

The Christian Eschatology Landscape

Christian eschatology (study of last things) is rich and rewarding to believers who carefully and prayerfully pursue it. Diligence, humility and patience is the key to making progress since it is a very difficult endeavor as evidenced by the vast array of interpretations that make up the Christian eschatology landscape.

I. Some Guiding Principles

1. All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is pure and true (2Tim 3:16; Psalm 119:160; Prov 30:5). God does not inspire error or contradictions.
2. The scriptures are given for our understanding (1John 5:13; Prov 4:4-7; 1Cor 2:7-16). Some scriptures are hard (not impossible) to understand (2Pet 3:16; 2Tim 2:15). Part of the spiritual growth and blessings enjoyed by the eschatology student is in the work required to rightly interpret and harmonize the numerous relevant passages.
3. God says that reading, hearing, and keeping prophecy is profitable for us (Matt 24:15; 2 Tim 3:16; Rev 1:3; 1Cor 15:58; 1Thes 4:18; 2Cor 5:9-11; 2Pet 3:11; 1Jo 3:2-3). Because of the vast number of scriptures on the subject, it cannot be ignored by any serious Bible student, and it would be wise to take plenty of time before positionalizing one's self. Excluding some extreme views such as hyper-preterism and hyper-dispensationalism, given the difficulty of the study and the apparent weaknesses in every system of explanation, Christians should be tolerant and patient with each other on these issues. Charges of heresy or liberalism should not be made rashly against fellow Christians just because they have a different eschatological interpretation.
4. We should read broadly. Yielding to confirmation bias and reading only those who believe what we already believe is dangerous. The real test of strength of our interpretation is not whether some verses can be assembled to teach a particular truth, but rather how our interpretation holds up under the criticisms against it from other pertinent scriptures. In considering different viewpoints, it is best to first focus on *understanding* them before criticizing them. By considering the most scholarly works of the different views, they can be fairly assessed and compared, and then criticisms are more likely to be legitimate rather than “straw man” critiques.
5. One must be careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater when weaknesses are discovered in a particular eschatological system. It may be that only a certain component of the system is wrong and not the entire construct.
6. Pay close attention to the hermeneutical assumptions made by the various eschatology proponents. By looking below the surface this way, often the fundamental underlying causes of disagreements can be discovered. Uncovering

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hermeneutical inconsistencies is an extremely valuable tool in identifying bad interpretations.

7. Pray that God will continue to give greater understanding and unity as we study and discuss these issues together in the Spirit of Christ.

II. Summary of the Main Issues

When a student of scripture approaches the subject of Christ's second coming, there are many glorious truths which are clear and indisputable. But there are aspects of the second coming that are hard to understand. Three basic questions emerge and the believer's answers to these questions will largely shape his/her view of biblical history and eschatology.

1. Has Christ already come again or will He come again in the future?

To expand the question: Do most "Christ coming" verses describe Jesus' symbolic coming in A.D. 70 to judge unbelieving Israel through the Roman army or do they describe Jesus' visible, physical coming from heaven to earth in the future to judge the world?

2. Is God through with ethnic Israel as a nation or not?

To expand the question: Have most of the kingdom promises made to ethnic Israel been fulfilled in the church or will many of the kingdom promises such as Israel's future national headship be more literally fulfilled in a future age? Were the prophecies to Israel conditioned upon their obedience and thus forfeited or were they unconditional and thus predestined by God to be fulfilled?

3. Is the kingdom of God realized now or is it to be realized in the future?

To expand the question: Before the eternal state (the new heavens and new earth) begins, is there a future, interim aspect to the kingdom of God on earth or is the current heavenly headship of Christ over the church the complete realization of the kingdom of God before the eternal state begins?

