

"THE TIME OF THE END"

Four Views Of The Millennium

INTRODUCTION

1. A precious hope of Christians is the return of Jesus Christ...
 - a. Promised by angels when He ascended to heaven - [Ac 1:9-11](#)
 - b. Proclaimed by His apostles in their writings - [1Th 4:16-18](#)
2. Events in the Middle East often spark interest in Jesus' return...
 - a. People wonder if the time of the end is near
 - b. Some often affirm "yes!" with great certainty, only to be proven wrong
3. What can we know about **"The Time Of The End"**...?
 - a. The Bible speaks of resurrections, a millennium, judgment, new heavens and new earth
 - b. What does it reveal about the sequence of such events?
 - c. Can we know when the time of the end is near?
4. Why even bother with such things...?
 - a. To be aware of other views (especially when a popular view is proven wrong time and again)
 - b. To avoid being misled by cults and others who use their views on prophecy to influence people

[A study of such things is called **eschatology**, from the Greek word "eschatos" (**last things**). The study is complicated by the diversity of views surrounding it. Here is a summary of four major views...]

I. DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM

A. DISTINCTIVE FEATURES...

1. **The kingdom:** Jesus failed to establish it at His first coming, will succeed at His second
2. **The church:** views the church and Israel as two distinct identities with two individual redemptive plans
3. **The tribulation:** a seven-year period (the 70th week of **Dan 9: 25-27**) containing the reign of the Anti-Christ prior to the millennium; restoration of Jews to Israel, conversion of the remnant of Israel, temple rebuilt, priesthood, sacrifices restored
4. **The rapture:** the church (living and dead) is raptured to meet the Lord in the air either at the beginning (pre-trib), middle (mid-trib) or end (post-trib) of the seven years of tribulation; tribulation saints and O.T. dead will be raised at the end of the tribulation
5. **The millennium:** Christ will return at the end of the tribulation to institute a 1000 year rule from a holy city (the New Jerusalem); those who come to believe in Christ during the tribulation (including the 144,000 Jews) and survive will go on to populate the earth during this time; those who were raptured or raised previous to the tribulation period will reign with Christ over the millennial population
6. **Post-millennium:** Satan, bound during Christ's earthly reign, will be loosed to deceive the nations, gather an army of the deceived, and take up to battle against the Lord; the battle will end in the judgment of the wicked and Satan, followed by entrance into the eternal state of glory by the righteous
7. **Major proponents:** John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, Louis Sperry Chafer, J. Dwight Pentecost, Norman Geisler, Charles Stanley, Chuck Smith, and Chuck Missler

-- A visual synopsis of this view can be seen on the web [here](#)

B. OBSERVATIONS...

1. This view is highly popular today, mostly due to Hal Lindsey

- (The Late, Great Planet Earth), Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins (Left Behind series)
- 2. A variation was taught among churches of Christ by R. H. Boll
- 3. It is of recent origin, its distinctive elements first taught by John Nelson Darby (1830 A.D.)
- 4. It views the church as either an after-thought or an unrevealed mystery in the OT
- 5. It teaches a number of resurrections; at least two for the righteous and one for the wicked
- **Requires a strictly literal interpretation of OT prophecy and the book of Revelation**

[Most people think of dispensational premillennialism when they hear the word 'premillennialism'; there is another form of premillennialism that has been around a lot longer...]

II. HISTORICAL PREMILLENNIALISM

A. DISTINCTIVE FEATURES...

1. **The kingdom of God:** present through the Spirit since Pentecost, to be experienced by sight during the millennium after Christ's return
 2. **The church:** the fulfillment of Israel (physical Israel has no distinctive redemptive plan)
 3. **The tribulation:** a time of apostasy and suffering just before the millennium, ended by the battle of Armageddon and destruction of the Anti-Christ; many Jews converted at this time
 4. **The rapture:** living and dead saints to meet the Lord in the clouds immediately preceding the millennium
 5. **The millennium:** Christ will return to institute a thousand-year reign on earth; there will be the re-establishment of temple worship and sacrifice as a remembrance of Christ's sacrifice
 6. **Post-millennium:** Satan loosed, the battle of Gog and Magog, Satan defeated; the wicked dead are raised, the great white throne judgment, followed by the eternal state
 7. **Major proponents:** George Eldon Ladd, Walter Martin, John Warwick Montgomery, and Theodore Zahn
- **A visual synopsis of this view can be seen on the web [here](#)**

B. OBSERVATIONS...

1. Not to be confused with dispensational premillennialism (see above)
 2. Called "historical" (or "classic") because elements of this view were first espoused by Justin Martyr (165 A.D.)
 3. It was taught among churches of Christ by: Barton W. Stone, Moses E. Lard, David Lipscomb, James A. Harding, and T. W. Brents
 4. This view is free from some of the troubling aspects found in dispensational premillennialism (especially in regards to the church as an after-thought)
 5. It teaches two separate resurrections; the righteous are raised before the millennium, the wicked afterwards
- **Its interpretation of OT prophecy and the book of Revelation is not strictly literal**

[Another view that was once very popular is that of...]

