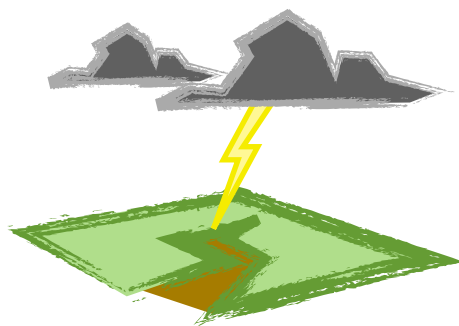
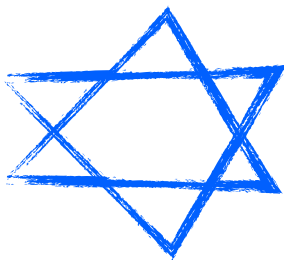
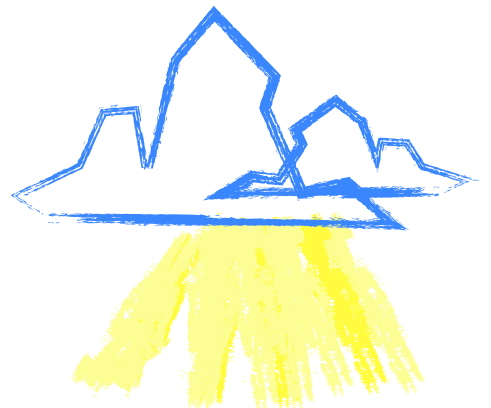
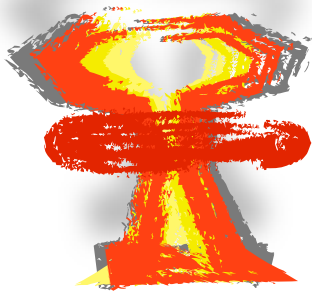

Endtimes Q&A

These Last Days: Four Millennial Views

David P Murray



headhearthand.posterous.com

Introduction

This ebook is an expanded version of “The Four (Main) Millennial Views,” which I presented at the 2010 [*Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology*](#) in Grand Rapids.

Allow me a few explanatory remarks about the format and content. First, in the interests of clarity, precision, simplicity and brevity, the material is presented in question and answer (or “catechism”) format.

Second, I’ve used pictures to illustrate and highlight many points. The link between text and picture is not always obvious, but will be all the more memorable if you can work it out!

Third, I’ve kept proof texts to a minimum, and those I have used are placed in the footnotes to avoid clutter. Many other eschatology books will give you all the necessary scriptural references.

Fourth, as this is only an introduction to the four main millennial views, I have kept things brief. I have also focussed on the mainstream of each view rather than all the variations within each.

Fifth, although I have tried to fairly represent the four main millennial views as well as setting out the strengths and weaknesses of each, I am biased toward amillennialism. My original address was somewhat tilted in favor of amillennialism. This book is more obviously tilted in that direction. However, whatever your millennial view, I hope that this ebook will help you to understand the alternatives better. If I have misrepresented any of the millennial views, I will gladly receive correction.

I am working on an expanded version of this ebook which will deal with the full range of eschatological subjects: death, intermediate state, final judgment, heaven, hell, etc. Check back at my blog, www.headhearthand.posterous.com in the coming months for the full version.

May I thank Dr Rick Phillips for his kind invitation to give this address. It was a privilege to co-labor with Rick and his colleagues at the [*Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals*](#).

David P Murray
(March 2010)

1. What is the millennium?

The millennium is the 1000 year reign of Christ and his saints following the binding of Satan, and which, because of many diverse interpretations, has become central to eschatology.

The millennium is the 1000 year reign of Christ and his saints, following the binding of Satan,

A “millennium” is a thousand year period of time (from Latin *mille*, thousand, and *annus*, year). It is the English translation of two Greek words χίλια ἔτη, used six times in Revelation 20:1-7, and nowhere else in the Bible.



...and which, because of many diverse interpretations,

There are diverse interpretations because of:

- Different approaches to the interpretation of prophecy: literal, typological, spiritual, a combination, etc.
- Different views of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments: complementary, contradictory, commentary, etc.
- Different ways of reading Revelation: sequential, cyclical, symbolic, literal, past history, the present, the future, etc.
- Desire for simplicity versus complexity



...has become central to eschatology

The study of eschatology includes death, the intermediate state, the resurrection, the final judgment, heaven, hell, and the new heavens and the new earth. But, because of the diversity of views, the millennium has taken up a disproportionate amount of time compared to these more important subjects.



It was Randy Alcorn who pointed out how Reformed theologians have especially neglected heaven in their writing. Calvin commended meditation on heaven but he wrote little about it. William Shedd’s three-volume *Dogmatic Theology* has eighty-seven pages on hell but only two on heaven. Louis Berkhof’s *Systematic Theology* devotes but one page out of 737 to the eternal state of heaven.

The millennium is the 1000 year reign of Christ and his saints, following the binding of Satan, and which, because of many diverse interpretations, has become central to eschatology.

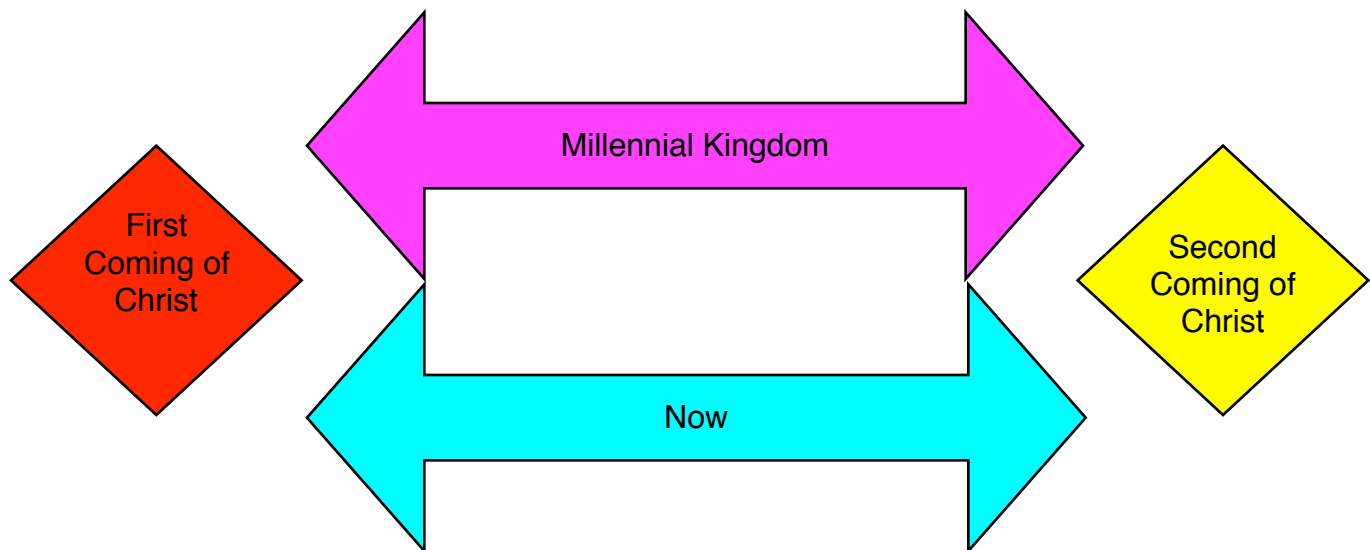
2. What are the four main millennial views

The four main millennial views are amillennialism, postmillennialism, historic premillennialism, and dispensational premillennialism.

The four main millennial views are amillennialism,

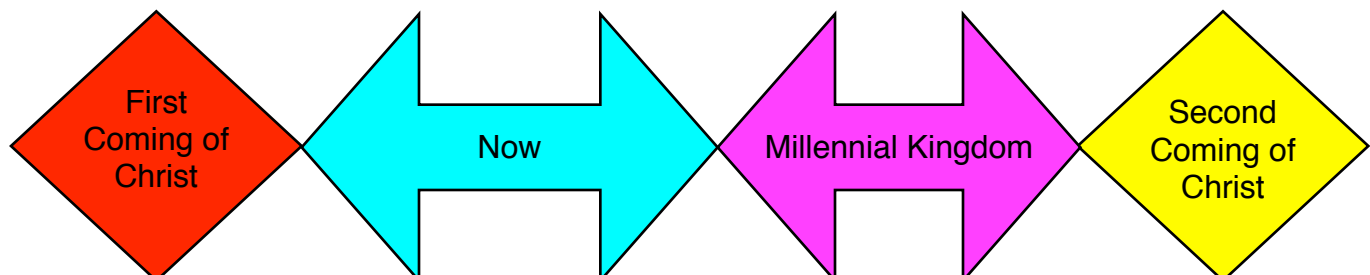
The prefixes post-, and pre- refer to Christ's second coming. They describe the timing of Christ's return to earth. Will it be after the millennium (post-millennialism), or before the millennium (pre-millennialism)?

Amillennialism is sometimes called "now-millennialism" because it believes that the millennial kingdom is now. It began with the first coming of Christ and will end with His second coming.



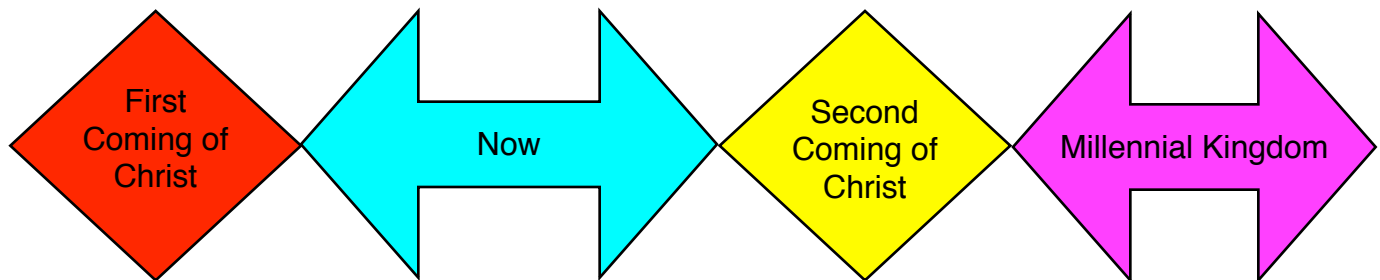
...postmillennialism,

The future millennial kingdom will be a golden period of Christianity on earth, followed by the return of Christ.



...historic premillennialism,

Christ will return to set up a glorious millennial kingdom on earth



...and dispensational premillennialism.

Like historic premillennialism, dispensational premillennialism also sees the return of Christ before the millennial kingdom, but is considerably more complicated in its “timetable” of events.

The four main millennial views are amillennialism, postmillennialism, premillennialism, and dispensational premillennialism.

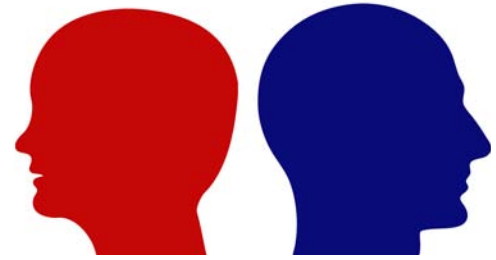
3. Are there any similarities between these very different views?

Though these views differ significantly, yet they share important fundamental beliefs, and they have all been held by good and godly Christians.

Though these views differ significantly,

The main differences concern:

- The timing and nature of Christ's Kingdom
- The timing and nature of Christ's second coming



...yet they share important fundamental beliefs,

When highlighting the differences, we want to remember how much we share in common with those who hold opposing views:

- The Scriptures are the inspired, inerrant, and authoritative Word of God
- The death of Christ was a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice
- Christ is the only way of salvation
- Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ
- Christ and his Church will conquer the devil and his angels
- There will be a future, visible, personal coming of Christ
- Every individual will receive a resurrection body
- Everyone will stand before the judgment seat of Christ
- The righteous will be rewarded in heaven and the wicked punished in hell



...and they have all been held by good and godly Christians.

