

Millennialism Throughout History

- 1) A Brief Review
 - a) What is the Millennium?
 - b) Key Terms
- 2) Why discuss the Millennium?
 - a) Belief in the Millennium is very common
 - b) People tend to act on their beliefs
 - c) Thus we should take Millennialism seriously if we wish to understand why people do what they do
- 3) The Structure of the Millennium
 - a) CIR + t1h + p/f/t2 + (!1/o/!2/0)
(S/s)
 - b) This is actually a schematic representation of all of history
 - c) History can be broken down three phases, roughly
 - i) Genesis
(1) Creation, Incubation, Release
 - ii) Transition
(1) Normal time
(2) The Last Days
 - iii) Unity
(1) Introductory apocalypse
(2) The Millennium itself
(3) Terminal apocalypse
(4) Eternity
- 4) Models of History
 - a) The 'Standard Model'—premillennial dispensationalism
 - i) Münster
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 - i) Carl Jung
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 - i) Spengler
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 - iii) H. G. Wells
- 5) Sometimes the End of the World is Clearly the Appropriate Option
 - a) Strategic Bombing
 - b) MAD
 - c) Harrapan
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- 6) *Spe Salvi*

Key Terms

- **Apocalypse**-- Literally, it means 'disclosure' or 'revelation,' particularly of the circumstances attending the end of the world. In the narrowest sense, it is simply an ancient literary genre.
- **The Millennium**— a future paradisiacal stage of history, when such constants of human experience as war, death and poverty will no longer exist. A universal human phenomenon, found in all cultures and religions. However, need not be specifically religious. In Christianity, an age ruled by Christ, named after its duration of 1,000 years.
- **Millenarian**—the belief that the world, or an age of the world, is about to end. The end need not be catastrophic, but it often is.
- **Millennialism**—a view of history articulated especially well by St. Augustine, the theory that the whole age of the Church should be associated with the Millennium of the Book of Revelation. Par. 670 CCC "Since the Ascension God's plan has entered into its fulfillment. We are already at 'the last hour.' 'Already the final stage of the world is with us, and the renewal of the world is irrevocably under way; it is even now anticipated in a certain real way, for the Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real but imperfect.' (The quotation is from the Vatican II document, 'Lumen Gentium,' chapter 48, section 3.) Sometimes this is what is meant by the use of either "post-millennialism", or "amillennialism", depending on whether the intent is to emphasize that the Second Coming is the end of history, or to indicate the rejection of the millenarian view respectively.
- **Pre-millennialism**—the belief that the Second Coming of Christ will inaugurate the Millennium.
- **Post-millennialism**—the belief that the Second Coming of Christ occurs at the end of the Millennium. According to Loraine Boettner in his book *The Millennium*, postmillennialism is "that view of last things which holds that the kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit, that the world eventually is to be Christianized, and that the return of Christ will occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace, commonly called the millennium." Can be distinguished from the Social Gospel and liberation theology, which does not take the millennium literally, and rejects supernatural elements.
- **Amillennialism** (antimillennialism) —used to distinguish historical millennialism from pre- and post-millennialism. Interprets Revelation 20 symbolically and sees the millennium not as an earthly golden age in which the world will be totally Christianized, but as the present period of Christ's rule in heaven and on the earth through his Church. This was the view of the Protestant Reformers and is still the most common view among mainline Protestants, though not among most of the newer Evangelical and Fundamentalist groups. Not necessarily equivalent to the view of St. Augustine.
- **Rapture**— 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17, which states, "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord." The term "rapture" is derived from the text of the Latin Vulgate of 1 Thess. 4:17—"we will be caught up," [Latin: rapiemur].
- **Tribulation**—Par. 675 CCC "Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the 'mystery of iniquity' in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah in the flesh." Among pre-millennialists, there are pre-trib, mid-trib, and post-trib, depending on when the faithful are gathered together with Christ.

