



Kurschner, Alan.

Antichrist Before the Day of the Lord: What Every Christian Needs to Know about the Return of Christ

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

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Antichrist Before the Day of the Lord (hereafter *ABDL*) is a thorough, intelligent, and provocative treatment of the eschatological events associated with the seven year tribulation period spoken of throughout Scripture, but most especially in the book of Revelation. Let's face it; we live in an age where certain eschatological views are ridiculed, namely premillennialism. Catholic and Orthodox believers are ashamed of their chiliastic roots while Lutheran and Reformed Protestants have largely maintained the amillennialism of the church they sought to reform.

It's refreshing then, when we find an author—in this case Alan Kurschner, founder and director of Eschatos Ministries—who's willing to examine and explain the biblical data from a futurist, premillennial perspective, without resorting to the type of sensationalism that we've seen popularized by the likes of Hal Lindsey, Jack Van Impe, John Hagee, or even in Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins' *Left Behind* novels. Perhaps the reason for this is that Kurschner, unlike those just named, approaches matters from a prewrath position on the timing of the rapture.

ABDL is divided into three major parts with six appendices. Part 1, "The Antichrist's Great Tribulation" makes the case for a seven year tribulation period, halfway through which the Antichrist will be revealed and persecute the church in unprecedented ways. Part 2, "The Rapture of God's People" shows that according to Jesus, Paul, and John (following the prophets) that there will be a number of celestial disturbances signaling the Lord's return and the church's

deliverance. Part 3 “The Day of the Lord's Wrath” presents Jesus and Paul’s teaching on the Day of the Lord with an examination of the judgments recorded in Revelation.

Certain things are taken for granted throughout *ABDL* such futurism, premillennialism, and the fact that Antichrist will be a literal figure as opposed to a world system or spiritual disposition. Kurschner also takes for granted that Jesus will return and rapture his people, so the reader will search in vain for a defense of these points. For that they can turn to the various articles on his helpful website. But given these assumptions Kurschner presents a reading of the Gospels, Paul, and Revelation that I find compelling.

Before reading this book I was always unclear about the differences between the mid-tribulationist view of the rapture and the pre-wrath view, but now I get it (thanks in large part to the many helpful charts that aid Kurschner’s exposition)! I think there's much to commend the pre-wrath view as Kurschner presents it, which is to say that the church will indeed experience tribulation, as we do in many ways already, but we will be delivered from *God's* wrath, which is clearly promised in many passages of Scripture. Pretribulationists tend to conflate tribulation and God's wrath, but holding these two in distinction really does help to make sense of a lot of Paul's teaching, especially in 1-2 Thessalonians.

Given this distinction, a pretribulation rapture is no longer necessary, which has huge practical implications. It provides no reason for an escapist mentality. It prepares believers to be ready to suffer for righteousness’ sake. It also helps to make sense of Paul’s exhortations that believers will not be taken by surprise when the Lord returns (although I’m not quite convinced that Kurschner’s reading deals the death blow to the doctrine of imminence suggested on pp. 131-36 cf. 188-92). But it also seems that Kurschner has a firm grasp on the practical importance of eschatology more generally.

There’s a popular slogan that says, “In the essentials unity; in the non-essentials liberty; in all things charity.” It’s a nice sentiment, and one that most would agree with, yet there’s always the issue of what counts as essential or non-essential. Speaking from personal experience, eschatology seems to be the stock example of a non-essential when this phrase is introduced. What is it about this particular locus of systematic theology that we find so elusive as to think that what we believe about last things doesn’t rate with what we believe about God or salvation?

I’d venture to guess that many people simply don’t know what to do with eschatology. They know enough to believe that Jesus is going to one day return but past that it’s anybody’s guess. Some even quip that they’re pan-tribulationists because whatever happens it will all pan out in

the end (pun intended, unfortunately). Kurschner rightly notes that correct eschatology matters (74-75) and shows just how Paul put this into practice. But Kurschner doesn't stop at Paul reassuring the Thessalonians that they haven't missed the resurrection; he takes the opportunity to present the gospel (113); call believers to self-examination and repentance (120, 123); and to test rather than assume our salvation (125).

While there's certainly room for debate and disagreement among believers on these issues, we mustn't pretend that they're not important and that all eschatological beliefs are created equal. *ABDL* provides much fodder for future conversations and merits engagement from proponents across the eschatological spectrum. Wherever one ultimately lands on these issues, they'll thank themselves for having wrestled with Kurschner's interpretations and their implications.