Whether we look at the past or the present we can find godly Christians who held to all the different views:

- Amillennialists include Augustine, Louis Berkhof, Geerhardus Vos, Abraham Kuyper, William Hendriksen.
- Postmillennialists include Charles Hodge, William Shedd, Robert Dabney, Benjamin Warfield, Iain H Murray.
- Premillennialists include John Gill, Andrew Bonar, Robert Murray McCheyne, Charles Spurgeon, Francis Schaeffer, George Ladd, Don Carson, Al Mohler.
- Premillennial dispensationalists include: John Whitcomb, John MacArthur, Dallas Seminary Faculty.



Though these views differ significantly, yet they share important fundamental beliefs, and they have all been held by good and godly Christians.

4. What are the fundamental differences between the four (main) millennial views?

The four (main) millennial views differ in these 8 areas: the length of the 1000 years, the nature of Christ's kingdom on earth, the relationship between Israel and the Church, the role of the Devil, the tribulation, the end-time signs, the number and timings of the resurrections and of Christ's coming(s).

The four (main) millennial views differ in these eight areas:

There are other differences between these views, and there are differences within the views, but we are focusing on the main differences between the mainstream representatives of each view



...the length of the 1000 years,

Is this a symbolical number for a long period of time, or a literal 1000 years?



...the nature of Christ's kingdom on earth

Is it spiritual, physical, or both?



...the relationship between Israel and the Church,

Is the Church the fulfillment of Israel, a replacement for Israel, identical with Israel, or distinct from Israel?



...the role of the devil,

When he is bound, when he is let loose, and what can he do?



...the tribulation,

When is it and who goes through it?



...the end-time signs,

Are they past, present, or future? What is the order and intensity?



...the number and timings of Christ's coming(s).

How many comings and what order?

The four (main) millennial views differ in these 8 areas: the length of the 1000 years, the nature of Christ's kingdom on earth, the relationship between Israel and the Church, the role of the Devil, the tribulation, the end-time signs, the number and timings of the resurrections and of Christ's coming(s).

5. What is amillennialism?

Amillennialism believes that the 1000 years of Revelation 20 is a figurative term for Christ's present kingdom on earth and in heaven between his first and second comings, during which the devil is significantly bound, and which will be concluded with these co-incidental climactic end-time signs: the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and the everlasting kingdom.

Amillennialism believes that the 1000 years of Revelation 20 is a figurative term

Revelation is apocalyptic literature, a genre which abounds in symbolism and imagery. Therefore, amillennialists regard the 1000 years of Revelation 20 figuratively. It is a long period of time, though not an unlimited period.

Amillennialism means literally “no-1000 years,” which seems to imply that amillennialists do not believe in any “1000 years.” They do, but they do not believe in a literal 1000 year period sometime in the future. That’s why some argue for amillennialism to be called “now-millennialism,” because they view the present as part of the 1000 years.



...for Christ's present kingdom on earth and in heaven

The kingdom of Christ has come, is coming, and will come.¹ Old Testament prophecies of the kingdom of God are already being fulfilled as Christ's kingdom comes on earth, and also as He reigns in heaven.



... between his first and second comings,

There are only two comings of Christ to this earth, the first was when he came in humiliation, and the second when he will come in glory to judge the universe. There are no further comings, and there is no idea of one coming in two phases.



...during which the devil is significantly bound,

Christ's first coming did bind the devil significantly, but not fully or forever. There will be a future brief unloosing of the devil.



¹ Luke 17:20-21; Matt. 12:28; Rom. 14:17

...and which will be concluded with co-incidental and climactic end-time signs:

Though the signs of the times are with us in the whole period between Christ's first and second comings, these signs will intensify and climax before the second coming of Christ. The conclusion of time will involve a cluster of concurrent events: the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and the new heavens and the new earth.



...the second coming of Christ,

Christ will come to the earth only one more time; to end time and to judge the world.

...the resurrection of the dead,

There will be one resurrection, a general resurrection of all the dead,² while living believers will be transformed and glorified.



...the final judgment,

At the final judgment, unbelievers will be consigned to eternal punishment, while believers inherit eternal life in the new heavens and earth. Believers will also be judged but not as to destiny, only as to the level of reward.



...and the everlasting kingdom.

All these major events (second coming, resurrection, final judgment) will occur immediately before the new heavens and the new earth are revealed.



Amillennialism believes that the 1000 years of Revelation 20 is a figurative term for Christ's present kingdom on earth and in heaven between his first and second comings, during which the devil is significantly bound, and which will be concluded with these co-incidental climactic end-time sign: the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and the everlasting kingdom.

² John 5:28-29, Acts 24:15; Dan. 12:2

6. How does an amillennialist interpret Daniel 9:24-27?

Daniel 9:24-27 is apocalyptic literature that uses figurative language to predict the nature, timing and consequences of Christ's work at His first coming.



Daniel 9:24-27

Daniel was written for the Israelites who had been living as captives in Babylon for almost seventy years. It was about 540 BC and it looked as if the Babylonian gods had defeated the God of Israel and the Israel of God. Eighty-two-year-old Daniel wrote to correct this false impression. The structure of the book is:

- **Chapters 1-6:** Faithful living in evil times (historical narratives about Daniel's godly life in Babylon)
- **Chapters 7-12:** Forward looking in evil times (dreams and visions about the future)

One day, as Daniel was reading the prophecy of Jeremiah about a seventy-year exile for Israel,¹ the angel Gabriel appeared to him with a message about another seventy. In effect, Gabriel said, "Daniel, you've been thinking about the seventy years of exile for God's people. Well that's not the only seventy in God's program for Jerusalem. In seventy periods of seven, Jerusalem will witness even greater things."

...is apocalyptic literature

Ezekiel, Daniel and Revelation are full of apocalyptic language, characterized by symbolism, visions, allegories, parables, and symbolic actions. Usually there is a sharp distinction between the heavenly and earthly spheres. The literature takes a pessimistic view of the earthly sphere, and usually centers hope in the heavenly realm, from which salvation will come.



...that uses figurative language



The Bible uses "seven" as a figure of perfection, and "ten" as a figure of completion. Therefore, Daniel's "seventy sevens" is a perfect and complete period of time. Just as forgiving seventy times seven is a figure for complete and perfect forgiveness, so Daniel's "seventy sevens" is the "decreed" period in which the greatest work of God is brought to complete perfection.

¹ Jeremiah 25:8-11; 29:10-14

...to predict the nature...of Christ's work at His first coming.

Daniel portrays this greatest work of God, Christ's redemption, with three negatives and three positives.²

The negatives

- To finish the transgression: sin will be brought under control so that it no longer reigns to the same extent
- To make an end of (*lit.* seal up) sins: sin will be securely locked up
- To make reconciliation for (*lit.* cover) iniquity: When sin is covered it is atoned for



The positives

- To bring in everlasting righteousness: God will bring in a righteousness from without, eternal in origin and duration
- To seal up (*lit.* authenticate) the vision and prophecy: God's Word will be accredited and attested by these events
- To anoint the Most Holy: God will qualify and enable His Son, the "Holy of Holies" for his central role and huge responsibilities in this great work of redemption.

...to predict the timing...of Christ's work at His first coming

Daniel divides the "seventy sevens" into three divisions³

- **7 sevens:** A medium period of time (@ 460 to 410 BC) which began when Artaxerxes gave the command to rebuild Jerusalem. Daniel describes this as "the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." This restoration and rebuilding occurred under Ezra and Nehemiah.
- **62 sevens:** A much longer period of time (@ 410 BC to 30 AD) which began with Jerusalem rebuilt and restored, and finished with Christ's first coming and, more specifically, with the beginning of His public ministry.
- **1 seven:** A relatively short period of time (@ 30 AD) which began with Christ's first coming (especially the beginning of His public ministry) and included His life, death and resurrection.



² Daniel 9:24

³ Daniel 9:25-27

...and to predict the consequences of Christ's work at His first coming.

After 7 + 62 sevens (69 sevens), or in the middle of the seventieth seven, “Messiah will be cut off,” a phrase used both for death and for ratifying a covenant. This “cutting off” will be for the benefit of others, “not for himself,” and it will “confirm the covenant with many.” The covenant of grace, as revealed through the covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, and as further prophesied by Jeremiah, will be fulfilled by the Messiah.

In the middle of the seventieth seven, Messiah will cause the whole temple worship to cease, to be rendered unnecessary by His death and resurrection. The temple sacrifices did not actually cease until Jerusalem was desolated by Titus in 70 AD, but that was really just the outward manifestation of what had already happened in God's eyes. In God's eyes, Christ's death rendered the sacrificial system unnecessary and over. So, although the Jews continued to reject Christ's sacrifice and offer animal sacrifices, God viewed this as “the overspreading of abominations,” for which He would punish them with desolation. “The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary: and the end thereof shall be with a flood.”⁴

Daniel 9:24-27 is apocalyptic literature that uses figurative language to predict the nature, timing and consequences of Christ's work at His first coming.

⁴ Daniel 9:26

7. How does an amillennialist interpret Matthew 24?

In Matthew 24, Jesus uses the classic prophetic methods of foreshortening and typology to predict not only the near judgment of Jerusalem, but also the continuing course of world history, and the climactic judgment of the world.

In Matthew 24, Jesus uses the classic prophetic methods of foreshortening

When you look at a mountain range from a distance, mountain peaks which are separated by many miles can sometimes look as if they are right beside one another. It's only when you get closer to the peaks that the distance between them becomes more obvious.

In a similar manner, when the Old Testament prophets looked ahead they sometimes saw events separated by many years as if they were right beside one another. It's only as time gets closer to the predicted events that the distance between them becomes obvious. This is sometimes called "prophetic foreshortening." "The widely separated mountain peaks of historic events merge and are seen as one."¹



In Matthew 24, Jesus presents the future fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the end of the world as intertwined. But as time gets closer to the predicted fall of Jerusalem, the events are seen as separated by time.

...and typology to predict

One of the reasons why Jesus and the prophets used prophetic foreshortening was to teach that the first event was a "type" of the latter. It was a smaller prophetic picture of a larger future event. When the first event occurred, then we could learn better what the larger event would be like. For example, the Old Testament prophets used the exodus of Israel from Egypt, as a type of the exodus of Israel from Babylon in 538 BC.

In Matthew 24, Jesus presents the events surrounding the end of Jerusalem in 70 AD as a type, a prophetic picture, of the church's experience in all ages, climaxing in the events surrounding the end of the age itself. Using the palette and colors of imminent events (the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans), Jesus painted a vivid picture of the future: ongoing enemy opposition together with ongoing divine judgments on these enemies, opposition and destruction that would climax and reach its highest height at the end of time.



¹ W Hendriksen, *Commentary on Matthew*, 846.

...not only the near judgment of Jerusalem,

Jesus is definitely referring to judgment on the physical city of Jerusalem. "Let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains."²



...but also the continuing course of world history,

Jesus moves beyond Jerusalem and beyond His age to tell the disciples that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations."³ But the future will not just see ongoing expansion of the Gospel Kingdom, there will also be wars, famines, earthquakes, persecution, false prophets, and apostasy. "But the end is not yet," and "these are the beginning of sorrows."⁴ In other words, these events will continue throughout all history. They will not just mark the end of history. However, they will increase and intensify towards the end of history.



...and the climactic judgment of the world.



