

Got Questions: What about the End Times?

Eschatology: From the Greek word *eschatos*, which means “last.” The Biblical study of eschatology is the study of “the last things.”

Appreciating the differing views of Eschatology

The varying views differ with primary respect to the order of the time of **tribulation** and the **millennium**. In addition, they differ in whether or not they include a **rapture** (gathering of the church) and if the millennium is literal or symbolic.

- **The three primary views are:** Premillennialism, Postmillennialism, and Amillennialism
 - The “pre,” “post,” and “a” qualifiers are in respect to when (or *if*) each view places The Second Coming of Christ to the earth (*not* the rapture or gathering of the church).
- Additionally, within Premillennialism, there are the views of:
 - Posttribulation and Pretribulation
 - These two views generally differ in respect to the timing (or existence) of the rapture.

The Second Coming: While on the earth, Jesus spoke often about his return to the earth.

Matthew 24:44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Mark 14:60 - 62

60 And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?”

61 But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”

62 And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

Luke 21:25 - 27

25 “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves,

26 people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

27 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

- After Jesus had ascended into heaven, two angels said to the disciples, “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” (**Acts 1:11**)
- James wrote, “be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” (**James 5:8**)
- The book of Revelation, which provides much detail about Jesus’ second coming, ends with his personal promise, “Surely I am coming soon,” and John’s response, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (**Revelation 22:20**).
- This will be a sudden revelation of Jesus Christ in the sky with the heavenly host in great glory and magnificence, and he will personally and physically (bodily) come again to the earth to reign as the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords.

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Millenium: The word millennium is from Latin and means “one thousand years.” The Biblical term comes from the end of the book of **Revelation**.

Revelation 20:1 - 6

1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain.

2 And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,

3 and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

4 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

- This is the time when Jesus reigns on the earth for a thousand years (Millenium).
 - Again, the three main views are Amillennialism, Postmillennialism, and Premillennialism.
 - They primarily differ with respect to when (or if) the second coming of Christ to the earth will occur and the nature of this “millennium.”

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Tribulation: Several times, Jesus foretold of a time of tribulation that was yet to come, unlike anything ever seen before.

Matthew 24:21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

Mark 13:19 - 20

19 For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be.

20 And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days.

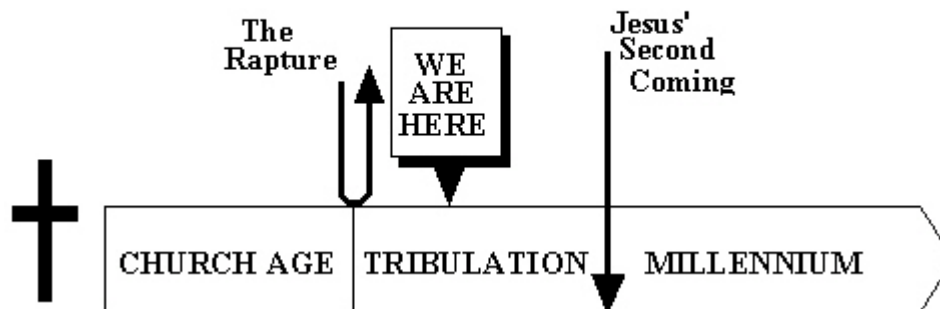
- This is the time that the Old Testament prophets **Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, Obidiah, Zephaniah,** and **Malichi** prophesied about and referred to as “the Day of the LORD (Yahweh).”
 - It is a time of great darkness and trouble on the earth.
- This is the time of the wrath that Christians are promised that Jesus has delivered us from. (**1st Thessalonians 1:10**)
- Again, the book of **Revelation** greatly details this time It tells us that the elect of this time will have to endure great hardship in order to be saved, and unless it is shortened by Christ’s coming, no one will make it.
- Within the Premillennial stance, the two differing views of when this time of tribulation will occur with respect to the second coming of Christ are pre-tribulational and post-tribulation.

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Rapture: Detailed in **1st Thessalonians 4** and **1st Corinthians 15**, this is the time when Jesus Christ himself “will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God” (**1st Thessalonians 4:16**) to gather the church, both the alive and those who have died to himself.

