

# *deeper*

word faith life

## Season 3

The Doctrine of Man

The Doctrine of Sin

The Doctrine of Salvation

Eschatology

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## Episode 6 – Eschatology

This is our second episode on the subject of Eschatology or the study of the Last Things. We will be looking at the Millennium and the different views on this topic and we will also be looking at the Rapture and the great Tribulation in these contexts. In this study we will be going over the basic views, but there are many variations of these views and not everyone agrees with how they are defined. We have to keep in mind that whatever view we hold, God knows what He will do regardless. We can only speculate this side of eternity.

### What is the Millennium?

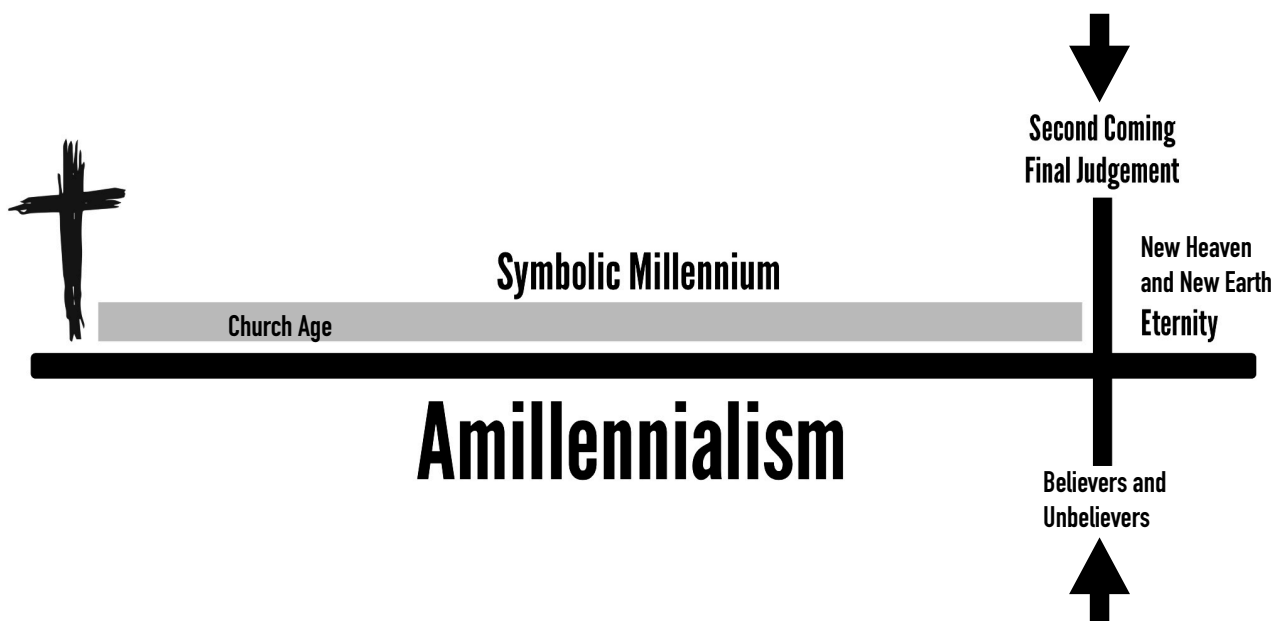
The Millennium means a thousand years in Latin, and we get the idea from these verses Revelation 20:1-6 - “They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” and “The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years was ended.”

There are three main views on the Millennium: (The last one is divided into two streams)

The Amillennial view - The Millennium is now and when it ends Jesus will return.

The Postmillennial view - The Millennium will come gradually, and Jesus will return after it.

The Premillennial view - The Millennium will come suddenly, and Jesus will return before it.



