christ will come in glory to achieve the definitive triumph of good over evil which, like the wheat and the tares, have grown up together in the course of history” (CCC 681) and “When he comes at the end of time to judge the living and the dead, the glorious Christ will reveal the secret disposition of hearts and will render to each man according to his works and according to his acceptance or refusal of grace” (CCC 682).
<b>A Time of Great Tribulation</b>	The majority of dispensationalists (pre-trib) believe that the Church, consisting of true believers, will escape the Tribulation by means of the Rapture. Proponents of this view include Hal Lindsey, Tim LaHaye, and most well-known dispensationalists. However, some dispensationalists (mid-trib) believe that the Rapture will occur in the middle of the Tribulation, while others (post-trib) believe that the Rapture will occur at the same time as the Second Coming. All agree that the Tribulation, seven years in length, will be a time of incredible destruction, terror, death and chaos, a period of God’s unrelenting judgment upon a sinful and evil world.	There will a time of great trial in the future which the Church must endure: “Before Christ’s second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers [Cf. Lk 18:8; Mt 24:12]” (CCC 675; also see CCC 2642). This time of trial will be at the start of the last days: “According to the Lord, the present time is the time of the Spirit and of witness, but also a time still marked by ‘distress’ and the time of evil which does not spare the Church [Cf. Acts 1:8; 1 Cor 7:26; Eph 5:16; 1 Pet 4:17] and ushers in the struggles of the last days. It is a time of waiting and watching [Mt 25:13; Mk 13:33-37]” (CCC 672).