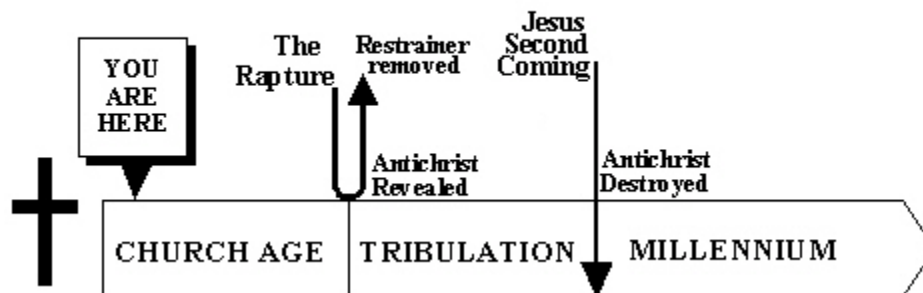
- We will rise up to meet him in the clouds in the air.
- Our physical bodies will be transformed to be heavenly and spiritual bodies, just like his, as in a moment, “the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.” (**1st Corinthians 15:52**)
- After this event, and eternally onward, those whom Christ has saved are promised: “so we will always be with the Lord.” (**1st Thessalonians 4:17**)

The Thessalonians' False Idea



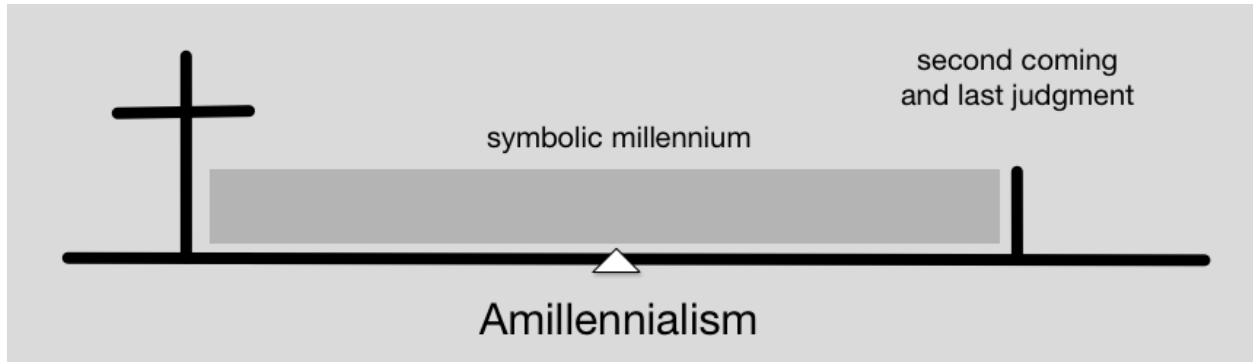
- The Thessalonians had become shaken and alarmed with concerns that “the day of the Lord had come” (**2nd Thessalonians 2:2**) and, therefore, that they were living in the time of tribulation.

Paul's Correction of their Error



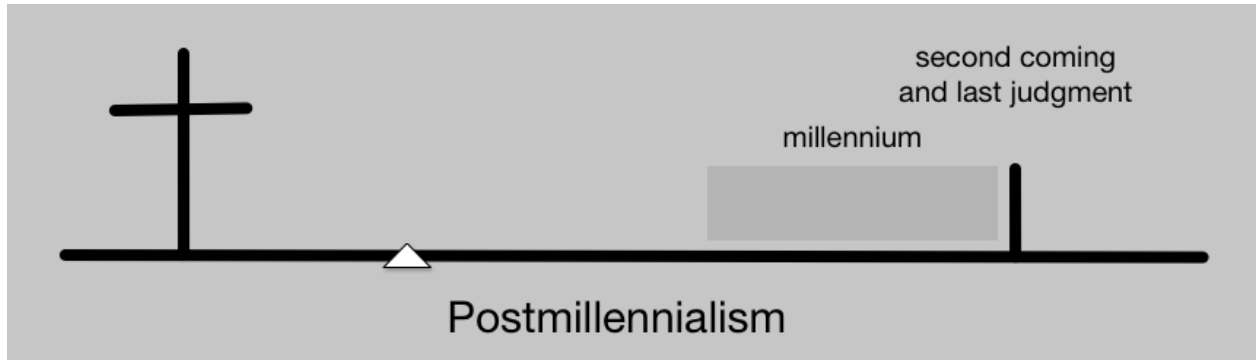
- Paul helpfully corrected their error by assuring them “that day will not come” (**2nd Thessalonians 2:3**) until first the restraint is removed, meaning the church is raptured (gathered to be with Christ), and then, and only then will the time of the tribulation begin.