- **Dispensation**—But in the 1830s, an Irish Protestant named John Nelson Darby began to preach the idea of a pre-tribulational Rapture. He spread this view in his own group, known as the Plymouth Brethren, and founded a new theological school in Protestantism. This school—Dispensationalism—holds that human history is divided into a number of distinct dispensations (ages) in which God deals with man in very different ways. Thus Dispensationalists frequently do not allow doctrinal appeals to be made to various parts of Scripture, arguing that they apply to a different dispensation than the one we live in (the "Church age").
- **Preterism**—the belief that the events in the Revelations to St. John have already occurred

Comparison of Christian millennial teachings

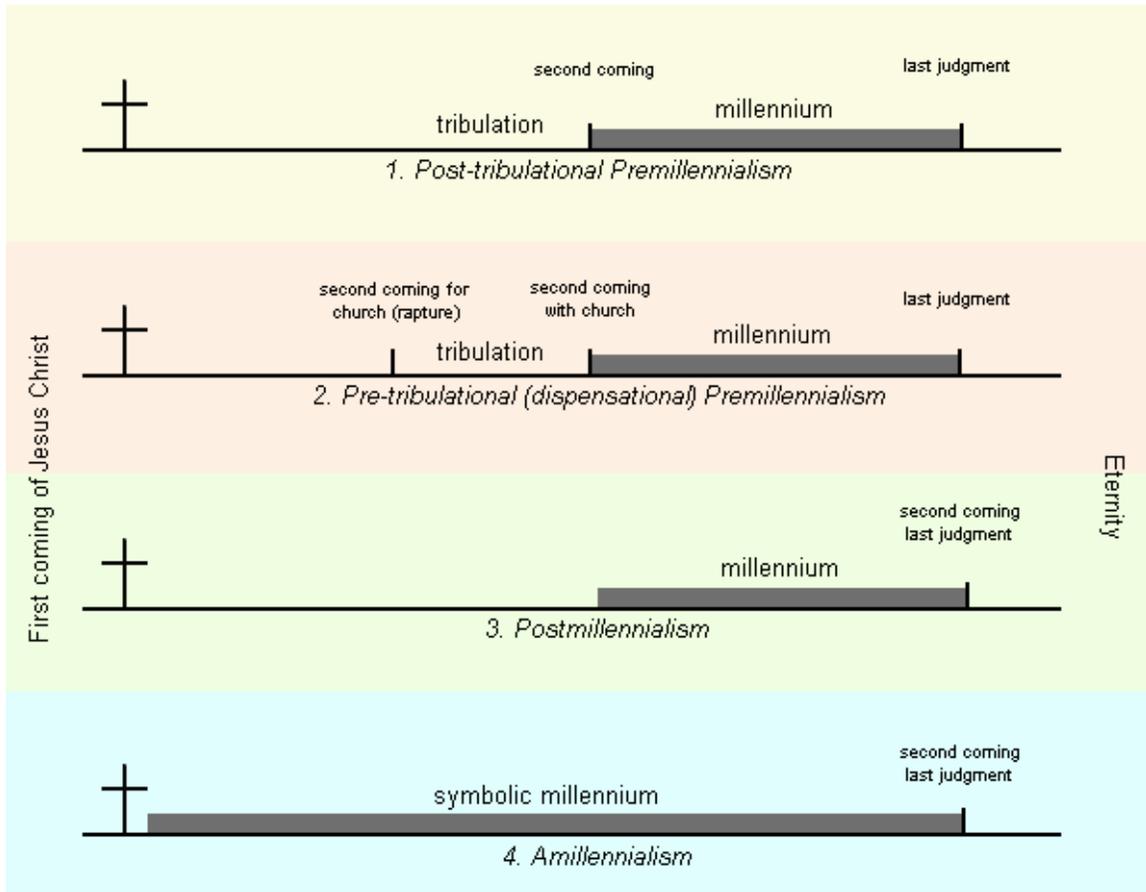


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