III. POSTMILLENNIALISM

A. DISTINCTIVE FEATURES...

1. **The kingdom of God:** a spiritual entity experienced on earth through the Christianizing affect of the Gospel
2. **The church:** the fulfillment of Israel (similar to historical premillennialism)
3. **The millennium:** an era (not a literal 1000 years) during which Christ will reign over the earth, not from an literal and earthly throne, but through the gradual increase of the Gospel and its power to change lives; after this gradual

Christianization of the world, Christ will return and immediately usher the church into their eternal state after judging the wicked

4. **Post-millennium:** Christ returns, the righteous and the wicked raised, followed by the final judgment and the eternal state
 5. **Major proponents:** Rousas J. Rushdoony, Greg L. Bahnsen, Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., David Chilton, and Gary North
- A visual synopsis of this view can be seen on the web [here](#)

B. OBSERVATIONS...

1. This view was very popular prior to the world wars of the twentieth century
 2. It was taught among churches of Christ by: Alexander Campbell, Tolbert Fanning, J. W. McGarvey, Robert Milligan, and E. G. Sewell
 3. It does not necessarily hold to a literal 1000 year reign of Christ (similar to amillennialism)
 4. It teaches just one resurrection, the righteous and wicked at the same time
- Its interpretation of OT prophecy and the book of Revelation is not strictly literal

[A fourth view that was once the most dominant view is referred to as...]

IV. AMILLENNIALISM

A. DISTINCTIVE FEATURES...

1. **The kingdom of God:** a spiritual reality that all Christians partake in and that is seen presently by faith, but will be grasped by sight at the consummation
 2. **The church:** the eschatological fulfillment of Israel, the visible manifestation today of the kingdom foretold by OT prophecy (along with John the Baptist and Jesus)
 3. **The millennium:** not a literal 1000 years, but a long period of time between the first coming and second coming of Christ; inaugurated with Christ's resurrection – in an "already/not yet" sense, Christ already reigns over all and is already victorious over Satan
 4. **Post-millennium:** Satan loosed, battle of Gog and Magog, Christ returns, Satan defeated, the righteous and wicked dead are raised, the great white throne judgment, followed by the eternal state
 5. **Major proponents:** Anthony Hoekema, William Hendrikson, Gregory K. Beale, Robert B. Strimple
- A visual synopsis of this view can be seen on the web [here](#)

B. OBSERVATIONS...

1. This view is perhaps better termed Nunc-Millennialism or Inaugurated Millennialism
 - a. "Amillennialism" suggests a lack of belief in the millennium
 - b. Though "a" can mean "in" (rather than the commoner "none")
 - c. This view holds the millennium of Rev 20 is now, just not a physical kingdom
 2. Popularized by Augustine (400 A.D.), and remains the dominant view among Catholics and some Protestant denominations (Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican)
 3. It was taught among churches of Christ by: Foy E. Wallace, R. L. Whiteside, C. R. Nichol and most in the churches of Christ since the early twentieth century
 4. It teaches just one resurrection, the righteous and wicked at the second coming of Christ
- Its interpretation of OT prophecy and the book of Revelation may be literal or symbolic, depending on the context

CONCLUSION

1. This survey is not intended to be exhaustive...
 - a. There are variations in each of the four views
 - b. Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Seventh-Day Adventists have

their own peculiar views

2. But perhaps it helps to identify areas to examine regarding the end times ...
 - a. The meaning of the expression "last days" in the Bible
 - b. The interpretation of prophecy in the OT and Revelation
 - c. The relationship between the church and the kingdom of God
 - d. The meaning of the millennium in Revelation 20
 - e. The doctrine of the resurrection and concepts of the rapture
 - f. The role of Israel in God's plan for the future
3. In the meantime...
 - a. Are you ready for whatever comes?
 - b. Are you watching for the Lord's return? - [1Th 5:1-6](#); [2Pe 3:10-14](#)
 - c. Are you working for the Lord now? - [Mt 24:44-51](#)

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. - [1Co 15:58](#)

In our next study, we shall look at the expression "last days" as found in Scripture...

Note: A useful aid in preparing this study was the **Blue Letter Bible** website, especially its Eschatology section entitled, "Four Views Of The Millenium" - <http://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/mill.html>

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