

Christ and The Future
Premillennial Views of the Return of Christ

Class 6

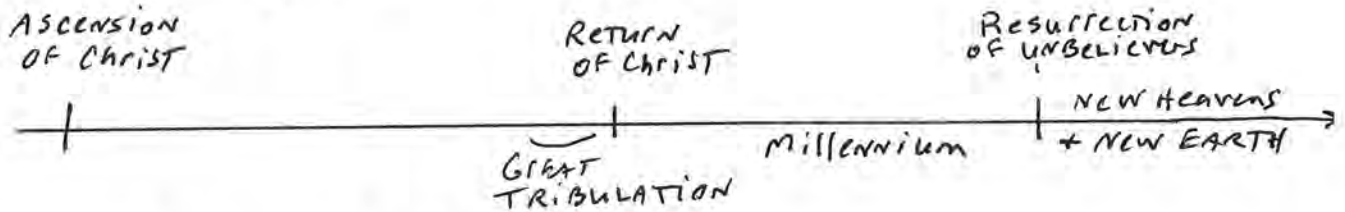
Among Bible-believing Christians there is wide agreement about the cardinal truths concerning the return of Christ and the eternal state. All believe that:

- Jesus Christ will return in Glory.
- The righteous and wicked will be raised from the dead.
- A final judgment (or judgments) will take place.
- The righteous in Christ will be rewarded with eternal life in the New Heavens and the New Earth.
- All unbelievers will be condemned to eternal punishment

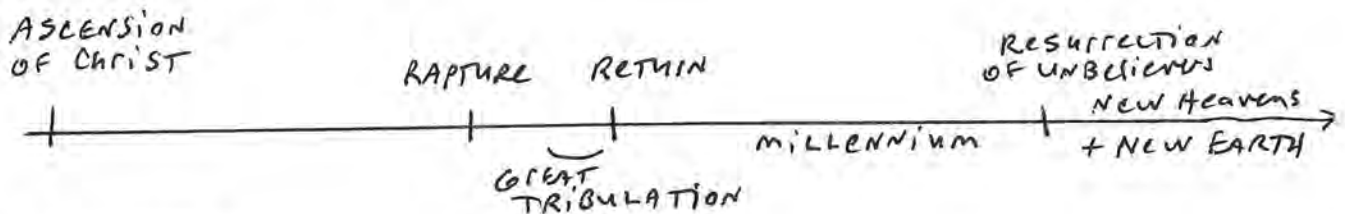
However, one of the most debated aspect of "end-times" doctrine concerns the Bible's teaching about a thousand-year "millennium." In fact, Revelation 20:1-6 is often considered the most debated passage in the Bible.

The four major views of the millennium:

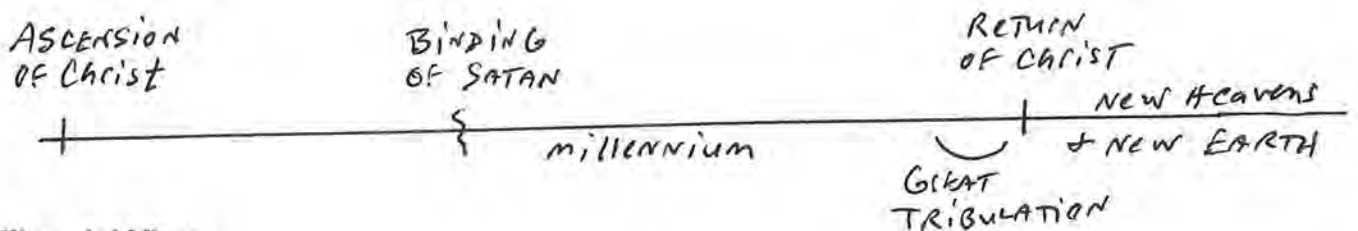
Historic Premillennial View



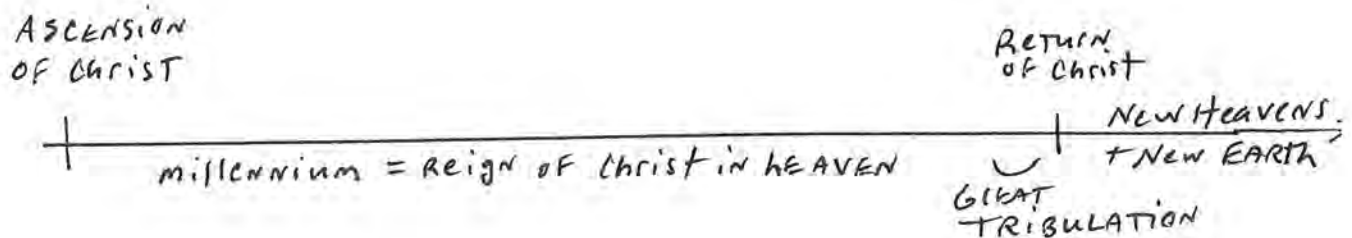
Dispensational Premillennial View



Postmillennial View:



Amillennial View:



Revelation 20 and the millennium (1000 years)

Premillennial View: Christ will return before (pre) the millennium. The millennium will be a long period of great blessing and righteousness on earth after Christ returns. Christ will literally and physically rule from a throne on the earth. The saints rule with Christ during this period. Both glorified believers and non-glorified unbelievers will somehow dwell on earth together. Satan is bound when Christ returns and is released briefly near the conclusion of this period.

Postmillennial View: Christ will return after (post) the millennium. There will be a long period of blessing and righteousness on earth before Christ returns. The millennium is a time of great gospel triumph and blessing when the nations of the earth (for the most part) turn to Christ, although there will still be unbelievers. The binding of Satan ushers in this period.

