

Max Lucado's *What Happens Next*

Super Sign Happened May 14th 1948 Israel Became a Sovereign Nation

Lucado aims to replace fear with hope by focusing on God's promises and a clear "heaven's timeline."

The book is divided into two main parts:

- **Part 1** lays foundational biblical principles.
- **Part 2** walks through the remaining events on heaven's timeline.

Lucado builds the book around **four key ideas**:

1. **We were made to reign with Christ** — Humanity's original purpose in Genesis (ruling over creation) was disrupted by sin but will be fully restored through Jesus, the second Adam.
2. **God has made and will keep His promises** — Lucado explores major covenants (with Adam/Eve, Abraham, David, the New Covenant, etc.) and God's faithfulness to Israel and the Church.
3. **Heaven has a timeline** — Prophecy is trustworthy, especially when interpreted literally (as in Daniel's 70 weeks).
4. **A golden era—the millennium—awaits** — A literal 1,000-year reign of Christ on a renewed earth.

Key Content Overview

- **Early chapters** (1–5) establish these foundations: an encouraging introduction, humanity's calling to reign, God's covenants, Daniel's 70-week prophecy (which introduces the future Tribulation), and reasons for believing in a literal Millennium.
- **Intermediate state and Rapture** (Chapters 6–9): Lucado describes where believers go immediately after death (a joyful "intermediate heaven" or paradise with Christ), the pretribulational Rapture (believers caught up to meet Jesus), the Judgment Seat of Christ (evaluation for rewards), and the marriage supper of the Lamb.
- **Later chapters** (10+) cover the Tribulation (a seven-year period of judgment, chaos, the Antichrist, and opportunity for salvation), Christ's glorious Second Coming, the Battle of Armageddon, the 1,000-year Millennium (peace, justice, Satan bound), the Great White Throne Judgment, and the final eternal state: the New Heaven and New Earth where God dwells with His people, with no more pain, death, or curse (Revelation 21–22).

Chapter 1: Introduction / Setting the Destination (Focus on the Future)

- Serves as an introductory chapter encouraging readers to live with their ultimate destination in mind rather than being overwhelmed by present uncertainties or end-times anxiety.
- Lucado emphasizes that knowing the future (through Scripture) removes fear because we know who holds it.
- Uses personal stories, illustrations, and gentle humor to invite readers into the topic — whether they are excited, curious, or hesitant about end-times discussions.
- Sets the stage: The future is not frightening when you know the One who controls it. Prepares the reader for a hopeful, non-sensational exploration of biblical prophecy.

Chapter 2: Made to Reign (It Looks Like Reign)

- Explores the foundational idea that humans were created to reign with God over the earth.
- Draws from Genesis 1:26–28 (the creation mandate/dominion) — humanity’s original vocation as partners with God in ruling creation.
- Discusses how sin interrupted this plan but did not cancel it. Jesus (the second Adam) redeems and restores it.
- Looks forward to the hope that God’s perfected children will one day reign with Christ over a perfected, renewed earth.
- This chapter establishes the “reign” theme as a key part of Christian hope, connecting origins (protology) with the end times (eschatology).

Chapter 3: God Keeps His Promises (Covenants)

- Focuses on the second big idea: God has made covenants and will faithfully keep them.
- Examines key biblical covenants, including those with Adam/Eve, Abraham, David, Jeremiah (new covenant), and God’s promises to Israel.
- Stresses a literal interpretation of prophecy and God’s unwavering faithfulness.
- Argues that God’s commitments to Israel will be fulfilled, alongside His promises to the Church.

- Builds confidence that God's plan is trustworthy and on schedule, encouraging readers to trust Him with both present and future.

Note: These early chapters form the foundation for the rest of the book. Lucado presents four big ideas overall:

- **We were made to reign with Christ.**
- **God has made and will keep His promises.**
- **Heaven has a timeline.**
- **A golden era (the millennium) awaits.**

Chapter 4: Daniel's 70 Weeks Prophecy (The Backbone of Biblical Prophecy)

- Explores the prophecy in **Daniel 9** as a key timeline for biblical prophecy.
- Presents a classic dispensational interpretation: The 70 weeks (490 years) are divided, with the first 69 weeks fulfilled historically (from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the time of Christ).
- Argues there is a gap between the 69th and 70th weeks (the current church age as a "parenthetical period").
- The 70th week refers to the future **seven years of Great Tribulation** at the end of the age.
- Emphasizes literal fulfillment of prophecy and God's faithfulness to His timeline.

