

# Four Views of the Millennium

Dr. Bryan Chapell

## What is the Millennium?

1000-year reign of Christ on earth prior to the Consummation (i.e., Jesus' final coming)

## What are the Most Common Millennial Views among Bible-believing Christians?

- **Premillennial** in two varieties (Pre = before)
- **Postmillennial** (Post = After)
- **Amillennial** view (A = without or Not)

## How Do these Millennial Views Vary?

They vary about when is *Christ's Second Coming relative to the 1,000-year reign.*

1. Pre = Second Coming before Millennium
  - a. Dispensational
  - b. Historic
2. Post = Second Coming after Millennium
3. A = Second Coming with no Millennium (actually, the "Now" Millennium)

## What beliefs do Bible-believing Christians hold in common, even if they hold differing millennial views?

1. The Bible is the Word of God.
2. We are saved by grace through faith in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus, not by the correctness of our view of the timing of the Millennium.
3. Jesus is coming again in power and great glory to raise the dead, to rescue and reunite all who have trusted in him, to judge the living and the dead, to bring an end to this fallen world and its effects on our bodies and souls, and to establish a New Heaven and Earth under the perfect and eternal reign of Christ.

## Key terms:

End Times - Period leading to, and including, Christ's final coming, judgment and glory

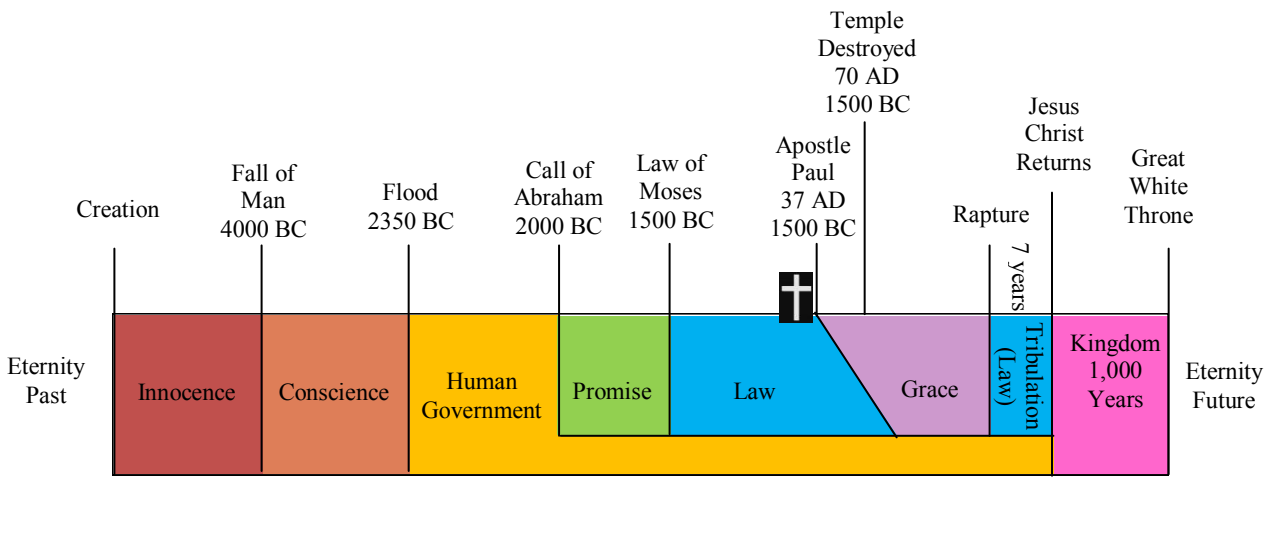
Eschatology – Study of the End Times in Scripture

Advent = Coming; Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent = Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming = Christ's Return

## Some Key Differing Perspectives on the Whole Bible that Affect Millennial Views

### A Dispensational View the Bible:

**God reveals his plan of salvation through successive “Dispensations”:** Periods of time when man is tested in some respect of obedience – followed by disobedience and judgment – in order that the necessity of God’s plan of salvation by grace would be cumulatively revealed.



