



Point of View

Dear Marketplace Friend,

The fastest growing segment of the American political system is the space marked "*independent*." Formal membership in either of the historic political parties is shrinking, while the electorate who refuse to loyally affiliate with partisan politics make their individual selections, issue-by-issue and candidate-by-candidate.

Same thing is happening today on the denominational front. An increasing number of born-again, church-attending Christians are choosing their church home based on the children's programs - or, the worship style - rather than based on the "brand" (*denominational affiliation*). The decision to dismiss doctrinal differences as secondary to hands-on experience and week-by-week satisfaction is pervasive...

Doctrinal differences? Sure enough. One layer past the beliefs in the By-Laws (*the common positions that affirm the Bible is God's Word, and that Jesus is God's Son, and that people are lost without a Savior*) are the thorny differences that put Christian churches into opposing camps with little or no common ground apparent.

One of the areas of frequent dissonance is the matter of **eschatology**. To many, that sounds like a medical specialty that requires a referral from your primary care physician



before you can make an appointment.

But eschatology - *the facet of theology dealing with the future of man and the earth* - grows out of the biblical emphasis on prophecy, since nearly a third of the Bible was prophetic at the time of its writing... and much of that prophecy has to do with events that are still in the future.

It doesn't take much conversation to uncover three distinct kinds of 21st Century American Christians: 1) *those who have no personal convictions about their own eschatological views*; 2) *those who are clear about their own views, but are in churches whose positions are not in sync with their own*; and, 3) *those who are in churches where their views and those of their church align*. In which group are you to be found?

So, would you best be called a **Post-Tribulational Premillennial**, or a **Pre-Tribulational Dispensational Premillennial**, or a **Postmillennial**, or an **Amillennial**? And,

I'm curious: *what are the top three distinctions of your position that make it your choice of beliefs?*

Whichever belief camp is yours, Joel C. Rosenberg's non-fiction work **Epicenter: Why the Current Rumbblings in the Middle East Will Change Your Future** (Tyndale, 2006 and 2008) is a vital addition to your reading stack. Joel is a **NY Times** best-selling author because of his fiction series (*which walks the reader through biblical eschatology, current events... and probable human drama set against that prophetic backdrop*). He is an informed and provocative scholar/journalist who forces the Christian reader to deal with the issues that supercede the personal life benefits of the faith and reminds them that they are players in a biblical drama that is being played out in accelerated terms in our generation.

A nuclear Iran? China rising to international power... and holding their assets in American debt? Russia on the rise, again, and increasingly feisty? America trying to decide where to come-down on Israel? Arab nations positioned to hold the world hostage to their supply of oil? Until you know the dynamics of our world with a biblical, eschatological world view... *you don't have the informed clarity that God intended you have to set your own course in challenging times.*

Great book. Huge subject. Critical clarity required. A question: *can you afford not to be a #3 Christian - aware of your theological position, and in a church where you are in agreement?*

Stirring it up, in the middle of August,

Bob Shank

Bob Shank is Founder and Chief Mentoring Officer of The Master's Program (TMP).

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