Jesus does not stop either with the fall of Jerusalem or continuing course of world history. He goes on to speak of the end of all world cities and all world history. "Then shall the end come...And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."⁵

We must remember the context of this prophecy was Jesus' prediction of the temple's destruction, and the disciple's questions: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"⁶ So, we can expect an answer that will deal not just with the destruction of Jerusalem, but also of the end of the world. And that's exactly what we get, with the one being a type of the other. The disciples connect the two events chronologically, but Jesus connects them typologically. That also fits the main emphasis of Matthew 24-25 which is the necessity of readiness.

² Matt. 24:16

³ Matt. 24:14

⁴ Matt. 24:6,8

⁵ Matt. 24: 14, 29-31

⁶ Matt. 24:2,3

We may structure Matthew 24:1-51 as follows:

- v. 1-3:** The Big Question
- v. 4-14:** The Rest of History in Outline
- v. 15-28:** The Rest of History in Detail
- v. 29-31:** The End of History
- v. 32-51:** Application: Be ready

Each of these sections conclude with a focus on the end of the world, but as the sections progress, the end comes more and more into view.

The greatest difficulty with this interpretation is how to interpret Jesus' concluding words: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."⁷ There are four ways of explaining this.

First, "this generation" is all mankind (or all believers) and "all these things" is everything until Christ's second coming. However, it would seem superfluous to say that mankind, or believers, or all things would continue until they no longer continue.

Second, "this generation" is all people living at that time and "all these things" are the end of Jerusalem or the end of the world. This interpretation implies that Jesus made a mistake. If He meant the end of Jerusalem, then His mistake was in saying that the Gospel would be preached to all nations before then. If He meant the end of the world, then His mistake was in saying that people of that generation would still be alive then. We reject both possibilities because Jesus, as God, could not make a mistake.

Third, "this generation" means the Jews as a race of people, and "all these things" are the end-time signs. However, if Jesus meant this, He could have chosen the Greek word most commonly used for a "race of people," or "successive generations," rather than the more ambiguous word he did use.

The fourth interpretation, and the one I favor, is that "this generation" means the Jews of Christ's day and "all these things" is limited to the end of Jerusalem. This requires a switch of time zones between verses 35 and 36.

That does fit the wider context, as Jesus has already been switching from one time zone to another, from the near destruction of Jerusalem to the more distant end of the world, with the former being a type for the latter. So, as he moves to application, from verse 32 onwards, he switches again between the known period of Jerusalem's destruction (v. 32-35), to the unknown day of the world's destruction (v. 36 ff).

The immediate context also supports this distinction. Look at how Jesus introduces the switch: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." He is contrasting the known and nearer Jerusalem destruction (v. 32-35) with the unknown and more distant destruction of the world (v. 36 ff). It is also significant that he talks of the world's end as a "day and hour" which fits the last day and hour more than the destruction of Jerusalem which was over many days and hours.

⁷ Matt 24: 34

In summary:

v. 32-35 Be ready because the imminent days of Jerusalem's end is known

v. 36-51 Be ready because the day of the world's end is unknown

In Matthew 24, Jesus uses the classic prophetic methods of foreshortening and typology to predict not only the near judgment of Jerusalem, but also the continuing course of world history, and the climactic judgment of the world.

8. What is the message of the book of Revelation?

The message of Revelation is that Christ and His Church will defeat the Devil and his armies.

Revelation was written by the Apostle John after the fall of Jerusalem, sometime around 80-90 AD. The early Church father Irenaeus testified that it was written not long before his own day “toward the end of Domitian’s reign” (81-96 AD). By then, the Roman Empire had developed into the great opponent and persecutor of the Church,¹ and John had been banished, a very common form of persecution during Domitian’s reign. The later date also reflects the age when Ephesus had already lost its first love and Sardis was already “dead.”

But despite all the opposition to the Church, both from within and without, Christ and His Church will conquer all enemies: death, hell, the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, and the men who worship the beast. And despite temporary affliction, the Church will emerge washed, victorious, triumphant and reigning in the new heavens and the new earth.

Revelation was written not only for John’s generation but for all subsequent generations of Christians, who also would suffer in the ongoing afflictions of the Church in this world.



The message of Revelation is that Christ and His Church will defeat the Devil and his armies.

¹ Rev. 17:9

9. What is the structure of the Book of Revelation?

Revelation is composed of seven parallel sections describing the period between Christ's first and second comings.

William Hendriksen divided Revelation into the following parallel sections:¹



1. Christ in the midst of the seven candlesticks: the church in the world (chs. 1-3)

As seven is the biblical number for completeness, the seven churches represent the complete church of Christ through the ages. The seven churches are not seven periods of time but seven spiritual conditions which are constantly repeated in the life of every church.

2. The book with seven seals: the church persecuted by the world (4-7)

As each seal is opened, God's providence reveals suffering and persecution for the church. However this is against the backdrop of Christ's victorious death and resurrection,² and ends with the two sides of God's final judgment.³

3. The seven trumpets of judgment: the church victorious over the world (8-11)

This section presents the church as avenged, protected and ultimately victorious. It climaxes again with the final judgment.⁴

4. The woman, the child, the dragon: Christ persecuted by the devil and his helpers (12-14)

This section begins with Christ's first coming as Savior,⁵ and ends with His second coming as Judge.⁶ In between, the five enemies of the church are introduced: the dragon, the beast out of the sea, the beast out of the earth, the great harlot, and the men that have the mark of the beast.

5. The seven bowls of wrath: Christ judging the devil and His helpers (15-16)

There are very clear parallels between the trumpets in the third section and the bowls here,⁷ indicating that this is the same period of time presented in different imagery. Like the previous sections, this one also concludes with the final judgment.⁸

6. The fall of the harlot and beasts: Christ defeating the dragon's helpers (17-19)

Babylon represents the world without God and the world against God. But she and all her supporters shall fall, especially at the second coming of Christ and the final judgment.⁹

¹ William Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors*.

² 5: 5,6

³ 6:12-17; 7:9-17

⁴ 11:15, 18

⁵ 12:5

⁶ 14:14-15

⁷ Trumpet/bowl parallel: Earth (8:7, 16:2), sea (8:8, 16:3), rivers (8:10, 16:4), sun (8:12, 16:8), pit/abyss/throne of beast (9:1-2, 16:10), Euphrates (9:14, 16:12), second coming to judge (11:15, 16:16-17)

⁸ 16:20

⁹ 19:11, 19, 20

7. The judgment on the dragon: Christ victorious over the dragon (20-22)

Just as chapter 11 ended with the final judgment, and chapter 12 took us back to the first coming of Christ, so chapter 19 ends with the final judgment and chapter 20 takes us back again to the first coming of Christ. Just as sections five and six ended with references to a final battle, so this last section also refers to THE battle.¹⁰

Conclusion

The book of Revelation consists of seven sections, each describing the same period of time - starting with the first coming of Christ and concluding with His second and final coming. However, though the sections describe the same events in the same period of time, there is development within the book. First, though every section concludes with the final judgment, there is an increasingly intense focus on it as the book unfolds. Second, the book moves from the visible surface conflict between the church and the world in sections 1-3, to the more invisible underlying conflict between Christ and the dragon in sections 4-7.

Revelation is composed of seven parallel sections describing the period between Christ's first and second comings.

¹⁰ 16:14; 19:19; 20:8

10. What are the biblical presuppositions for the amillennial interpretation of Revelation 20?

Amillennialists believe in the spiritual-literal fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, the synchronization of end-time events, and a belief in one unchanging and unfailing plan of God.

Amillennialists believe in the spiritual-literal fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies,

Old Testament prophecies portray the future Kingdom of God in very physical terms. Amillennialists have been criticized for interpreting these descriptions in a purely spiritual or heavenly way. Amillennialists have responded to this with a more nuanced interpretation of these passages. They begin with spiritual fulfillment at the first coming of Christ.¹ But they go on to see not just spiritual but also physical fulfillment as the kingdom of Christ spreads throughout the earth. And they conclude with a very literal and physical fulfillment with Christ and His people reigning over the new heavens and the new earth.

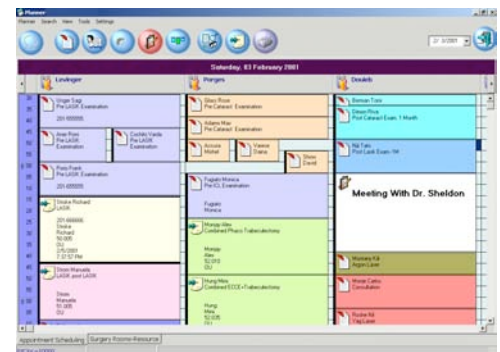


...the synchronization of end-time events,

Amillennialists see only two ages, the present temporary age, and the final eternal age to come. They do not see any age in between these. They base this on the verses which teach that the second coming will be immediately followed by the second coming of Christ, the dissolution of the old earth, and the creation of the new.²

...and a belief in one unchanging and unfailing plan of God.

Amillennialists do not see different messages in the Old and New Testament. They do not see different messages for different people groups. They see one message in the Old and New Testament and one message for both Jews and Gentiles. God did not change His plans.



Amillennialists believe in the spiritual-literal fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, the synchronization of end-time events, and a belief in one unchanging and unfailing plan of God.

¹ Luke 17:20-21

² Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 3:19-21; 2 Pet. 3:10-13

11. When are the “1000 years” of Revelation 20?

The “1000 years” is figurative language for the period and events between Christ’s 1st and 2nd comings, both on earth and in heaven.

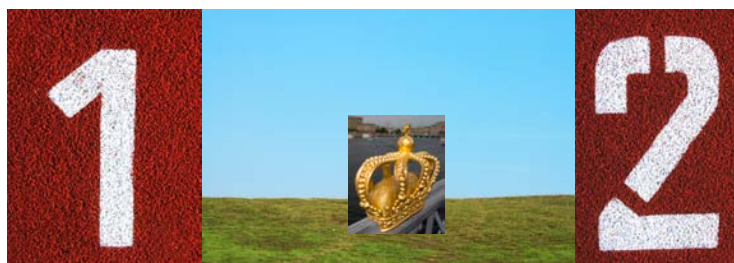
The “1000 years” is figurative language

No millennial view believes in a literal key or chain, because you cannot bind a spirit with something physical like a chain.¹ Other Scripture passages also use “1000” figuratively.²



...for the period and events between Christ’s 1st and 2nd comings,

10 and its multiples are symbols of completeness (e.g 10 commandments, 10 plagues, etc.). So 1000 years is the lengthy complete period between Christ’s first and second comings.



(and events) both on earth and in heaven.

Revelation 20: 1-3 describe “1000 years” of the devil’s activity on earth, having been bound. Verses 7-10 focus on the devil’s activity on earth, having been briefly released before being finally defeated. Verses 4-6 are a parenthesis describing what happens in heaven during the “1000 years.” There is not the slightest hint that this passage is connected with the Old Testament prophecies of national glory for Israel. What we have is a contrast between the glorious experience of the martyrs in heaven with the tribulation that believers on earth have to pass through for a time.

The “1000 years” is figurative language for the period and events between Christ’s 1st and 2nd comings, both on earth and in heaven.

¹ Rev. 20:1-2

² Deut. 7:9; Ex. 20:5-6; Ps. 50:10-11; Ps. 84:10

12. What happens during the 1000 years on earth?

Christ's death and resurrection devastates the devil's ability to deceive the nations until close to the end of time.

Christ's death and resurrection devastates the devil's ability

John says, "I saw an angel..."¹ There are four reasons to view this "angel" as the Son of God. First, "angel" is literally "messenger. So this is a heavenly messenger with a message. Second, the Son of God appears as an "angel" elsewhere in Revelation.² Third, He comes with a key and a great chain, symbols of judicial authority and ability. Fourth, a titanic battle is presented by using the "Son of God versus Satan" language of Matthew 12:28-29.³

In Matthew 12:28-29, Christ devastates the devil's abilities by binding him and casting him out, the same two verbs used to describe the work of the "angel" in Revelation 20:2-3. This view of how Christ's life and death devastated the devil is also echoed by the apostles.⁴

So Revelation 20:1-10 describe the two climactic points in Christ's victory over Satan: victory at His first coming (the cross), and victory at his second coming (the end).