**Amillennialism** - The Millennium is now, and when it ends, Jesus will return. This is the simplest view of Revelation 20:1-6 and it describes the present church age and not some future event. Christians who hold this view believe that all of the previously mentioned signs occurred early on in church history and that Christ could really return at any moment. They believe that, “they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4) means that believers who have already died are today reigning with Christ in a spiritual sense. Ephesians 2:6 says that we are “seated with Christ in heavenly places”. Since the events in Revelation 20 are currently being fulfilled in the church, the thousand year period that John speaks about in Revelation 4:4-5 is a figure of speech meaning a very long time, the entire church age from Pentecost to the return of Christ. Adherents of this view believe that the binding of Satan “so that he might not deceive nations any longer”, referred to in Revelation 20:2-3, happened during Jesus’ earthly ministry. And the fact that Paul could preach the gospel to the Gentiles unhindered in Acts 28:31, is evidence of this. The idea of a future thousand year



reign either before or after Jesus returns is rejected. They believe that when Jesus returns, there will be one resurrection of both believers and unbelievers. Those who believe in Jesus will go to heaven, and those who don't will face judgement and eternal condemnation. At that time the new earth and the new heavens will begin and remain for all eternity. It is very simple, Christ returns, there is judgement, and we live in a new heaven and a new earth forever.

#### Main Features and Distinctions:

- Israel and the church - The church is the fulfillment of Israel, God's promise to Abraham.
- Kingdom of God - A spiritual reality that all Christians partake in and that is seen presently by faith, but will be grasped by sight at Jesus' return.
- The Rapture - The saints, living and dead, shall meet the Lord in the clouds and immediately proceed to judge the nations with Christ and then follow Him into their eternal state of glory.
- Role of Satan - His influence has been diminished because he has been bound by Christ.
- The Millennium - Inaugurated with Christ's resurrection, in an "already/not yet" sense, Christ already reigns over all and is already victorious over Satan.
- Popularity - Early 400's AD, widely held view for much of church history, including most of the Protestant Reformers of the 16th century.
- Notable Adherents - Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Louis Berkhof, CS Lewis, RC Sproul.
- Key Scriptures - John 5:28-29; Romans 8:17-23; 2 Peter 3:3-14; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10.

#### Summary:

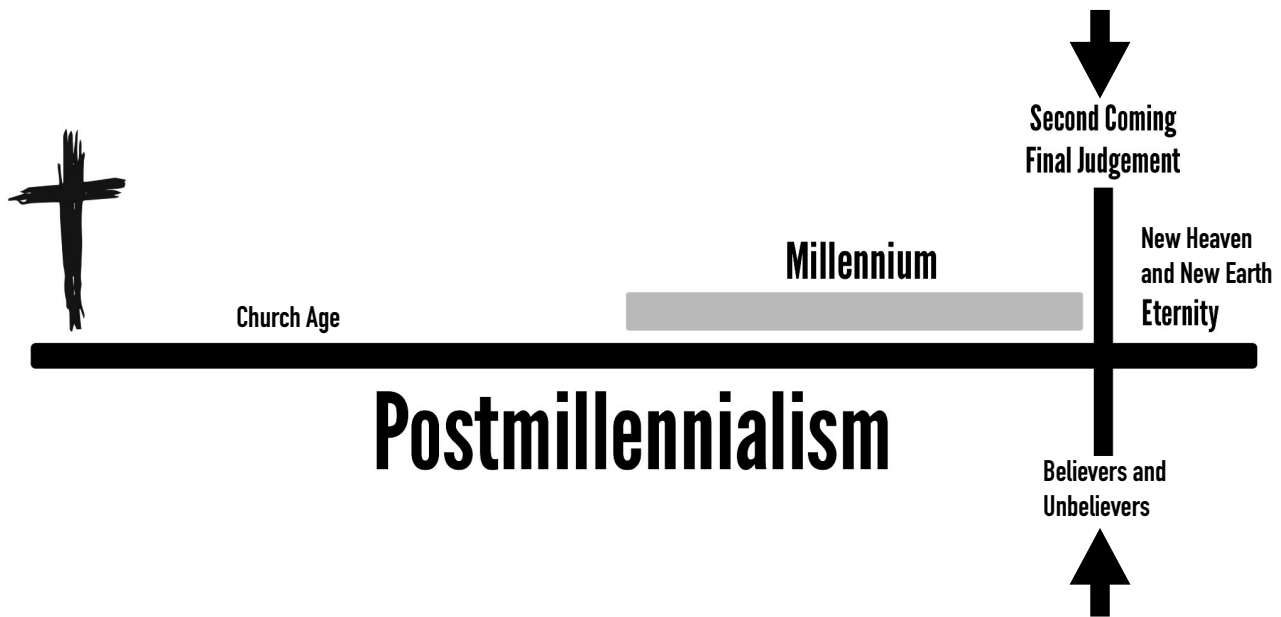
The Amillennialist perspective sees the whole of God's redemptive revelation as twofold; promise and fulfillment. It also emphasises that a strict-literal interpretation of Old Testament is not necessarily the most accurate way of determining what the text means.

