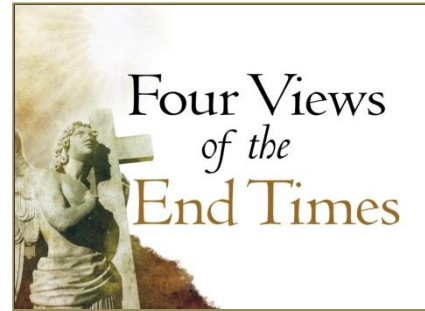


Compiled by Andrew Hancock



The Goal of God's Plan

Big Idea:
Keep your Eyes on the Right End!



The Intrigue

For 2000 years people have wondered about the events of the end times and when Jesus will return. Terms such as *millennium*, *tribulation*, *666*, and *antichrist* are used in the media. Key Questions we will study:

- Will Jesus return physically and reign on earth for 1,000 years?
- Will Christians go through the seven-year tribulation?
- Will the second coming of Christ occur at the same time as the rapture?
- Will Christians be raptured (removed from earth) and other people “left behind”?
- What does the nation of Israel have to do with the end times?

Key Truths

1. If we focus on the wrong end, the results can be:
 - a. Confusing and frustrating
 - b. Dangerous and violent (history has showed)
2. The Four Views
 - a. **Dispensational Premillennialism:** Christ's return and rapture are separate events.
 - b. **Historical Premillennialism:** Christians endure the tribulation.
 - c. **Amillennialism:** No literal thousand-year rule.
 - d. **Postmillennialism:** Christ returns after the millennium.
 - i. Items of agreement
 1. Jesus will come again for those who love him.
 2. Jesus calls his followers to be ready all the time.
 3. No one knows the day or the hour.
3. Key Passages: what **Jesus** taught:
 - a. Matthew 24–25; Mark 13; Luke 21
 - b. Jesus promised his disciples that he would come again.
 - c. Before his return there would be “birth pains”—events before “the signs” of the end.
 - d. Birth pains:

- i. There will be wars, famine, earthquakes, and pestilence.
 - ii. Wickedness will increase.
 - iii. There will be fearful events and signs from heaven.
 - iv. People will be deceived by many false messiahs.
 - v. Believers in Christ will be persecuted and killed.
 - vi. Believers will be witnesses of Jesus to kings.
 - vii. Many will turn away from the faith.
 - viii. There will be betrayals by parents, brothers, and friends.
- e. The signs of the end:
 - i. Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies.
 - ii. The “abomination that causes desolation” will stand in the holy place.
 - iii. Jerusalem will be trampled on by Gentiles
 - iv. The sun will darken, the moon will not shine, and the stars will fall.
 - v. False prophets will perform signs, and miracles.
 - vi. Severe ocean activity will disturb the nations.
 - vii. People will faint with terror.
 - viii. Jesus will appear in the sky.
 - ix. The trumpet will sound.
 - x. Angels will gather God’s elect

Jesus said, “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” (Matthew 24:36).

“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.” (Matthew 24:12–13)

4. Key Passages: what **Paul** taught about the end times:
 - a. 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17
 - i. The Lord will descend.
 - ii. The dead in Christ will rise first.
 - iii. The living will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord and be with him forever.
 - b. 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4
 - i. Don’t believe those who say the Day of the Lord has already come.
 - ii. The Day of the Lord will be preceded by:
 1. Rebellion
 2. The revelation of the man of lawlessness
 - iii. The man of lawlessness will:
 1. Oppose and exalt himself over God.
 2. Set himself up in God’s temple.
 3. Proclaim to be God.

4. Be revealed when the one holding him back is taken out of the way.
 5. Be accompanied by satanic, counterfeit miracles.
 6. Deceive those who do not love the truth.
 7. Be overthrown and destroyed when Jesus comes.
5. We need to focus on the **right end**, Jesus!
- "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."* (Rev. 22:13).
- a. Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Isaiah 41:4 and 44:6 describe God as the first and the last. Rev. 1:8 and 21:1-7 describe God as the Alpha and the Omega. Therefore, John is saying that Jesus is God.
 - b. Jesus is the **source** (Alpha) and **goal** (Omega) of human history!
He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Col. 1:17)
 - c. The disciples were looking for the wrong thing (Acts 1:7-8 also see Mk 9:30-34; 10:25-45; Luke 22:24-27).
 - d. But Jesus gave them a **mission** and his **presence**!
"It is not for you to know the times or seasons...But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:7-8).
"Surely I will be with you always, even to the very end of the age" (Mt 28:20)

Group Time

1. Have you ever become too focused on the events that accompany the end of time and lost focus on Jesus? Or have you ever had a friend become too focused on the details? What were the results and what are the dangers?
2. Read Col 1:15-20; John 1:1-4; and Hebrews 13:8. What do these passages teach about how Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega? How can we keep our focus on the person and work of Jesus during our end times study?

Apply

1. The Bible tells us to continue meeting together to encourage one another as the Day approaches (Heb 10:24-25). Keep up with good community!
2. The Scriptures say that we should fix our eyes on Jesus (Heb. 12:2). Keep Jesus message, mission, and presence first place this week!



Four Ways to End the World

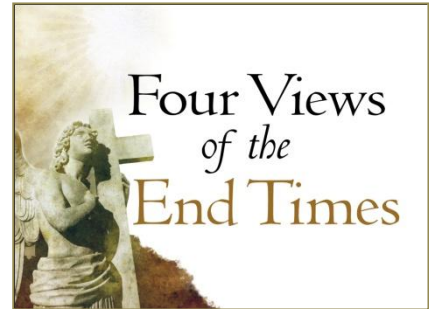
Big Idea:

Three Themes that Matter the Most

Look for common ground!

The Context:

1. A letter to the Seven Churches¹



- **Apocalyptic literature**
 - Genre of ancient Jewish literature presented in the form of visions that figuratively point to hidden truths for the purpose of assuring God’s people of the goodness of God’s plans during periods of persecution.
 - From Greek *apokalupsis* “revelation”
 - Visions and imagery
 - Arose from the Jewish Community
 - Uses numbers symbolically
- **Eschatology**
 - Study of events of the end times. From Greek *eschaton* “last” and *logos* “word”

Four Approaches

Futurist	Revelation is predictive prophecy. Events are in the future.
Historicist	Revelation is a figurative retelling of certain eras of history.
Idealist	Revelation is a symbolic expression of the battle between good and evil that happens in every age of time.
Preterist	Revelation is about events that have already happened around the time of the apostle John and the nation of Rome.

Three Themes That Matter the Most

“I, John, your brother and partner in the *tribulation* and the *kingdom* and the *patient endurance* that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (Rev 1:9).

