

Discipleship Night *The Doctrine of Eschatology*

Eschatology: *The study of "_____, " or future events.*

As Michael Wilcock has said in his commentary on Revelation:

"Matthew 24 and 25 [and Mark 13 and Luke 21] are Christ's master plan of the future. They are his answer to a double question from his disciples: First they had asked, in 24:3, 'When will this be?'; and secondly, 'What will be the sign of your coming—your parousia—and of the close of the age?' This is Christ's answer; and it is a full and detailed one.

How full, we may judge from its very first words: 'Take heed that no one leads you astray.' Prophecy, the future, the end of the world—what more fruitful field for the growth of odd and misleading theories? The sheer number of different interpretations of Revelation demonstrates that growth. For every interpretation which comes anywhere near the truth, there must be dozens which lead away from it.

So, Christ (says in Matthew 24:4), 'Take heed that no one leads you astray.' And for two long chapters Christ sets out his own magisterial teaching, explicitly designed to guard his disciples against being deceived in these matters. We must therefore beware of any theory about the future which adds unwieldy extras to the perfectly proportioned outline given us here." - **Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Revelation***

What Biblical Christians agree on when it comes to eschatology

#1. There Will Be a Sudden, Personal, Visible, Bodily _____ of Christ.

Jesus in Matt. 24:44 - *"You also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*

Jesus in John 14:3 - *"I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."*

Immediately 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).

Paul in 1 Thess. 4:16 - *"The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God."*

#2. We Should _____ Long for Christ's Return.

John's response at the end of Revelation should characterize Christians' hearts in all ages: *"Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20).*

Paul charges Titus, and all believers, *"to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:12–13).*

Paul says in Philippians 3:20 - *"Our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).*

<i>The term "Maranatha" in 1 Corinthians 16:22 means, "Our Lord, come!"</i>
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#3. We _____ Know When Christ Will Return.

Jesus tells us this on multiple occasions:

"The Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matt. 24:44).

"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Matt. 25:13).

"But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch; for you do not know when the time will come" (Mark 13:32–33).

#4. We agree on the _____ Results of Christ's Return.

No matter what their differences on the details, all Christians who take the Bible as their final authority agree that the final and ultimate result of Christ's return will be:

- 1) The judgment of unbelievers and the final reward of believers.
- 2) Believers will live with Christ in the new heavens and new earth for all eternity.

3) God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will reign and will be worshiped in a never-ending kingdom with no more sin, sorrow, or suffering.

The Millennium and Great Tribulation

What is the millennium? When does it occur? Will Christians go through the Great Tribulation?

Glossary of Terms

The doctrine of eschatology introduces a set of terms to our vocabulary that can overwhelm students who are unfamiliar with them. Here are some of these key terms.

Church Age: The current or present age/time period where the Church of Jesus Christ on earth awaits Christ's second coming.

Second Coming: The sudden, personal, visible, bodily return of Christ from heaven to earth.

The Rapture: The taking up or snatching up of believers to be with Christ when he returns to the earth.

The Tribulation: Refers to a period of great hardship and suffering prior to the return of Christ.

- ***Pre-tribulational:*** The view that the rapture will occur before the seven-year tribulation. The church is removed from the earth for seven years, then returns with the Lord at the end of the tribulation.
- ***Post-tribulational:*** The belief that the rapture happens after the tribulation. The church is raptured, and then returns to the earth immediately to reign with the Lord in the kingdom.

Millennium: The period of one thousand years (mentioned in Rev. 20:4–5) when Christ will be physically present and reign in perfect peace and justice over the earth.

Premillennialism: The belief that Christ will return to the earth before the millennium.

- ***Dispensational premillennialism (Pre-tribulation):*** The view that Christ will return secretly before the seven year, great tribulation to call believers to

himself, and then again after the tribulation to reign on earth for a thousand years.