...to deceive the nations

"But," you say, "the Devil seems far from bound and cast out to me!" That's why it is important to consider the stated earthly effect of the binding: it stops him from deceiving the nations.⁵ The devil is devastated but not yet destroyed. He is bound in some significant ways, but not in others. He is greatly restricted, but not paralyzed. He can still trouble souls and do damage, but he can no longer prevent the international spread of the Gospel, he cannot destroy the church, and he cannot unite the nations under antichrist (yet). He is not powerless nor inactive. He rages like a chained dog. But instead of the nations conquering the church, the church spreads through the nations by the Gospel (in contrast to much more limited spread pre-Christ). This does not mean that the world will be Christianized, nor that there will be a 1000 year period of world peace and prosperity. The world will be a mixture of good and evil, war and peace, until Christ returns.⁶ However, the kingdom is coming in a way that it never did nor could before Christ's death.



¹ Rev. 20:1

² Rev. 1:13-15; 10:1

³ cf. John 12:31-32

⁴ 1 Cor. 15:26; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8

⁵ Rev. 20:3

⁶ Matt. 13:24-43; 24:37-39



...until close to the end of time.

This chaining lasts “until the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”⁷ Near the end of time, God will release the devil from his chain and allow him to “go out to deceive the nations” again.⁸ But, at the end, the binding will be made perfect and complete.⁹

Christ’s death and resurrection devastates the devil’s ability to deceive the nations until close to the end of time.

⁷ Rev. 20: 3, 7

⁸ Rev. 20: 8

⁹ Rev. 20: 9-10

13. What happens during the 1000 years in heaven?

The souls of glorified saints are spiritually resurrected to live, reign, and judge with Christ in perfect holiness and happiness, while the rest of the dead experience the second death.

The souls of glorified saints...

With the words, “And I saw thrones...”¹ John transitions from an earthly scene to a heavenly. “Throne” is mentioned 47 times in Revelation, and all but three of these are situated in heaven. The heavenly location is confirmed by John saying he saw “the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus.” Sometimes “souls” can mean whole persons,² but the “souls” in Revelation 20 have been beheaded and are no longer in the body. And, although the contextual focus is on the martyrs of John’s day, they are representative of all the reigning saints in the intermediate state - that blessed condition between earthly death and full heavenly glorification in the body. The promise of Revelation 3:21 is being fulfilled: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”



are spiritually resurrected to live with Christ



These Christian “souls” had lived and died for the Gospel. Having refused to give up the testimony of Jesus, or to receive the “mark of the beast,” they were put to death. However, John raises his eyes from that scene of earthly bloodshed to heavenly glory and sees these same “souls” now living and reigning with Christ. They are contrasted with “the rest of the dead” in verse five. Both the souls that “lived with Christ” and “the rest of the dead” had died, but their experience after death could not be more different.

After death the Christian souls “lived,” which can mean “they came to life.” Compared to earthly existence, entering heaven is like a coming to life, like a resurrection, as the soul leaves this world of death, is purged from sin, and is fitted for heavenly communion. It is true that the Greek verb behind “lived” is often used for bodily resurrection. However, it is also used for non-bodily or spiritual resurrection.³ Thus John describes this coming to heaven of believers as “the first resurrection.” “On such the second death hath no power.”⁴ The first death is the physical death of the believer. The second death is the soul in eternal torments. The believer passes through the first death, but never the second. In summary, just as first and second death refer to different degrees of death, so the first and second resurrection

¹ Revelation 20:4

² Acts 2:41

³ Luke 20:38; Rev. 13:14; John 5:25

⁴ Rev. 20:6

describe different stages of eternal life. Bodily resurrection, the second resurrection for believers, is mentioned later in the chapter,⁵ when the 1000 years ends.

...to reign and judge with Christ,

Christians reign with Christ in heaven. They share in the glory, benefits and activities of His reign throughout the 1000 years. They also judge with Christ. In His role as judge, Christ shares information with them, consults them, and even perhaps delegates some judgment to them.



...in perfect holiness and happiness,

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.”⁶
What a reward after the sufferings of this life! To live, reign and judge with Christ!

...while the rest of the dead experience the second death.

In contrast with the dead who “lived,” who experienced this first resurrection, the “rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.”⁷ “Until...” does not mean that the rest of the dead were unconscious or non-existent. And neither does it mean that their condition changed at the end of the thousand years. It simply means that they did not come to enjoy the life that believers enjoyed when they died, and that loss lasted throughout the period between Christ’s first and second comings. John is only speaking of what happens in the thousand years, not what happens afterward.



To summarize, the believer experiences one death then two resurrections - the first spiritual, the second physical. The unbeliever experiences two deaths - the first physical, the second spiritual and eternal - and one resurrection - when the body is resurrected to join his soul in eternal death.

The souls of glorified saints are spiritually resurrected to live, reign, and judge with Christ in perfect holiness and happiness, while the rest of the dead experience the second death.

⁵ Rev. 20:11-13

⁶ Rev. 20:5

⁷ Rev. 20:5.

14. What will happen at the end of the 1000 years?

At the end of the 1000 years, the devil will be released to deceive and stir up the nations against the church, but the Lord will return to deliver the church, resurrect all, and finally and fully bind the devil.

At the end of the 1000 years the devil will be released, to deceive and stir up all nations against the church,

Near the end of the 1000 years, the devil will be temporarily released with minimal restriction.¹ Christ will unbind him and let him go for a time. This will result in serious deception and severe persecution. Gog and Magog were two well-known pagan kings who fought against the Jews in Old Testament times. In Revelation 20:8 they are used as symbols for the final attack of the devil and his armies against the Church. Antichrist will rise to lead the forces of evil in a violent persecution of Christianity,² which will result in large-scale and widespread apostasy from the Christian faith.³ This will all climax in one last battle, already referred to in Revelation.⁴ In these earlier references, we learned what would happen to the heathen kings, and to the false prophet. But here we discover what happens to Satan as a result of the battle.



...but the Lord will return to deliver the church,

At the climax of this last battle, when it appears that Satan and his armies are on the verge of victory, Christ will appear in triumphant glory;⁵ to deliver the church and destroy all his enemies.

...resurrect all,

After winning this climactic battle, the Lord will raise all people from their graves for the final judgment.⁶ This bodily resurrection is a single event for all people.



¹ Rev. 20:3, 7-9

² Rev. 20:9; Matt. 24:6-14, 21, 22

³ 2 Thess. 2:3-12; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1-6; Lk. 18:8

⁴ Rev. 20:8; 16:14; 19:19.

⁵ Rev. 20:9ff; Matt. 24:30

⁶ Rev. 20:10-15

...and finally and fully bind the devil

So history ends with the defeat of Satan, and Christ on His great white throne. The greatest manifestation of wickedness will form the backdrop to the greatest manifestation of grace.



At the end of the 1000 years the devil will be released to deceive and stir up the nations against the church, but the Lord will return to deliver the church, resurrect all, and finally and fully bind the devil.

15. What are the strengths of amillennialism?

Amillennialism is relatively simple, it interprets the obscure in the light of the clear, does justice to the powerful effect of Christ's first coming, fits "few find it" language, and represents the Kingdom of God as eternal not temporal.

Amillennialism is relatively simple,

After the detail in the last few Q&A's, it may not seem simple. However, believe me, compared to some of the millennial views, this is elementary school level! Whenever our interpretation of the Bible gets over-complicated, we should be asking, "Did God intend the Bible only to be understood by learned scholars?"



...it interprets the obscure in the light of the clear,



Amillennialism does not build its whole theology on one quite obscure passage in Revelation 20. It is not a conclusive argument against a doctrine to say that it only appears on one place. Even if it only appears in one verse, we should believe it. However, it is valid to seriously question if God would really have left such a vitally important doctrine as a future millennial reign of Christ on earth to one late (and highly debated) chapter of the Bible. It is better to start with multiple clear verses and interpret the rarer obscure passages in the light of that, rather than vice versa.

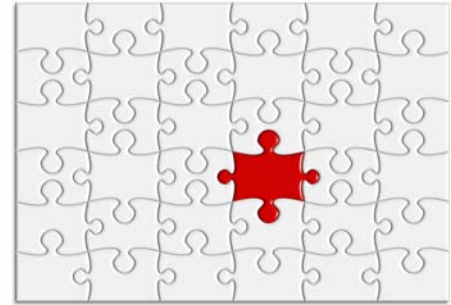
...does justice to the powerful effect of Christ's first coming,

Some millennial views that emphasize a future glorious kingdom of Christ on earth (spiritual or physical), tend to minimize the impact of Christ's first coming on the devil, the world and the church. Amillennialism gives a stronger account of this, with its emphasis on the devil being bound and the kingdom of God already growing and spreading throughout the nations.



...fits “few find it” language,

There are verses which seem to teach that relatively few at most points in history will find the narrow way to Christ.¹ Also, Jesus himself asks if he will find faith on the earth when he returns.² Amillennialism does not rule out times of revival. Neither does it rule out a future return of the Jews to Christ, which will have a reviving effect on the church. However, it is less optimistic about the prospect of some future golden age of Christianity on the earth.



...and represents the Kingdom of God as eternal not temporal.

The Bible presents the kingdom of God as eternal not temporal.³ This view of the kingdom also fits the general theme of Revelation which is to look up, beyond this world; and to look ahead, beyond time.

Amillennialism is relatively simple, it interprets the obscure in the light of the clear, does justice to the powerful effect of Christ's first coming, fits “few find it” language, and represents the Kingdom of God as eternal not temporal.

¹ Matt. 7:14

² Luke 18:8

³ 1 Sam.9:7; Dan. 7:14; Lk. 1:33; Heb. 1:8

16. What are the weaknesses of amillennialism?¹

Amillennialism has been criticized for misinterpreting Revelation 20 and Matthew 24, for underestimating the devil's present power, and for cultivating unbiblical pessimism and careless complacency.

Amillennialism has been criticized for misinterpreting Revelation 20,

This criticism is usually focused in five areas:

1. Amillennialists make too much of the millennium only being in one chapter of the Bible

The Bible only needs to teach something once for us to believe it, and progressive revelation explains why this was left until the end. Also there are other passages which speak of a better state than this, but which falls short of the eternal age.²



2. Obscurity is a result of spiritualizing the literal

The alleged obscurity that amillennialists say they find in Revelation 20 is the result of spiritualizing what is to be taken literally.

3. The events of Revelation all take place on earth

The angel came down from heaven to earth and clearly does work in the earthly realm (v.1-3).

4. Two different interpretations of "lived"

"...and they *lived* and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (v. 4).

"The rest of the dead *lived* not again until the thousand years were finished" (v. 5).

As amillennialists say verse four means "believers come to heavenly life," do they believe that the the rest of the dead, the unbelievers, "come to heavenly life" at the end of the thousand years?

5. "Resurrection" never means the soul going to heaven

"Resurrection" is always used of the body. This exact verb is used of Jesus' bodily resurrection in Revelation 2:8.

and (misinterpreting) Matthew 24

It requires exegetical gymnastics to make Matthew 24 fit amillennialism. Instead of one sustained and chronological narrative, it requires multiple switchbacks from present to future and back again, from Jerusalem to world and back again.

¹ If you refer to previous Q&A's you will find these criticisms answered.

² Ps. 72:8-14; Isa. 11:2-9; 65:20; 1 Cor. 15:23-24; Rev. 2:27; 12:5



...for underestimating the devil's present power,

The devil is described as “bound,” “cast out,” “shut up,” “sealed,” which seems more extensive than the past or present results of Christ’s first coming. It is more like a total removal from influence on the earth. But Satan’s activity on the earth is still very strong.³ Even if we accept the amillennial limitation to the deception of the nations, that also is happening even now.