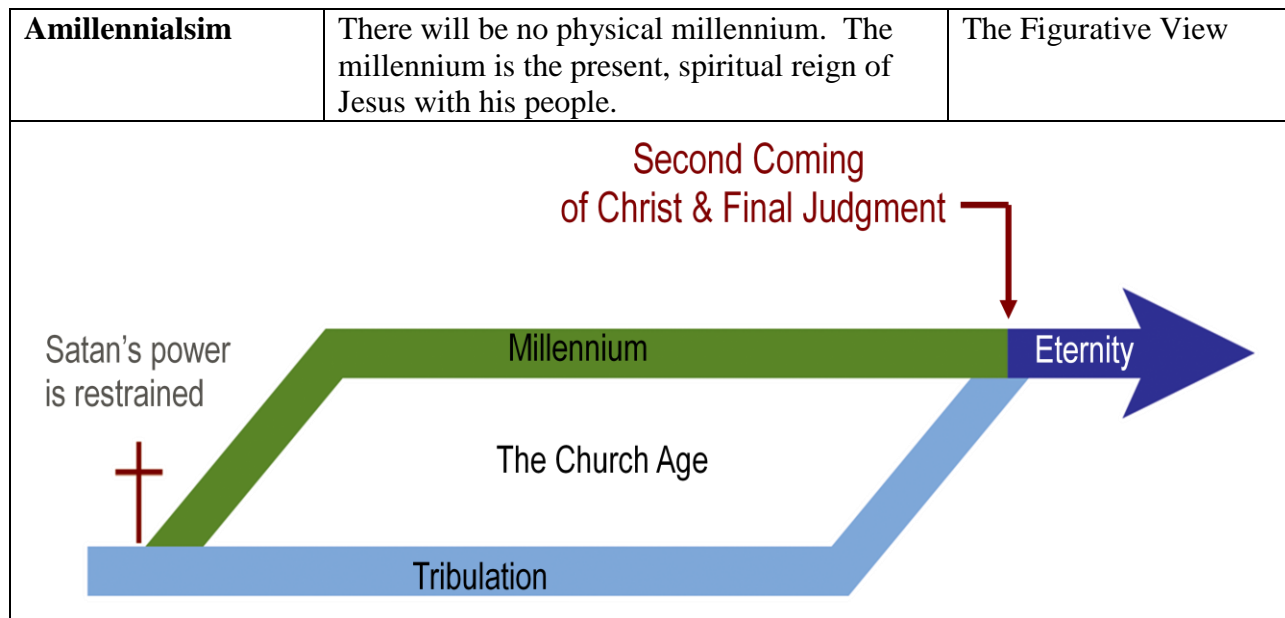
- **Kingdom**
 - “The kingdom of God is God’s people living in God’s domain under God’s rule.” (Grame Goldsworthy). Spiritual and physical.
 - Already but not yet. The kingdom of God is here in the hearts of believers, but it is not yet fully realized until Christ comes again.
 - We are to seek first God’s kingdom and share the good news of the kingdom (Mt. 6:33; 24:14).
- **Tribulation**
 - Since we are in the already-not yet kingdom, we will face opposition.
 - Everyone who wants to live a godly life will be persecuted (2 Tim 3:12).
 - Trials and tribulations produce character and hope for his return (James 1, 1 Peter 3).

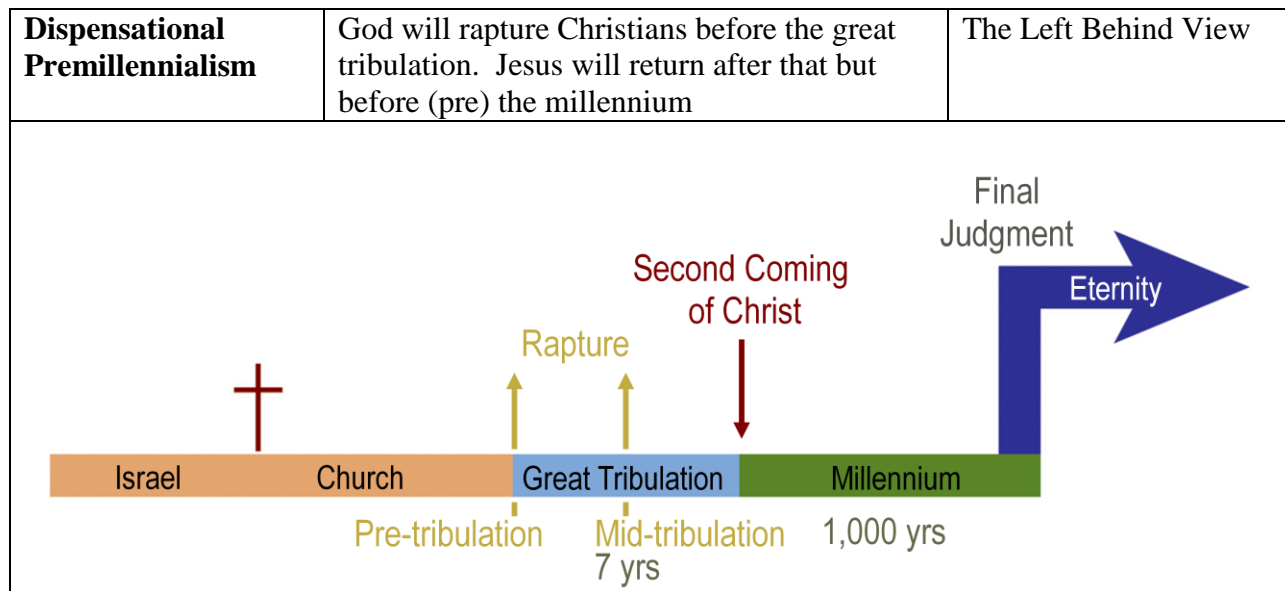
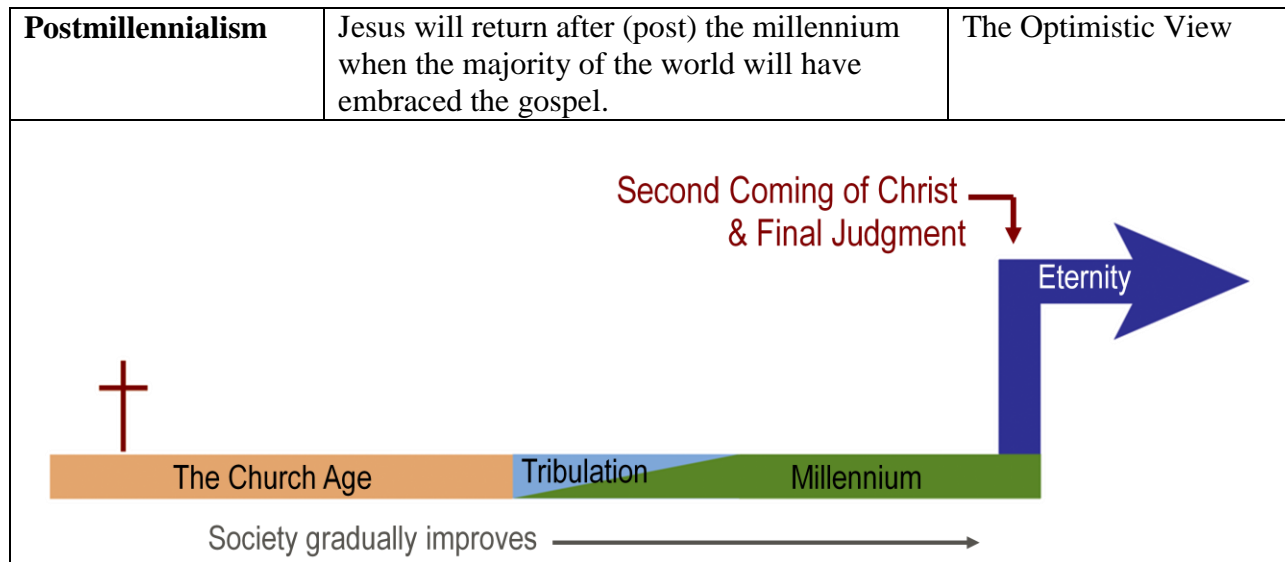
- When Christ returns he will wipe away tribulation for those who believe, so we are to endure patiently our trials and tribulations in this life.
- **Patient Endurance**
 - Common phrase in Revelation (1:9, 2:2-3, 2:19, 3:10).
 - This means working together to express and to expand the kingdom of Christ in the lives of people around us while patiently resting in the goodness of God's providence here and now.
 - Source is God's strength and hope of a brighter future.

