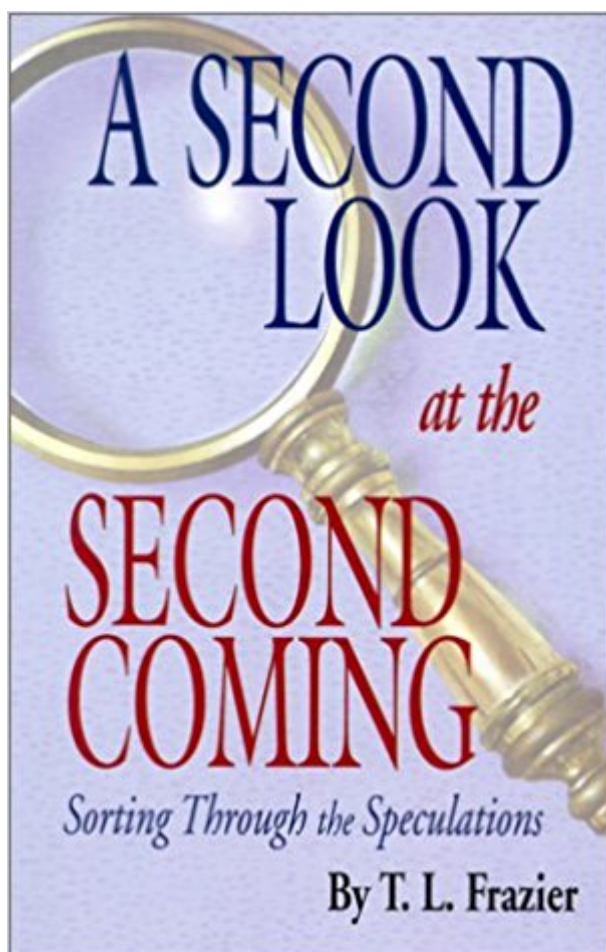




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A Second Look At The Second Coming (Sorting Through The Speculations)



Synopsis

An Eastern Orthodox Christian perspective on eschatology. Read a balanced, well-researched treatment of the end times, interpreted from the Christian East by faithful Orthodox saints, martyrs, and Spirit-filled Fathers of the Faith. Historic Christian teaching on the rapture, the millennium, the state of Israel, and the role of the Church in the last days is something quite different from what is commonly taught in the pop religion of today's evangelicalism.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

T.L. Frazier has written numerous articles and books defending historic Christian beliefs. He has recently written *Holy Relics* for Conciliar Press, and has coauthored, *Understanding the Divine Liturgy* with Father Michel Najim. He lives in Southern California with his wife and two daughters.

Although this book is a scholarly treatise, it's still readable for the average reader, with most chapters being short for those who prefer them that way. No doubt it's a well-researched book; a lot of history that many may not know about. This reader did not perceive any bias throughout the whole book, nor any dichotomies. When you compare Scripture with Scripture, and when you keep all in context, you then discover great truth. A perfect companion to this book would be "The Apocalypse of St. John" by Lawrence R. Farley.

Any Christian studying eschatology will encounter the theological system known as dispensationalism. Enter any Christian bookstore and survey the books on endtimes themes and the vast majority will likely be dispensationalist titles. One might easily conclude that it is the Church's traditional eschatological position. Thus it may come as a shock that dispensationalism is a novel doctrine without historical support. Furthermore, it does not, as its backers claim, take the Bible literally but rather forces contextually isolated Scripture passages into a system with little concern for original intent. Having its origins in the eighteenth century, it gained a foothold among Fundamentalists with their acceptance of the Scofield Reference Bible and then in wider Protestant circles with the publication of Hal Lindsay's *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Since then, it has grown even more pervasive through the wide popularity of the *Left Behind* novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. Into this mess steps T. L. Frazier of the Eastern Orthodox Church. In *A Second Look at the Second Coming*, Frazier provides a powerful critique of dispensationalism that shows the reader the Scriptural missteps, newspaper exegesis, historical ignorance, and cultural parochialism at its core. Not only does he succeed in laying waste the entire system, but he also places in contrast the eschatological understanding of the Church Fathers. Their wise and humble council stands in sharp contrast to the lurid sensationalism championed by today's "prophecy teachers." Frazier begins with a discussion of the cultural upheaval that took place in the late 1960s and provided dispensationalism a receptive audience. In this context, Lindsay's *The Late Great Planet Earth* is just another of the gloom and doom books then a mainstay of popular culture. Lindsay thus stood in the midst of a boom in doomsday scenarios. Frazier then outlines the history of eschatological thought. This serves to demonstrate the complete novelty of dispensational beliefs. Dispensationalist authors will frequently point to certain early Church Fathers as supporting their views, but Frazier quickly dispels this myth. While Fathers such as St. Irenaeus and St. Justin Martyr did have premillennialist views (dispensationalism has a premillennialist orientation), they were most definitely not dispensationalists. Their views (called historic premillennialism) did not entertain dispensationalist distinctives such as a rapture of the Church into heaven prior to the tribulation so God can again deal with the Jewish people. The early premillennialists believed the Church was the true spiritual Israel built upon the faithful remnant of Jews who had accepted Jesus as their Messiah and God's only dealing with the Jews in the future would be to call them to the Church. Furthermore, they held the Church would not be raptured into heaven but endure the tribulation under God's protection after which Christ would return to establish His kingdom. Such a straightforward view is a far cry from the exegetical and logical gymnastics the dispensationalists engage in to make their convoluted system work. Having demonstrated that the dispensationalism

