

Introduction to Cosmic Eschatology

Millennial Views

Amillennialism

- Israel
- Church age
- Return of X (Resurrection of believers and unbelievers, judged)
- New Heaven and New Earth

*No literal 1,000-year reign of Christ. The “Millennial Kingdom” is reference to Christ’s reign in heaven, and in the hearts of believers during the entire church age.

Postmillennialism

- Israel
- Church age (This age morphs into a “golden age” of global Christendom that may or may not be a literal 1,000 years)
- Return of X (Resurrection of believers and unbelievers, judged)
- New Heaven and New Earth

Historic/Classic Premillennialism

- Israel
- Church age
- At some point, there is an en masse “salvation” of ethnic Israel into the church. Ethnic Israel is “saved,” but not “restored” as a national, geo-political entity to which all the nations gather (c.f., Zech. 12:10, 8:20-23 14). The timing of this en masse gathering is unclear.
- 7-year tribulation (This may or may not be literal)
- Return of X (Living believers are raptured into the air, but descend back with Christ to reign in the millennial kingdom (1Thess. 4:17). Once Jesus fully descends, it triggers a resurrection of dead believers)
- 1,000-year earthly millennial reign.

- Satan released for a short time, leading to one last attempt to wage war against God and His people, but immediate defeat
- Resurrection of the unbelievers, judged
- New Heaven and New Earth

Dispensational Premillennialism

- Israel
- Church age
- Secret rapture of the church. (Church age ends due to fulness of Gentiles coming in [Rom. 11:25])
- 7-year tribulation (During this time there is an en masse salvation of Israel. A “restoration” of ethnic/national Israel, as a geo-political entity, will materialize in the millennial kingdom)
- Return of X with the church (and pre-church believers?) to establish 1,000-year earthly millennial reign.
- Satan released for a short time, leading to one last attempt to wage war against God and His people, but immediate defeat
- Resurrection of the unbelievers, judged
- New Heaven and New Earth

Rapture Views

What is the Tribulation?

1) The Tribulation is a time of heightened wrath, associated with the OT’s, “The Day of the Lord,” language (primarily Minor Prophets), in which God pulls back His restraining grace. It is the final culmination of His discipline focused upon Israel.

2) A discussion only within Pre-mil. Amills and Post mills don’t hold to a literal 7-year period.

Where does the concept of a Tribulation come from?

- 1) The idea of 7 years come from the 70 weeks in Daniel 9:20-27.
 - A “week” in Daniel comes out to a 7-year period.

→ The final “week” has not yet happened.

- 2) The non-literal approach of amil, postmil, some historic premil don’t see a literal 7-year tribulation.

What are the views?

1) Pre-tribulationism – Church is raptured prior to the Tribulation.

→ Since the focus of the Trib is upon the Jews, and there is no explicit mention of the church in Rev. 6-16, the church is raptured before.

→ Key passages: 1Thess. 5:2, 9.

2) Mid-tribulationism – Church is raptured half-way through tribulation.

→ Dan. 9:26-27. The “prince” is viewed as “the beast,” who will make a pact with Israel under false pretense. He is some kind of political/military world leader.

→ Half way through the seven-year period he will defect and cut off all supply for sacrifice, etc. (9:27).

→ The final 3-1/2 years of the tribulation will continue to be horrendous. (This is when the “beast” will establish the abomination of desolation in the Temple—c.f., Matt. 24:15, and force the world to worship him for 42 months (or 3-1/2 years— c.f., Dan. 7:25 “times, time, and half a time,” also Rev. 13:5).

→ The church is raptured out before the final 3-1/2 years (Rev. 11:12). A modification is known as a “pre-wrath rapture,” in which the worst of the tribulation will take place in the final 3-1/2 years. The “six seal judgments” (ch. 6) are considered the wrath of Satan and the antichrist, whereas the trumpet and bowl judgments (chs. 7-16) are seen as the wrath of God.

*The pre and post view see the seal judgements as God’s wrath as well, since it is the Lamb Who opens the seals.

3) Post-tribulationism – Church endures full Tribulation.

→ Focus is upon Israel, but the church will be protected in the sense that no true believer will defect.

→ The church has never been exempted from suffering, so while will the final generation be except from the final 7 years?

Interpretational Approaches to Revelation

1) Futurist—See the book of Revelation as something yet future.

→Necessarily Premillennialist.

→Can hold to any of the Tribulational positions.

2) Preterist – See the book of Revelation (and Jesus many prophetic statements) as primarily fulfilled in 70AD.

→Full preterists sees all of Revelation fulfilled, including chs. 21-22.

→Partial preterists see most of revelation fulfilled, except chs. 20-22.

→This position sees Rev. 1:1 as definitive for framing the book— “things which must soon take place.”

3) Historicist—See the book of Revelation as unfolding over a long period of time (from Pentecost to Christ’s return).

→ This is not a literal approach, but symbolic. This position associates specific moments (or symbols) in revelation with certain moments in history. (E.g., “The Harlot” in Rev. 17 is typically identified as the papacy of Rome).

→ This is a highly subjective approach and difficult to defend.

→This is typically Amill or Postmil, since it doesn’t take a literal approach to interpretation.

4) Idealist—See the book of Revelation as an a-temporal commentary in which various elements of revelation will correspond to various realities in the world.

→ This is different from the historicist position in that it doesn’t seek to match specific events in Revelation with specific moments in history. Rather, it sees Revelation as typical of what will happen over and over again in history. (E.g., The dragon ready to devour the offspring of the woman in Rev. 12 is emblematic of the struggle that will always be present between Satan and God’s people.

→ This view is typically Amil or Postmill, since it doesn’t take a literal approach to interpretation.

Hermeneutical Presuppositions

Two key factors which determine interpretational approach:

1) How does the NT relate to the Old?

→ Does the NT interpret (i.e., reinterpret) the Old, or does the NT simply build upon Old (i.e., *sensus plenior* vs. progressive revelation)?

→ How do you understand the nature of the various biblical covenants (unilateral, bilateral, conditional, unconditional)? Or is there a mixture? Additionally, how do the various biblical covenants relate to each other?

→ Further, do you see non-biblical covenants present, or must the interpreter be controlled exclusively by the explicit biblical covenants? (e.g., cov. of work/grace—or only Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, New, etc.).

2) What is the Church's relationship to Israel?

→ Has the Church replaced Israel (i.e., supersessionism)?

→ Is the Church a parenthesis (a plan B) in God's plan for the sake of Israel, resulting in two ways of salvation?

→ Is there overlap between the two?

→ If there a future for Israel? Is Israel simply absorbed into the church ("salvation"), or will Israel also be "restored" as a geo-political entity ("salvation and restoration")?

****Your answer to the above questions will determine your approach to Revelation, not the other way around. Until these questions are settled, nothing else matters.**