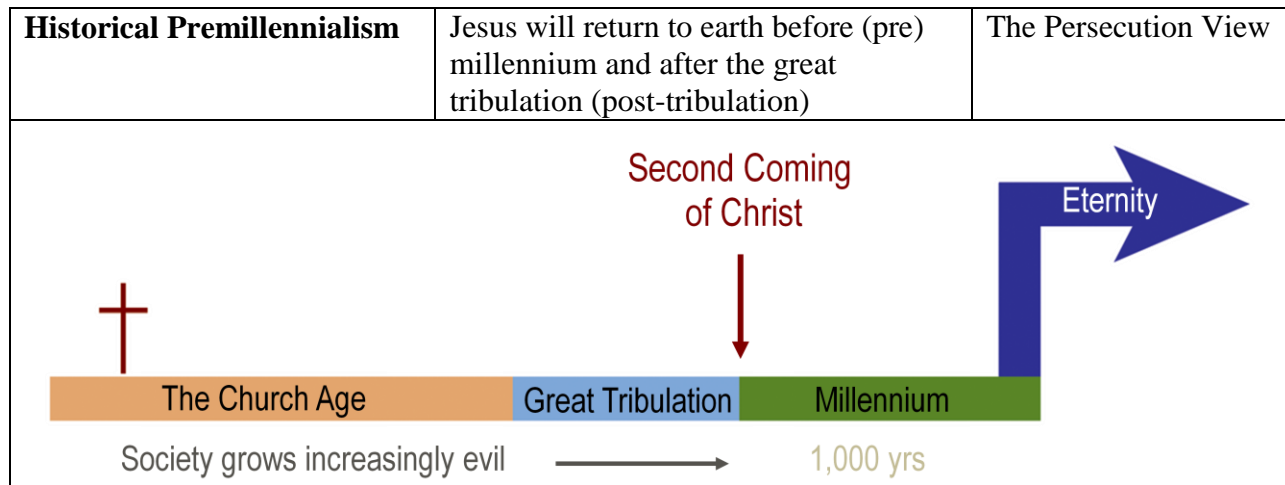
The Four Views

Things to decide:

- What is the nature of the millennium?
- When will the rapture happen?







Looking for the Common Ground

So what are the essential truths that Christians must believe about the end of time? The Apostles Creed says that Jesus, “ascended to the right hand of God the Father; from there, he will return to judge the living and the dead.” Later in the same creed, it says, “the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.” The Nicene Creed expands, “He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end... We await the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.” Regardless of their view of the end times, Christians throughout the world and throughout time share this common confession: Jesus was crucified and resurrected, ascended to the Father, and will return physically to earth.

1. Jesus will come again for those who love him.
2. Jesus calls his followers to be ready all the time.
3. No one knows the day or the hour.

Group Time

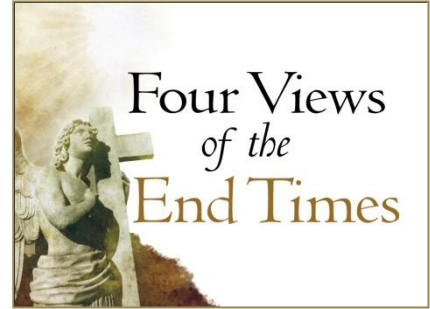
1. How is the kingdom present in your life right here and now? What are you doing to expand the kingdom of God?
2. How are tribulation or trials present in your life here and now? What can you do to respond in God-centered ways to tribulation and trials?
3. In what areas of your life do you need to learn patient endurance?

Apply

- Read Rev 1-3 and look for the themes of kingdom, tribulation, and patient endurance in the letters to the seven churches. List three areas of your life where you need to work on patient endurance. This week, seek specific ways to submit this area of your life to the kingdom of the living Lord Jesus Christ.

Four Views of End Times

Key Terms!



The Church Age

- The time period from the start of the church (AD 30) until Jesus Christ returns.

Antichrist

- A Satanic counterfeit of Jesus, described as “lawless” and “beast” Two interpretations:
 - A specific person who rises to power during the tribulation.
 - A symbol for false teachers and leaders who will arise during the end times.

The Rapture

- Jesus returns for his people (event described in 1 Thess 4:16-17).
- From Latin, *raptus*, meaning “carry away” Two interpretations:
- **Worldwide:** Historical premillennialists, amillennialists, and postmillennialists understand the second coming of Jesus and the event described in 1 Thess. 4:16–17 as the same event.
- **Secret:** Dispensational premillennialists (Left Behind View) believe that the rapture and the second coming of Jesus are two separate events. They place the rapture before the great tribulation and the second coming after the tribulation.

The Tribulation (Great)

- The time when disasters happen on the earth and people who are faithful to Jesus suffer intense persecution, possibly lasting seven years.
- Premillennialists place the great tribulation near the end.
- Dispensational premillennialists typically believe that the tribulation will last exactly seven years.
- Many historical premillennialists view the reference to “seven years” as a symbol of the completeness of God’s dealings with the world as the end of time approaches.
- Most amillennialists and postmillennialists treat the tribulation as a symbol of calamities and persecutions that have occurred throughout church history.
- Some amillennialists and postmillennialists are preterists (Revelation has already happened)—they believe that the great tribulation occurred AD 63–70, during the Jewish-Roman War.

144,000

- A group of believers that endure the great tribulation (Rev 7:14). Two interpretations:
 - Could be literal Jewish persons; 12,000 from each tribe, who embrace Jesus as Lord (Rev 7:4-9).
 - A symbol of God's people. Israel and the 12 tribes are often referred to as Christians (James 1:1; Gal 6:16) and 1,000 is a symbol for a multitude of length of time. So it means the multitude of those who belong to Christ.

Babylon

Three Interpretations:

- **Jerusalem:** symbolic reference to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD as some Jews helped the Romans persecute their people.
- **Rome:** after 70 AD, many Jewish writers referred to Rome as "Babylon" as it symbolized the political and religious powers of every age that defy God and persecute his people.
- **One-world government:** Babylon is a reference to a one-world government during the time of the tribulation.

The Two Witnesses

- Two beings described in Rev. 11:1-14 who speak God's truth before being killed and then brought back to life. Three interpretations:
 - Two literal people who will appear during the tribulation.
 - Moses and Elijah who are resurrected and proclaim God's truth during the tribulation.
 - Symbols of the Law and the Prophets. Both testify to Jesus and were rejected by Jews in the first century. The resurrection could refer to a time of final vindication when God demonstrates that the Law and the Prophets testified rightly about Jesus Christ.