### A Covenantal View of the Bible

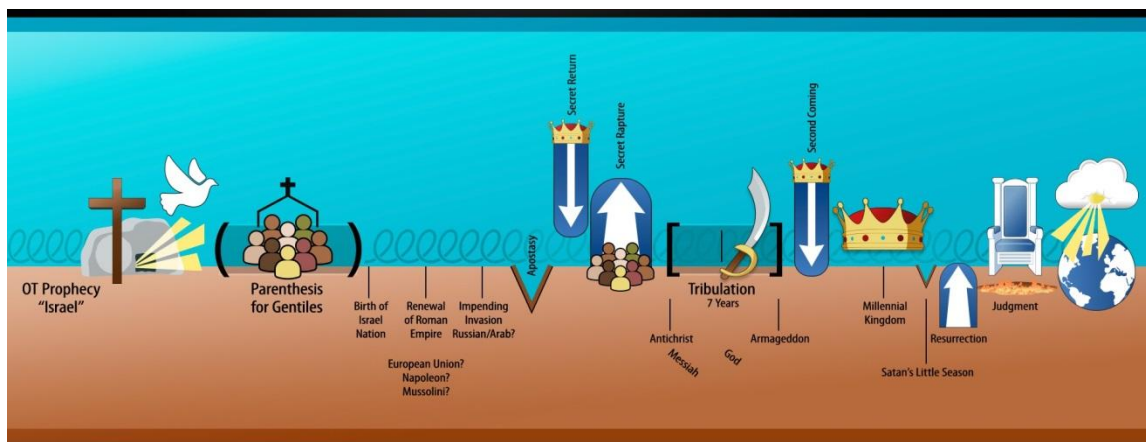
**God reveals his salvation plan through an unfolding “Covenant”:** A divine promise of grace unfolding in stages to signal and further God’s unfolding plan of redemption

#### Grace from Eternity Past

Adam → Noah → Abraham → Moses → David → Christ → New Hvn & Erth

#### Grace into Eternity Future

## Dispensational Premillennial View



### Distinctive Image

- Stop Watch

### Distinctive Teaching

- Dispensations of testing and judgment set up necessity of Christ.
- “Age of Parenthesis” for Church/Gentiles (Church not prophesied OT)
- “Separate and Unique” Plans for Israel and Church
- “Secret” Rapture (Pre-, Mid-, Post- Tribulation) prior to Second Coming
- “Literal” Millennium to convert Jews and World

### Key Influences and Development

- Mid-1800’s Irish John Darby and Brethrenism
- C.I. Scofield Reference Bible (esp. 1917 edition); later Charles Ryrie Reference, 1978
- *Late Great Planet Earth*, Hal Lindsey; Evangelicals 60’s-70’s Dominant
- *Left Behind* Series, Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins
- But left behind by “Progressive Dispensationalist” c. 1986 with new consensus that “Age of Gentile Parenthesis” actually fulfillment and completion of Old Testament promises.

### Institutions of Dominant Thought

- Dallas, Moody, Talbot, Masters, Grace
- Until Progressive Dispensational eclipse

### Key Names

- Scofield, Ryrie, Walvoord, J. Vernon McGee, Lindsey, LaHaye, John MacArthur/David Jeremiah “Leaky Dispensationalists”
- Bock, Blaising, Saucy – Progressive Dispensationalism

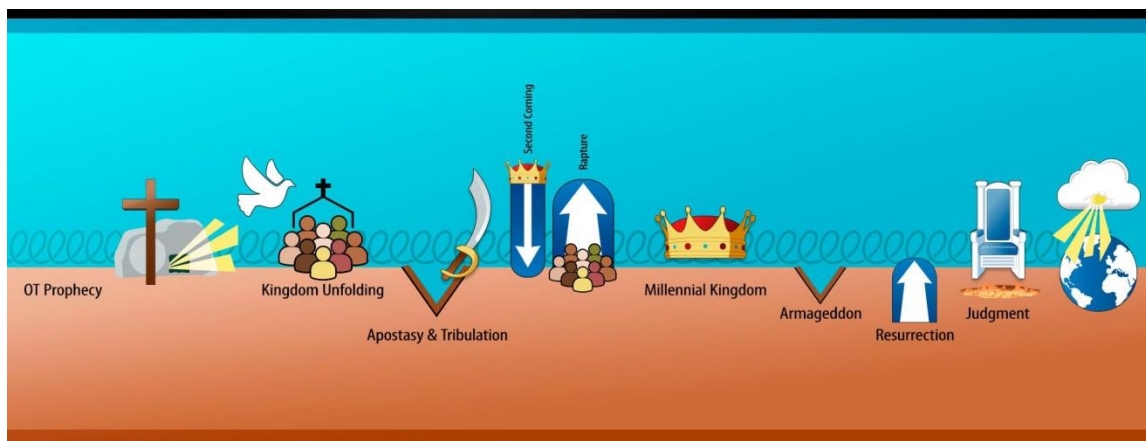
### Key Passages (1000-year millennium follows *unprophesied* Gentile era w/Israel promises intact)