All Christians acknowledge that the destruction of Herod's temple in A.D. 70 was a significant event which had been prophesied by Daniel and Jesus Himself (Dan 9:26; Matt 24:2). However, some Christians place more emphasis on this event than others. Preterists (from the Latin *praeter*, a prefix denoting that something is "past") believe that Christ's coming, as described in the Olivet discourse and in other places, is referring to A.D. 70 and the end of the Jewish age and nation. Futurists see these events applying to Christ's visible, physical appearing at the end of the age.

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Because the New Testament applies many kingdom prophecies regarding Israel to the church, some Christians see the church as the new Israel of God, ethnic Israel having permanently forfeited the promises made to them due to their disobedience. This belief requires taking many of God's messianic kingdom promises made to Israel in the Old Testament to be *conditional* (Ex 19:5-6; Num 14:30-34; Deut 28:13-25, 45-46, 68; Jer 18:9-10; 1Sam 2:30; Jonah 3:4). Nondispensationalists, viewing the New Testament as the advanced revelation that helps us better understand the Old Testament prophecies, believe the New Testament does not teach a national restoration of Israel. Thus they believe many of the Old Testament kingdom prophecies concerning Israel will not be literally fulfilled in the future.

Dispensationalists, on the other hand, believe many promises made to Israel were unilateral and *unconditional* (particularly the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New covenantal promises) (Abrahamic covenant: Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-16; 15:8-21; 28:10-15; Gal 3:17; Eze 16:60-63; Deut 7:6-9; Psalm 89:1-3, 30-37; Rom 11:26-29; Davidic covenant: 2Sam 7:12-17; 23:5; Psalm 72; Psalm 89; New Covenant: Jer 31: 31-37; Eze 36:24-38; Zech 12:10) and the New Testament corroborates and attests to the future fulfillment of these promises to Israel. Many dispensationalists acknowledge that the church has received many of the kingdom blessings promised to Israel, but maintain that God has not permanently cast away His covenant people, Israel--and that although God has inaugurated the kingdom at Christ's first coming, and the church saints are partakers of that kingdom, there is a future fulfillment that is distinctly for Israelites.

Some Christians believe the church fulfills many of the kingdom promises and that the millennial age of Christ reigning with the saints began with Christ's first coming and will end with His second coming. Amillennialists believe that the millennial reign of Rev 20:1-7 describes a heavenly versus earthly reign that is being realized now in the church age. Postmillennialists believe in an earthly reign of Christ and His saints in the future through the success of the church to evangelize and rule over unbelievers. Postmillennialists believe this one-thousand-year golden age will be *followed* by the return of Christ. Premillennialists believe the world will enter a period of great tribulation, immediately followed by Christ's literal return to earth where He will sit on His throne in Jerusalem and reign with the saints for a thousand years. To premillennialists, it is during this intermediate period of the millennium that the kingdom promises to Israel will be literally fulfilled before the eternal state begins.

III. Some Key Eschatology Terms

1. Abomination of Desolation -- To preterists, this is the event during the tribulation just before A.D. 70 when the Roman army surrounded Jerusalem and destroyed Herod's temple. To futurists, this is at the end times when Antichrist stands in the rebuilt temple, causes the sacrifices to cease, and claims to be God.

2. Antichrist -- These last times since the Lord left are marked by many antichrists who deny that Jesus is the Christ, paving the way for Antichrist to come (1Jn 2:18-23). Preterists may view the man of sin in 2Thes 2 as the little horn of Dan 7, but may see the sea beast of Rev 13

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as a different entity altogether. Many preterists believe this beast (Rev 13) is Nero. Some preterists have viewed the man of sin (2Thes 2) as the Roman Catholic Popes. Futurists see "Antichrist" as one who will come and deceive the whole world during the tribulation period immediately preceding the second coming of Christ. They see 1Jn 2's Antichrist, Daniel 7's little horn, 2Thes 2's man of sin, and the sea beast of Romans 13 as the same individual man. Futurists believe he will be destroyed at Christ's second coming in power and glory.