The Beasts

Beast #1: a creature that rises from the sea with 10 horns and 7 heads. 7 heads seem to point to Rome, the city with 7 hills. This beast claims blasphemous names for itself.

Three interpretations:

- The Emperor Domitian (81-96) who made people call him the Lord God. One horn dies and comes back—Nero was rumored to have done this.
- A literal reference to a world power that will arise at the end times.
- A symbolic reference to the powers of every age that defy God and persecute his people.

Beast #2: a creature that rises from the earth with horns like a lamb and voice of a dragon—in other words, a satanic parody of Jesus, the Lamb of God. Two interpretations:

- A literal person who will encourage people to worship the first beast.
- A symbol of any religion in any time period that focuses worshippers on anything other than Christ.

Mark of the Beast

An indication of a person's allegiance to the teachings of the antichrist (Rev 13:16-17).

Two interpretations:

- An actual mark on people that is required by the antichrist (in the 400 silent years, some Jews were branded with the symbol of Dionysus).
- A reference to someone's *actions* ("hand") and *beliefs* ("forehead"). Hand and forehead carry this symbolic meaning in Ex 13:9,16.

666

- Number of the beast (Rev 13:8). Spelled out in Greek letters.
- The numbers corresponding to Nero's name can be 666 (Neron; Latin). Roman emperor who persecuted Christians 54-69 AD.
- Six is a symbol of incompleteness. 666 symbolizes complete imperfection of the beast.

Abomination of Desolation

- An event that desecrates the temple Jerusalem, signaling that Jerusalem will soon be ruined (Mt 24:14). Two interpretations:
 - Past event where the temple was desecrated and destroyed by the Romans (40, 70 AD).
 - Future event where the antichrist desecrates the temple in some way (maybe in the middle of the 7 year great tribulation).

Armageddon

- Flat area around the city of Megiddo in Israel's west coast where many battles were fought. Two views:
 - Some believe a literal battle will be there at the end of time.
 - Others view the reference to Armageddon to symbolize the ultimate conflict between forces of good and evil.

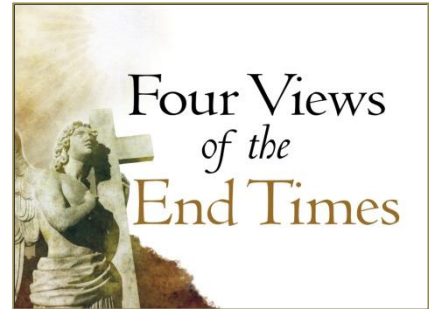
Final Judgment

- The event in Rev 20:11-15 when God resurrects all people, judges them from the great white throne of judgment, and sends them to the eternal destiny.

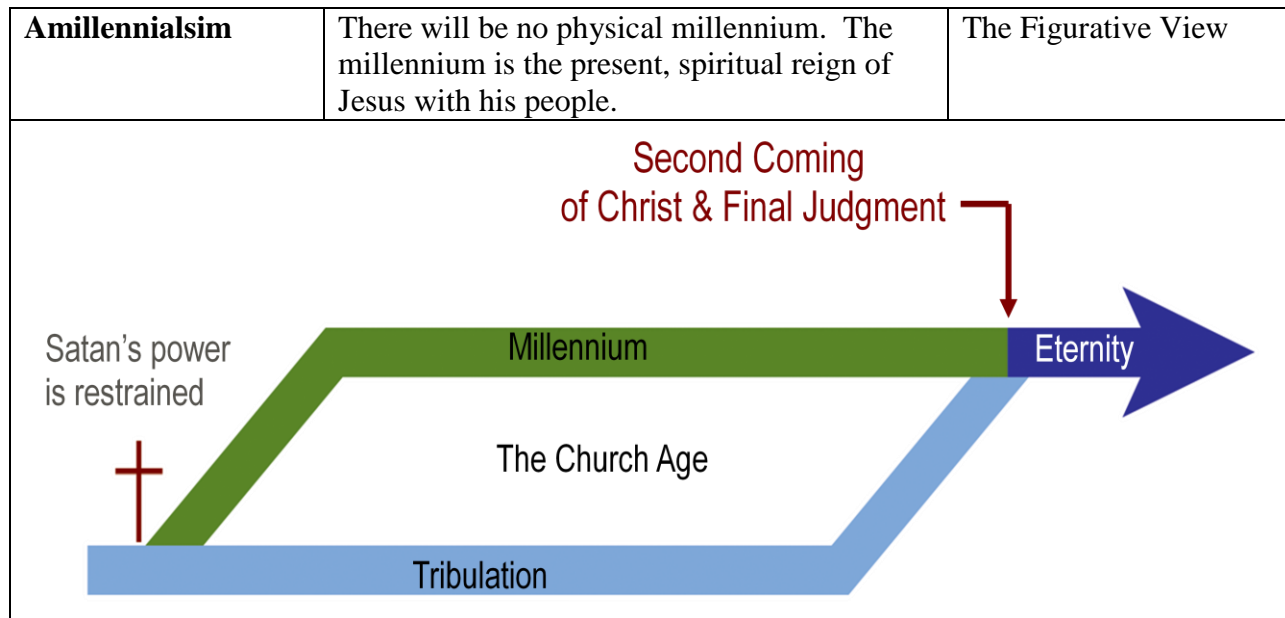
Amillennialism

Kingdom Already, Kingdom Not Yet

**Because of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus,
Satan is Already Defeated.**



The View:



The Timing:

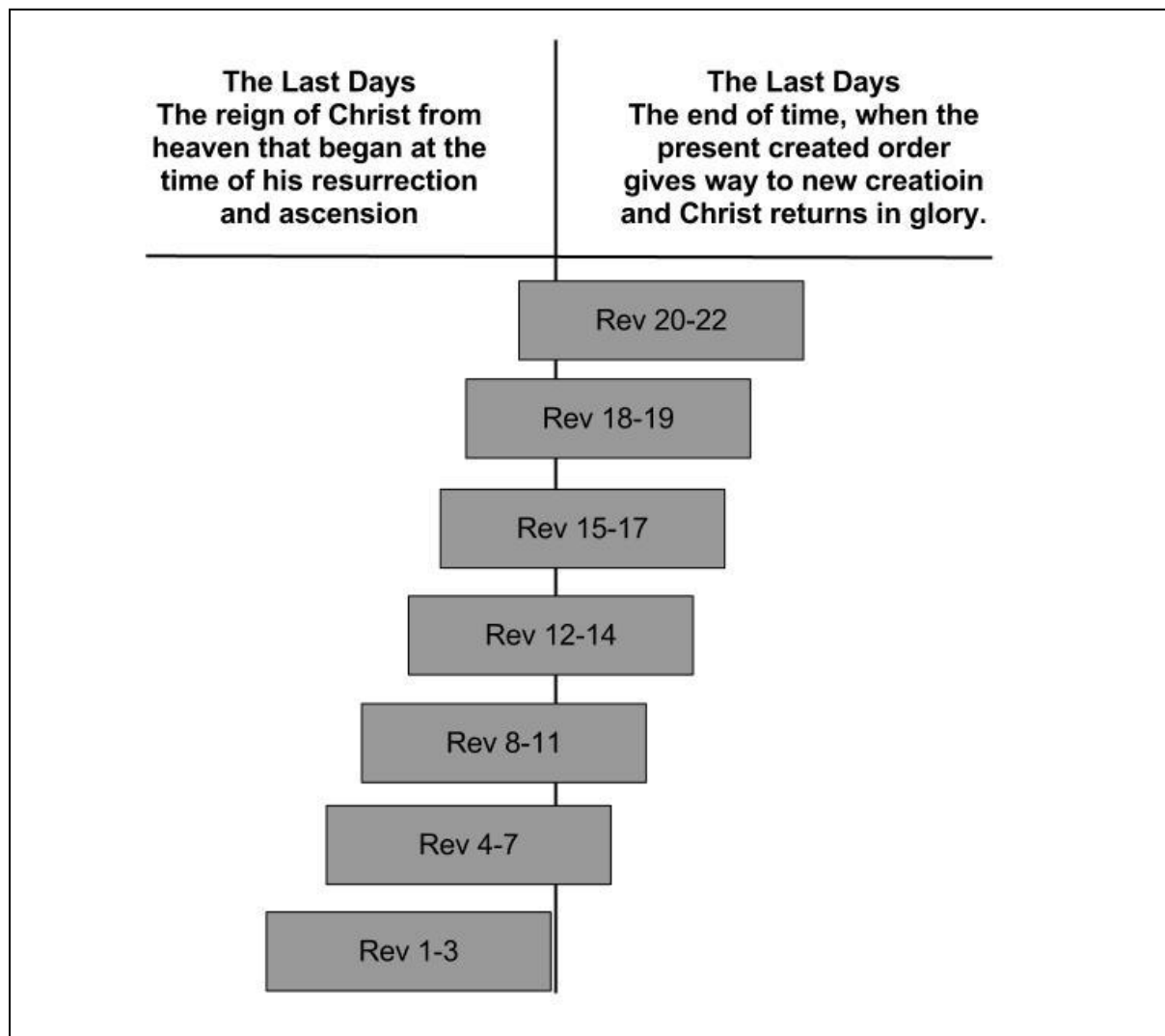
- The millennium is the spiritual reign of Jesus in the hearts of his followers.
- The “first resurrection” in Rev. 20:5 is not a physical restoration from the dead, but the spiritual resurrection known as regeneration.
- Christ’s triumph over Satan through his death and resurrection in AD 30 restrained the power of Satan on the earth.
- Persecution of Christians (tribulation) will occur until Jesus comes again, as will the expansion of God’s kingdom (the millennium).
- When Christ returns, he will immediately defeat the powers of evil, resurrect the saved and the unsaved, judge them, and deliver them to their eternal destinies.
- The great tribulation represents disasters, wars, and persecutions that have occurred throughout church history. Not a 7 year format but any time of testing, purifying, and calling to repentance that happens in history (Israel in wilderness, Elijah, Acts).

- Most references to “Israel” in Revelation are symbolic references to the people of God on earth (Galatians 6:16).

What does this view emphasize?

Progressive Parallelism: pattern where the author describes an event then goes back and retells the event before adding to it.

- Many amillennialists believe that the book of Revelation consists of seven sections.
- These seven sections are *not* interpreted as successive time periods.
- Rather, the seven sections describe the time from Jesus’ first coming until his second coming in seven different ways.
- John told and retold one inspired history—that God would judge evil and save those who trust Christ—seven times in seven ways through seven sections. The tribulations described in each section will not occur consecutively at the end of time; they happen simultaneously throughout human history.



Numbers represent ideas or concepts rather than literal statistics.

Number	Possible Meaning	Examples
1000	A great length or magnitude	Ezk. 47:3-5; Rev. 20:1-7
42	Cleansing through tribulation	Rev. 11:2; 13:5; 42 encampments in the wilderness; Num. 33:5-29; perhaps 42 months in Luke 4:25; James 5:17
12	The people of God	Ezk. 47:13; Rev. 12:1; 21:12-21
10	Something significant or extreme, but limited	Dan. 7:7, 20-24; Rev. 2:10
7	Completeness	Ezk. 39:9; Dan. 4:23; Rev. 5:6
6	Incompleteness	Rev. 13:18
4	Earthly powers	Dan. 7:2-3, 17; 8:8; 11:4; Rev. 7:1

Scriptural Support

- Christ said that all authority has been given to him; therefore, he is now reigning from heaven in the hearts of believers (Mt 28:17-20).
- There is no mention of a millennium outside of the highly symbolic book of Revelation. The Greek word for 1,000 is symbolic of a long period of time (2 Pet 3:8) so the numbers
- Satan's power to deceive the nations is broken and Christ is the victor. The spread of the gospel to all nations during the church age is evidence of Satan's hindrance (binding) as he can no longer be the "deceiver of the nations" (Mt 12:29; Jn 12:31-32; Col. 2:15).
- Scripture does not teach two resurrections. The second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the saved and the unsaved will occur at the same time (John 5:28-29). The first resurrection could refer to the spiritual resurrection (the regeneration or new birth) of persons who trust Christ (Romans 11:13-15). Rev 20:5 refers to the martyrs' coming into the presence of the Lord and reigning.
- The saints are on earth during the tribulation (Revelation 13:7).

Weaknesses

- Although it may be feasible to spiritualize the 1,000 year reign of Christ in Rev. 20, the most straight forward reading of the text is two resurrections, one before and one after the millennium (Rev. 20:4-6).
- It is problematic to say that Satan is bound, locked, and sealed in the abyss for the last 2,000 years and not deceiving the nations. Satan prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Pet. 5:8; Jn. 8:44; Eph. 6:10-11).
- This view usually does not have a future for ethnic Israel, but places Israel with the church. This is a problem since Rom. 11 talks about ethnic Israel does have a future.

Group Time

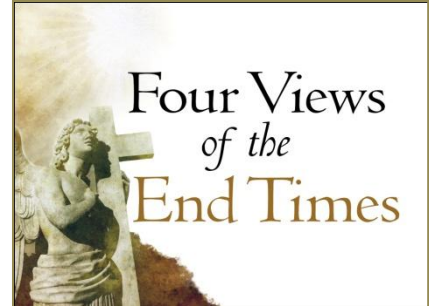
Jesus has already won! To be sure, there are still trials and struggles and tribulations. Yet—through his perfect life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection—Jesus the Messiah shattered Satan’s power and won a kingdom for his Father. Final victory is only a matter of time.

1. How does the victory of Christ over Satan affect your view of tribulations and judgments?
2. Amillennialism stresses that Satan’s power over believers has been broken. Are there ways in which you are living or have lived as if Satan has not already been defeated?