- Classic view: Gen. 12:1-3; 15:18; Dan. 9:24-27; Matt. 24:41; Rom. 9-11; 16:25; Rev. 20/Is. 11
- Progressive view: Gen. 12:2; 22:18; Ruth; Psm. 117; Acts 2:16-21; Rom. 15:4-13

### View of Revelation

- *Literal* interpretation (esp. re Israel, though Ryrie prefers “plain” or “normal” terms for fairness and accuracy); mostly chronological

## Historic Premillennialism



### Distinctive Image

- Atomic Watch

### Distinctive Teaching

- Covenant of grace unfolding over time and culminating in Christ
- “Coordinated plans” of Israel and Church (Gentiles “engrafted”; specific ethnic promises remain for key advocates, maintaining “literal” interpretation)
- “Real” Millennium to “Vindicate” Christ’s rule and persecuted Church
- Rapture accompanies Second Coming

### Key Influences and Development

- Early Church (e.g., Irenaeus, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Papias = 2nd & 3rd Century)
- Present

### Institutions of Dominant Thought

- Fuller, TEDS, Covenant

### Key Names

- George Eldon Ladd, Walter Martin, John Warwick Montgomery, R. Laird Harris, J. Barton Payne

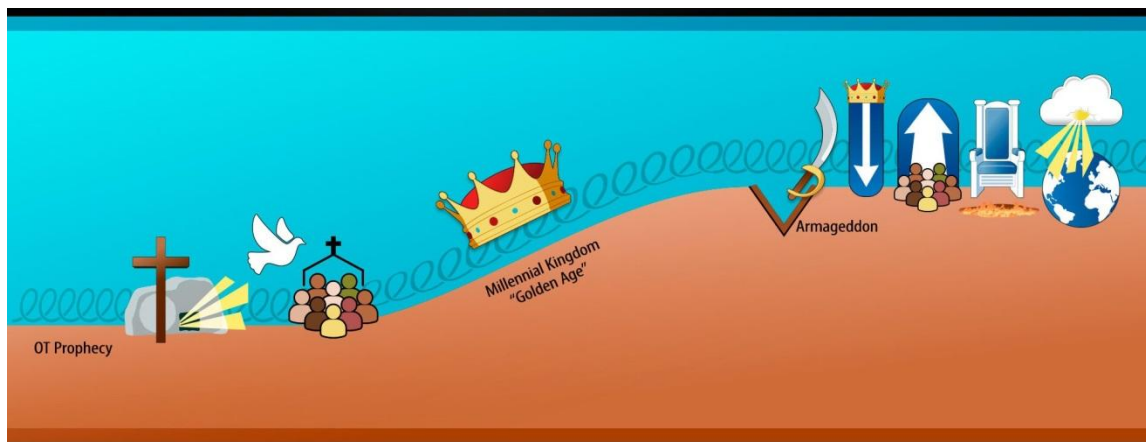
### Key Passages (1000-year millennium follows *prophesied* engrafting of Gentiles)

- Gen. 12:2; 22:18; Is. 7:14; Luke 2:29-32; Acts 2:16-21; Rom. 9-11; 15:4-13; 1 Thess. 4; 2 Thess. 2:3; Rev. 20/Is. 11

### View of Revelation

- *Natural* interpretation (i.e. literal as context makes appropriate to indicated whether symbolism is intended; e.g. “Great beast,” “Lamb,” “Babylon”); mostly chronological

## Postmillennial View



### Distinctive Image

- Hill Climb

### Distinctive Teaching

- Covenant theology unfolding over time (“The Long View”)
- United plan for Israel and Church (critics say, “substitution”; advocates say, “engrafting”)
- Return = Rapture = Resurrection
- “Golden Age” Millennium ushers in Christ’s return  
(Reformed Aberration = “Theonomy”)  
(Charismatic Version = “Dominion Theology”)

### Key Influences and Development

- Tychonius (4th Century)
- Any era of Christian dominance (e.g. Crusades, British Israelism)
- Many Anglo/American Evangelicals before Dispensationalism (reflecting “Manifest Destiny”)
- Many Anglo/American Evangelicals before WWI

### Institutions of Dominant Thought (among “Evangelicals”)

- Puritans and “Old” Princeton
- Theonomic Schools (“Theocratic Reform”)
- Charismatic Schools (“Latter Rain”)

### Key Names

- Charles Hodge, A.A. Hodge, B.B. Warfield, Lorraine Boettner, D. James Kennedy, J. Jefferson Davis
- Theonomy: R.J. Rushdoony, Greg Bahnsen, Gary North, Ken Gentry, Doug Wilson
- Charismatic: Paul Yongli Cho, Kenneth Copeland, John Hagee, Pat Robertson