3. The kingdom of God -- The kingdom of God is everlasting and universal (1Chron 29:11-12; Psalm 10:16; 29:10; 103:19; 145:13). The mediatorial aspect of God's kingdom was ultimately rejected by Israel during the Old Testament and during Christ's ministry. The apostles then turned to the Gentiles with the kingdom message. Through the remnant of saved Jews and Gentiles (the church) the kingdom was inaugurated during Christ's ministry and is a present reality for believers today (Psalm 29:10; Matt 12:28; 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 11:20-21; 17:20-21; 1Cor 4:19-20; Rom 14:17; Col 1:13). The kingdom also has a future aspect which has not yet occurred (Zech 14:9; Matt 6:10; 7:21; 19:28; 25:31; 2Tim 4:1). The kingdom is spiritual (Matt 12:28; 21:43; 23:13; Lk 17:20-21; Jn 18:36, etc.) and earthly (Jer 23:5; Matt 5:5; 8:11-12; Lk 19:11; Rom 8:18-23; 1Cor 15:22-28; Rev 5:10; 11:15; 21:1). Christ's second coming will bring in the fulfillment of the kingdom which has already begun but not consummated (Rev 3:21; 12:5; 19:11-16). Christ's first coming with the Jewish disciples will continue to grow to include believers from every tribe, tongue and nation. At the second coming of Christ, the saved will be separated from the unsaved. Unbelievers will be punished and believers will be exalted in the future kingdom where believers will reign with Christ forever (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43; 2Tim 2:12; Rev 5:10; 20:6; 22:5). When all enemies (the last enemy being death) are subdued, Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God the Father that God may be all in all (1Cor 15:23-28).

4. Millennium -- A thousand years (from the Latin, *mil* = thousand and *annum* = year). The period of time referred to in Revelation 20:1-10. According to Revelation 20:1-10, during this period Christ reigns with his saints and Satan is bound such that he should deceive the nations no more until the end of the thousand years. After which Satan is loosed a little season and deceives the nations to make war against the saints and the beloved city. Great multitudes are devoured by fire from God out of heaven. There is a resurrection of one group of people before the thousand years and another group after the thousand years.

5. Rapture -- From the Latin word for "catching up" found in 1Thes 4:17. The catching up into the air of live saints upon their transformation and dead saints upon their resurrection, which all occurs at Christ's coming (1Thes 4:16-17). Pre-trib proponents believe this event to be before the tribulation, mid-tribbers in the middle of the great tribulation, pre-wrathers after the great tribulation but before the wrath associated with the opening of the 6th seal (Rev 6:12-17). Post-tribbers believe the rapture is concurrent with Christ's coming in judgment and is not a two-phase event or separate coming.

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6. Second Advent -- Advent meaning "coming". The revelation of Christ in judgment at the end of the world. Pre-trib, mid-trib, and pre-wrath rapture proponents believe the rapture to be a separate event from the second advent (or the first of two phases). They believe at the rapture, He comes *for* his saints. At the advent, He comes *with* His saints in judgment. Those who teach a single-event advent (which involves both the rapture and judgment) include post-trib rapturists (who can be dispensational premillenarians or amillenarians) and partial preterists (who do not teach a future tribulation preceding Christ's second coming in the future).

