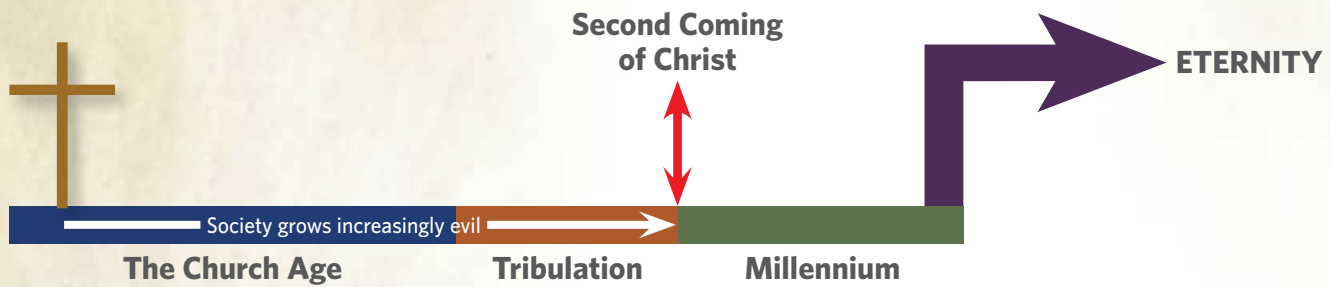


Four Views of the End Times

HISTORICAL PREMILLENNIALISM



What is historical premillennialism?

It is the belief that Christians will remain on the earth during the great tribulation, which will purify the churches by rooting out false believers. The second coming of Christ will precede the millennium, which is a literal, future event. God's promises of land and blessings to Abraham and his offspring were conditional promises based on their obedience. The church has replaced the nation of Israel as God's covenant people. 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 (Rom. 9:6–8; Gal. 6:16).

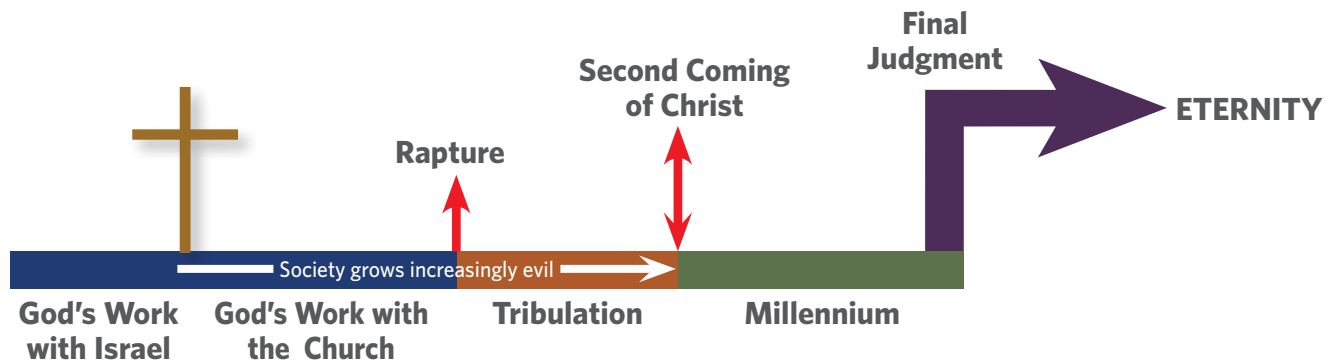
What Scriptures seem to support this view?

The revealing of the Antichrist precedes Christ's return (2 Thess. 2:3–4). The tribulation will root out false members from the churches (Rev. 2:22–23). The saints are on earth during the tribulation (Rev. 13:7). God's promises to Abraham and his offspring were conditional (Gen. 22:18; 2 Chron. 33:8; Isa. 1:19–20; Jer. 7:6–7). The New Testament frequently uses "Israel" and "the twelve tribes" to refer to Christians (Matt. 19:28–29; Rom. 9:6–8).

When has this view been popular?

It seems to have been the earliest view of the end times among Christians who lived just after the apostles, but it faded with later church fathers. Supporters included many early church fathers such as Lactantius, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, and possibly Papias. Modern supporters include David Dockery, John Warwick Montgomery, George R. Beasley-Murray, Robert Gundry, and George E. Ladd.

DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM



What is dispensational premillennialism?

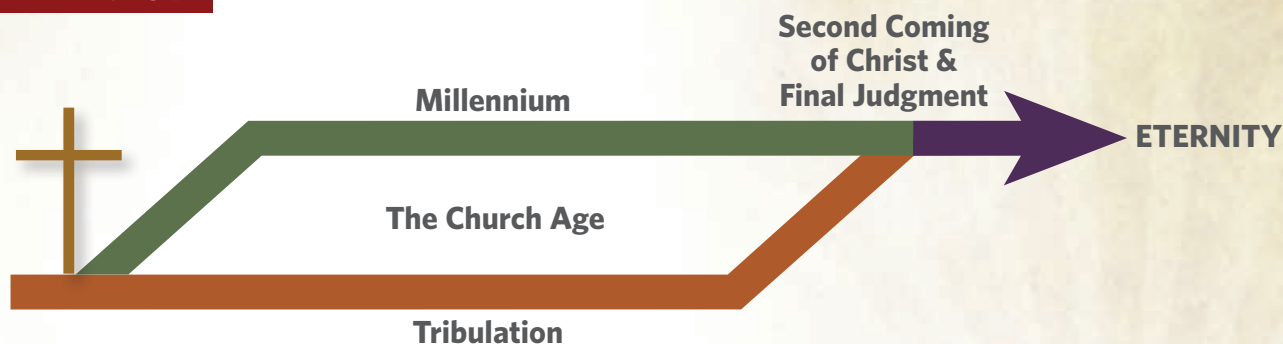
It is the belief that Jesus will come back to earth after a seven-year tribulation and will rule during a thousand-year millennium of peace on earth. God will still give to the nation of Israel the land described in Genesis 15:18. All references to Israel in Revelation refer to the nation of Israel. Most who hold this view are "pre-tribulationists"; they understand Revelation 4:1–2 to refer to the rapture. The rapture is the event when Christ removes Christians from the earth before the great tribulation begins. The rapture and the second coming of Jesus are two separate events. Others who hold this view are "mid-tribulationists"; they believe the rapture will occur during the tribulation.

What Scriptures seem to support this view?

God will remove Christians before the tribulation (1 Thess. 5:9; Rev. 3:10). God's promises to Abraham and his offspring were unconditional (Gen. 15:7–21). The church is not specifically mentioned between Revelation 4 and 19.

When has this view been popular?

This view emerged in the 1800s among the Plymouth Brethren. It increased in popularity in the late 1800s and remains widespread today. Supporters include J. Nelson Darby, C.I. Scofield, Harry A. Ironside, Gleason Archer, Donald G. Barnhouse, Hal Lindsey, Chuck Smith, John MacArthur, Charles Ryrie, Charles Stanley, Norman L. Geisler, and Tim LaHaye.

AMILLENNIALISM**What is amillennialism?**

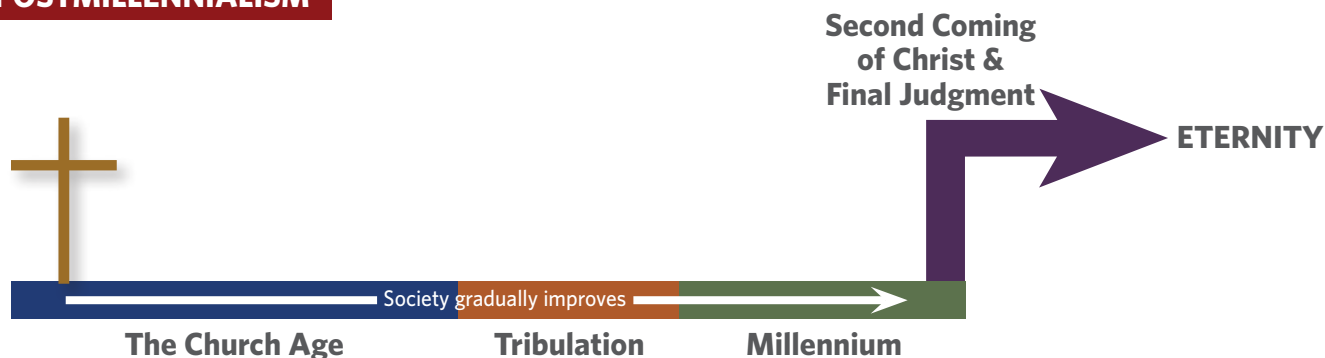
It is the belief that the millennium is the spiritual reign of Jesus in the hearts of his followers. The “first resurrection” in Revelation 20:5 is not a physical restoration from the dead, but a spiritual resurrection (regeneration). Christ’s triumph over Satan through his death and resurrection restrained the power of Satan on earth (Rev. 20:1-3). 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. Most references to Israel in Revelation are symbolic references to the people of God on earth.