- ***Classic or Historic premillennialism (Post-tribulation):*** *The view that Christ will return to the earth after a period of great tribulation and establish a millennial kingdom. At this time, believers who have died will be raised from the dead and believers who are alive will receive glorified resurrection bodies, and both will reign with Christ on earth for a thousand years.*

Amillennialism: *The view that there will be no literal thousand-year bodily reign of Christ on earth prior to the final judgment and the eternal state. In this view, scriptural references to the millennium in Revelation 20 are understood to describe the present church age.*

Postmillennialism: *The view that Christ will return to the earth after the millennium. In this view, the millennium is an age of peace and righteousness on the earth that is brought about by the progress of the gospel and the growth of the church but not by Christ's physical presence on earth.*

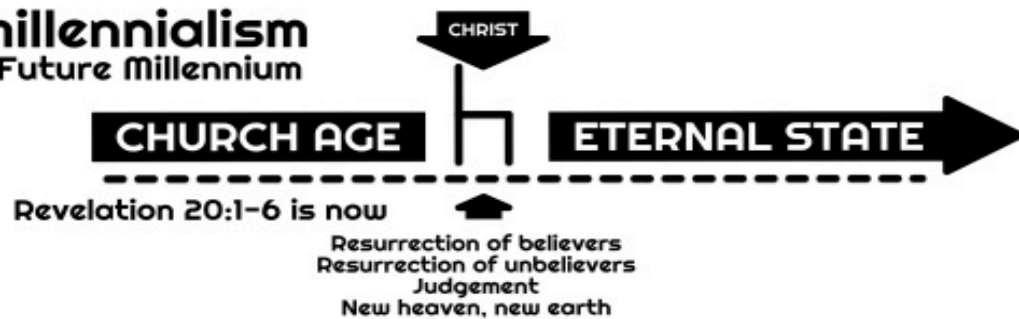
Intermediate state: *The state of a person between his or her death and the time that Christ returns to give believers new resurrection bodies. In the intermediate state, believers exist as spirits without physical bodies.*

Final judgment: *The last and ultimate proclamation by Jesus Christ of the eternal destinies of all people, which will take place after the millennium.*

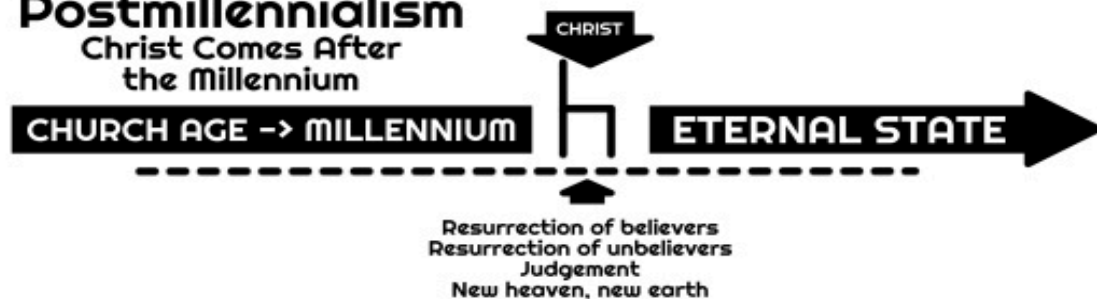
New heavens and new earth: *A description of the entirely renewed creation in which believers will dwell after the final judgment.*