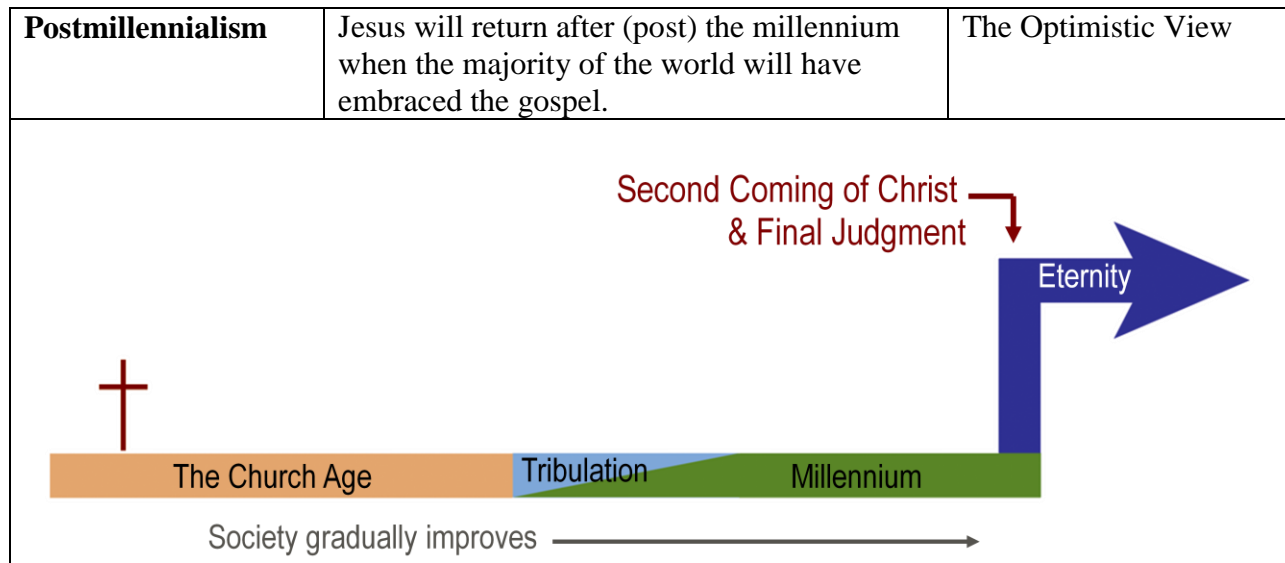
Postmillennialism

Building a Better World

Never Underestimate the Power of the Gospel!



The View:



The Timing:

- Postmillennialism is the belief that the second coming of Christ will occur *after* the millennium.
- A period of great tribulation may precede the millennium.
- The millennial reign described in Revelation 20:1–6 represents a long time period when, through the preaching of the gospel, most of the world will submit to Christ.
- During this time, Satan will have no power over the earth, and evil regimes will collapse.
- When the church recognizes the fullness of its power through the Holy Spirit, the church will establish God’s kingdom on earth and usher in the millennium, a golden age.
- Some view the tribulation as a brief time of persecution that occurs immediately before the millennium.
- Others believe that “great tribulation” describes the seven years of the First Jewish-Roman War which culminated in AD 70 with the destruction of the Jewish temple.

- During the millennium, Christ will rule the earth through his Spirit and through his Church.
- Jesus will not, however, be physically present on the earth.
- The resurrection depicted in Revelation 20:4 represents the spiritual regeneration of people who trust Jesus Christ.
- These events will occur together immediately *after* the millennium:
 - The second coming of Christ
 - The final conflict between good and evil
 - The defeat of Satan
 - The physical resurrection of all people
 - The final judgment

What does this view emphasize?

- Postmillennialists place great confidence in the preaching of the gospel.
- They contend that the gospel will eventually spread in such a way that nearly everyone in the world will turn to Jesus Christ.
- Postmillennialists believe that this golden age is described in Bible passages such as Micah 4:3.
- Postmillennialists tend to emphasize the power of the gospel to transform societies and individual lives.
- Many Postmillennialists are Preterists—Revelation describes events that already happened around 70AD. They say Nero was the beast (666 for Neuron Caesar). The abomination of desolation happened when the temple was destroyed by Titus. The great pain, agony, and persecution of God’s people during this time was the great tribulation (Rev 13:16-18; Mark 13:1-2 measures out judgment).

Scriptural Support

- Every ethnic group will receive the gospel before the second coming (Matthew 24:14). Therefore, the great commission demands it and the power of Christ will make it happen (1 Cor 15:25; Ephesians 1:15-23).
- The first resurrection could refer to the spiritual resurrection (the regeneration or new birth) of persons who trust Christ (Romans 11:13–15).
- The second coming of Christ and the resurrection of all people, saved and unsaved, will occur at the same time (John 5:28–29).
- The Spirit of God in the heart of the believer is the millennium (John 14-16).
- Christ’s parable of the mustard seed and leaven shows how the gospel will extend and expand slowly until it covers the whole world (Mt. 13:31-33).
- All other views are too pessimistic. Only the postmillennial view provides for the true triumph of Christ through the church (Mt. 16:18).
- The Church is continuing to grow with over 2 billion adherents to Christianity.

Weaknesses

- The New Testament seems to describe events on earth as getting worse instead of better (Mt. 24; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Pet. 3:3-4).
- Scriptural support for this view is limited compared to the other views.
- This approach completely allegorizes Rev 20 and the thousand year reign and fails to deal adequately with this text as it approaches the end times.
- A majority of saved people in the world does not guarantee a golden age. The world actually seems to be getting worse, not better. Example—two world wars.

What are the Differences between Postmillennialism and Amillennialism?

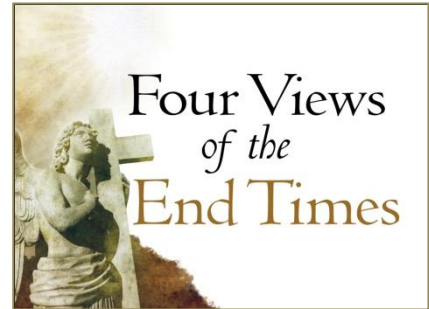
1. According to Amillennialists, the millennial kingdom and the great tribulation occur at the same time. Postmillennialists believe that the millennium takes place after the great tribulation.
2. Amillennialists say that Jesus is reigning spiritually with the saints in heaven whereas postmillennialists believe that Jesus will reign spiritually through the gospel on earth.