The Amillennial perspective stresses that the coming of the Kingdom of God is a two-part event. The first portion dawned at Christ's first coming, John the Baptist proclaimed this, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand".(Matthew 3:2) At the cross, Christ won final victory over death and Satan. And then He ascended to reign upon the throne of David forever. (Luke 1:32-33, Acts 2:30-31) Now because we "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal". (2 Corinthians 4:18) Because of this, the Amillennialist sees the final things already accomplished, though not yet seen by sight, but by faith.(2 Corinthians 5:7)

The Amillennialist's view of the church in this world is one of suffering. The Christian will be hated by all, just as Jesus was.(Matthew 10:22) for a servant is not greater than his master. Seeing this as the church's role on earth, to suffer as Christ did, the Amillennialist can hold no hope for an earthly exaltation and longs for the fulfillment of the second stage of the coming of the Kingdom.

This second stage of the Amillennial perspective is the final consummation of all the heavenly promises. The Christian will no longer see by faith alone, but by sight. All the shadowy things will pass away and our eternal reign with Christ will begin. The Amillennialist, expecting no earthly glory for the church, places all his hope on this heavenly glory.





**Postmillennialism** - The Millennium will come gradually, and Jesus will return after it. This view states that Jesus will return after the thousand years in Revelation. As the church grows and Christians continue to have greater influence, society will begin to function more and more in line with God's standards. Gradually, a "Millennial Age" of great peace and righteousness will come about on earth. This is also not a literal thousand years. Christ will not physically reign on earth during this period, but instead Christians will have great influence on society and Christ will reign through them. Postmillennialists emphasise Jesus' statement in Matthew 28:18, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me," They expect that as a result, the kingdom of God will continue to advance with great power throughout the earth until there is a Millennial kingdom on earth. Jesus will then return at the end of this "Millennial Age". There will be one resurrection of both believers and unbelievers. Those who believe in Him will go to heaven, and those who don't will face the final judgement and eternal condemnation. At that time, the new heaven and new earth will begin and remain for all eternity, and Christ will be present on earth to reign in bodily form.

#### Main Features and Distinctions:

- Israel and the church - The church is the spiritual fulfillment of Israel.
- Kingdom of God - A spiritual entity experienced on earth through the Christianizing affect of the Gospel.
- The Millennium - A "Golden Age" preceding Christ's return during which Christ will vicariously rule over the whole earth through an unprecedented spread of the Gospel; the large majority of people will be Christian.
- Role of Satan - There is no definitive position on his role.
- Popularity - A later view to develop, it came about after the Reformation around the 1700's.
- Notable Adherents - Jonathan Edwards, BB Warfield, Greg Bahnsen.
- Key Scriptures - Psalm 2; Isaiah 2:2-4; Matthew 13:28; John 12.