Amillennial View: Christ will return without reference to (A) the millennium. (Or another way to say it is that there is no (A) millennium in the sense of pre or post millennial views.) The millennium is understood as the entire interadvental period (church age). Satan is bound when Christ triumphs over him in the cross and resurrection.

Major points of agreement:

1. Satan and all evil will finally be defeated.
2. God cares for his people, and they share in his triumph and rule.

Key issues of interpretation in Revelation 20:

What is the relationship between chapters 19 and 20?

Chronological? (Premillennial view)

Recapitulation? (Postmillennial and Amillennial view)

The "final battle" of 20:7-10 seems to be describing the same "final battle" as that found in 16:14-16; 17:14; 19:11-21.

The judgment of Satan (20:10) parallels the judgment of Babylon (chap. 17-18) and the judgment of the Beast and the False Prophet (19:11-21). These are three visions of the final doom of God's enemies arranged **thematically not chronologically**.

The Second Coming of Christ is described again in slightly different language but with repeated themes (compare 20:11-5; 6:14; 11:18)

The problem of the rebellion in Rev. 20 after all of Christ's enemies are destroyed in chapter 19. This rules out a chronological interpretation.

What is the "first resurrection" (20:4-6)?

The bodily resurrection of believers (Premil view)

Being born again and receiving new life spiritually (Postmil view)

Spiritual life of martyrs (and all believers) with Christ when they die (Amil view)

What is the binding of Satan?

At Christ's return (Premil)

At some point in church age (Postmil)

At the cross and resurrection (Amil)

Premillennial and postmillennial see this binding as almost absolute.

Amil sees this binding as a "relative binding" (See John 12:31; Col. 2:15; Jude 6)

Brief Overview of Dispensational Premillennialism:

History of this theological development:

1825 – John Nelson Darby, a Church of England clergyman from Ireland
Darby originated a teaching meeting in Plymouth, England.
His teachings and writings came to be known as “Dispensationalism.”

Dispensations (term in the Bible referring to an administration or stewardship)
Eph. 1:10; 3:2; Col. 1:25

“A particular arrangement by which God regulates the way human beings relate to Him.”

Most common Dispensational view of the seven dispensations in the Bible:

Innocence: creation to expulsion from the garden of Eden

Human Conscience: from the expulsion to the great flood

Human government: from the flood to the calling of Abraham

Promise: from Abraham to the giving of the Law

Law: from the giving of the law to the coming of Christ

Church: from the crucifixion to the Rapture

Kingdom: from the Rapture to the end of the Millennium

1909 – First publication of the Scofield Reference Study Bible.

Cyrus Scofield was a Congregationalist minister in America who was trained in law, but had no seminary or theological training. He followed J. N. Darby's teachings and greatly popularized Dispensationalism with his study Bible.

The Twentieth Century saw the emergence of many Bible Institutes and colleges in America that spread the teaching of Dispensationalism, foremost among them were Philadelphia College of the Bible (founded by Scofield), Moody Bible Institute, and Dallas Theological Seminary.

1967 – Publication of the New Scofield Reference Bible (9-member committee of theologians), which moderated some of the more extreme views of the original.

Today there are “Progressive Dispensationalists” which moderate Dispensationalism more along the lines of Covenant Theology.

Distinctives of Dispensational Theology as concerns the Return of Christ:

1. The sharp distinction between Israel and the Church

The church age seen as a parenthesis in the course of redemptive history.

The Kingdom of God (and God's heavenly people, Gentile believers) are separate from the Kingdom of Heaven (and God's earthly people, Jewish believers)

Old Testament prophecies about Israel do not find their fulfillment in the church, but all these must be fulfilled literally during the millennium (restored temple, Davidic kingdom, sacrifices, land, throne, new Jerusalem, universal peace, etc.)

2. The Secret Rapture of the church is distinguished from Christ's coming in glory.

This is the point at which God resumes his dealings with Israel and the church dispensation is concluded.

This secret rapture is also the means by which believers escape the great tribulation.

3. The Millennium is characterized by normal life and death, marriage and family, while Christ rules from Jerusalem during a long period of nearly universal peace and prosperity.

There are different opinions as to whether this is exactly 1,000 years.

4. At the end of the Millennium, nominal believers will join Satan in his final rebellion.

5. There are various (separated) resurrections and judgments.

Christian believers raised at the Rapture.

Martyred believers killed during the tribulation and Old Testament saints at the Return.

Various judgments at the Rapture, Return, and at the end of the Millennium.

Problems with Premillennialism:

1. Rev. 20 must be interpreted in the light of the clear teaching of the rest of Scripture.

The return of Christ is clearly taught as the consummating event of history.

The return of Christ will introduce the final state (2 Pet. 3:13).

The resurrection of the just and the unjust will coincide (Jonh 5:28-29).

The resurrection of believers is said to be at the "last day" (1 Cor. 15:23).

2. The clear teaching of Scripture is that believers are not exempt from present, future, or "great" tribulation. (Matt. 24:22,31; 2 Thess 2; Rev. 2:22; 7:9-17).

3. Scripture does not teach a 2-phase return of Christ. (even in 1 Thess. 4: 13-18)

4. The church is never seen as a parenthesis in the purposes of God.

The church is the fulfillment of the temple of God. (1 Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:21-22).

The church is identified with Jerusalem and the city of God. (Heb. 12:22-23)

The church is regarded as the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises.

(1 Pet. 2:9-10; Gal. 3 & 4—the promises to Abraham fulfilled!)

5. Christ has now fulfilled the Davidic throne and is now installed as king (Eph. 1:20-23).

6. A literal interpretation of Scripture includes understanding poetry, types and symbols as such.