An antique pocket watch with Roman numerals is shown in the bottom left corner, resting on a textured, brownish surface. The watch face is white with black Roman numerals and hands. The background is a blurred, textured surface, possibly stone or wood, with a warm, golden light source creating a soft glow.

Understanding the Time

Matthew 24-25

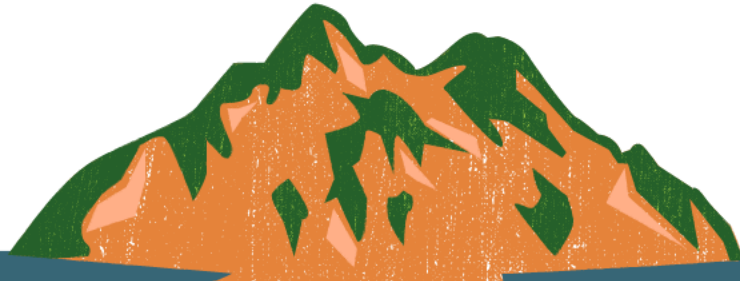
Eschatology 101

How Christians through history have understood the end of the world.

We're talking about the events between...



The first coming
of Jesus, and



including the
destruction of the
Temple in AD 70.



the second
coming of Jesus,

A quick definition of terms & concepts:

Rapture – to be caught up.

¹³ We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, concerning those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in the same way, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵ For we say this to you by a word from the Lord: We who are still alive at the Lord's coming will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the archangel's voice, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are still alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

- I Thessalonians 4:13-18 (CSB).

A quick definition of terms & concepts:

Tribulation – a time of suffering.

⁹ After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice:

Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!

¹¹ All the angels stood around the throne, and along with the elders and the four living creatures they fell facedown before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying,

“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

A quick definition of terms & concepts:

Tribulation – a time of suffering.

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, “Who are these people in white robes, and where did they come from?”

¹⁴ I said to him, “Sir, you know.”

Then he told me: These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵ For this reason they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple. The one seated on the throne will shelter them: ¹⁶ They will no longer hunger; they will no longer thirst; the sun will no longer strike them, nor will any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb who is at the center of the throne will shepherd them; he will guide them to springs of the waters of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

- Revelation 7:9–17 (CSB)

A quick definition of terms & concepts:

Millenium – Jesus reigns over all nations of the Earth for a thousand years.

⁴ Then I saw thrones, and people seated on them who were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and who had not accepted the mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

- Revelation 20:4-6 (CSB)

A quick definition of terms & concepts:

Antichrist – a person who represents the climax of human rebellion against God.

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him: We ask you, brothers and sisters, ² not to be easily upset or troubled, either by a prophecy or by a message or by a letter supposedly from us, alleging that the day of the Lord has come. ³ Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. For that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴ He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits in God's temple, proclaiming that he himself is God.

- 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 (CSB)

A quick definition of terms & concepts:

Second Coming – Christ returns to judge the world.

³⁶ “Now concerning that day and hour no one knows—neither the angels of heaven nor the Son—except the Father alone. ³⁷ As the days of Noah were, so the coming of the Son of Man will be. ³⁸ For in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah boarded the ark. ³⁹ They didn’t know until the flood came and swept them all away. This is the way the coming of the Son of Man will be.

- Matthew 24:36–39 (CSB)

4 Biblical Views of Eschatology

All of these views:

- are held by Spirit-filled, Bible-believing Christians
- have strengths and weaknesses both in accuracy and in application.

So we will hold our eschatology loosely while holding the underlying Biblical teaching tightly. This requires wisdom and humility!

4 Biblical Views of Eschatology

Quick mention of 1 common view that we don't consider Biblical – Preterism.

Preterism is the belief that all Bible prophecy has already been fulfilled – ending with the destruction of the Temple in AD70 and the commencement of the “church age”.

All the views we'll consider acknowledge the partial fulfilment of earlier events but expect a final future fulfilment of prophecy.