#### Summary:

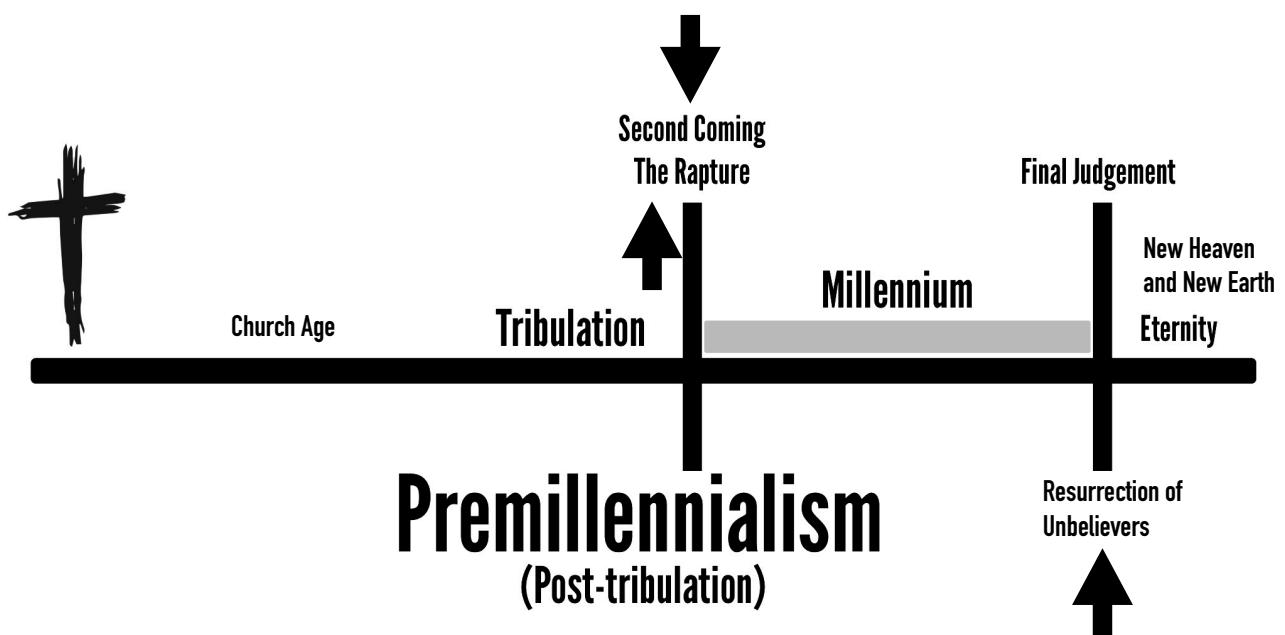
There are several different versions of Postmillennialism, but one of the views gaining the most popularity, is that of the theologians. Generally speaking, the Postmillennial theologian viewpoint holds to a partial-preterist interpretation of Revelation and the



various judgment prophecies in the Gospels, believing that the majority of those prophecies were fulfilled in 70 AD at the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.

The Postmillennialist sees the millennial kingdom as the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that he would become "a great nation" and that, "all peoples on earth would be blessed" through him.(Genesis 12:2-3) This holy reign will come about via gradual conversion through the spread of the Gospel, this incremental progress is drawn from many pictures found throughout Scripture.(Deuteronomy 7:22 and Ezekiel 47:1-12)

Postmillennial optimism is also nurtured through many prophetic Psalms.(Psalm 2:1-12) They often speak of all nations fearing Him, salvation being known among all nations, the ends of the earth fearing Him. Another passage that feeds this earthly optimism is Isaiah 2:2,3 in which the "nations will stream" to the exalted temple of God. It does have a notable "Kingdom Now" or "Dominionist" leaning.