Group Time

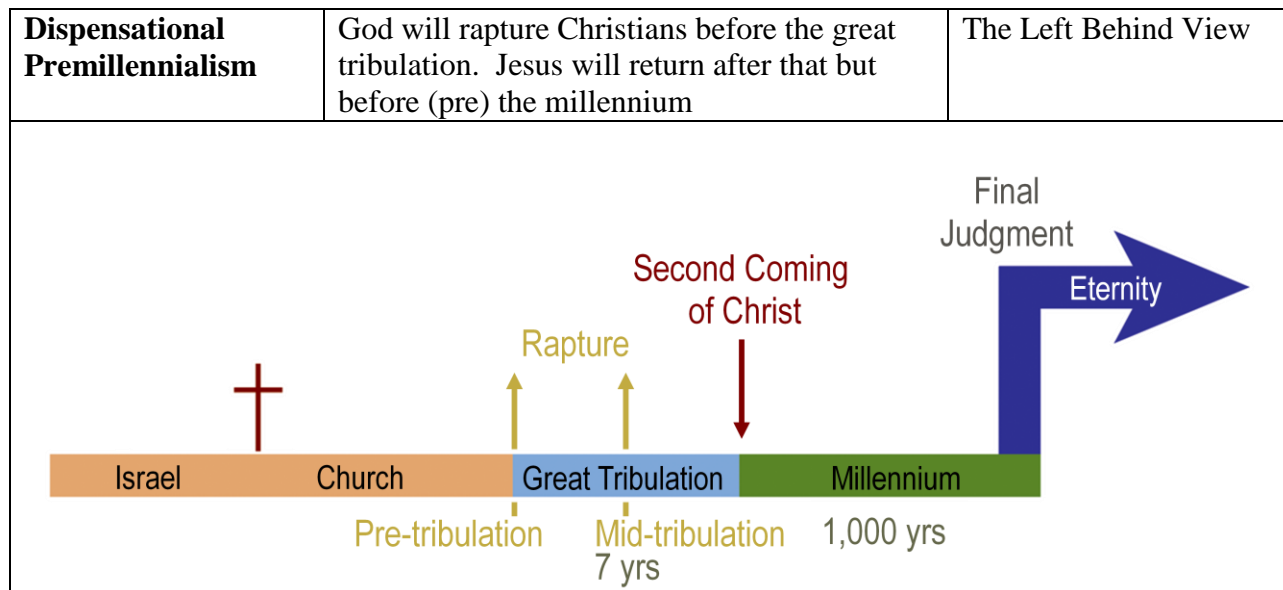
1. What do you think of this view of the end times? What strengths, weaknesses, or verses stand out to you as particularly important or meaningful?
2. Regardless of whether you agree with this view or not, it emphasizes an important truth—the gospel has great power and should not be underestimated! Look up these verses about the power of the gospel and summarize your thoughts—discuss what stands out to you (Romans 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18; Eph. 2:1-10).
3. How has the power of the message of the gospel changed you or someone you know?

Dispensational Premillennialism

Always be Ready for the Return of Jesus!



The View:



The Timing:

- **OVERVIEW:** Secret rapture of the Church, 7 years of tribulation, Second Coming of Christ, Millennium as 1,000 years of Christ reigning on earth with believers, final judgment, eternal states.
- **SPECIFICS:**
- Many nations will rise up against the modern state of Israel (Ezk 38-39).
- Israel responds by signing a treaty with a world leader (Beast/Antichrist) (Rev 11:7, 13:1-8).
- A “strong covenant” is ratified (Daniel) and the Antichrist will assist in the rebuilding of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem—sacrifices and offerings will resume.
- The church is raptured and the 7 year tribulation begins (1 Thess 4; 1 Thess 5:9).
- The great tribulation of 7 years happens or Daniel’s seventieth week (Dan. 9:24; Rev 4-19).
- God will designate 144,000 Jews to proclaim the gospel to the nations and a great multitude will come to faith (Rev. 7:1-17).

- After 3½ years the Antichrist will turn on Israel and desecrate the temple. The armies of the earth will join and attack God's people. Great wrath will be unleashed on the earth. When all hope is gone, Jesus will come to conquer as the King of King and the Lord of Lords—second coming (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 16; Rev. 19).
- Millennium is a literal 1,000 years and Satan bound.
- At end of this peaceful time, Satan is released and defeated and all people will be judged on the Great White Throne of Judgment (Rev. 20:7-15).

What does this view emphasize?

- The main difference between this view and the other three views is the nature of the rapture. This view believes that the rapture is a secret event before the tribulation—separate from the second coming (7 years later).

The Rapture and Jesus' Return as separate events.

Rapture of the Church	Jesus' Return to Earth
The rapture will occur at an unexpected time (1 Thess 5:2; Mt 24:4).	Jesus will return to earth after 7 year great tribulation (Mt 24:29).
Jesus will return for his church (1 Thess 4:13-18).	Jesus will return with his church (Rev 19:14).
Believers will be taken into the Father's presence (Jn 14:3).	Believers will come to earth (Mt 24:30).
Only believers will experience the rapture (1 Cor 15:52).	Every eye will see Jesus as the returning King (Mt 24:30; Rev 1:7, 19:11-16).
No battle with Satan is mentioned.	Satan is bound (Rev 20:1-3).
No judgment of the earth is mentioned.	The earth is judged (Rev 20:4-5).
The rapture is a mystery (1 Cor 15:51).	The return of Jesus was foretold in the Old Testament (Dan 12:1-3; Zechariah 12:10).

View on Israel and the Church.

	The Nation of Israel	The Church
Left Behind View	God has purposed to work with the two different groups of people— Israel and the church in different dispensations. God will fulfill his promise to the patriarchs and to the Jewish people through the modern nation of Israel.	The church is a spiritual work separate from God's earthly work with the political nation of Israel. During the great tribulation, God will remove the church from the world and continue his work with the nation of Israel.
Amill, Postmill, Hist. Premill	God has always had one plan and one people. God's work with the nation of Israel was preparatory for his revelation of himself through Jesus and for his work with the church. Before the end of time, a great spiritual awakening will bring many Jewish people to faith in Jesus as their Messiah.	It is through Jesus and through the church that God is fulfilling the promises that he made to the patriarchs and to the people of Israel. In the OT and the NT, God's purpose has always been to redeem every person who trusts in the Messiah. Jesus came to accomplish this redemption through his death and resurrection.

What are the Dispensations and how many are there?

- A segment of history that deals with people in a particular way.
- Some suggest 3, 6, 7, 12. Many dispensational thinkers suggest Seven:

	Name	Description	Verses
1	Innocence	Time before the fall	Gn. 1:28-3:6
2	Conscience	God dealing with man's conscience before the law	Gn. 4-8
3	Government	Covenant to Noah	Gn. 8:15-11:9
4	Promise	Period of the Patriarchs	Gn. 11-Ex. 18
5	Mosaic Law	From Moses to the death of Christ	Ex. 19-Acts 1
6	Grace	God makes his grace known to all mankind	Acts 2-Rev. 19
7	Millennium	God returns and reigns 1,000 years on earth	Rev. 20:4-6

Arguments for Premillennialism:

- The most natural, historical, grammatical reading of Rev. 20 demands that there be a 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth. No other view can do justice to this passage.
- The millennium is necessary for God to fulfill his promises to the nation of Israel (Gn. 12:1-3; 15:15) and the OT describes the kingdom as an on-earth reign of the Messiah over the world. The covenants in the OT were unconditional and therefore still to come for ethnic Jews (Ezk. 37:21-28).

- Although while Christ was on earth, the kingdom of God was present through the advent of Jesus, Christ makes it clear that He did not set up his Kingdom on earth at this time. It was to be in the future (Acts 1:6-7; Mt. 6:9-10).
- Strengths of people who hold to the dispensational view 1) that they are very serious about Scripture, 2) passionate about evangelism, and 3) expectant of the return of Jesus at any moment (rapture: Mk 13:33-37).

Arguments for a Rapture before the Tribulation (Dispensational Theology):

- It is characteristic for God to rescue his followers before judgment (e.g. Noah, Lot).
- The Bible says that believers will not experience the wrath of God and that the church will be rescued from the tribulation (1 Thess. 2:10; Rev. 3:10).
- There is no mention of the Church during the time of the tribulation in the book of Revelation (Rev. 6-18).
- The restrainer mentioned in 2 Thess. 1-12 is the Holy Spirit, who must be removed before the tribulation—if this is so, then the church (which is the temple of God) will also be removed.
- Christ's return is said to be immanent--could come at any moment like a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5:2). If the rapture were not before the tribulation, Christ could not come at literally any moment, he would have to wait for certain events to occur (Mt. 24:42-44, 50, 25:13).