7. Tribulation period --The Bible speaks much about tribulation, which means trouble, hardship, and/or affliction. The Bible makes it clear that Christians will experience tribulation (John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom 5:3; 1Thes 3:4). In prophecy, "the tribulation" is a term that describes a particular period of great trouble described in the Olivet discourse (Matt 24; Mark 13; and Luke 21), Revelation (7:14 and perhaps all of Rev 6-19), and Daniel (12:1). Preterists (partial and full) view this tribulation period as pertaining to Jerusalem or perhaps the Roman Empire. Preterists believe this period to be in the past as it describes the Jewish war and the destruction of Jerusalem in the first century. Preterists many times do not believe the length of the tribulation period is specified literally in scripture. Preterists do not necessarily associate Daniel's 70th week with the tribulation which they believe to be describing the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Some preterists do not place a gap between Daniel's 70 weeks of prophecy (Dan 9:24-27) but because no significant event happened in history without placing a gap, many are compelled to do so, although A.D. 70 would be the latest they would place the end of the 70 week prophecy. Futurists, on the other hand, typically see the tribulation as a global event which immediately precedes the Lord Jesus' literal future return in glory and power. Many dispensationalists believe the length of the future tribulation period to be seven years based on the biblical references to 3.5 years in Revelation and Daniel (Dan 7:25, 12:7; Rev 11:2, 11:3; 12:6; 12:14, 13:5) and Daniel's 70th week of years (7 years-not days) described in Daniel 9:27. Although the Olivet discourse does not explicitly specify the length of the tribulation, Jesus' reference to Daniel's "abomination that makes desolate" connects it to Daniel's 70-week prophecy and the 3.5 years in Daniel 12 and Revelation. Dispensationalists view the tribulation period as being divided into two 3.5 year periods. This position is based on combining several passages that describe what dispensationalists believe to be events preceding the Lord's return. For example, the tribulation immediately precedes Christ's coming (Matt 24:29-31), and the 3.5 years describes the beast's persecution of the saints before he is destroyed by Christ's coming (2Thes 2:8; Rev 19:11-20; Dan 7:17-27). Daniel's 70th week is also the last week of Daniel's prophecy concerning Israel and Jerusalem which is interrupted in the middle by the abomination of desolation, which is associated by dispensationalists with the beast. This interpretation depends on placing a long gap between the 69th and 70th week and positing that there are two 3.5 year periods that together make up the last week of Daniel's prophecy.

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IV. Interpretational Systems that Shape the Eschatology Landscape

Progressive fulfillment -- Similar to the concepts of "dual fulfillment" and "now and not yet". The idea is that prophecies do not have to be fulfilled in a single event but may have a near-term and far-term fulfillment, or may be fulfilled in a succession of several events. The progressive nature of God's revelation presents an increasingly fuller view of the scope of God's unfolding prophetic plan. A prophecy's fulfillment may be realized now but also await a fuller realization in the future. An example is the Devil's predicted defeat (Gen 3:15; Matt 12:28; Jn 12:31; Heb 2:14; Rom 16:20; Rev 20:10). These verses show a succession of defeats culminating in his final defeat. Another example is the Messianic prophecies. The two comings of Messiah, one to suffer and one to reign, was not obvious until the advanced revelation of the New Testament revealed this multiple aspect of Messiah's appearing. This principle is also observed with Antichrist(s) (Dan 8; Dan 11; Matt 24; 1Jn 2:18-23; 2Thes 2; Rev 20). These examples do not show separate fulfillments of the same prophecy, but rather a progressive realization of the prophecy with the near term being a part of the full manifestation. Many other examples are found in scripture (2Sam 7:1-16; 1Chron 17:1-14; 22:6-10; Luke 1:31-33). Regarding Christ's second coming, the Olivet discourse (Matt 24, Mark 13, Luke 17 and 21) has reference to both the destruction of the temple (Matt 24:1-3) which occurred in A.D. 70 and the second coming at the end of this age (Matt 24:3; Matt 24:36-25:46). Christ's cleansing of the temple before and after His ministry (Jn 2:13-17; Matt 21:12-13) was a preview of A.D. 70 when the temple would be completely destroyed. The local judgment against Israel in A.D. 70 was a type or rehearsal or preview of the worldwide visible coming of Christ in the future to judge the world. Progressive fulfillment allows verses in the Olivet discourse to apply to both the destruction of the temple in His generation's lifetime *and* to His visible, personal coming in the future. Note: Since Christ's first coming we have been in the last days (Acts 2:17; Heb 1:2; 1Pet 1:18-20). He came to Israel first with salvation (Matt 10:5-6), then to the whole world. Likewise, in judgment, he started with first-century unbelieving Israel in A.D. 70, and then (after the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled at the end this age) He will judge the whole unbelieving world.