4 Biblical Views of Eschatology

1. Amillennialism

Amillennialists do not believe that the millennium is a yet-to-come future event but a present reality. **The millennium is now.** It is the church age—the entire period between the departure and return of Jesus. Jesus is Lord over His Church, reigning in Heaven and in us through the Spirit.

Evil will continue to expand right alongside the spread of the gospel and its positive influences.

Jesus bound and imprisoned Satan with his death on the cross and resurrection. Thus Satan's influence has been severely limited, making way for the spread of the gospel to all nations. Deceased Christians are currently in heaven with Christ, reigning with him.

Since the millennium is now, when Christ returns it will be the end. He brings with him the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and the recreation of the new heavens and the new earth.

Amillennialists point out that the only mention of the millennium is found in the book of Revelation. Since Revelation is highly symbolic, it is perfectly acceptable to **interpret the millennium as an indeterminate period of time** rather than a literal thousand years.

4 Biblical Views of Eschatology

1. Amillennialism

Key Passages: John 5:28–29; Romans 8:17–23; 2 Peter 3:3–14; 2 Thessalonians 1:5–10.

Notable Representatives: Augustine of Hippo, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Louis Berkhof, C. S. Lewis, R. C. Sproul.

Rapture,
2nd Coming,
Final judgement

Symbolic Millenium

New Heaven & Earth

4 Biblical Views of Eschatology

2. Postmillennialism

Postmillennialism maintains that Jesus will return after the millennium.

Through the church's spreading of the gospel, the millennium will be gradually and progressively established on earth. As Christian influence spreads, so will peace and righteousness.

The millennium, then, is the period when universal peace reigns on the earth as a result of the work of the church in spreading the gospel.

Some postmillennialists think that the period is literally a thousand years, while others maintain that it is an undefined, extended period of time.

Toward the end of the millennium, the devil will be released and lead a brief rebellion. Jesus will return to the earth to defeat his enemies, raise the dead to face the final judgment, and then bring about the new heavens and the new earth.

The key to postmillennialism is that Jesus returns after the millennium. He comes back after the church has successfully spread the gospel and established peace throughout the earth.

4 Biblical Views of Eschatology

2. Postmillennialism

Key Passages: Psalm 2; Isaiah 2:2–4; Matthew 13; 28; John 12.

Notable Representatives: Jonathan Edwards, B. B. Warfield

Rapture,
2nd Coming,
Final judgement



Church Expands

Symbolic Millenium – A golden age

New Heaven & Earth

4 Biblical Views of Eschatology

3. Premillennialism - Historic

Premillennialists believe that **Jesus will return before the millennium**. This view holds that the time between Jesus' ascension to heaven and his return back to earth is the age of the church. When Christ returns, the church age will come to an end and Jesus will then establish his millennial kingdom. The Christian dead will be raised to life and reign with Christ for this thousand years in a literal kingdom that Jesus establishes on the earth. This kingdom will last for an actual period of a thousand years. With the binding of the devil, peace and righteousness will reign over all the earth. But at the end of the thousand years, the devil will be unbound and released. He will gather those who refused to submit to Jesus and will lead one final rebellion against Christ and Christ's kingdom. He will fail, and Jesus will finally and ultimately defeat him. Then comes the end. God will bring about a new heavens and a new earth—a purified and restored creation.

This is heaven; this is the eternal state. No more sin, no more suffering, no more death. Paradise has been regained. Believers will once again enjoy perfect, unbroken fellowship with God.

