

# The Doctrine of the End Times

## Week 6: Why There Needs to be a Millennial Kingdom

### INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

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- The word “eschatology” comes from the Greek adjective ἐσχατος (“last”) and refers to the study of “last things” or “end times.”
- More specifically, it refers to the study of biblical prophecy about the future events surrounding the end of the age when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth to bring about the restoration of all things.
- The study of the end times has brought with it much debate on the timing and the means by which biblical prophecy will be fulfilled. Topics such as the timing of the rapture, the understanding of the Millennial Kingdom, Dispensationalism, and Covenant Theology are all connected to eschatology.
- Because of this, we will take time over the next six weeks to unpack some of the major end times issues, as well as the implications of those in how we approach and interpret Scripture.
- Our schedule will look like this:
  - Week 1: Introduction to the Doctrine of the End Times
  - Week 2: Overview of Covenant Theology
  - Week 3: Overview of Dispensationalism
  - Week 4: Implications of Covenant Theology/Dispensationalism
  - Week 5: Views on the Millennial Kingdom
  - **Week 6: Why There Needs to be a Millennial Kingdom**

### INTRODUCTION

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- Having discussed two views on the Millennial Kingdom (Amillennialism and Postmillennialism) which take an allegorical approach to Revelation and other passages discussing the Millennial reign of Christ, we turn, now to the final view – Premillennialism.
- As a reminder, the Millennial Kingdom is the name given to 1,000-year period (hence, Millennial) where Satan is bound, and Christ is ruling and reigning with resurrected believers, as detailed in Revelation 20:1-6.
  - **The Imprisonment of Satan:**
    - **Revelation 20:1-3** - *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and **Satan, and bound him for a thousand years**; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, **until the thousand years were completed**; after these things he must be released for a short time.*

- **The Millennial Reign of Christ:**

- **Revelation 20: 4-6** - *Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.*

- In approaching this passage, and the concept of the Millennial Kingdom, there are generally two issues regarding interpretation and fulfillment: the *timing* and *nature* of the Millennial Kingdom.
  - Timing: When will it happen (or is it happening now)?
  - Nature: Is it a physical kingdom on earth, or is it a spiritual kingdom?
- In our final class in this unit on Eschatology, I want to unpack the Premillennial view, and attempt to defend, from Scripture, the need for a literal, physical, 1,000-year reign of Christ at His return.

## PREMILLENNIALISM

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- Definition: Premillennialism (“pre” meaning *before*) is the view that Christ will return before the millennium mentioned in Revelation 20 and that He will reign upon the earth in a literal, physical millennial kingdom.

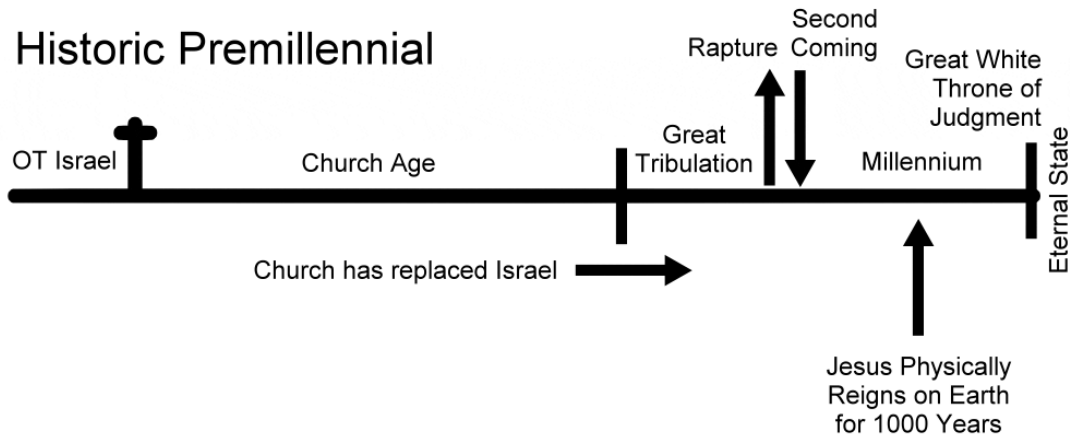
### 1. The Main Beliefs of Premillennialism

- **The Church Age is Distinct From the Millennial Kingdom**
  - The church age exists as a distinct age (the “present” age stated in the NT), and the Millennial Kingdom serves as an intermediate state between this age and the age to come.
  - The present age will climax with a seven-year period of Tribulation (Rev 6-18) and the Second Coming of Christ (Rev 19), who will then establish His messianic kingdom and reign upon the earth for a thousand-year period known as the millennium (Rev 20).
- **Satan is Not Bound in This Age, But Will Be During the Millennium**
  - At the time of Christ’s return, Satan will be confined in the abyss (Rev 20:1-3) and believers will be resurrected to reign with Christ, who will rule upon the earth in peace and righteousness (Rev 20:4-6).
  - At the end of the millennium, Satan will be released from the abyss and will gather an army of unbelievers against Christ, but they will be decisively defeated (Rev 20:7-10).
    - The wicked will be judged, the earth will be destroyed (Rev 20:11-15), and a new heaven and earth will be established forever (Rev 21-22).

## 2. The Two Forms of Premillennialism

- While Premillennialism, as a whole, understand a literal interpretation of Revelation 19-20, and hold to a physical millennial kingdom of Christ on earth between the second coming and eternal state, there are two distinct types of Premillennialism that exist: **Covenant (Historic) Premillennialism** and **Dispensational Premillennialism**.