Dispensationalism -- Dispensational theology views scriptural history as a series of dispensations marked by God's interventions. These interventions, to varying degrees, change the way God administers his sovereign rule over creation. Dispensationalists understand these changes to be more significant than do Covenant theologians. Dispensational theologians see the ultimate purpose of history as the glory of God through the salvation of the elect, the regeneration of the entire created order, and His righteous reign over all people. The ultimate purpose is therefore all encompassing, involving spiritual, natural, social and political redemption. Dispensationalists believe the Old Testament Law of Moses for Israel has been superseded by the New Testament law of Christ for Christians. They thus apply the Old Testament laws that have not been reiterated in the New Testament scriptures as examples, not ordinances, for the Christian. They believe God still has a distinct plan for ethnic Israel to fulfill her role in the prophetic future kingdom in accordance with Old Testament prophecies. Dispensationalists must interpret many prophetic scriptures non-literally, but strive to

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interpret prophetic passages as literally as possible to avoid subjective spiritualizing of texts. Dispensationalists are most always premillennial. Some people associate the term dispensational as holding to a pretribulation rapture. It is more appropriate to apply the term to those believing in a future national restoration of Israel, regardless of the timing of the rapture.

Covenant Theology -- Covenant theology views scriptural history as various administrations of two or three basic covenants, emphasizing the unity of the covenants and not drawing as many distinctions as dispensational theology does. (1) the Covenant of redemption, (2) the covenant of works, and (3) the covenant of grace. In covenant theology the covenant of works is said to be an agreement between God and Adam promising life to Adam for perfect obedience and including death as the penalty for failure. But Adam sinned and thus mankind failed to meet the requirements of the covenant of works. Therefore, a second covenant, the covenant of grace, was brought into operation. Covenant theologians see the ultimate purpose of history as the glory of God displayed primarily by the salvation of elect individuals throughout time by God's grace. It is focused primarily on spiritual redemption. Covenant theologians tend to homogenize the Old Testament and the New Testament, applying the Old Testament laws that have not been specifically rescinded to New Testament believers as ordinances. They view the church as receiving the prophetic promises made to Israel (Jer 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:6-13; 9:14,15; 10:9-17) and/or view some of the prophecies as having been fulfilled already or forfeited by unbelief. Thus ethnic Israel has no distinct role in God's future program, other than their salvation and integration into God's one people, the church. Covenant theologians interpret many prophetic passages literally but are not insistent on literal interpretation, emphasizing the New Testament apostles' application of Old Testament prophecies in a non-literal way. Covenant theologians are usually amillennial.

V. Various Views on the Second Coming in Relation to A.D. 70

A. Preterism -- Espouses that many, if not all, prophetic passages of the coming of Jesus have already been fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem.

a. Full or hyper preterism--Considers most *all* second coming pronouncements to be fulfilled in A.D. 70, including the resurrection of the dead and the great judgment. Full preterism is extreme to the point of heresy (1Tim 1:18-20; 2Tim 2:15-18).

b. Evangelical preterism (or partial preterism)--Views only certain passages regarding Christ's coming and associated events such as the abomination of desolation, antichrist, and the great tribulation period as being time-marked to be fulfilled in that first century generation of Jews. The visible, physical second coming of Christ, bodily resurrection of the dead, and the great judgment are believed to be end-time events not yet accomplished.