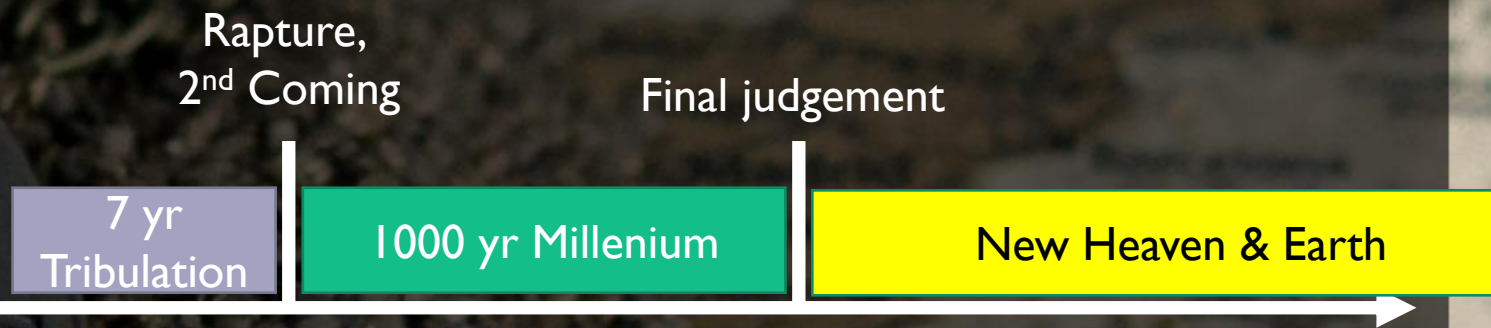
Historically, premillennialists placed the rapture & second coming of Christ immediately before the millennium, after a period of tribulation for God's people.

4 Biblical Views of Eschatology

3. Premillennialism - Historic

Key Passages: As previous 2, but a more literal (less symbolic) interpretation.

Notable Representatives: Irenaeus, Wayne Grudem, Robert Gundry, Ben Witherington III, Craig Blomberg.



4 Biblical Views of Eschatology

4. Premillennialism - Dispensationalist

Dispensationalists draw a sharp distinction between Israel and the church—and God's dealings with each. They believe God has one plan for Israel and another plan for the church.

In light of that, one of the major differences in dispensationalism is that it suggests a secret rapture where Christ comes for His church, taking believers who are asleep and awake to Heaven where they will be spared from the period of tribulation. On this occasion Jesus doesn't fully return to the Earth – He meets believers in the air and takes them to Heaven.

The removal of the church allows God to focus on Israel. During this tribulation, there will be a great conversion of Jewish people to Christ. Then, at the end of seven years, Jesus will visibly return and set up his kingdom to reign on the Earth for 1000 years before Satan is loosed and his final rebellion is crushed.

Though there are many variations, premillennialism is defined by the belief that Jesus returns before the millennium. It generally holds that history continues on a downward spiral. Suffering generally increases as history progresses until suddenly Christ returns.

4 Biblical Views of Eschatology

4. Premillennialism - Dispensationalist

Key Passages: Literalist interpretation which organizes history into “dispensations” or eras where God is dealing with humanity differently. Applies Daniel 9 to God’s resumed dealings with Israel to conclude his promises to Abraham.

Notable Representatives: Lewis S. Chafer, John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, Hal Lindsey, John MacArthur.