Chapter 5: The Millennium (Why a Literal 1,000-Year Reign?)

- Explains why Lucado believes in a literal **millennium** (1,000-year reign of Christ on earth) before the final judgment.
- Discusses different Christian views on the millennium (premillennialism, amillennialism, postmillennialism) with humility, acknowledging faithful Christians hold varying interpretations.
- Ties this to God's promises to Israel and the restoration of creation.
- Highlights the hope of Christ reigning with His people over a renewed earth.

Chapter 6: Where God's People Go When They Die (The People of Paradise / Intermediate State)

- Addresses the question of the current state of believers who have died (before the resurrection/rapture).
- Describes the **intermediate heaven** or paradise where Christians go immediately upon death — a place of comfort, presence with Christ, and joy, but not yet the final new heavens and new earth.
- Uses biblical examples and stories to reassure readers about loved ones who have passed away.
- Emphasizes that this is a temporary but blessed state, building anticipation for the full resurrection and eternal home.

Chapter 7: The Rapture

- Presents Lucado's understanding of the **Rapture** — the event where living believers and resurrected saints are caught up to meet Christ in the air.
- Portrays it as a sudden, comforting, and victorious event for Christians, occurring before the Tribulation (pretribulationist rapture view).
- Draws from passages like **1 Thessalonians 4** and emphasizes Jesus coming for His church like a loving rescuer.
- Stresses encouragement and hope: Believers will not face the full wrath of the Tribulation period.

Chapters 8–9: What Happens to Raptured Christians

- Describes the immediate experiences and activities for believers after the Rapture.
- Covers the **Judgment Seat of Christ** (Bema Seat) — a time of reward and evaluation for Christians based on their earthly faithfulness (not for salvation, but for crowns/rewards).
- Explores the marriage supper of the Lamb and preparation for returning with Christ.
- Focuses on joy, reunion, worship, and the believer's role in the events that follow.
- These chapters reassure readers about their secure and blessed future with Christ.

Chapter 10: The Tribulation Begins (or The Great Tribulation – Part 1)

- Introduces the seven-year period of tribulation drawn from Daniel 9, Revelation, and other prophetic passages.
- Describes it as a time of increasing global chaos, judgment, and suffering on earth after the Rapture.
- Highlights the rise of the Antichrist, false peace, and the opening of the seals in Revelation.
- Emphasizes that this period is God’s judgment on a rebellious world, but also a time when many will still turn to faith.

Chapter 11: Life During the Tribulation (or The Great Tribulation – Part 2 / What Life Will Be Like)

- Explores the human experience and intensified trials during the Tribulation (wars, natural disasters, persecution, the mark of the beast, etc.).
- Uses illustrations and a hypothetical story to help readers imagine the period without being overly sensational.
- Stresses God’s sovereignty even in judgment and the opportunity for salvation amid hardship.
- Contrasts the suffering on earth with the security of those already with Christ.

Chapter 12–13: The Return of Christ (The Second Coming)

- Details Christ’s visible, glorious return to earth at the end of the Tribulation (often distinguished from the Rapture).
- Describes the Battle of Armageddon, Christ’s victory over evil forces, and His descent with the saints.
- Focuses on themes of justice, deliverance for Israel, and the establishment of Christ’s kingdom.
- Encourages hope: Jesus returns as King to set all things right.

Chapter 14: The Millennium (The Thousand-Year Reign)

- Expands on the literal 1,000-year reign of Christ on a restored earth (Revelation 20).
- Portrays a golden era of peace, justice, and prosperity where Satan is bound and Christ rules with His saints.
- Ties back to earlier themes of humanity’s original calling to reign and God’s faithfulness to His covenants.
- Acknowledges differing Christian views on the millennium but explains why he holds a premillennial perspective.

Chapter 15: The Final Judgment

- Covers the Great White Throne Judgment and the judgment of believers' works (already addressed earlier) versus the judgment of the unsaved.
- Discusses the reality of hell as eternal separation from God, handled compassionately but truthfully.
- Emphasizes accountability, the end of evil, and God's perfect justice.

Chapter 16: The New Heaven and New Earth (The Great Homecoming / Eternity)

- Describes the final eternal state: the renewal of creation, the descent of the New Jerusalem, and God dwelling with His people forever.
- Highlights the elimination of pain, death, tears, and curse (Revelation 21–22).
- Ends with an inspiring vision of homecoming, reunion, worship, and reigning with Christ.
- Concludes the book by calling readers to live with hope and purpose in light of this glorious future.