According to preterists, Jesus' coming described in the Olivet discourse (Matt 24; Mark 13; Luke 17,21) and other passages refers to His judgment of the first century generation of Jews

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who rejected Him (Matt 11:16-19; 12:41-45; 23:34-39; Matt 24:34). This coming is a local judgment of unbelieving Jews around Jerusalem and/or the Roman Empire and not a worldwide judgment of all unbelievers. Interpreting many prophecies as having already been fulfilled, preterists see no scriptural warrant for a future rebuilt temple, a revived Roman empire, a future great tribulation, or future personal Antichrist. Preterists do not believe Christ physically left heaven to come back with literal clouds in A.D. 70. Rather, they believe that Christ's coming is often portrayed using Hebrew idioms that were used in the Old Testament and by Jews of that day (Isa 13:10 Babylon's destruction; Isa 34:4 Edom's destruction; Eze 32:7-8 Egypt's destruction). These figures of speech were therefore not meant to be understood literally as Christians today might initially think. So it is imperative for students of scripture to familiarize themselves with this poetic prophetic language of the past to properly interpret prophecies of the coming of Christ. They point out that the term "coming" is often not personal and visible (Isa 19:1; Rev 3:20; Jn 14:16-18, 23; Rev 2:5). Preterism prides itself with preserving the integrity of the timing verses such as "and you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven", "this generation shall not pass", "shortly come to pass", "the time is at hand", "some standing here that will not taste death" without inserting unnecessary gaps in the prophetic timeline (Mk 14:62; Matt 24:34; Rev 1:1,3; 22:10; Matt 16:28; 10:23). The prophecies of Daniel and Revelation are viewed to be largely, if not completely, fulfilled in the past. Preterist ideas are found written as early as the third century by Origen. It is commonly reported that the first significant preterist exposition was written by Roman Catholic Jesuit Luis De Alcasar in the late 16th century as a defense against the Protestant Historicist view which identified the papacy as the Antichrist. Some modern adherents are Kenneth Gentry, Gary DeMar and Hank Hanegraaff.

B. Futurism -- Views most all of the "Christ coming" prophecies as yet to occur in the future, including the abomination of desolation, Antichrist, and the great tribulation period. Christ's coming is more consistently understood to be referring to His literal, bodily, visible return to the earth to destroy the final Antichrist (2Thes 2:8; Rev 19:11-20; Dan 7:17-27) immediately following the great tribulation (Dan 12; Matt 24). And Christ's literal coming and concurrent resurrection of the saints is connected with the great tribulation, the 3.5 year prophetic period, and abomination of desolation (Dan 12). Futurism prides itself with interpreting the Bible more literally without unnecessary allegorizing, thus preserving the integrity of the Old Testament prophecies as well as New Testament prophecies of Christ's second advent. Numerous Old Testament prophecies are seen to have a future fulfillment, including most of the prophecies of the book of Revelation. Futurism is said to have its first significant exposition presented by Jesuit theologian Francisco Ribera in 1585 AD, proposing the Antichrist was a future man versus the Roman Catholic papacy (i.e., the Popes). Virtually all dispensationalists are futurists.

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VI. Various Views on the Second Coming in Relation to the Millennium and Jewish Prophecies

A. Amillennialism -- Holds that the 1000 year reign of Revelation 20 is not a literal 1000 years, but represents an indefinite period of time. This reign of Christ is not a political reign over all people, but a spiritual reign with the saints. This millennial period started at Christ's first coming when Satan was bound by Jesus on the cross. It will end at Christ's second coming and judgment, immediately after which the new heavens and new earth will be established (2Peter 3:10-13; 1Cor 15:22-26; 2Thes 1:7-10; Matt 25:31-46). Kingdom promises to ethnic Israel in the Old Testament are taken less literally and find their complete fulfillment in the Church and/or the new heavens and new earth. Amillennialists view the church as spiritual Israel and the recipients of the promises. Thus there is no national political kingdom associated with ethnic Israel to be anticipated (Mat 21:43; 1Thes 2:16). The kingdom of God is a spiritual, present, kingdom made up of all of the saved in the church in which there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles (Gal 3:27-28; Col 3:9-11). Amillennialists believe that the apostles' application of Old Testament prophecies to the church help us to decode the Old Testament prophecies and understand their fulfillment in a non-literal way. Amillennialism was espoused by second and third century church fathers such as Origen and popularized by Augustine in the fourth century and was the most common eschatological position of the church for several centuries, adopted by the Catholic church and maintained by most of the reformers.

