

Shawn Nelson - Eschatology Class #1  
**What are the four main views of the end times?**

## Introduction

### What is eschatology?

- “Study of last things (the future).”
- In Greek: *eschatos* (last) + *logy* (study of)

### Why study it?

- To be good Bible students!
  - 26.8% of bible is prophecy!
  - 1,239 prophecies in the Old Testament + 578 prophecies in the New Testament = 1,817 of the (31, 124 total verses in Bible) = 26.8%
- Practical reasons to study eschatology
  - Notice the blessing in Revelation (Rev. 1:3)
  - It motivates us to evangelize and serve God.
  - Helps us find hope in troublesome times (how important today!)
  - Eschatology helps us look forward to heaven (Rev. 21:4).
  - Motivates us to live right (Romans 13:11-12).

### Why a taboo topic?

- People can get pretty worked up over different views
- Joke about “The Heretic”
- Position taught here will be pretribulational premillennial (view of Chuck Smith, Calvary Chapel)
- We need to agree from the start that we will be respectful of other opinions

## The 4 Main Eschatological Views

Good place to start is with the mention of a 1,000 year reign of Christ in **Revelation 20:1-11**

Because what is believed about this has a significant impact on other views in eschatology.

### The Premillennial View

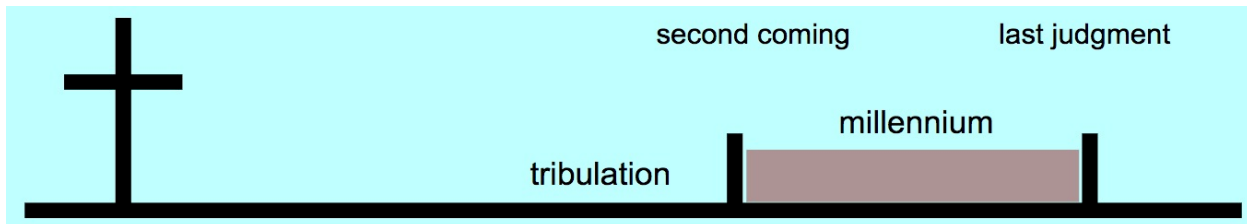
There are two main views. Both believe:

- Jesus will return and establish a physical kingdom upon the earth.
- This millennial kingdom will last for 1,000 years.

- The land promises to Abraham and the kingdom promise to David will be literally fulfilled.

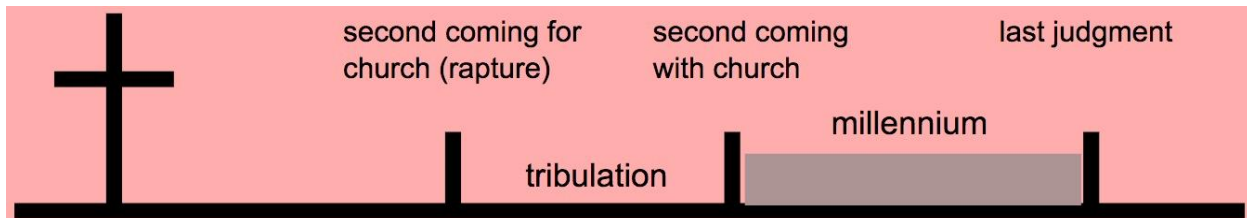
### Historic premillennialism

- Church was in fore vision of OT prophecy
- Reject rapture of church before tribulation.
- Post-Tribulational



### Dispensational premillennialism

- Millennium will be a time of fulfillment of unconditional promises to Israel.
- Church is mystery, a temporary parenthesis in history as result of Jews rejecting the kingdom.
- Pre-Tribulational



Main arguments offered in support of premillennialism include:

- (1) Best explains **unconditional land-promise to Abraham** and his **descendants** (Gen. 12, 14–15).
- (2) It provides the best understanding of the **unconditional Davidic covenant** (that his descendent would reign forever (2 Sam. 7:12ff.).
- (3) Needed to fulfill numerous **Old Testament predictions about a messianic age** (cf. Isa. 9, 60, 65).
- (4) It explains Jesus' promise that He and His apostles would **reign on thrones in Jerusalem** (Matt. 19:28).
- (5) It is supported by Jesus' response to the disciples' **question about restoring the kingdom to Israel** (Acts 1:5–7).
- (6) It upholds **Paul's affirmation** about Christ reigning until death is defeated (1 Cor. 15:20–28).
- (7) It is consistent with the Romans 11 promise that **Israel will be restored**.
- (8) It maintains a literal interpretation of Christ and the resurrected saints reigning "a thousand years" (Rev. 20:1–6).

Held by:

- Many early church Fathers (e.g., Justin Martyr [c. 100–c. 165], Clement of Alexandria [150–c. 215], Tertullian [c. 155–c. 225])
- The early Augustine [354–430])
- Some Puritans (Cotton Mather [1663–1728])
- Plymouth Brethren (John Nelson Darby [1800–1882])
- Anglicans (Griffith Thomas [1861–1924])

- Some Presbyterians (Lewis Sperry Chafer [1871–1952])
- Some Reformed (James Montgomery Boice [1938–2000])
- Baptists (Millard Erickson [b. 1932])
- Wide variety of charismatics.

## The Amillennial View



- The term amillennial means literally “no Millennium.”
- There will not be a literal, physical, earthly millennial reign of Christ following the Second Coming.
- Believes the unfulfilled Old Testament predictions made to Israel are fulfilled spiritually in the New Testament church.

Main arguments for amillennialism include the following:

- (1) The Abrahamic and Davidic **covenants were conditional** and, thus, need no future fulfillment.
- (2) **Prophecy demands a symbolic approach** and, hence, need not be taken literally.
- (3) **Israel and the church** are not two distinct entities, but **one people of God** bound by one covenant of grace.
- (4) The Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament and so must be understood in light of this fulfillment.
- (5) The “first resurrection” of Revelation 20 should be understood as a “**spiritual resurrection,**” namely, souls being delivered from earth to heaven where they reign with Christ spiritually.
- (6) Numerous New Testament passages show that **Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled in the church** (e.g., the new covenant—cf. Jer. 31:31; Heb. 8:8–13)

Held by:

- Later Augustine
- Martin Luther (1483–1546)
- John Calvin (1509–1564)
- Most Puritans held to Amillennialism
- Most Roman Catholics

## The Postmillennial View



- Postmillennialism is like amillennialism in that it also **rejects a literal 1,000** year reign of Christ
- Instead this view asserts Jesus **established his kingdom on earth** through preaching and redemptive work in 1<sup>st</sup> century
- There will be **increasing gospel success** until most people are saved
- This will lead to a time of **unparalleled peace**, righteousness and prosperity upon the earth
- Then Jesus will physically return
- **Not a strong view** today (because most see world getting more evil)

The following are some of the main postmillennial arguments:

- (1) The Bible promises universal gospel proclamation (Matt. 28:18–20).
- (2) Christ’s throne, from which He reigns, is **in heaven** (Ps. 47:2; 9:5).
- (3) People from all nations and ethnicities will be saved (Rev. 7:9–10).
- (4) Jesus’ parable of the mustard seed foretells **continual advance of Christianity** in the world (Matt. 13:31–32).
- (5) There is ample evidence that world conditions, through Christian teaching, are improving morally, socially, and spiritually.
- (6) In the Bible, thousand is often used symbolically (cf. 1 Chron. 16:15; Ps. 50:10).

Held by:

- A. Hodge (1823–1886)
- B. Warfield (1851–1921)
- H. Strong (Baptist, 1836–1921), and Loraine Boettner (1932–2000)

Bibliography:

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