...and for cultivating unbiblical pessimism

Some critics point to Romans 9-11 and protest, “How can the future conversion of the Jews be life from the dead and bring untold blessings to the world if things are always getting worse and worse?”



and careless complacency.

Perhaps the most powerful criticism of amillennialism is the difficulty of preserving a sense of the imminence of Christ’s second coming? If there are still things to happen like the conversion of the Jews, the rise of antichrist, or the much greater intensification of the signs of the times, how can you avoid Christians (and even unbelievers) slipping into careless complacency?



Amillennialism has been criticized for misinterpreting Revelation 20 and Matthew 24, for underestimating the devil's present power, and for cultivating unbiblical pessimism and careless complacency.

³ 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 Jn.4:3; 5:19

17. What is postmillennialism?

Postmillennialism believes that many of the signs of the times have been fulfilled, and that the thousand years is a figurative term for a future golden age of Christianity on earth, when the devil will be almost totally bound and the earth almost totally Christianized, followed by a brief period of Satanic loosing and the Lord's return to earth for the final judgment.

Postmillennialism believes that many of the signs of the times have been fulfilled,

Most postmillennialists believe there will be a final apostasy at the end of human history, although it does not tend to be as serious or significant as that envisaged by amillennialists before Christ's second coming.

A minority of postmillennialists reject any possibility of a final apostasy and believe that the Gospel conquest will be so complete that not one unbeliever will be left in the world.

Postmillennialists who want to eliminate or minimize the final apostasy may teach that Matthew 24 describes the signs present during the great tribulation before and during the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.¹

They may also teach that Revelation was written before 70 AD and also refers to the imminent events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem² - Nero's persecutions and the Roman-Jewish war. The great apostasy³ and the rise of the antichrist are past.⁴

Some postmillennialists have modified their "past-tense" interpretation of Matthew 24 and Revelation. They say that although most of the signs have passed, there may be a few just before the very end of the 1000 years on earth.

...and that the thousand years is a figurative term for a future golden age of Christianity on earth,

Although some postmillennialists have held to a literal 1000 years, most now take it to be a very long period, but not an exact 1000 year period. Some say that the 1000 years will happen suddenly, while others see the present age gradually merging into the golden millennial age. During that long golden age, the Kingdom of God will be greatly extended. Social, economic, political and cultural life will be vastly improved. Prosperity and peace will abound.

Turning to Revelation 20, the "first resurrection" is a spiritual regeneration, a revival of the elect on earth. Like amillennialists, postmillennialists do not see the millennium involving a visible reign of Christ from an earthly throne.



¹ Matt. 24:21, 34

² Rev. 1:1, 3; 22:7, 10, 12

³ 2 Thess. 2

⁴ 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7

...when the devil will be almost totally bound,

Although the devil is bound to a limited extent through the present age, so that Satan is not able to deceive and control all the nations, this is moving towards a total and perfect binding when all will be under Christ's control. Evil will be subdued and reduced to negligible proportions.



...and the earth almost totally Christianized,



Though not everyone will be converted, all will be "Christianized," the world will be controlled by Christians, and many believe that there will be a large-scale conversion of the Jews. Some postmillennialists see this happening by the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, while others see it as coming about through political and social change from the top down.

This golden age is based on numerous Old Testament prophecies of the Messianic Kingdom bringing universal peace and spiritual prosperity.⁵ It is admitted that there are not many New Testament references, because the New Testament emphasis is not on peace, but warfare; not prosperity, but tribulation. However, there are the "mustard seed to great tree," and "little leaven to whole lump" passages about Christ's Kingdom.⁶ The great commission is also appealed to for evidence of not just gospel

announcement, but a promise that the nations will be successfully evangelized. Romans 11 describes the effect of the Jews' conversion as being life from the dead. Other "majority success" texts are John 12:31-32 and Revelation 7:9-10. Postmillennialism, like premillennialism, sees a largely earthly realization of the Kingdom of God during present history.

...followed by a brief period of Satanic loosing,

Most postmillennialists do accept that golden though this future age will be, Satan will be unloosed for a short time against the church.⁷ There will be a brief period of apostasy and terrible conflict between good and evil, though this will not really harm the church.



⁵ Gen. 15:1-5; Ps. 2: 7,8; Isa. 2, 11; Isa. 65:17-25

⁶ Matt. 13:31-33

⁷ Rev. 20:7-9

...and the Lord's return to earth for the final judgment.

Like amillennialism, postmillennialism sees Christ returning *after* the 1000 years. Then Christ will appear to destroy the devil and to establish the eternal kingdom. He will return to a largely Christianized world, resurrect all the dead, conduct the final judgment and assign all people their permanent eternal destiny. At this point, Christ's millennial kingdom will come to an end, and he will turn over the kingdom to His Father.⁸ Thus, postmillennialists see four ages: the past age, the present age, the golden age, and the eternal age. In this sense they are similar to premillennialists who believe the millennium is still future.



Postmillennialism believes that many of the signs of the times have been fulfilled, and that the thousand years is a figurative term for a future golden age of Christianity on earth, when the devil will be almost totally bound and the earth almost totally Christianized, followed by a brief period of Satanic loosing and the Lord's return to earth for the final judgment.

⁸ 1 Cor. 15:22-28

18. What are some of the weaknesses of postmillennialism?

Despite some attractions, Postmillennialists are over-optimistic about the future of the Gospel, under-pessimistic about the future rise of evil, and unrealistic about the present reign of Christ.



Despite some attractions,

Surely every Christian wishes that postmillennialism was true! We would all love to see Christ have visible and numerical victory on earth, and to see the vast majority of our fellow men and women converted. That is an extremely attractive prospect.

...postmillennialists are over-optimistic about the future of the Gospel,

The Bible depicts the end of the ages not as an increasing triumph of good over evil, but as an increasing battle between good and evil.¹ We can expect the worldwide spread of the Gospel, but not the Christianizing of the world. We can expect the Gospel to bring many blessings to the world, but not the conversion of the world.² We can expect visible manifestations of Christ's kingship in the world, but not a visible worldwide dominion. Christ's kingdom is primarily spiritual, not earthly; in the individual and the church, rather than in the world.³ The church's hope is to be focussed on the return of Christ,⁴ not on a "golden age" of Christianity.⁵



So where did postmillennialists get the idea of a future golden age? Herman Bavinck argued that much of the postmillennialist's optimism comes from interpreting the New Testament in the light of the Old, instead of the Old Testament in the light of the New. It cannot be denied that the Old Testament contains many "golden age" prophecies of worldwide peace, prosperity, happiness, and victory. The question is how to interpret them. Are they to be taken literally or figuratively? Do they speak of a literal future golden age on earth before Christ's second coming, or are they figurative descriptions of worldwide Gospel blessings following Christ's first coming? It is surely significant that none of the eschatological passages of the New Testament (Matthew 24, 1 Corinthians 15, 2 Peter 3, Revelation) make mention of a golden earthly age before Christ's return. None of the Old Testament psalms or prophetic passages are ever applied to a golden age by New Testament writers. This would lead us to think that the New Testament writers did not interpret these passages literally but rather figuratively of the blessings of the Gospel age.

¹ Gen. 3:15; Matt. 13:36-43

² Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 18:8

³ Jn. 18:36; Rom. 14:17

⁴ Titus 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:3-7

⁵ 2 Pet. 3:11-13

The postmillennial appeal to New Testament passages such as the “great commission” to disciple the nations, and the also the mustard-seed and leaven metaphors are not convincing. The great commission does not guarantee the majority in any nation will be discipled, and we are not told that the mustard tree filled the earth.



...under-pessimistic about the future rise of evil,

Many postmillennialists see many if not most of the “signs of the times” as having been already fulfilled in the great tribulation surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. They lay great emphasis on Jesus’ words that “this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.” The same approach is often taken to the book of Revelation and other “tribulation” passages. They were written before the fall of Jerusalem and predicted it. Thus the worst outbreak of evil is in the past, and the future is one of increasing righteousness.

There are difficulties with this interpretation of Matthew 24. It speaks of a tribulation such as has not been seen from the beginning of the world and never will be (v. 21). Awful though it was, it is difficult to fit the 70 AD Jerusalem tribulation into this box. Also, verses 29-30 link the great tribulation with the coming of the Son of Man. Postmillennialists make the link by arguing that the Son of man came in judgment on Jerusalem in 70 AD. The angels going out to the four corners of the earth are interpreted as the preachers of the Gospel going out to the then-known world (v. 31), and the heavenly signs of are symbols of God’s judgment (v. 29-31). “All tribes of the earth will mourn” (v. 30), is taken as descriptive of the families scattered by Roman persecution through the then-known world. Christ’s coming on the clouds of heaven (v. 30) is not His return but His coming to the Father in heaven to receive vindication and authority.

Rather than getting lost in detailed exegesis to rebut this interpretation of Matthew 24, it is better to focus on the main themes of the Bible, and then ask if our interpretation of individual passages such as Matthew 24 fit that.

First, Jesus and the Apostles teach a theology of the cross, rather than a theology of glory. The Christian life in this world is usually a life of Christ-like cross-bearing, suffering and humiliation, rather than earthly victory, triumph and glory. Second, the New Testament focus is not on a future golden age but on the second coming of Christ.⁶ That is our blessed hope. Third, the Bible presents the transition to the eternal age as catastrophic, not a barely perceptible move from a golden age on earth to a golden age in the new heavens and new earth. A special intervention of God will bring the rule of Satan on earth to an end and will usher in the Kingdom that cannot be shaken.⁷ The change will be so great that it is called the regeneration.⁸

Postmillennialism’s golden age does not fit these three major biblical themes. As a result, it has the potential to lull believers into a false sense of security. It does not warn believers about the coming conflict, leaving them unprepared. Though many postmillennialists do accept a future time of trouble for the church, just before the end, they minimize it so that it will not affect the general upward trend or result in an anticlimax.

⁶ 1 Thess. 1:9-10; Titus 2:12-13; Heb. 9:28; James 5:7; 1 Peter 1:13; 2 Peter 3:11-12

⁷ Matt. 24:29-31; Heb. 12:26,27; 2 Pet. 3:10-13

⁸ Matt. 19:28

...and unrealistic about the present reign of Christ.

Postmillennialism tends to minimize the present impact of Christ's victory over the devil. It denies that we are seeing much of Christ's victory on earth in the present time. However, Christ's kingdom is coming, His reign is spreading, sinners are being saved, and churches are being established across the world. He is already the exalted King.⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:22-26 teaches that after Christ's resurrection he was installed as King and presently reigns until all his enemies will be brought under his feet. There is no suggestion of a millennial age intervening between the present age and the eternal age.



Despite some attractions, Postmillennialists are over-optimistic about the future of the Gospel, under-pessimistic about the future rise of evil, and unrealistic about the present reign of Christ.

⁹ Phil. 2:9-12; Eph. 1:22-23; Heb. 1:3

19. What is historic premillennialism?

Historic Premillennialism believes that after the end time signs, including the great tribulation, Christ will return to earth to bind Satan, resurrect His people, and reign on earth for 1000 years; after which Satan will be released for a little season before the resurrection of all at the final judgment, and the return of the Kingdom to the Father.

Historic premillennialism believes that after the end time signs,

Historic (or classical) premillennialism is so named not only to distinguish it from more recent dispensational premillennialism, but also because the view dates back to early church fathers such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus. It is a view found throughout church history and has been held by many eminent theologians. Premillennialists tend to have a rather pessimistic view of this present age. Though they believe the nations are being evangelized, they see things eventually getting gradually worse and worse, climaxing with the signs of apostasy, the antichrist, persecution, etc.