Classic or Historic Premillennialism - The Millennium will come suddenly and Jesus will return before it. This view also holds that prior to Jesus' Second Coming there will be a time of great suffering on the earth, often called the Great Tribulation.(Matthew 24:21-31) According to this view, Christ will return and physically reign on earth for a thousand years as mentioned in Revelation 20:4,5, although not necessarily a literal thousand years. When Jesus returns to begin His Millennial Reign, all believers, dead and alive will be caught up in the air to meet Him. 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17 - "For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever." During the Millennium, Satan and his demons will be completely removed from all influence on the earth.

Revelation 20:1-3 - "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time."

Because Jesus will reign in peace and righteousness on the earth, many people will turn



to Him for their salvation. But there will still be unbelievers on the earth, they will still do evil. In this view, after the thousand year reign of Christ on earth, the Final Judgement will occur and the believers will continue to reign with Him for eternity, and those who rejected Him, will be condemned for eternity.

After the millennium, Satan will be loosed, and Gog and Magog will rise against the kingdom of God, this will immediately be followed by the Final Judgment. While similar in some respects to the Dispensational Premillennialism in that it holds to Christ's return being before the establishment of the thousand year earthly reign, Historical Premillennialism differs in significant ways, mainly in the method of interpreting Scripture, and the positioning of the Tribulation.

This view does seem to enjoy the most Biblical support out of all the views. It is an easy and natural reading of Revelation 20:1-6 and this was the view of the early church. Old Testament passages such as Isaiah 65:20, indicate a time in the future which is very different from this age, but where sin and death are not yet removed. Other passages like Psalm 72:8-14, Isaiah 11:2-9, Zechariah 14:6-21, Revelation 2:27, 12:5, 19:15, seem to indicate a period of time when Christ's reign over all things is seen in a greater way, but sin and evil still exist on the earth. These seem to support a Premillennial reign of Christ and is supported by other New Testament passages that affirm that believers will reign over the earth with Him sometime in the future. (Luke 19:17,19; 1 Corinthians 6:3; Revelation 2:26,27; 3:21)

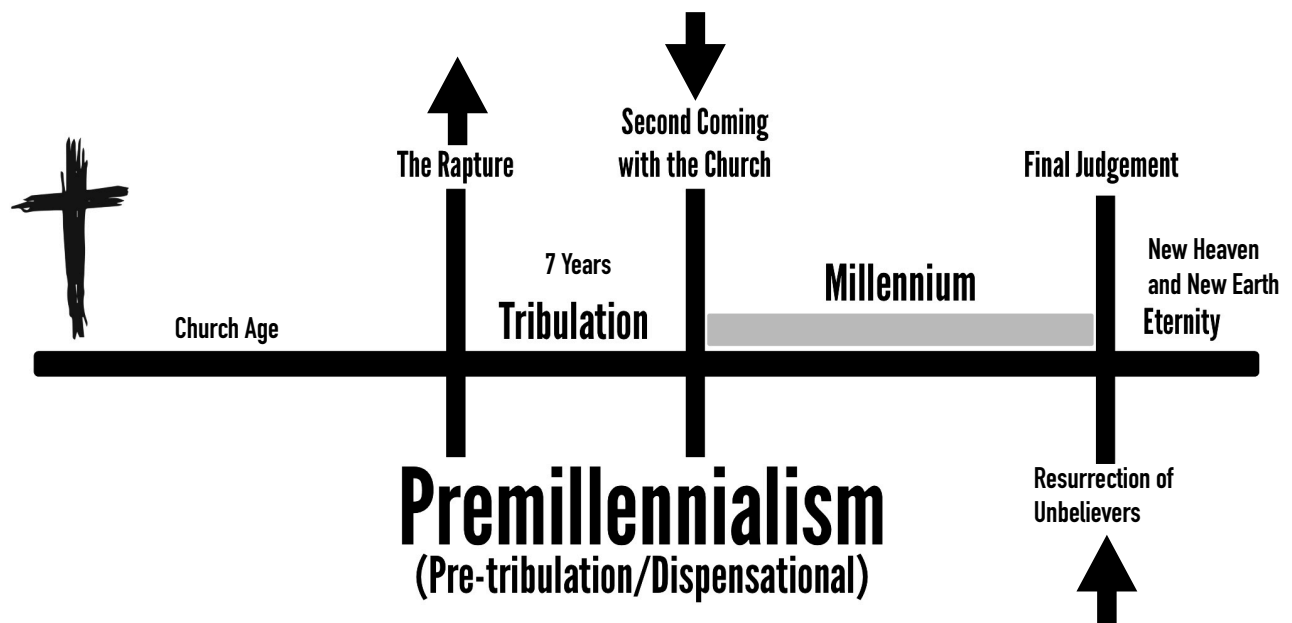
#### Main Features and Distinctions:

- Israel and the church - The church is the fulfillment of Israel.
- Kingdom of God - Present through the Spirit since Pentecost and to be experienced by sight during the Millennium after Christ's return.
- The Rapture - The believers, living and dead, shall meet the Lord in the clouds immediately preceding the Millennial Reign, but after the Tribulation.
- The Millennium - Christ will return to institute a thousand-year reign on earth. The Millennium will see the re-establishment of temple worship and sacrifice as a remembrance of Christ's sacrifice.
- The Role of Satan - He is currently at work in the world, influencing and deceiving nations.
- Popularity - For the first four centuries it was the commonly held view, it fell away during the Middle ages, but was revived by the Puritans in the 17th century.
- Notable Adherents - Irenaeus, Wayne Grudem, Robert Gundry, Craig Blomberg.
- Key Scriptures - Revelation 20:1-10.

#### Summary:

The Historical Premillennialist's view interprets some prophecy in Scripture as having literal fulfillment while others demand a semi-symbolic fulfillment. As a case in point, the seal judgments (Revelation 6) are viewed as having fulfillment in history, rather than in future powers by which God works out his redemptive and judicial purposes leading up to the end. Rather than the belief of an imminent return of Christ, it is held that a number of historical events such as the rise of the Beast and the False Prophet, must take place before Christ's Second Coming. The Second Coming will be accompanied by the resurrection and rapture of the believers (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18); this will inaugurate the millennial reign of Christ. The Jewish nation, while being perfectly able to join the church in the belief of a true faith in Christ, has no distinct redemptive plan as they would in the dispensational view. The duration of the millennial kingdom, (Revelation 20:1-6) may be literal or metaphorical.





There are one or two variations of the Premillennial view, let's take a look.

Pretribulational or Dispensational Premillennialism - Those who hold this view believe that Jesus will actually return twice; once in a secret way to suddenly take believers out of the world and then seven years later in a second, public return when He will bring the believers back to earth to reign with Him for a thousand years. During the seven years absence, there will be a Great Tribulation when the vast majority of Jewish people will come to faith in Christ as their Messiah. They will then preach the Gospel to those unbelievers left on earth. Satan, who was bound up during Christ's thousand year earthly reign, will be loosed to deceive the nations, gather an army of the deceived and battle against the Lord at Armageddon. This battle will end with judgement against unbelievers and Satan, and with them being cast into the Lake of Fire, and the entrance into the eternal state of glory by the believers. It is called dispensational because it is founded on the doctrines of Dispensationalism.