Weaknesses:

- It is problematic to base such an important doctrine on one passage (Rev. 20).
- Other Scriptures talk about the second coming and the rapture as the same event—no interval between them (Jn. 5:28-29).
- There is no good passage to explain the idea of the “secret rapture.” In 1 Thess. 4:16-17 there is no reason to take the events as secret—the events are very public and visible.
- Israel and the church are seen as one in the New Testament. Therefore, the promises made to ethnic Israel are fulfilled in the church (Gal. 3:7-9, 25-29; Rom. 9:6-7a). Some also explain that Israel was unfaithful to the covenant, therefore the promises made to them are void (Jer. 18:9-10). The New Covenant replaced the promises of the Old Covenant (Jer 31:31-33; Heb. 8:13).

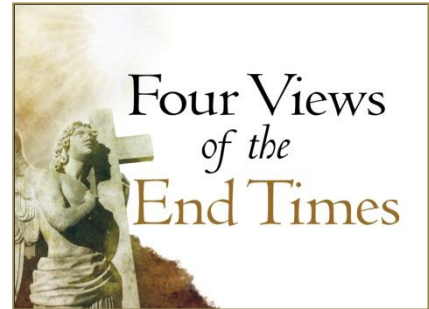
Group Time:

1. What do you think of this view of the end times? What strengths do you see as particularly important to this view?
2. This view emphasizes the fact that we always need to be ready for the Master's return. How do we stay ready for him to return? What would be specific character qualities and actions

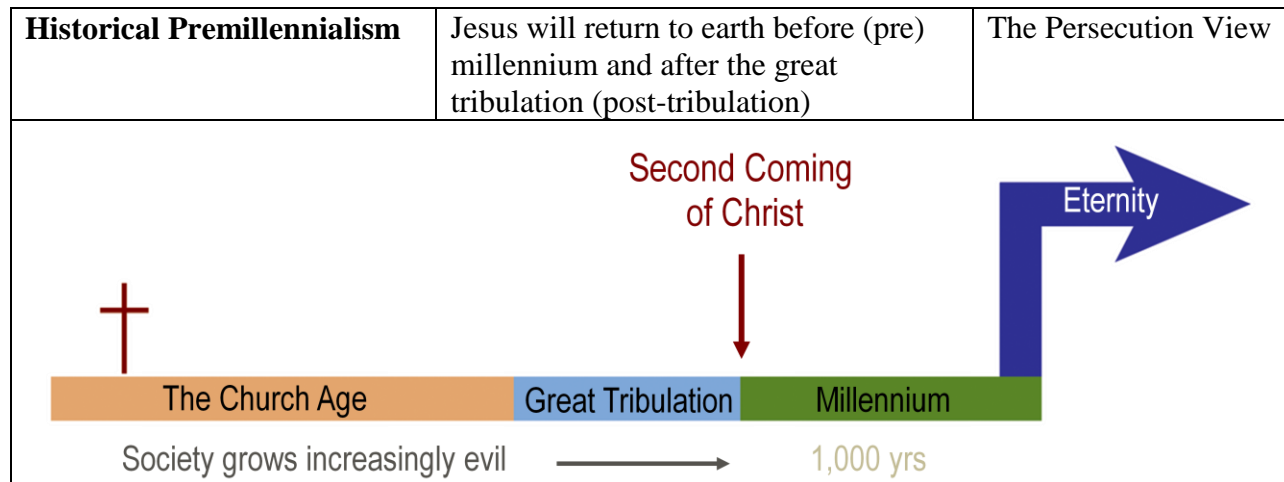
Historical Premillennialism

Through Tribulation to Everlasting Life

God Grows His People through Trials



The View:



The Timing:

- **OVERVIEW:** Church age, great tribulation, rapture/second coming, millennium as 1,000 literal years, great white throne and eternal states.
- **SPECIFICS:**
- Christians will remain on the earth during the tribulation as it is a time of purification of the churches as false members get rooted out.
- The rapture and the second coming are the same event—visible, public, glorious.
- Early church fathers envisioned a majestic earthly kingdom of Christ and his believers during the millennium. All creation will be restored to its original goodness after a time of testing.

What does this view emphasize?

- Historical premillennialists try to balance symbolic and literal interpretations of Revelation.
- They emphasize both what the book meant to first-century readers and how it might apply for people's lives today.
- God's promises of land and blessings to Abraham and his offspring were conditional promises, based on their obedience.

- Israel's persistent disobedience violated God's covenant with them.
- God has maintained a covenant of grace throughout the Old and New Testaments with all who trusted in him. These believers—embodied today in the church—are the true Israel.
- Most references to "Israel" in Revelation refer symbolically to the church.

Arguments for Historical Premillennialism:

- The revealing of the Antichrist precedes Christ's return (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4).
- The tribulation will root out false members from the churches (Revelation 2:22–23).
- The saints are on earth during the tribulation (Revelation 13:7–10, 14:12).
- There is no reason to see the rapture as secret. 1 Thess. 4:16–17 is very visible and dramatic—as well as Mark 13:24–27.
- Rev 3:10 means that God will protect his people in the midst of tribulations (Egypt, John 17:5).
- The parable of the wheat and tares in Matthew 13:24 suggests that believers and unbelievers will live together until the "harvest"—second coming.
- God's promises to Abraham and his offspring were conditional (Genesis 22:17–18).
- The New Testament frequently uses "Israel" and "the twelve tribes" to refer to Christians (Romans 9:6–8). Israel and the church are seen as one in the NT (Galatians 3:7–9, 25–29).
- Matt. 24 seems to suggest that believers will go through tribulation. No hint of secret rapture.
- Historical premillennialism seems to have been the earliest view of the end times among Christians who lived just after the apostles.

Weaknesses:

- The large amount of OT promises to Israel that are unconditional and still need to be fulfilled (land, temple, etc—happen in the 7 years when church is gone). Gn 12:1–3, 15:5.
- Christ's return is immanent—could come at any moment "thief in the night" 1 Thessalonians 5:2. If the rapture were not before the tribulation, Christ could not be said to come at any moment (Matthew 24:42–44, 50).
- There is no mention of the church in Revelation 6–18 during the time of the tribulation.
- The Bible says that believers will not experience the wrath of God (1 Thessalonians 5:9; Rev 3:10).

Group Time:

1. What do you think of this view of the end times? What strengths do you see as particularly important to this view?
2. This view emphasizes that Christians must not merely tolerate tribulations in this life—Christians must see tribulations as opportunities for God to purify and to transform his people. Look up the following verses and discuss their truths (Romans 5:3-5, 12:12; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 4:12-19).
3. What trials/tribulations are you going through right now? How do the above verses speak into your life right now?

Many of the charts, pictures, and main points in this packet were used from *4 Views of the End Times* by Timothy Paul Jones. Rose Publishing.

¹ From the ESV Study Bible.