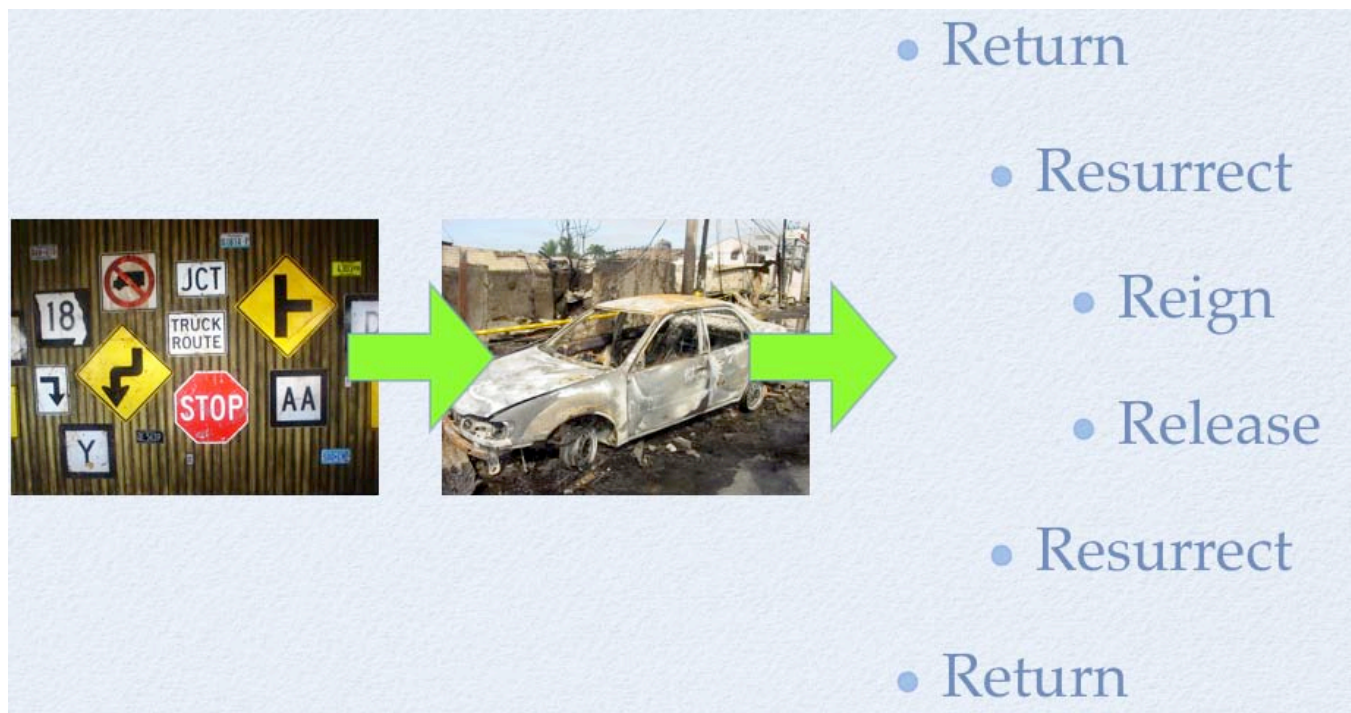


...including the great tribulation,

Historic premillennialism is distinguished from its dispensational relative by a firm conviction that the great tribulation will precede rather than follow the second coming of Christ.¹ It is during the great tribulation that very many of Israel will be converted to Christ.



¹ Matt. 24:29-30



...Christ will return to earth to bind Satan,

The signs of the times and the great tribulation are described in Revelation 10-19. Revelation 20 follows chronologically and describes Christ's second coming, when he will return to bind Satan and defeat antichrist and his armies.

...resurrect His people,

One distinctive of premillennialism is the belief in two resurrections. The first coincides with Christ's return to earth.² At that point, Christ will raise all dead believers and glorify them together with all living believers. Both groups will meet the Lord in the air;³ and then descend with Him to the earth. The return of Christ, and the resurrection and rapture of believers are all one event.

...and reign on earth for 1000 years;

After meeting resurrected dead believers and transformed living believers in the air, Christ will proceed to the earth, set up His Kingdom with His people, and rule the world for 1000 years (which may be literal or symbolic).⁴

Historic premillennialism insists on one church of Christ comprising both Jews and Gentiles. However, it reserves a special place for the Jewish people and nation in the millennial kingdom. Having been converted in the great tribulation, they will be a source of great blessing to the church and the world. The world will enjoy a time of unprecedented peace and prosperity.

² Rev. 20:4

³ 1 Thess. 4:17

⁴ Luke 19: 17, 19; 1 Cor. 6: 3; Rev. 2:26-27

This belief in a future millennial kingdom on earth is based on a number of Old Testament passages which describe an age better than this present age though not so great nor as perfect as the eternal kingdom.⁵ Important New Testament passages apart from Revelation 20, are Revelation 2:26-27 and 1 Corinthians 15:23-25. In the latter passage, premillennialists see three stages of world history: Christ's resurrection is followed a long time later by the believer's resurrection (v. 23), followed, many years later by the resurrection of all (v. 24).

...after which Satan will be released for a little season,

Near the end of the millennial kingdom, Satan who was bound at Christ's return to the earth, will be loosed to go out and deceive the nations again.⁶ Satan will join forces with many unbelievers who only outwardly submitted to Christ but who remained enemies in their hearts. These will join with the rebellious nations for the battle of Gog and Magog, the final attack upon the camp of the saints.

...before the resurrection of all at the final judgment,

After fire comes down from heaven to destroy all the rebellious nations, and Satan is cast into the lake of fire, the second resurrection will take place - that of the wicked from all ages and the believers who died in the millennial age.⁷

Premillennialists argue that although some passages seem to teach only one resurrection, they do not exclude two resurrections. They simply do not state whether or not the resurrection of both believers and unbelievers will be separate. These passages must be interpreted in the light of Revelation 20.

After this second resurrection there will be the Great White throne judgment of believers and unbelievers followed by the new heavens and new earth.

...and the return of the Kingdom to the Father.

1 Corinthians 15:23-25 teaches that history has three stages: the Christian Church - Christ's reign largely hidden; the millennium - Christ's visible reign; the eternal kingdom - the kingdom reverts to the father.

Historic Premillennialism believes that after the end time signs, including the great tribulation, Christ will return to earth to bind Satan, resurrect His people, and reign on earth for 1000 years; after which Satan will be released for a little season before the resurrection of all at the final judgment, and the return of the Kingdom to the Father.

⁵ Isa. 65:20; 11:6-9; Ps. 72; Zech. 14:5-17

⁶ Rev. 20: 3, 7

⁷ Rev. 20:8-15

20. What are the problems with historic premillennialism?

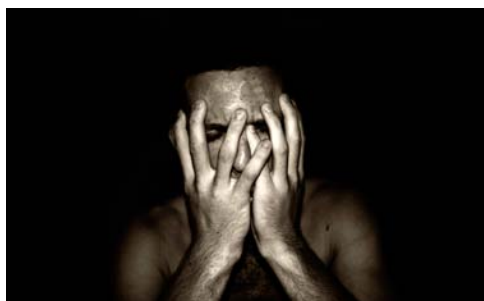
Though historic premillennialism has some strengths, it tends to be pessimistic, it misconnects Revelation 19 and 20, it adds living believers to Revelation 20, it sees time where there is only order in 1 Corinthians 15, it reverses Christ and His people's glorification, and it adds a third era to the two found in the New Testament.

Though historic premillennialism has some strengths,

Historic premillennialism, unlike its dispensational cousin, views the second coming as one single event. It also sees believers in both the Old and New Testaments as one people with one way of salvation and one destiny. The signs of the times are present in all ages, but intensify before the second coming of Christ. It accepts that the church does go through the great tribulation. The Kingdom of God is both present and future, so that the present church is enjoying eschatological blessings already.



...it tends to be pessimistic,

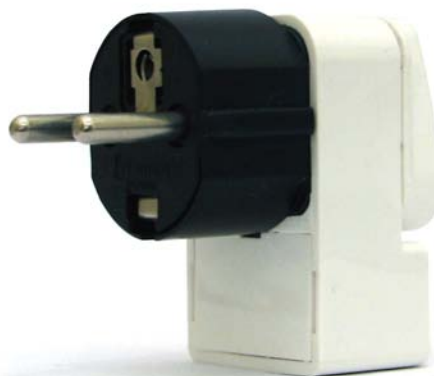


Premillennialism does not expect the worldwide preaching of the Gospel to be very effective. Although Matthew 24:14 says that the gospel will be preached as a witness to all nations, that simply speaks of the preaching of the Gospel without saying anything about its effects. Things are going from bad to worse; so much so that we really need to wait until Christ's return before we will see great things on this earth.

This is an over-pessimistic view of the present age, which cannot but impact motivation and action. Christ is already present in His kingdom, the leaven is leavening, and the mustard seed is growing into a tree. Though they say that the Kingdom has already come, it is to a very little degree.

...it misconnects Revelation 19 and 20,

Premillennialism takes a more chronological view of Revelation, saying that Revelation 19 precedes Revelation 20 in time. However, as amillennialists have pointed out, there is strong evidence for viewing Revelation as cyclical, rather than chronological. Revelation 19 ends with the second coming of Christ, whereas Revelation 20 cycles us back to the first coming of Christ.¹



¹ See Venema's *Christ and the Future*, 111-118



...it adds living believers to Revelation 20,

Premillennialists say that the first resurrection² is of the Christians who had died before Christ returned. To them are added the believers who were still living when Christ returned. These two groups then reign with Christ over the earth for 1000 years. The problem is that Revelation 20 says nothing about living believers being added to resurrected believers. Also, as those who do experience the first resurrection are contrasted with “the rest of the dead,” we may conclude that the first resurrection group were also once dead. How can living believers fit into that group? Furthermore, there is no indication in these verses that Christ and his saints are seen reigning on the earth. Other passages in Revelation would seem to indicate that the scene is in heaven.³

...it sees time where there is only order in 1 Corinthians 15,

In our definition of premillennialism we noted how 1 Corinthians 15:23-24 is used by premillennialists to establish three ages (resurrection of Christ, resurrection of believers, resurrection of unbelievers), with significant time intervals between each. However, these verses are more about logical and theological order than time periods. In fact, unbelievers are not mentioned, never mind a 1000 year period between their resurrection and that of believers. In other places the same Greek expressions describe closely connected events with no protracted time in between.⁴ In fact, in the immediate context of 1 Corinthians 15 (v.5-7), the same words describe a simple sequence of events. The coming of Christ and the end are closely connected events in the Bible.



...it reverses Christ and His people's glorification,



Christ has already won the decisive victory against his enemies and already reigns.⁵ Is He really coming back for more fighting and for a period of only qualified peace and blessing? Revelation 21 tells us that Christ and His Church will take up their dwelling on earth after heaven and earth have been renewed, not before.

How will sinners and saints still in the flesh be able to stand in the presence of the glorified Christ. Remember Paul and John

² Rev. 20:5

³ Rev. 4:4-5; 6:9

⁴ Luke 8:12; Mark 4:17

⁵ Heb. 1:3

were completely overwhelmed by him.⁶ Other passages link the coming of Christ with universal judgment of all people, living and dead, with the issues being eternal life or eternal punishment.⁷

The return of glorified believers and a glorified Christ to earth would violate the finality of their glorification. What an anticlimax to come back to a world of the wicked, including sin and death!

...and it adds a third era to the two found in the New Testament.

In *The Endtimes Made Simple*, Sam Waldron has highlighted 16 clear verses that show there are only two ages left - this age and the eternal age. This age and the age to come exhaust all time. They are qualitatively different states of human existence, divided by the resurrection of all and the judgment of all. There is no third age.