B. Postmillennialism -- Posits that Christ will reign on the earth in the future for a thousand years through his church. This thousand years may or may not be literal. The church will experience growth such that the world will eventually be Christianized either by conversion or influence. Jesus will come again "post" (i.e., after) this period of righteousness, peace, and prosperity. Under Christ's authority, the preaching of the gospel commissioned by Jesus will be successful and the kingdom of God will start small but grow and flourish steadily until it fills the earth (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 13:31-32). Many contemporary postmillennialists believe the millennium began at the first coming of Christ (like amillennialists) and that the growth of the kingdom is gradual. Some postmillennialists believe the Church will bring in a Christian republic in which the Mosaic law will be observed in government. Postmillennialists are often Partial Preterists. Roman Catholic writer Joachim of Floris of the twelfth century has been named as the first significant postmillennialist. The rise of modern postmillennialism is credited to Unitarian Daniel Whitby (1638-1725). Postmillennialism was espoused by Jonathan Edwards and was the most popular view of the millennium in the 19th century. Some modern postmillennialists are Kenneth Gentry and Douglas Wilson.

C. Premillennialism -- Maintains that Jesus' second coming will be *before* the Millennium, with Christ coming to reign on the earth with His saints. The millennium is viewed to be a future period of peace and righteousness over all the earth, with glorified saints and non-glorified people living together. Premillennialism understands that in the New Testament church, believing Gentiles have been made partakers of the blessings promised to Israel and the wall of partition has been broken down (Eph 2:14-19; Rom 11:17-24)--but the kingdom is not fully

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realized through the church (1Cor 4:8; Matt 6:10). At Christ's coming, all of the saints, Jews and Gentiles, will reign with Christ on the earth. Basic premillennialism was believed by many of the first century church fathers. In the fourth century, Augustine made amillennialism popular and it remained dominant for many centuries. In the modern age, a recovery of premillennialism is said to have started with a Roman Catholic Jesuit Priest named Manual Lacunza Diaz in 1790 A.D.

1. Historic Premillennialism -- Sometimes called classic premillennialism, historic premillennialists believe Christ's coming will occur before an earthly millennial reign of Christ and His saints. This conviction is based almost exclusively on Rev 20:1-6. Like covenant theology, ethnic Israel has no special place in the millennium. Thus historic premillennialists are not dispensational. Historic premillennialists believe the exact nature of the millennium is not expounded in scripture (similar to the way the Old Testament scripture did fully expound the New Testament). Unfortunately, some apply the term historic premillennial to those who are premillennial and post-trib in their view of the rapture. Charles Spurgeon adopted this view and more modern adherents include Francis Schaeffer, George Eldon Ladd, and Albert Mohler.

2. Dispensational Premillennialism -- Different from historic premillennialists, dispensational premillennialists stress a distinction between national Israel and the Church in the future by insisting on a more literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies. Most all dispensationalists are premillennial, but not all premillennialists are dispensational (e.g., historic dispensationalism). Dispensationalists understand the millennium to be the time when many unfulfilled Old Testament promises and prophecies will be fulfilled (Gen 13:15; Isa 2:2-4; 9:6-7; 11:6-9; 65:17-25; Micah 4:1-5; Jer 30:9; Eze 34:23-24; 36-39; Hosea 3:5; Zec 12-14;). While not all people on earth are saved during this millennial period, culture is so influenced by Christ and Christians, that even the unsaved will comply with God's law or be punished. Israel will be restored as the ruling nation under Christ who will reign from His throne in Jerusalem (Obad 12-21; Isa 2:3; 24:23; 33:17). Hence dispensationalists believe in a future tribulation period followed by Christ's coming, followed by a thousand year reign (the Jewish kingdom is restored) with Israel leading the nations (Deut 15:6; 28:1, 13; Isa 14:1-2; 41:8-16; 49:15,16,22,23; 60:1-3,12; 61:6-7; Ezek 40-48, etc). Although the Old Testament system has been abolished forever, in the millennium some of the feasts and ceremonies of the Old Testament will be reinstated as non-atoning, memorials to Christ, including animal sacrifices. Dispensationalism emerged significantly in 1827 by J.N. Darby and was advanced by the Scofield Reference Bible (1909) and Dallas Theological Seminary (1924 to present). It was further popularized by Hal Lindsey in 1970 and by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins in 1995 (*Left Behind* series).