Lucado holds a **premillennial, pretribulational, dispensational** perspective but presents it humbly, acknowledging that faithful Christians differ on some details (e.g., views of the Millennium). He repeatedly emphasizes hope, God's sovereignty, and practical encouragement to live faithfully now.

Premillennial (or Premillennialism) is a view in Christian eschatology (the study of end times) about the timing of Jesus Christ's return in relation to the "millennium."

Premillennialism teaches that Jesus Christ will return before (pre-) the Millennium — the 1,000-year period of peace and righteous rule described in Revelation 20.

Key Beliefs of Premillennialism:

- Christ returns **physically and visibly** to earth at His Second Coming.
- After His return, He establishes a literal 1,000-year kingdom (the Millennium) on a renewed earth.
- During this time:
 - Satan is bound and cannot deceive the nations.

- Christ rules with His resurrected saints.
- There is peace, justice, and prosperity on earth.
- Many of God’s promises to Israel are fulfilled.
- At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan is briefly released, leading to a final rebellion.
- Then comes the final judgment (Great White Throne) and the eternal state (New Heaven and New Earth).

View	When Does Christ Return?	Is the 1,000 Years Literal?
Premillennial	Before the Millennium	Yes
Postmillennial	After the Millennium	Usually symbolic
Amillennial	At the end (no literal Millennium)	Symbolic / Present

Pretribulational (or **Pretribulational Premillennialism**) refers to a specific view about the **timing of the Rapture** in relation to the Tribulation.

Simple Definition:

Pretribulational means the Rapture of the Church happens **before** ("pre-") the seven-year period of Tribulation prophesied in the Bible.

Key Beliefs:

- The **Rapture** (when living believers are suddenly caught up to meet Christ in the air, along with the resurrection of deceased believers — see 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) occurs **before** the Tribulation begins.
- After the Rapture, the seven-year Tribulation (also called Daniel’s 70th week) takes place on earth — a time of increasing judgment, chaos, the rise of the Antichrist, and great suffering.
- At the **end** of the Tribulation, Christ returns visibly with His saints (the Second Coming) to defeat evil, establish His kingdom, and begin the 1,000-year Millennium.

Why “Pretrib”?

- “Pre” = before
- “Tribulational” = the Tribulation (a time of wrath and judgment)
- The core idea: The Church is **removed** from the earth before God pours out His wrath during the Tribulation. Believers are spared that intense period of global suffering.

How It Fits with Premillennialism

- **Pretribulational** is a subtype of **premillennialism**.
- Christ returns **before** the Millennium (premillennial), **and** the Rapture happens **before** the Tribulation (pretribulational).

View	When Does the Rapture Happen?	Common Label
Pretribulational	Before the 7-year Tribulation	Pretrib
Mid-tribulational	In the middle of the Tribulation (after 3½ years)	Mid-trib
Post-tribulational	At the very end of the Tribulation (same time as Second Coming)	Post-trib

Dispensational (or **Dispensationalism**) is a system of biblical interpretation that views God’s work throughout history as being carried out through distinct periods called “dispensations.”

Simple Definition:

Dispensationalism teaches that God has managed His relationship with humanity in different ways during different eras of history. Each “dispensation” is a unique time in which God tests or interacts with people according to specific responsibilities He has given them.

Key Beliefs of Dispensationalism:

- **Literal interpretation** of Scripture, especially prophecy. Prophecies about Israel, the Temple, the land, and the kingdom are taken at face value rather than being spiritualized.
- **Distinction between Israel and the Church:** God has separate plans and promises for national Israel and for the Church (believers in Christ). The Church is not seen as the “new Israel.”
- **History divided into dispensations:** Common traditional divisions include:
 1. Innocence (Adam & Eve before the Fall)
 2. Conscience (after the Fall)
 3. Human Government (after the Flood)
 4. Promise (Abraham to Moses)
 5. Law (Moses to Christ)
 6. Grace/Church Age (current age we live in)
 7. Kingdom/Millennium (future 1,000-year reign of Christ)

- Strong emphasis on **biblical prophecy** and a clear timeline for the end times.
- Usually paired with **premillennial** and **pretribulational** views of the Rapture and Christ's return.

How It Relates to Previous Terms You Asked About:

- **Premillennial** → Christ returns *before* the 1,000-year kingdom.
- **Pretribulational** → The Rapture happens *before* the Tribulation.
- **Dispensational** → The overall framework that ties these together and sees a clear distinction between Israel and the Church, along with a literal future for Israel.

Most people who hold to a pretribulational premillennial view are also dispensational.