Four Views of the Millennium

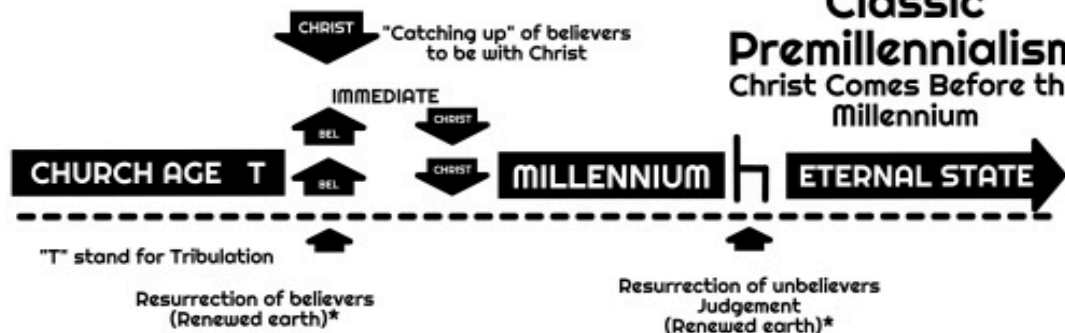
Amillennialism No Future Millennium



Postmillennialism Christ Comes After the Millennium

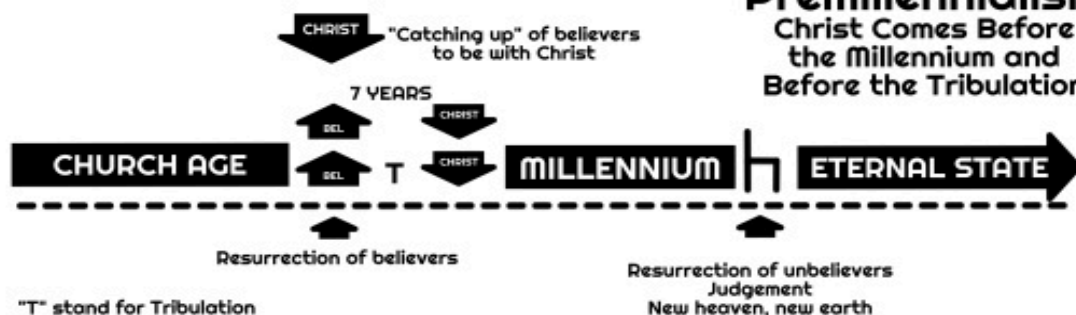


Classic Premillennialism Christ Comes Before the Millennium



*Classical Premillennialists differ over whether the renewed earth will begin in the millennium or the eternal state.

Pretribulational Premillennialism Christ Comes Before the Millennium and Before the Tribulation



"T" stand for Tribulation

See definitions of all terms from “Church Age” through of “Millennium”

Read: Matthew 24:3-14 (Tribulation), Revelation 20:1-10 (Millenium)

Four primary views of the Millennium and Great Tribulation

Have students look at graphic **AND key definitions for each as I walk through the different views.*

#1. Amillennialism (simplest view): There is **no** future millennium.

- Revelation 20:1-6 describes the present age.
- “Thousand years” is simply a figure of speech.
- The present church age will continue until the return of Christ when there will be a resurrection of both believers and unbelievers, and the new heavens and new earth will begin.

#2. Postmillennialism: Christ will return **after** (“post-”) the millennium.

- The progress of the gospel/growth of the church will increase; a larger proportion of the population will be Christians. As a result, there will be significant Christian influences on society.
- Gradually, a “millennial age” of peace and righteousness will occur on the earth, and will last for a long time.
- At the end of this period, Christ’s return to earth, believers and unbelievers raised, final judgment, new heaven/earth.

#3. Premillennialism: Christ will return **before** ("pre-") the millennium.

Classic or Historic premillennialism (Post-tribulation)

- The present church age will continue until a time of great tribulation and suffering comes on the earth.
- After that tribulation at the end of the church age, Christ will return to earth to establish a millennial kingdom.
- During this time, Christ will be physically present on earth and will reign as king.
- The believers will receive glorified resurrection bodies, and will reign with Christ on earth for one thousand years.
- Many hold that we will see the new heavens and new earth at this time.
- At the beginning, Satan will be bound/cast into the bottomless pit; he will have no influence on the earth.
 - At the end, Satan will be loosed, and with many unbelievers gather for battle against Christ, but will be defeated.
- Christ will raise from the dead unbelievers for final judgment, and believers enter into the eternal state.

Pretribulational (or Dispensational) Premillennialism:

- The church age will continue until suddenly, unexpectedly, and secretly, Christ will return part way to earth, and then will call believers to himself, then return to heaven with the believers who have been removed.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 - "The dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

- When that happens, there will be a great tribulation on the earth for seven years.
- During the tribulation, many of the signs that precede Christ's return will be fulfilled.

- The great ingathering of the Jewish people will occur.
- At the end of the tribulation, Christ will come back with his saints to reign on the earth for a thousand years.
- After this millennium: a rebellion, the defeat of Satan, resurrection of unbelievers, final judgment, & the eternal state.

NOTE: For more in depth arguments FOR and AGAINST each of these four views, see Grudem's Bible Doctrine book.

Arguments FOR Amillennialism:

1. Only one obscure passage (Rev. 20:1-6) appears to teach the future earthly millennial reign of Christ.
2. Scripture only teaches one resurrection, when both believers and unbelievers will be raised. (Jn 5:28-29; Ac 24:15)
3. The idea of glorified believers and sinners living on earth together is too difficult to accept.
4. If Christ comes in glory to reign on the earth, then how could people still persist in sin?
5. There seems to be no convincing purpose for such a millennium.
6. Scripture seems to indicate that all the major events yet to come before the eternal state will occur at once.

Arguments FOR Postmillennialism:

1. The Great Commission leads us to expect the gospel to go forth and result in a largely Christian world.
2. Parables of the gradual growth of the kingdom indicate it will eventually fill the earth with its influence. Mt 13:31-33)
3. Postmillennialists argue that the world is becoming more Christian.

