

Overall Class Objective: To intensify our pursuit of a God-centered, Gospel-based life through a deeper understanding of the character and work of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Class Overview

1. Explore the current apathy within the Christian church regarding the return of Jesus and the future.
2. Identify the common beliefs held by Bible-believing people regarding the second coming of Christ.
3. Delineate the four major views of the millennium.
4. Compare and contrast the four views of the millennium.
5. **Describe the taking up of the church relative to the various views of the millennium.**
6. **Determine a biblical rationale for deepening our positive anticipation of Jesus' return.**

Review

- 2) Common beliefs held by Bible-believing people regarding the second coming of Christ.
 1. Christ will suddenly, visibly, physically return to the earth.
 2. All people who have ever lived will be physically resurrected.
 3. A final judgment of unbelievers will result in their eternal separation from God.
 4. All believers will be rewarded and will dwell eternally with Christ in a new heavens and new earth.
 5. Satan will be defeated, judged and punished forever.
- 3) Delineate the four major views of the millennium.
 - a) The four major views of end-time events are generally framed according to the time of the millennium in relation to the return of Jesus to the earth.
 - i) Dispensational premillennialism
 - ii) Historic premillennialism
 - iii) Postmillennialism
 - iv) Amillennialism
- 4) Compare and contrast the four views of the millennium. (See charts for further details.)
 - a) Here are some of the problems critics have pointed out regarding each of these views of the end-time events. (these notes were in last week's media only)
 - i) Premillennialism (most of these apply to both forms of premillennialism)
 - (1) A slavishly literal hermeneutic that fails to account for the way Jesus and his apostles viewed Old Testament promises as applied to the church
 - (2) Belief that physical death will continue to exist beyond the time of Christ's second coming
 - (3) Belief that the natural creation will continue, beyond the time of Christ's second coming, to be subjected to the curse imposed by the fall of man
 - (4) Belief that the New Heavens and New Earth will not be introduced until 1,000 years after the return of Christ
 - (5) Belief that unbelieving men and women will still have the opportunity to come to saving faith in Christ for at least 1,000 years subsequent to his return
 - (6) Belief that unbelievers will not be finally resurrected until at least 1,000 years subsequent to the return of Christ
 - (7) Belief that unbelievers will not be finally judged and cast into eternal punishment until at least 1,000 years subsequent to the return of Christ

- ii) Postmillennialism
 - (1) Its vision of a gradually Christianized world does not seem at all consistent with any known or anticipated experience of the church.
 - (a) “The New Testament seems to anticipate that the number of those saved when Christ returns will not be as great as the Postmillennialist suggests, and that conditions will be decidedly bad, not good.”
 - (b) “Scripture nowhere explicitly teaches the progressive and eventual wholesale reconstruction of society according to Christian principles prior to Christ’s return.”
 - (2) It minimizes the New Testament doctrine of the church suffering for Christ until he comes.
- iii) Amillennialism
 - (1) A spiritualizing hermeneutic that seems to allow for assigning arbitrary meanings to the biblical text
 - (2) The binding of Satan in Revelation 20:1-3 that appears to fail to account for the continued presence and propagation of evil in the world
 - (a) ¹Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. ²And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, ³and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended.
 - (3) Affirming the notion of only one resurrection when Revelation 20:5, 6 seems to clearly imply there are two resurrections
 - (a) ⁵The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

Notes

- 5) Describe the taking up of the church relative to the various views of the millennium.
- a) The taking up of the church (called the rapture by some) is described most fully in two passages.
 - i) But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, 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, 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. Therefore encourage one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
 - ii) I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”
 “O death, where is your victory?
 O death, where is your sting?”

1 Corinthians 15:50-55

b) Dispensational premillennialism and historic premillennialism both believe the tribulation period will precede the return of Jesus and the subsequent millennial period immediately to follow.

(1) The adherents of dispensational premillennialism may take any of three views of the taking up of the church in relation to the tribulation. Some believe it will occur before (pretribulation), others think it will happen during (mid-tribulation) and some assert it will come after (post-tribulation) the tribulation period. A fourth view is a form of mid-tribulationism called the pre-wrath view which sees the taking up of the church late in the second half of the tribulation.