What Scriptures seem to support this view?

The Bible frequently uses the number 1,000 figuratively (Ps. 50:10; 90:4; 105:8; 2 Peter 3:8). The first resurrection could refer to the spiritual resurrection of those who trust Christ (Rev. 20:4; Rom. 11:13-15; Eph. 2:1-4). The second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the saved and the unsaved will occur at the same time (Dan. 12:2-3; John 5:28-29). The saints are on earth during the tribulation (Rev. 13:7).

When has this view been popular?

It became popular in the fifth century and has remained widespread throughout church history. Augustine was possibly the first amillennialist. Martin Luther and John Calvin held this view. Other supporters include E.Y. Mullins, Abraham Kuyper, G.C. Berkouwer, Herschel Hobbs, Stanley Grenz, and J. I. Packer.

POSTMILLENNIALISM**What is postmillennialism?**

It is the belief that the second coming of Christ will occur after the millennium, which represents a long time period when, through the preaching of the gospel, most of the world will submit to Jesus. Satan will have no power over the earth, and evil regimes will collapse (Rev. 19:19-20:3). Christ will rule the earth through his Spirit and through his church. He will not, however, be physically present on the earth. The resurrection depicted in Revelation 20:4 represents the spiritual regeneration of people who trust in Jesus Christ. The second coming of Christ, the final conflict between good and evil, the defeat of Satan, the physical resurrection of all people, and the final judgment will occur together, immediately after the millennium (Rev. 20:7-15).

What Scriptures seem to support this view?

Every ethnic group will receive the gospel before the second coming (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10). The second coming of Christ and the resurrection of all people will occur at the same time (Dan. 12:2-3; John 5:28-29).

When has postmillennialism been popular?

The earliest writer who was clearly postmillennialist was Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202). Earlier leaders such as Eusebius, Athanasius, and Augustine may have also been postmillennialists. During the missionary expansion of the 1800s, this view increased in popularity. But in the early 1900s, a world war and economic depression raised questions about whether the world was becoming a better place, and postmillennialism diminished in popularity. Supporters include Jonathan Edwards, B.B. Warfield, Augustus H. Strong, Charles Hodge, R.L. Dabney, Loraine Boettner, and R.C. Sproul.

	Dispensational Premillennialism	Historical Premillennialism	Amillennialism	Postmillennialism
Will Jesus return physically?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
When will Jesus return?	After a 7-year tribulation; before the millennium.	After tribulation; before the millennium.	Anytime; a detailed time frame is not important.	After the millennium.
Do the rapture and second coming of Christ occur at the same time?	No, they are events separated by either 7 years (pre-tribulation rapture) or 3½ years (mid-tribulation rapture).	Yes	Yes	Yes
Will there be a great tribulation?	Yes	Yes	The tribulation occurs any time Christians are persecuted or wars and disasters occur.	Tribulation is either the first-century Jewish-Roman War or the ongoing conflict between good and evil prior to millennium.
Will Christians suffer during the tribulation?	Christians are either raptured before the tribulation (pre-tribulation rapture) or 3½ years into the tribulation (mid-tribulation rapture).	Yes, Christians will go through the tribulation and endure suffering and persecution for the cause of Christ.	Yes, Christians will suffer and endure persecution until Jesus returns; persecution will increase in the end.	Yes, Christians are called to share the gospel, and tribulation will occur when that gospel is opposed.
Will there be a literal 1,000-year millennium?	Yes, after the 7-year tribulation, Christ will return and reign for 1,000 years.	Yes, after the tribulation, Christ will return and reign for 1,000 years.	No, the millennium refers to the reign of Christ in the hearts of his believers.	No, the millennium refers to a period of peace when the gospel reaches all people.
Who is saved?	Christians only	Christians only	Christians only	Christians only
Is the modern state of Israel relevant to the prophecies in Revelation?	Yes	No	No	No
When was this view most held?	Became popular about 1860. Has increased in popularity.	The earliest view of the end times, emerging at the end of the first century.	Popularized in AD 400. Continues to be accepted today.	May have been popular as early as AD 300. Less popular today.