Rapture –
Jesus returns
for His
Church

2nd Coming-
Jesus returns
with His
Church

Final judgement

7 yr
Tribulation

1000 yr Millenium

New Heaven & Earth



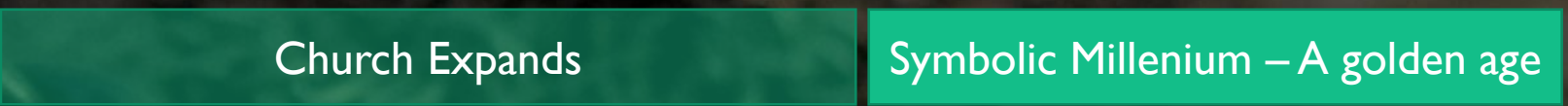
Amillennialism



Rapture,
2nd Coming,
Final judgement

New Heaven & Earth

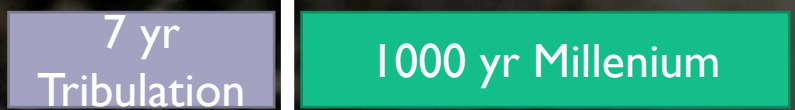
Postmillennialism



Rapture,
2nd Coming,
Final judgement

New Heaven & Earth

Historic Premillennialism

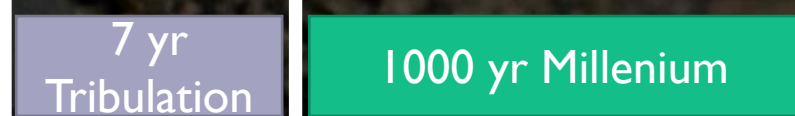


Rapture,
2nd Coming

Final judgement

New Heaven & Earth

Dispensational Premillennialism

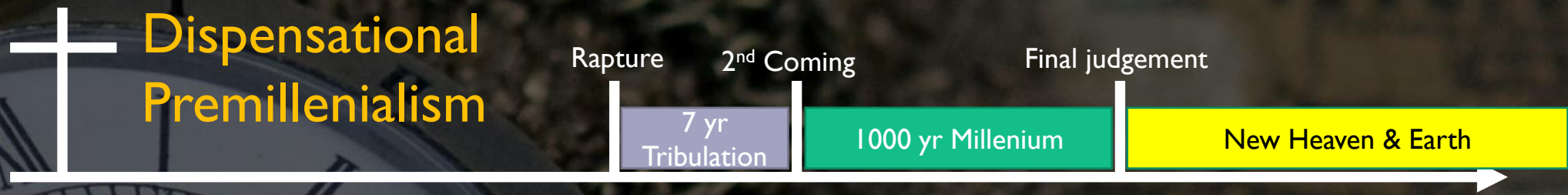
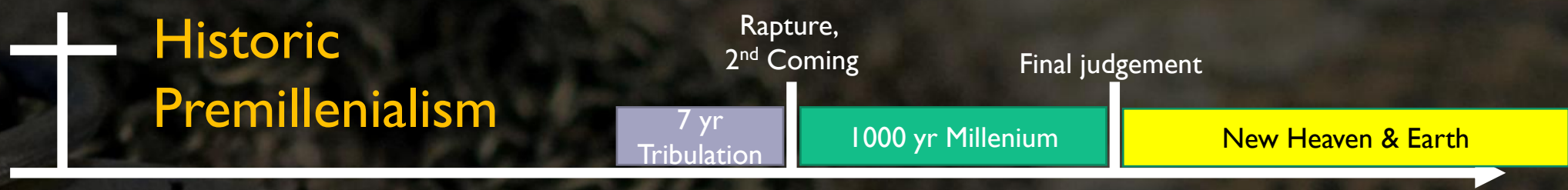
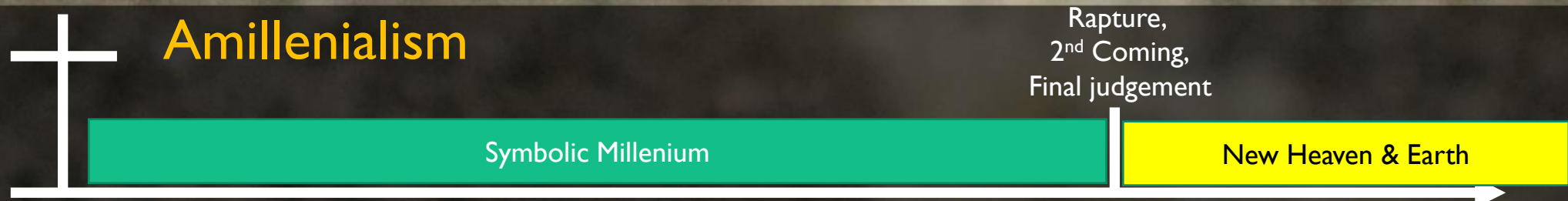


Rapture

2nd Coming

Final judgement

New Heaven & Earth



For Further Study - <https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/mill.cfm>
 in-depth descriptions, charts and study resources for each of these 4 views.