Though historic premillennialism has some strengths, it tends to be pessimistic, it misconnects Revelation 19 and 20, it adds living believers to Revelation 20, it sees time where there is only order in 1 Corinthians 15, it reverses Christ and His people's glorification, and it adds a third era to the two found in the New Testament.

⁶ Acts 26:12-14; Rev. 1:17

⁷ Matt. 25:31-46; Rom. 2:1-6; 2 Pet. 3:1-18

21. What is traditional dispensationalism?

On the basis of a largely literal interpretation of the Bible and a fundamental distinction between Israel and the Church, traditional Dispensationalism teaches that God has divided history into seven periods, each with a different test of human obedience to God's will, though one way of salvation.

On the basis of a largely literal interpretation of the Bible,

Dispensationalism began with John Nelson Darby in the mid-1800's. It was significantly advanced by the study notes in the *Scofield Reference Bible*, first published in the early 1900's. Lewis Sperry Chafer's *Systematic Theology* organized it, and the *Left Behind* series of books popularized it.

One of the mottos of dispensationalism is "literal unless ludicrous." They make much of taking words in their plain and normal sense unless a metaphor or simile is clearly indicated, or it is impossible to take literally. Prophecy should be interpreted as history written beforehand.



...and a fundamental distinction between Israel and the Church,



God has two distinct purposes for two distinct peoples. He has an earthly purpose for an earthly people (Israel), and a heavenly purpose for a heavenly people (Christians). This is sometimes expressed as follows:

Plan A

Israel's golden age of the Davidic Kingdom was a foretaste of the Kingdom of the Messiah, which would have been fully realized by Israel if they had not proven unfaithful, resulting in their overthrow and exile. Prophets brought message of hope for Israel that if they repented, the throne of David would be re-established and the Kingdom of Messiah would come in glory.

Plan B

Christ offered an earthly but glorious Davidic Kingdom to the Jews through faith in the Messiah and Sermon on the Mount morality. However, they rejected it, resulting in the postponement of the Kingdom until the millennium.

Plan C

Christ introduced the mystery (previously unknown and unpredicted) form of the kingdom to the Gentiles resulting in the Christian Church of which Christ is the Head (but not King). This is often called the "parenthesis of grace" and is seen as occurring between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel 9. During this period, really from Pentecost onwards, the Church has the task of declaring the Gospel of free grace throughout the nations. God's promises and covenants are partially and spiritually fulfilled in believers' lives, but are mainly and physically covenants and promises for Israel.

Return to postponed Plan B

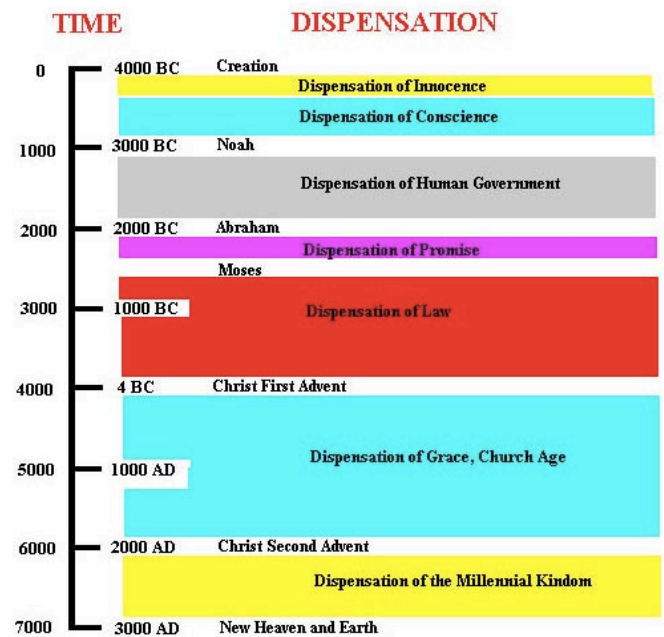
The 1000 year reign of Christ on earth begins in the 70th week of Daniel 9, when Christ will return to earth to deal specifically with the nation of Israel. Israel will be re-gathered in Canaan, enjoy remarkable peace and prosperity, have a special and privileged place above the nations, and will live under the perfect rule of the Messiah. Israel resumes its leading role, while the church is but an interlude.

Some dispensationalists use the Plan A/B/C language. Others dislike it and say that although God changed His plans, He had planned to change his plans.

...traditional Dispensationalism teaches that God has divided history into seven periods,

“Dispensation” originally referred to the way a household was administered. The term describes various arrangements in the history of redemption by which God regulated man’s relationship to himself. The seven dispensations each advance God’s purposes:

1. Pre-fall: Innocence
2. To Noah: Conscience
3. To Abraham: Civil government
4. To Moses: Promise
5. To Christ: Law (leading dispensation of OT)
6. From Christ to rapture: Grace (7 year persecution of the Jews)
7. To end: Millennial



...each

with a different test of human obedience to God’s will,

Each dispensation tested man’s obedience regarding a specific revelation of God’s will.



...though one way of salvation.

Though the dispensations differ in the way God reveals His will, these are neither separate nor contradictory ways of salvation. Throughout the dispensations, man is reconciled to God by His grace through the work of Christ to come. Pre-Christ faith was in God and expressed through obedience to His will. Post-Christ faith is specifically in Christ.

On the basis of a largely literal interpretation of the Bible and a fundamental distinction between Israel and the Church, traditional Dispensationalism teaches that God has divided history into seven periods, each with a different test of human obedience to God's will, though one way of salvation.



22. What is dispensational premillennialism?

Dispensational premillennialism teaches that Christ's second coming will occur in four phases: Christ's rapture, Christ's revelation, Christ's reign, and Christ's renewal.

23. What is Christ's rapture?

Without any precursory signs, Christ will return for His church, resurrect all dead believers, transform all living believers, meet them in the air, and return to heaven with them, while the 70th week begins on earth.

Without any precursory signs,

Dispensational premillennialists believe that Christ can return at any time. There are no predicted signs to precede this. This is thought to be the only way to maintain the expectancy and watchfulness expected of Christians.

...Christ will return for His church,

Dispensational premillennialists call this return of Christ for His Church the *parousia* (one of the Greek words for Christ's coming). In the *parousia* coming, Christ does not come all the way to the earth, but stops short.

...resurrect all dead believers,

At the *parousia*, Christ will resurrect all true believers who have died (though not Old Testament believers). This is the first resurrection.

...transform all living believers,

All believers alive at the time of the *parousia*, both Gentiles and the Jewish remnant, will be glorified.

...meet them in the air,

The resurrected dead and the transformed living believers will all be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. This is called the rapture from the Latin *rapio* meaning "seize, snatch, carry away." The restrainer mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 is the Holy Spirit indwelling the church. He must remove the church before the tribulation begins.¹ Hence this is called "the pre-tribulation rapture." (Some premillennial dispensationalists have held to a mid-tribulation rapture which teaches that Christ will come back in the middle of the seven years to rescue believers.) It is thought to be inappropriate for believers to be on earth during the pouring out of God's wrath in the great tribulation.

...and return to heaven with them,

The raptured all return to heaven with Christ to celebrate the marriage supper of the lamb for seven years.



¹ Revelation 3:10

...while the 70th week begins on earth.

Many Jews will repent and turn to Christ during these seven years. This is the seventieth week predicted by Daniel.

69th week Christ's first coming

(Church Age) 70th week postponed until after the rapture because Jews rejected Christ

70th week Dead and living Christians raptured to heaven

Part 1: Great Conversions on Earth

Thousands of Jews converted who preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to Gentiles with great blessing

Nation of Israel re-gathered into Palestine

Part 2: Great Tribulation on Earth

Antichrist made covenant of peace with Israel for 3.5 years but now turns to persecute her in time of great tribulation (Jacob's trouble)

Antichrist reigns and demands to be worshipped

Great judgments fall on the earth climaxing in Armageddon where Christ has final triumph over the Antichrist, the beast, the prophet and all their armies.

Dispensational premillennialism teaches that Christ's second coming will occur in four phases: Christ's rapture, Christ's revelation, Christ's reign, and Christ's renewal.

Without any precursory signs, Christ will return for His church, resurrect all dead believers, transform all living believers, meet them in the air, and return to heaven with them, while the 70th week begins on earth.

22. What is dispensational premillennialism?

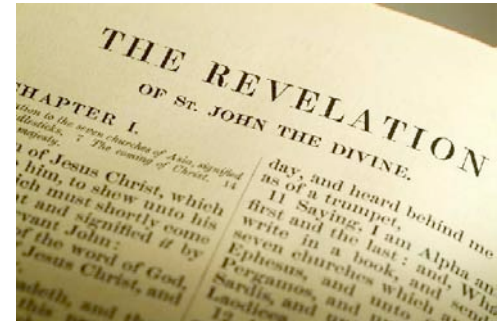
Dispensational premillennialism teaches that Christ's second coming will occur in four phases: Christ's rapture, Christ's revelation, Christ's reign, and Christ's renewal.

24. What is Christ's revelation?

At the end of the 70th week, Christ will return to the earth in glory with His church, win Armageddon, bind the devil, resurrect tribulation martyrs and Old Testament saints, and then judge the nations.

At the end of the 70th week,

The great tribulation is at its height and all seems lost.



...Christ will return to the earth in glory with His church,

At the end of the 7 years of the 70th week, Christ will return in glory with his church and this time He will come all the way to earth. This is called the “revelation” or *apokalupsis* coming (**with** His Church) in distinction from the earlier *parousia* coming (**for** His Church).

...win Armageddon,

Christ will destroy antichrist and his forces at the last great battle.

...bind the devil,

The millennium of Revelation 20 now begins with the devil being bound and cast into the pit for 1000 years.

...resurrect tribulation martyrs and Old Testament saints,

Saints who died during the 7-year tribulation will be raised from the dead together with the Old Testament saints. However, they will not enter the millennial kingdom which is about to be established on earth. Rather they will join the risen and translated saints who constitute the raptured church in heaven.

...and then judge the nations.

This judgment will have two parts. First there is the judgment of living Gentiles¹ which will test how individual Gentiles treated Christ's brethren (the Jews and the converted Gentiles) during the tribulation. The sheep will be those who pass the test. They will be left on earth to enter the millennial kingdom. Those who fail, the goats, will be cast into everlasting fire. Second there will be the judgment on Israel.² Rebels will be put to death and not allowed to enjoy the millennial kingdom. Those who turned to the Lord will.

At the end of the 70th week Christ will return to the earth in glory with His church, win Armageddon, bind the devil, resurrect tribulation martyrs and Old Testament saints, and then judge the nations.

¹ Matt. 25:31-46

² Ezek. 20:33-38

22. What is dispensational premillennialism?

Dispensational premillennialism teaches that Christ's second coming will occur in four phases: Christ's rapture, Christ's revelation, Christ's reign, and Christ's renewal.

25. What is Christ's reign?

Christ will reign on earth from Jerusalem with mainly Jewish believers for a thousand blessed years, although they will be concluded with the Devil's ultimately unsuccessful little season.

Christ will reign on earth

Christ will re-establish a real, visible, terrestrial and material Davidic kingdom.

...from Jerusalem

The throne of Christ established at Jerusalem will become the central place of worship. The temple will be re-built on Mt Zion and the altar will once again be used for sacrifice.

...with mainly Jewish believers

Christian believers are in heaven while mainly Jewish believers are in the earthly millennial kingdom.

...for a thousand blessed years,

Sin and death will still claim their victims but it will be a time of longer lives, increased fruitfulness and greater prosperity. The world will be speedily converted.

although they will be concluded with the Devil's ultimately unsuccessful little season.

After the millennium, the devil will be loosed for a little season to lead the hordes of Gog and Magog against the holy city. Christ's enemies will be devoured by heavenly fire, and Satan cast into the bottomless pit to join the beast and the false prophet.



