

# Large Number of Pastors Don't Believe in the Rapture

End-time theology is wavering in the Christian church and a large number of Protestant pastors believe there is no rapture.

Whether pre-tribulation or post rapture, a new study by LifeWay research reveals that pinning down details of the apocalypse among a group of pastors is hard to do.

Although the Scriptures make it clear that Jesus is coming back, researchers found varying views on three aspects of end-time theology: the rapture, the Antichrist and the millennial kingdom.

Out of the 1,000 senior Protestant pastors surveyed, only a third (36 percent) believed in a pre-tribulation rapture where Christians disappear at the start of the apocalypse and those left behind suffer tribulation.

Thirty-six percent of pastors say the rapture is not literal, while almost 1 in 5 believe the rapture happens after the tribulation (18 percent).

End-time theology is popular with churchgoers but it is not an easy topic to preach about, Scott McConnell, vice president of LifeWay Research, explained.

"Most people want their pastor to preach about the Book of Revelation and the end of the world," he said. "But that's a complicated task. Pastors and the scholars they cite often disagree about how the end times will unfold."

The diversity among eschatological views includes varying opinions on the Antichrist and beliefs in a millennial kingdom.

About half of pastors (49 percent) see the Antichrist as a figure who will arise in the future, 14 percent believe he is the personification of evil, while 12 percent say he is not an actual person.

Close to half of the pastors surveyed believe in pre-millennialism (48 percent), which is the view that the thousand-year reign of Christ happens in the future.

A third (31 percent) of leaders don't believe in a thousand-year reign, but they do believe that Jesus already rules in the hearts and minds of Christians. Close to 1 in 10 (11 percent) believe in post-millennialism, the idea that the world will gradually become more Christian until Jesus returns.

McConnell said it isn't a bad thing that pastors disagree on the details of the apocalypse because most agree on the main teachings about the Second Coming of Jesus. He said the rest doesn't affect the day-to-day life of most Christians.

"The big picture of Revelation is clear: Jesus returns, people must be ready, evil is defeated," he said. "With the rest of the details, there is room for disagreement." {eoa}

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