#### Main Features and Distinctions:

- Israel and the church - Views church and Israel as two distinct identities with two individual redemptive plans.
- The Rapture - The church is raptured before a seven-year tribulation, the seventieth week of Daniel.(Daniel 9:24-27) This tribulational period includes the reign of the Anti-christ.
- Millennium - Christ will return at the end of the Great Tribulation to institute a thousand-year rule from a holy city, the New Jerusalem. Those who come to believe in Christ during the seventieth week of Daniel, including the 144,000 Jews, and survive will go on to populate the earth during this time. Those who were raptured before the Tribulation will reign with Christ over the millennial population. It sees the re-establishment of temple worship and sacrifice as a remembrance of Christ's sacrifice. The Millennium will end with the "Great White Throne Judgment" where Satan and all unbelievers will be thrown into the lake of fire. Christ and all saints will proceed into eternal glory.
- Role of Satan - He is actively at work to influence and deceive, and to undermine the church and God's people. He will be bound for the Millennium and then released for the final confrontation where he will be defeated and cast into the lake of fire for eternity.
- Popularity - A newcomer, it was introduced in the early 1800's along with Dispensationalism.
- Notable Adherents - Lewis Chafer, Charles Ryrie, Hal Lindsay, John MacArthur, Tim LaHaye (The Left Behind series of novels)



- Key Scriptures - Daniel 9. Dispensationalism views the content of the Bible as being divided along seven dispensations or eras: Innocence, Conscience, Human Government, Promise, Law, Grace, and the Millennium. Key Scriptures are interpreted through this dispensational grid.

### Summary:

A strictly literal hermeneutic is foundational to the Dispensational Premillennialist viewpoint. Interpreting Scripture in this manner will in fact demand such perspectives unique to dispensationalism such as:

- An earthly kingdom of God from which Christ will reign
- A future redemptive plan for national Israel
- A seven year period of great tribulation
- The rejection of prophetic idiom and symbolism

Dispensational Premillennialism holds that a seven-year tribulation, foreseen in Daniel 9:27 will precede a thousand-year period (Revelation 20:1-6) during which time, Christ will reign on the throne of David. (Luke 1:32)

Immediately before the Great Tribulation, all the dead saints will rise from their graves and all the living members of the church shall be caught up with them to meet Christ in the clouds. (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17) this is known as "the Rapture." During this time of tribulation, there will be three and a half years of world peace under an Anti-christ figure (Daniel 7:8; Revelation 13:1-8) who will establish a world-church (Revelation 17:1-15), followed by three and a half years of greater suffering (Revelation 6-18). At the end of this period, Christ will return (Matthew 24:27-31; Revelation 19:11-21), judge the world (Ezekiel 20:33-38; Matthew 25:31; Jude 1:14-15), bind Satan for one thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3), and raise the Old Testament and Tribulation saints from the dead (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:4).

At this time, the millennial reign will begin and Christ will reign politically over the earth at this time from His capital in Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3). Throughout His reign, there will be no war (Isaiah 2:4) and even the animals will live in harmony (Isaiah 11:6-9). At the end of this era of peace, Satan will be released and instigate a massive, but futile, rebellion against God. (Revelation 20:7-9) After this battle of Armageddon, Satan and the wicked are cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10), while the righteous proceed into their eternal state in the new heaven and the new earth. (Revelation 21)

There is another variation of the Premillennial view and that is the Mid-tribulation Rapture of the believers. As the name suggests, in this view, the believers will be raptured after the first three and a half years of the Great Tribulation and before the suffering is ratcheted up for the last three and a half years. (Daniel 9,12)

There are so many differences in views of the future, simply because these events have not yet happened. Regardless of the timing of Christ's return, all Christians believe that the final victory of Jesus over Satan described in Revelation 20:7-10 will occur in the future. We all believe that Satan "will be released from his prison" to gather together those he has deceived, for a battle against the Lord. Jesus will defeat Satan and his army once and for all. Satan will be "thrown into the lake of burning sulphur" where he "will be tormented day and night forever and ever. At the end of the final battle, Jesus, the victorious King, will execute His Final Judgement, and then He will reign for all eternity. Our differences are mainly around the timing of these events.

As Jesus told John in Revelation 22:6, this is something in which all believers can take great hope, because His words are "trustworthy and true". Jesus said, "Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done." (Revelation 22:12) Our response, regardless of our interpretation of Revelation, should be just like that of John, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. (vs12)





Memory Verses:

Revelation 22:4-5

“They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”