Christ will reign on earth from Jerusalem with mainly Jewish believers for a thousand blessed years, although they will be concluded with the Devil's ultimately unsuccessful little season.

22. What is dispensational premillennialism?

Dispensational premillennialism teaches that Christ's second coming will occur in four phases: Christ's rapture, Christ's revelation, Christ's reign, and Christ's renewal.

26. What is Christ's renewal?

After raising and judging the wicked dead and the saints who died in the millennium, Jesus will renew and reign over the new heavens and the new earth.

After raising and judging the wicked dead

The wicked dead are raised up and appear in judgment before the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15).

...and the saints who died in the millennium,

This is the third resurrection.

...Jesus will renew and reign over the new heavens and the new earth.

The heavenly Jerusalem descends to renewed earth.



After raising and judging the wicked dead and the saints who died in the millennium Jesus will renew and reign over the new heavens and the new earth.

27. What are the main criticisms of dispensationalism?

The main criticisms are an unsustainable literalism, an unfounded postponement theory, an unjustified separation of the final events, a confusion between divine wrath and tribulation, an unlikely reversal of glorification, and a return to Old Covenant worship.

The main criticisms are an unsustainable literalism,

Premillennial dispensationalists claim that they interpret Old Testament prophecies about Israel and the Kingdom of God 100% literally. However, the prophets themselves indicate that at least some of their predictions will be fulfilled spiritually rather than literally.¹ Indeed, the prophets use “Zion” and “Jerusalem” in a figurative (or non-literal) sense² to describe the Old Testament Church of God, a use that passes into the New Testament.³



When we turn to the New Testament we do not find any clear text that points to the re-establishment of the Davidic kingdom. In fact, the New Testament constantly points towards the spiritual fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies given to Israel.⁴ For example, Acts 15 sees Amos 9:11-12 fulfilled in the salvation of the Gentile church.

Literalism also produces many physical and theological difficulties: great ancient world powers (Egypt, Babylon, Assyrians) reconstituted,⁵ temple rebuilt,⁶ sons of Zadok serving as priests,⁷ sin and trespass offerings sacrificed,⁸ nations come to Jerusalem for annual feasts, etc.⁹

This reversal of redemptive history seems so contrary to Hebrews' teaching about the New Testament rendering Old Covenant worship obsolete. In fact, the ultimate fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies is in Christ not in Israel.¹⁰



...an unfounded postponement theory,

Premillennial dispensationalists say that John and Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom was at hand, but because the Jews did not repent and believe, Jesus postponed its establishment until His second coming. Scofield marks this pivotal point as Matthew 11:20. Prior to this, Jesus is said to have only preached the Kingdom to Israel, and after that He did not preach the Kingdom but rather predicted its future coming. In the meantime, He offered rest to the weary of both Israel and the Gentiles.

¹ Isa. 61:6; Jer. 3:16; 31:33; Hos. 14:2

² Isa. 49:14; 51:3; 52:1,2

³ Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 3:12; 21:9

⁴ Matt. 21:43; Acts 2:29-36; Rom. 9:25, 26; Heb. 8:8-13; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6

⁵ Isa. 11:14; Amos 9:12; Joel 3:19

⁶ Isa. 2:2,3; Mic. 4:1,2; Zech. 14:16-22

⁷ Ezek. 44:15-41; 48:11-14

⁸ Ezek. 42:13; 43:18-27

⁹ Zech. 14:16

¹⁰ 2 Cor. 1:20

However, Jesus did not preach two Gospels in two phases. He did concern himself with the Gentiles before the turning point,¹¹ and he did preach the Kingdom after it.¹² Both Christ and His apostles preached the Kingdom which was to be built by the preaching of the Gospel.¹³ Jesus came to establish a spiritual kingdom, of which the Old Testament kingdom was a type.¹⁴ And he did establish the kingdom as a present reality.¹⁵

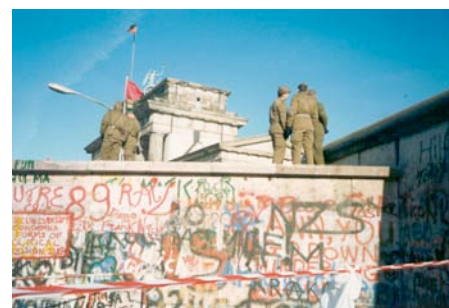
The postponement theory divides both the Bible and the Church. It divides the Bible by saying that the Old Testament was the book of the Kingdom, but the New Testament is the book of the Church. Old Testament Israel will fulfill the prophecies given to it and the Church will fulfill the promises given to it. However, the Bible represents the relationship between Old and New Testaments as that of type/antitype or prophecy/fulfillment. Premillennial dispensationalism says that while that was the original aim, the outcome was quite different.

It divides the Church because we end up with two peoples of God, Israel and the Church, the one natural and the other spiritual, the one earthly and the other heavenly. And that line of separation throughout history continues into the final state in which the earthly Israel will receive earthly blessings and the spiritual church spiritual blessings.

There are so many verses which speak of a united people of God. Jesus spoke of one flock and one shepherd.¹⁶ Paul said that the Gentiles were grafted into the one olive tree and the Jews will be grafted back in again.¹⁷ Paul presents the Old Testament church as a child and a New Testament church as the mature man.¹⁸ The names of Old Testament Israel are applied to the New Testament Church.¹⁹ Jesus broke down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile.²⁰ Old Testament Israel was the prediction, the New Testament Church the fulfillment. The Church was not plan B, an afterthought, or an interim project, but the central accomplishment of Christ. Jesus Himself, the foremost member of the Church, was Jewish, as were all His disciples.

...an unjustified separation of the final events,

Premillennial dispensationalists end up with two, three or even four resurrections, and two or three final judgments over 1000 years. However, the Bible presents the future events of Christ's second coming, the translation of living saints, the resurrection of the just, the final judgment and the end of the world as synchronizing at the coming of the Lord. The only possible verse suggesting a separation of 1000 years is Rev. 20:4-6.



Sometimes dispensational premillennialists will argue that the day of the Lord may be 1000 years long,²¹ and on that basis say that the resurrection of the saints and the judgment of the nations takes place in the

¹¹ Matt. 8:5-13; Jn. 4:1-42

¹² Matt. 13; Lk. 10:1-11

¹³ Acts 20:28; Matt. 16:19

¹⁴ Matt. 8:11,12; 13:31-33; 21:43; Lk. 17:21; Jn. 3:3; 18:36,37

¹⁵ Matt. 11:12; 12:28; Lk. 17:21; Jn. 18:36,37

¹⁶ John 10:16

¹⁷ Romans 11

¹⁸ Gal. 4

¹⁹ 1 Peter 2:9; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; Heb. 12:22-23

²⁰ Eph. 2:14

²¹ 2 Pet. 3:8

morning of that long day and the resurrection of the wicked and the great white throne judgment occurs at the evening of the same day. But Christ's return is presented in the Bible as the consummating event that closes this age, resurrects all, judges all, and introduces the new heavens and the new earth.²²

Paul wrote three chapters on the future of the Jews (Romans 9-11), yet not once does he say anything about the pre-millennial kingdom and the Jews place in it.

Parousia (appearance and presence) and *apokalupsis* (revelation) are used interchangeably in the New Testament²³ and refer to the single return of Christ to the earth at the end of all time. They do not describe different times but different aspects of the one return.

...a confusion between divine wrath and tribulation,



Premillennial dispensationalists say that the Church is exempt from divine wrath (1 Thess. 1:10), especially the great tribulation of Revelation 3:10. They argue that there is no mention of the church in Revelation 4-18.

We agree that Christians are exempt from divine wrath, but the vast majority of the tribulation passages refer to tribulation that believers suffer. So exemption from wrath cannot mean exemption from tribulation. It means that they will be kept in the midst of tribulation. All believers will avoid God's wrath but that does not mean they will avoid all suffering and hardship.

...an unlikely reversal of glorification,

Like classical premillennialism this scheme also ends up with the glorified Christ and the glorified saints back on a less-than-glorified earth.



...and a return to Old Covenant worship.

Premillennial dispensationalists insist that Old Testament passages that speak of a rebuilt temple, the priesthood restored, and sacrifices offered should be taken literally. But that is not how the New Testament interprets these passages. It sees the Old Testament prophets speaking of the future glory of the Messianic kingdom in their own language. And, as with any type, when the reality comes the shadow falls away.

The main criticisms are an unsustainable literalism, an unfounded postponement theory, an unjustified separation of the final events, a confusion between divine wrath and tribulation, an unlikely reversal of glorification, and a return to Old Covenant worship.

²² 2 Thess. 1:6-10; 1 Cor. 1:7,8; Phil. 1:6,10; 1 Jn. 2:28; 1 Tim. 4:8; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Pet. 3:13; John 5:28, 29; 6:40; Acts 24:14-15

²³ 1 Thess. 1:7-8; 3:13; 4:15; 2 Thess. 2:8; Matthew 24:39; Luke 17:30

28. What is the practical value of eschatology?

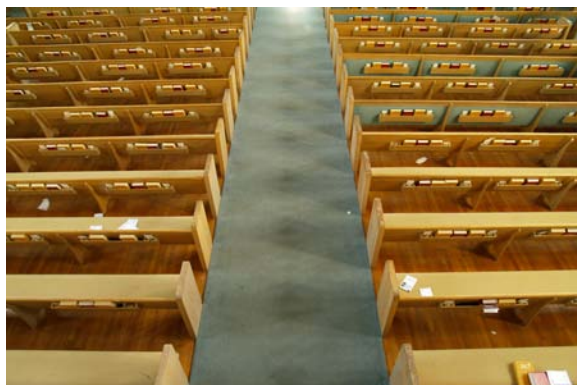
Eschatology helps us to teach the church, worship God, serve with zeal, hope in the midst of trouble, prepare for judgment, and long for heaven.

Eschatology helps us to teach the church,

Eschatology is one of the more neglected of theological subjects, especially in the Reformed Church. This vacuum perhaps partly explains why so many bizarre eschatological schemes have taken hold and spread through many churches.

The Church needs teaching on this subject, not just because neglect is dangerous, but also because eschatology is the capstone and crown of systematic theology. It sheds light on every other doctrine and answers questions which every other subject raises.

The Church needs a balanced view of eschatology so that it does not omit thought of the world to come, but also so that it does not become obsessed with the world to come.



...worship God,

Worship should be the end of all theology, but especially of eschatology. When we think of the resurrection, the defeat of Satan, the judgment, the new heavens and the new earth, and eternal fellowship with Christ and His Church, we surely cannot but amplify our worship of God.

...serve with zeal,

The fact that the end is nigh should not make us passive waiters for the inevitable. It should not induce a fatalistic inactivity. Rather the New Testament links zealous service with a true belief in the end of all things.¹



¹ 2 Peter 3:11-14



...hope in the midst of trouble,

Paul urges suffering believers to hope by reminding them that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.² Whether we are suffering disease, family trouble, national apostasy, or persecution, we have the sure hope that it is temporary and small compared to the eternal and massive blessings that are round the corner.

...prepare for judgment,

Eschatology reminds us that we must prepare to meet our God. We are going to be called to account for the deeds done in the body. And this is especially important for unbelievers. Their lives will not go on forever, and this world will not go on forever. They need to seek the Lord and beg for mercy before that great day of their end, or of the world's end.



...and long for heaven.

When we learn about the new heavens and the new earth, in which dwells righteousness, we should desire an acceleration of that great day.³ When we think of the glory of Christ's eternal reign our prayer should be, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."⁴

Eschatology helps us to teach the church, worship God, serve with zeal, hope in the midst of trouble, prepare for judgment, and long for heaven.

² Romans 8:18-25

³ 2 Peter 3:12

⁴ Rev. 22:20