Arguments FOR Premillennialism:

1. Several OT passages fit neither in the present age nor in the eternal state (Is. 65:20; Is. 11:6-11; Zec. 14:5-17).
2. Many NT passages besides Revelation 20 also speak of a future millennium. (Rev. 2:26-27; 1 Corinthians 15:22-25).
3. Revelation 20 seems to be best understood as referring to a future earthly reign of Christ prior to the future judgment.

Arguments FOR a pre-tribulation rapture:

1. Inappropriate for believers to be on the earth during the outpouring of God's wrath.
2. Revelation 3:10 seems to promise that the church will be taken out of the world prior to the hour of trial.
3. If Christ returns after the tribulation and defeats all his enemies, where will the unbelievers come from who populate the millennial kingdom?

Arguments FOR a post-tribulation rapture:

1. The NT nowhere clearly says the church will be removed from the earth before the tribulation.
2. The tribulation is clearly linked with the Lord's return in some passages. (Mt 24:31; 1 Th 4:16; 1 Co 15:51-52).
3. The NT does not seem to justify the idea of two separate returns of Christ.

The Final Judgment

#1. The time of the final judgment

- The final judgment will occur after the millennium and the rebellion that occurs at the end of it. (Rev 20:7-11)

#2. The nature of the final judgment

- 1) Jesus Christ will be the judge (2 Tim 4:1; Acts 10:42; John 5:26-27)
- 2) Unbelievers will be judged (Rom 2:5-7; Lk 12:47-48)
 - This judgment of unbelievers will include degrees of punishment
- 3) Believers will be judged (Rom 14:10, 12; 2 Cor 5:10)
 - This judgment of believers will be a judgment to evaluate and bestow various degrees of reward, but believers should never fear eternal condemnation. (John 5:24; Romans 8:1)
 - Thus the day of judgment can be portrayed as one in which believers are rewarded and unbelievers are punished. (Rev 11:18)
- 4) Angels will be judged (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; 1 Cor 6:3)

#3. Moral application of the final judgment

- 1) The doctrine of final judgment satisfies our inward sense of a need for justice in the world (Col 3:22, 25)
- 2) The doctrine of final judgment enables us to forgive others freely (Rom 12:19; 1 Pet 2:22-23)
- 3) The doctrine of final judgment provides a motive for righteous living (Matt 6:20)
- 4) The doctrine of final judgment provides a great motive for evangelism (Ezek 33:11; 2 Pet 3:9)

Heaven (the intermediate state) and the new heavens and new earth

#1. For those Christians who die before the Lord returns, we will go

_____ **to heaven (or the intermediate state).**

Heaven: Heaven is the place where God most fully makes known his presence to bless. (Is 66:1; 1 Pe 3:22; Mt 6:9).

- Heaven is a place, not just a state of mind (Acts 1:11; Acts 7:55-56; John 14:3).

The intermediate state: The state of a person between his or her death and the time that Christ returns to give believers new resurrection bodies. In the intermediate state, believers exist as spirits without physical bodies.

#2. We will ultimately live _____ with God in new heavens and a new earth.

- After final judgment, believers enter into the full enjoyment of life in God's presence forever. (Mt 25:34; Rev 22:3).
- Christians often speak of living with God "in heaven" forever, but biblical teaching is much richer: new heavens and a new earth. (Isa 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev 21:1-3).

#3. The _____ creation will be renewed and we will continue to exist and act in it (Rom 8:19-21; Heb 1:11-12; Heb 12:26-27; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Re 20:11; Re 21:1)

- It seems preferable in these passages to think that the earth is to be changed and renewed.
 - Difficult to think of God annihilating his original creation as this seems to give the devil the last word by scrapping what was originally "very good."
 - Passages above may simply refer to the burning up of some of the things on the earth in its present form, not its very existence.

#4. Our resurrection _____ will be part of the renewed creation.

- In the new heavens and new earth there will be a place and activities for our resurrection bodies, which will never grow old or become weak or ill. There is nothing inherently “unspiritual” about the physical world that God made and called “very good” (Gen 1:31).

<i>Four Implications of studying eschatology the right way:</i>
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#1. It should bring _____.

Luke 21:28 - "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

1 Peter 5:4 - And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

#2. It should spur _____.

Mark 13:10 - "The gospel must first be preached to all the nations.

Matthew 24:14 - "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

#3. It should encourage _____.

Luke 21:34-36 - "Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth... "But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

1 John 2:28 - Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

#4. It should cause us to _____ the Lord with great joy!

Isaiah 12:5 - "Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be made known in all the earth.