has no historical basis, Frazier then proceeds to prove it has no basis in Holy Scripture either. Beginning with the New Testament teaching of the Church as spiritual Israel, he clearly lays out the misreadings of Holy Scripture and the bizarre twists and turns the theology must take in order to make this strange system make any sense at all. Thus we end up with the unjustified dividing of eschatological passages into "rapture" and "second coming" based upon their system with no basis in either the text or the historical understanding of the Church. In fact, as Frazier points out, there is no passage any dispensationalist can point to where it is mentioned that Jesus will come back twice. Without the preexisting assumptions of their system, it is doubtful anyone would even consider it a possibility. The dispensationalist rendering of the Church as a parenthesis between God's dealings with national Israel comes in for severe criticism. Not only does it do violence to the text of Holy Scripture, but ends up with our standing before God judged by our relationship with a secular nation instead of our relationship with Christ. Without their system, the confusion evaporates. Frazier then moves on to confront the dispensationalists' best arguments directly. In his analysis, he exposes their ignorance of Church history, complete misreading of apocalyptic symbolism, and their confusion over the literary genres that make up the Holy Scriptures and how each should be approached. Such poor exegetical methodology is emblematic of dispensationalism and inevitably leads to misunderstandings of original meaning and intent. Expanding on this theme, Frazier points out how the dispensationalists' erroneous conclusions lead to fruitless speculations attempting to correspond current events to Scriptural prophecies and a defeatist orientation that undermines the Christian's responsibility to his fellow man. Even worse, when their predictions fail to come to fruition, they bring the Gospel into disrepute and undermine the faith of those Christians who equate this system with Biblical truth. Frazier's main plea throughout is that in approaching such a difficult text as the Apocalypse of St. John (often called the Book of Revelation), we should seek the wisdom of the early Church who were the closest to the Apostles' teaching. To this end, he closes with an interpretation that is in keeping with the historic beliefs of the Church. He does not claim it to be the only such interpretation - there was disagreement on details in the early Church as there are now - but it is one that makes sense in the Scriptural and historical context of the Church. The historic Churches have until recently largely ignored dispensationalism and underestimated the confusion it would cause for their own faithful. Thankfully, authors have come forward to set the record straight. As one of the earliest of these efforts, *A Second Look at the Second Coming* sets a high standard. It is absolutely essential reading for any Christian interested in eschatology.

A well-written, history-based rebuttal to the evangelical, dispensationalist nonsense that passes for legitimate eschatological study these days. A must-read for those confused by such charlatans as LaHaye, Lindsey, Robertson, et al.

In the early 70s, I was a big fan of Hal Lindsey's book "The Late Great Planet Earth," which predicted that the Second Coming of Christ was immanent because of his interpretation that it was to occur within one generation of the founding of the modern state of Israel (in 1948). This position is one that he continues to update, and modify, and is also popularized in the writings of others, such as the "Left Behind" series, by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. Back then, as I began my own studies of the Book of Revelation, I was shocked to discover that most major Bible commentaries did not share the view promoted by Lindsey and other preachers of the "pre-tribulation rapture." Not only that, I learned that this particular interpretation was a novel one in Christian history, and relatively recent, first appearing around the 1800s. Over the years, as I have retreated from this minority view (with many parallels to those of the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists) to a more traditional position, I have often wished for a volume that would present the historic view of the Christian Church on the Second Coming of Christ in a clear and thoroughly researched manner, especially as it pertains to views popular in many circles of Evangelical Protestantism. This book by T.L. Frazier is that book! I would recommend this volume to students of biblical prophecy, to people who want to critically examine the views of pre-tribulation writers like Lindsey and LaHaye, and to people who love Church history (or theology) and would like a survey of the historical views of mainline Christianity (whether Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant) on this important subject. Although Frazier is an Orthodox writer, it is my opinion that this book represents the views of most Christians since the days of the Early Church, which is: the Second Coming of Christ is a one-time event, not one that has "pre" and "post" (or even "mid") aspects to it, and He's coming to judge everybody, and not just coming to rescue a select few. I will say that this volume is not always easy reading. Since Frazier has done extensive research, he may have provided more details than the average reader cares about. Having said that, it's still an important work and worth the effort. One will find sobering information on how some views of biblical prophecy have influenced American foreign policy, particularly toward modern day Israel, with the sad impact that many American Christians are promoting the persecution of fellow Christians in the Middle East. The major shortcoming of this excellent title is that it has no index. I find myself wanting to look up specific scripture references or the names of writers quoted throughout the book. I would hope that Conciliar Press will rectify this error in future editions!

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