GLOSSARY OF END TIMES WORDS

666—Number of the beast, spelled out in Rev. 13:18 as *six hundred sixty-six*.

144,000—Group of believers who endure the great tribulation (Rev. 7:14).

Abomination of Desolation—An event that desecrates the temple in Jerusalem and is a signal to Jesus' followers that soon Jerusalem will be ruined (Matt. 24:15).

Antichrist—(from Greek, *antichristos*, in place of Christ) Anyone who denies what the apostles taught about Jesus Christ (1 John 2:18–22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7). Specifically, the antichrist is a Satanic counterfeit of Jesus Christ, described as “lawless” and as a “beast” (2 Thess. 2:3–8; Rev. 13:1–18; 17:3–17).

Apocalyptic Literature—(from Greek, *apokalypsis*, revealing) Jewish genre of writing structured around visions that figuratively pointed to hidden truths for the purpose of assuring God's people of the goodness of God's plans during periods of persecution.

Armageddon—(from Hebrew, *Har-Megiddon*, Mount Megiddo) The city of Megiddo was located between the Plain of Jezreel and Israel's western coast. Deborah, Gideon, Saul, Ahaziah, and Josiah fought decisive battles near Megiddo, so the valley of Megiddo became the symbol of a point of decisive conflict.

Babylon—In the book of Revelation, the name “Babylon” is symbolic, yet interpretations vary. It has been interpreted to refer to Jerusalem, Rome, or a one-world government and church.

Beasts, The Two—Symbolic creatures described in Rev. 11:7; 13:1–18. The first beast rises from the sea and has ten horns and seven heads that seem to point to Rome. The second beast rises from the earth with horns like a lamb and a voice like a dragon—in other words, a satanic parody of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

Church Age—Time period from the beginning of the church (about AD 30) until Jesus Christ returns for everyone who has trusted in him, as promised in John 14.

Eschatology—(from Greek, *eschatos* meaning “final” and *logos* meaning “word” or “idea”) The study of the Bible's teachings about the events leading up to the second coming of Jesus.

Final Judgment—Event described in Rev. 20:11–15 when God resurrects all people, judges them from the great white throne, and delivers them to their eternal destinies.

First Coming of Christ—Earthly life and ministry of Jesus Christ, about 4 BC–AD 30.

Mark of the Beast—Indication of a person's allegiance to the teachings of the antichrist (Rev. 13:16–17). The people of God receive a similar mark indicating their allegiance to Jesus (Rev. 7:3; 9:4; 14:1; 22:4). Some interpreters believe that the mark of the beast will be an actual mark required by the Antichrist. Others understand the mark as a reference to someone's actions (“hand”) and beliefs (“forehead”) (Ex. 13:9, 16).

Millennium—(from Latin, *mille*, thousand) The 1,000-year reign of Jesus on earth described in Rev. 20:4–6.

Rapture—(from Latin, *raptus*, carry away) Event described in 1 Thess. 4:15–17 when Jesus Christ returns for his people. Dispensational premillennialists believe that the rapture and the second coming of Jesus are two separate events.

Second Coming of Christ—Bodily return of Jesus to earth to reign as king.

Tribulation, Great—Time when disasters happen on the earth and people who are faithful to Jesus suffer intense persecution, possibly lasting seven years (Rev. 7:14).

Witnesses, The Two—Two beings described in Rev. 11:1–14 who speak the truth about God before being killed and then resurrected.