Amillennialism



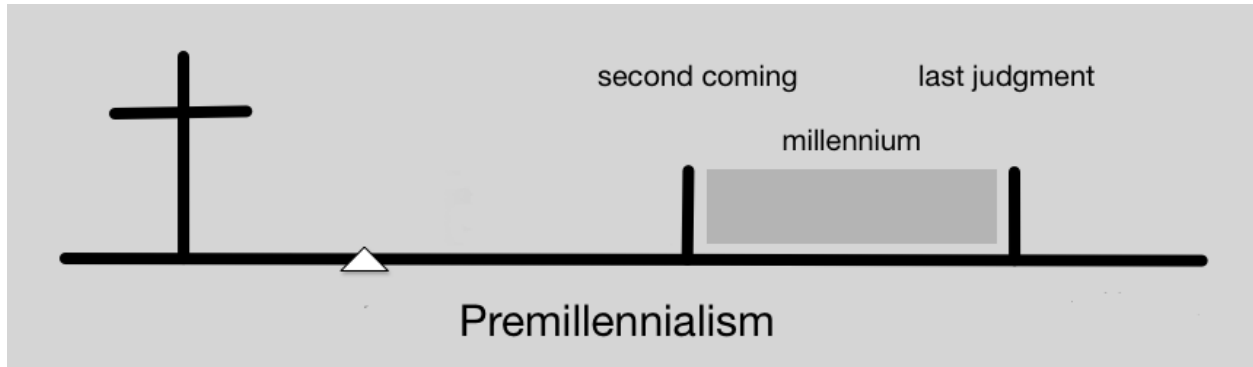
- This is the simplest eschatological view to explain.
- The amillennial stance expects there to be “no future millennium.”
 - According to this position, the thousand years of **Revelation 20:1 - 6** is both symbolic and right now.
- They believe that the exact duration of the church age cannot be known and that the “thousand years” is simply a figure of speech for a long time.
 - They believe that now is a time when Satan has been bound, and so his influence over the age is greatly reduced so that the gospel can be preached to all nations.
 - They believe that Christ is presently reigning over the earth during this figurative millennium from heaven and by means of his spiritual body (the church) being present on the earth.
- According to this position, the present church period will continue until the time of Christ’s second coming.
 - Then, suddenly, they believe all the end-time events will happen at once:
 - Resurrection, final judgment, new creation, etc...

Postmillennialism



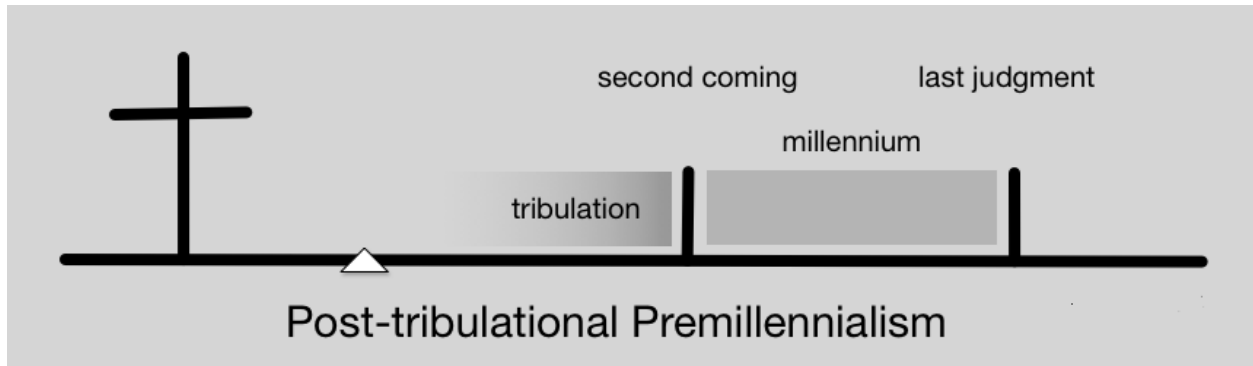
- According to this view, Christ's second coming will be after the millennium of **Revelation 20:1 - 6**.
 - They believe that the gospel will continue to progress, and the church will continue to grow to the extent that, eventually, the majority of the population will become Christian.
- Therefore, they believe that gradually, a "millennial age" of peace and righteousness will occur, and finally, at the end of this period, Christ will return to the earth.
 - Then they believe that there will be the resurrection and last judgment of the just and the unjust, and a new heaven and a new earth.
- Similar to the amillennialist, the postmillennialist tends to believe the millennium is a figurative period.
 - They believe that Christ reigns over the earth right now in a spiritual sense, as it is seen in the hearts of believers, and will become more apparent as the gospel transforms the nations of the Earth ushering in an age of without conflict.