a. Classical Dispensationalism -- Classical dispensationalists draw a sharp distinction between God's earthly people, Israel, and God's heavenly people, the Church. This distinction of two peoples is maintained throughout God's timeline. Classic dispensationalists maintain that there are two programs for God's two distinct peoples: His earthly people

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(Israel) and His heavenly people (the Church). Classical dispensationalists tend not to apply prophecies made to Israel in the Old Testament to the Church. They interpret passages where the apostles use Old Testament prophecies this way more as incomplete types rather than completed fulfillments. The New Testament Church age is viewed more as a parenthetical period in God's prophetic timetable which deals primarily with Israel. Hence classical or traditional dispensationalists often believe in a future pre-tribulation rapture (the church leaves), a seven-year tribulation period (the Jews are judged), and a thousand year reign (the Jewish kingdom is restored) with Israel leading the nations. Classical or traditional dispensationalism was the original form of dispensationalism significantly developed in mid-18th century by J.N. Darby. Clarence Larkin books and the C. I. Scofield reference Bible greatly popularized this view. It has been modified over the years, the most recent revision being that of progressive dispensationalism. John Walvoord and Charles Ryrie represent the revised form of classical Dispensationalism.

b. Progressive Dispensationalism (PD) -- PD adherents are dispensational in that they hold to God fulfilling His kingdom promises to Israel, however do not necessarily hold to a pre-tribulation rapture. They default to a literal interpretation of prophecies, but accept that certain prophecies made to Israel have been partially or completely fulfilled in the Church based on the New Testament scriptures' declaration. Progressive dispensationalism does not identify Israel and the Church as being two separate "peoples of God." But that Israel is a nation and the Church is a spiritual organism. The nation of Israel is made up of believers and unbelievers, whereas the Church is composed of believing Jews and Gentiles from all ages. In the future, the saved Jews, who are part of the Church, will fulfill the prophecies that are not fulfilled by the Church in this era. The current Church period is viewed as a progressive fulfillment period rather than a postponement period or parenthesis in God's prophetic timeline. God's redemptive plan starting with Abraham progresses from a man and his children to an entire nation (Israel) under the Old Testament Mosaic Law. Under the New Testament, believers in Christ from all nations are God's redeemed in the Church. In the millennium to come, the Jewish and Gentile believers in the Church will reign with Christ who will rule the earth with a rod of iron. Israel will inherit the promised land and be the head of the nations. In the eternal state, there will be no more sin, all unbelievers will have been consigned to the lake of fire, and the nations, which consist of the redeemed only, will reign with Christ forever. So PD followers emphasize kingdom *progression* more than kingdom *postponement*. Following the revisions of dispensationalism by Charles Ryrie and John Walvoord, progressive dispensationalism was first articulated in the 1990s by Craig Blaising, Darrell Bock, and Robert Saucy.

c. Hyper-Dispensationalism -- An extreme version of dispensationalism that teaches that the body of Christ started later in Acts (chapter 9, some as late as chapter 28) and believes water baptism is a Jewish ordinance that was phased out in the transition period from Judaism to Christianity as described in Acts. It is taught that the teachings of Jesus in the gospels and the non-Pauline epistles of the New Testament are "kingdom-related" and speak

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more to Jewish believers rather than to the church. Different versions were developed in the 1800s by E.W. Bullinger and J.C. O'Hair, and Cornelius Stam in the 1900s.