(2) Historic premillennialism sees the taking up of the church as occurring at the end of this tribulation period.

c) Most postmillennialists believe the tribulation passages pertain to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and is thus a past event. They see the taking up of the church as occurring at the end of a non-literal millennium when Christ returns to earth.

d) Amillennialism sees the taking up of the church as occurring at the conclusion of the millennial age immediately before the final judgment which is followed by the new heavens and new earth.

6) How to tell yourself the truth about the coming of Jesus

This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, ² that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles,

³ knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. ⁴ They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."

⁵ For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, ⁶ and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. ⁷ But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

⁸ But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

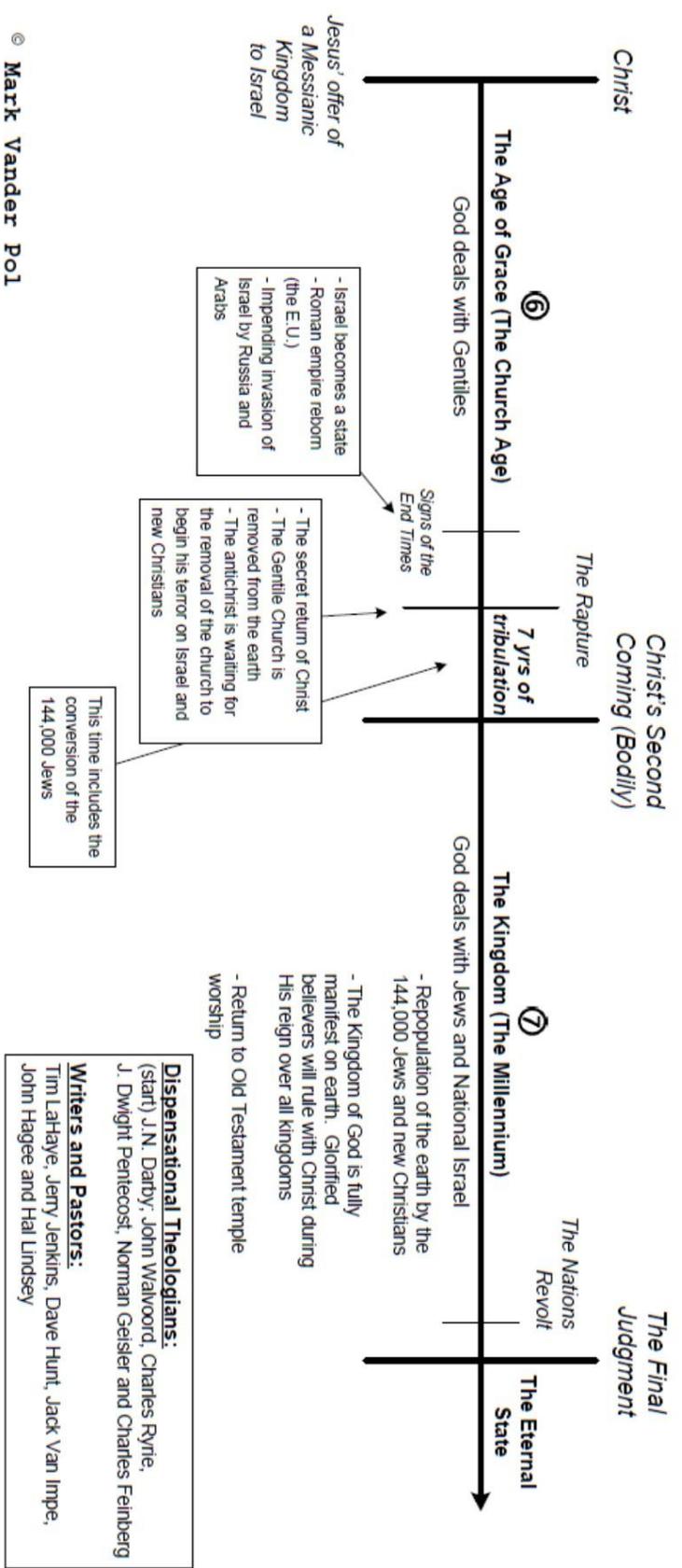
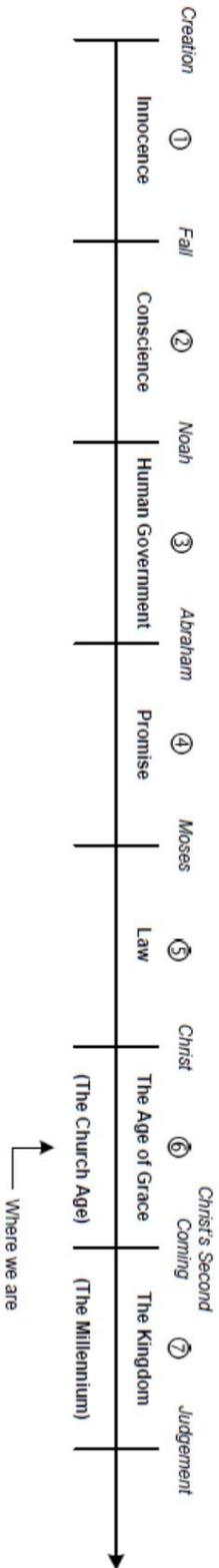
¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!

¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

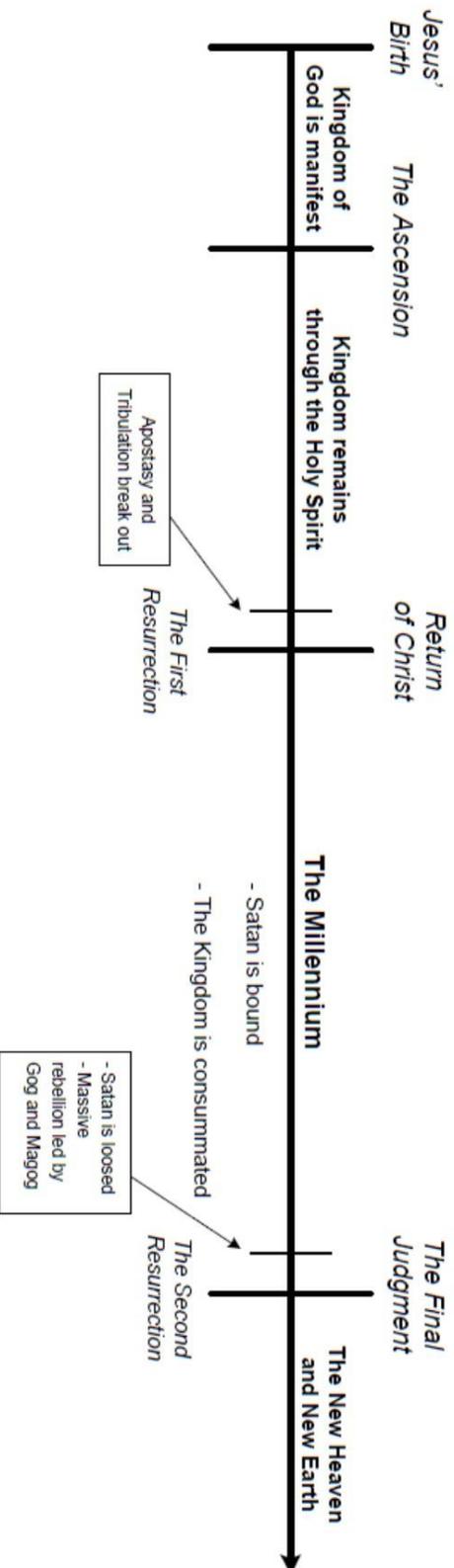
2 Peter 3:1-13

Dispensationalism

Overview - The Seven Dispensations



Historic Premillennialism



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Historic Premillennial Theologians:
George Eldon Ladd, John W. Montgomery, J. Barton Payne,
R. Laird Harris, Henry Alford, Theodore Zahn, James Boice

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Charles Hodge, A.A. Hodge, B.B. Warfield,
John Jefferson Davis

Amillennialism