Premillennialism



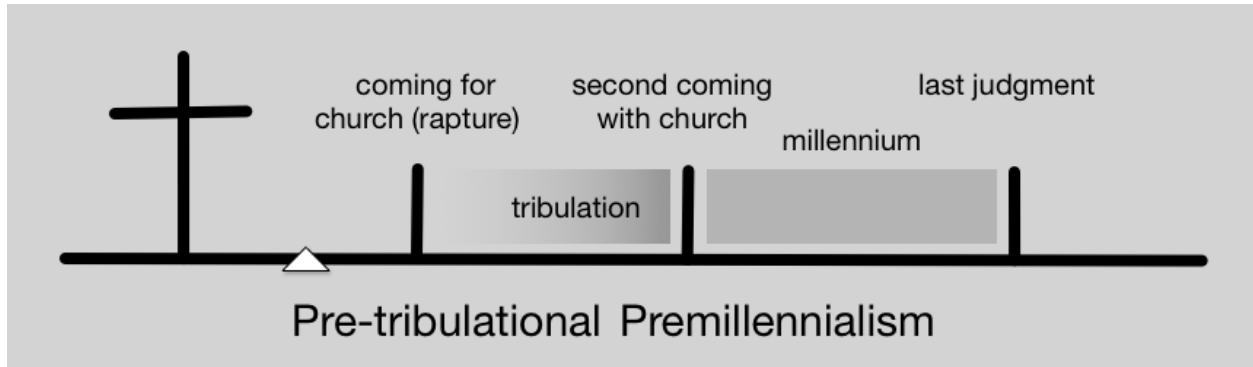
- This view holds that after Christ's Second Coming is before the millennium, he will inaugurate a physical kingdom on Earth for a millennium (1,000 years).
 - At the end of that time, Satan will be loosed, he will be defeated, and then will come the resurrection of the just and the unjust, the great white throne judgment, and the inauguration of the New Heavens and New Earth.
- However, within the Premillennial view, there are two differing positions on *when* Christ returns for the church in relation to the tribulation.

Post-tributational Premillennialism



- Contrary to the postmillennial arguing that things will get *better*, this position holds that the present church is currently in the tribulation and that the tribulation against Christians will only get *worse*.
 - This current tribulation will eventually escalate into the promised time of the Great Tribulation (wrath) over the entire earth.
- To end this, then Jesus Christ will come to the earth and reign for a thousand years.
 - They believe it is at this time when Christ returns to the earth that Christians who have died will be raised from the dead, receive their glorified bodies, and they will reign with Christ for a thousand years in the Millennial Kingdom.

Pre-tribulational Premillennialism



- According to this final position, Christ will not only return before the millennium but also before the tribulation.
 - This was a key clarification that the Apostle Paul had to reteach to the Thessalonians.
 - First, the church will be raptured (gathered to be with Christ), and then, and only then, will the time of the tribulation begin.
 - Then will be the rise of the lawless one (anti-Christ)
- Then suddenly, Christ will come with glory in the clouds with the heavenly host (angels and his church), and he will physically come to the earth, and “kill (the lawless one) with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.” (**2nd Thessalonians 2:8**)
 - Then, he will reign for the millennium as King of Kings and Lord of Lords
- After this time, Satan will be loosed for a little while (**Revelation 20:3**) and go out to deceive the nations and assemble them for the last battle.
 - Fire will come down from heaven and consume them all.
- Then will be the resurrection of the just and the unjust, the Great White Throne Judgement, and the ushering in of a new heaven and a new earth.