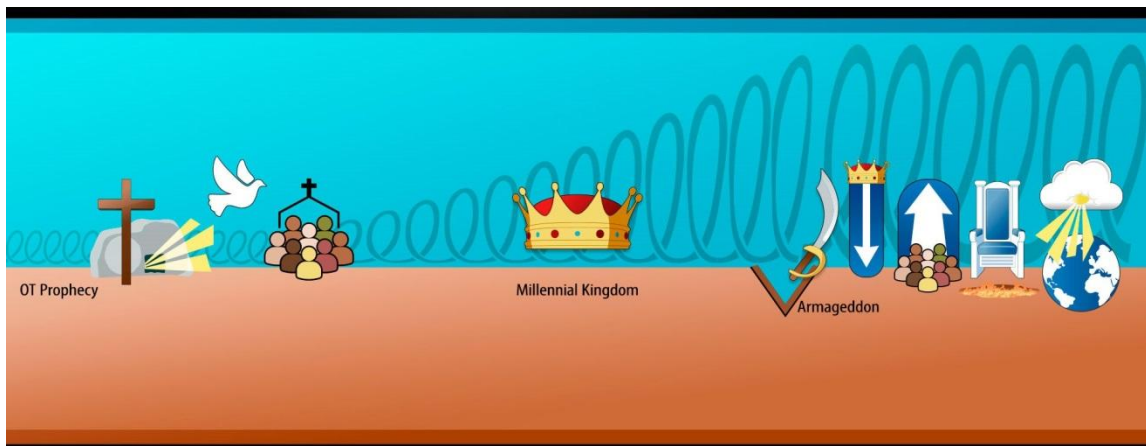
### Key Verses (Christ’s *rule* was prophesied to all, and will extend over all)

- Ps. 110; Isaiah 2:2-4, 11:9; Hab. 2:14; Matt. 8:10-12; Lk. 20:9-16; Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16-17; Eph. 2:11-3:7

### View of Revelation

- *Descriptive* interpretation of vignettes (not necessarily chronological)
- Instructional for persecuted church

## Amillennial View



### Distinctive Image

- Horn of Plenty

### Distinctive Teaching

- 1,000-year reign symbolic of Covenant Theology unfolding in Church Age
- Satan bound in Christ's death, resurrection and ascension
- Promises to Israel fulfilled in Church
- Final apostasy (Armageddon precedes Second Coming)

### Key Influences and Development

- Augustine
- Majority of Christians in majority of Christian Era

### Institutions of Dominant Thought

- Majority of world's Christian schools (RC, Lutheran, Reformed, etc., but Baptists mixed)
- RTS, Westminster, Covenant, Calvin, Knox, Gordon-Conwell

### Key Names

- Augustine, J. I. Packer, Michael Horton, Anthony Hoekema, RC Sproul (originally), Tim Keller

### Key Passages (Blessings to the nations *fulfill* promises to Israel)

- Is. 2:2-4; Matt. 24:21; Acts 2:30-32; Rom. 9:6-7; Gal. 3:29; 2 Thess. 2:6-8; Rev. 6, 12 & 20:4

### View of Revelation

- *Direct* interpretation (literal and symbolic) determined by context
- Symbolic cycles (7x) in Progressive Parallelism

## Summary Thoughts on these Four Millennial Views

### Key Differences:

1. Discontinuity or Continuity
2. Optimistic or Pessimistic (typically an unfair characterization of any view)
3. Church is or is not Israel (is or is not “engrafted”)
4. Millennium (Revelation) Literal or Symbolic
5. Interpretation: Literal, Plain, Natural, etc. (Unfair to say any Bible-believing view is “not literal” since all are interpreting according to literary intent of the author.)
6. Promise of *Place* (land) and/or *Presence* (Immanuel/tabernacle principle)

### All Positions Agree:

1. The Bible is the Word of God; and is to be interpreted “literally”=authorial intent
2. Salvation is not determined by your view of the timing of Revelation 20 but by faith in Christ’s Cross, Resurrection and Return
3. 1st Coming of Christ involved cross and resurrection (payment of and victory over sin)
4. Christ Physically Returns in 2nd Coming
5. Time of Apostasy and Persecution → Return
6. Christ’s Return → Rapture/Rescue/Resurrection
7. Reunion accompanies Return
8. Judgment follows Return
9. Eternity (New Heavens and Earth) follows Judgment
10. Renewal (bodies, souls, heavens and earth) follows return