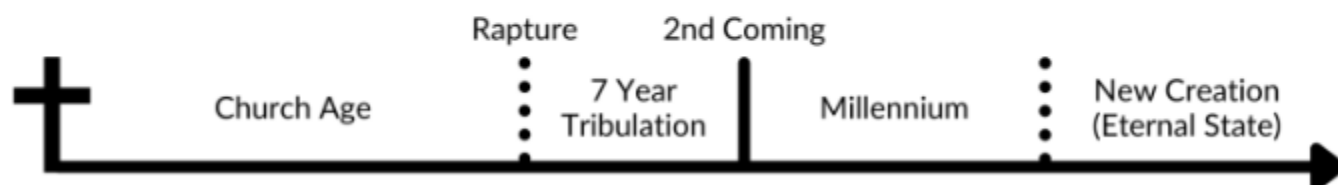
### ○ Covenant/Historical Premillennialism



- Historic/Covenant Premillennialism generally affirms that the Church receives the fulfillment of the covenant promises made to Israel (i.e., Covenant Theology) and therefore that the nation of Israel plays no distinct role in the future plan of God or millennial reign of Christ.
  - This view is supported, structurally, in Revelation 20:1-6, but does not go to the Old Testament to support the millennial kingdom, and therefore, sees no need to connect Israel to the covenant fulfillment of the Millennial Kingdom.
- It would also not see the purpose of the tribulation as a time of testing and turning of the nation of Israel back to their God. Therefore, most would hold to a post-tribulational rapture.
- **The Weakness of Covenant Premillennialism**
  - As with covenant theology and amillennialism, this view fails to remain consistent in its hermeneutics.
    - While it holds the fulfillment of Revelation 20 as literal, it spiritualizes the Old Testament promises to Israel to be fulfilled in the church.
  - Because of this, it fails to give the nation of Israel its proper place in God's kingdom program.
    - In fact, it fails to understand the purpose of the millennial reign of Christ on earth.

- Dispensational Premillennialism

## Dispensational Premillennialism



- In this model, the rapture of the church stands as the next event in redemptive history and will be followed by a 7-year tribulation.
- Christ returns after the tribulation (Rev 19:11-16), defeats the Antichrist and his forces (19:17-21), binds Satan, and ushers in a 1,000-year millennial reign on earth (20:1-6).
  - Dispensational Premillennialism affirms that Israel will be saved at the end of the present age and restored to her land in fulfillment of the covenant promises of God, and that the nation will have a special function of service in the millennium that is different from that of the Church.
- After the millennium, Satan will be released, there will be one final rebellion, which is ultimately defeated (Rev 20:7-10), there will be a resurrection of all unbelievers for judgment (20:11-15), and the eternal state will be ushered in.
  - Regarding the first and second resurrection in Revelation 20:
    - First resurrection - believers martyred during the tribulation
    - Second resurrection – unbelievers for the Great White Throne judgment
- Of the views presented, dispensational premillennialism is the only to hold a consistent hermeneutic (literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutic).

### 3. The Challenges to Premillennialism<sup>1</sup>

- The strongest argument against premillennialism comes from the “two-age model” of amillennialism, the eschatological framework established by the references to “this age” and “the age to come” (e.g., Matt 12:32; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30; 20:34-35; Eph 1:21).
- Amillennialists use the two-age model to argue against the idea of an intermediate kingdom held by premillennialism in three distinct ways:

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Matt Waymeyer. Fall 2023. The Expositor’s Seminary, Theology III Class Notes.

- **Argument #1**—Because “the age to come” will immediately follow this present age (Matt 12:32; Eph 1:21), there is no gap of time between the two ages to allow for the intermediate kingdom of premillennialism.
  - **RESPONSE:** The millennium of Revelation 20 is best understood as the initial phase of the age to come, and therefore the biblical references to the two ages do not require an interval of time between them to accommodate an intermediate kingdom
- **Argument #2**—Because the qualities ascribed to “the age to come” are all eternal in nature (Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30; 20:34–36), the temporal aspects of premillennialism’s intermediate kingdom—such as sin, death, and procreation—render it incompatible with the coming age.
  - **RESPONSE:** The qualities ascribed to the age to come in Scripture are compatible with the millennial kingdom as the first phase of that coming age, and therefore the characteristics of the two ages fail to provide a compelling argument against premillennialism.
- **Argument #3**—Because the Second Coming is the line of demarcation between the two ages—and because it will be accompanied by the resurrection and judgment of all mankind (Dan 12:2; John 5:28–29; Acts 24:15; Matt 25:31–46; 2 Thess 1:6–10), the destruction and renewal of the cosmos (2 Pet 3:10–13; Rom 8:18–23), and the final victory over sin and death (1 Cor 15:20–28, 50–57; Rom 8:17–23)—there is no gap of time to allow for the intermediate kingdom of premillennialism.
  - **RESPONSE:** The Bible’s description of the dividing line between the two ages fails to prove that the Second Coming immediately introduces the eternal state, and therefore the millennial kingdom can indeed be harmonized with the remainder of the New Testament.

## **A BIBLICAL DEFENSE FOR PREMILLENNIALISM:**

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- In the final portion of this class, I want to unpack, from Scripture, why I believe there must be a literal, physical, 1,000-year Millennial Kingdom on earth, with Christ ruling and reigning from Jerusalem.
- As we look to certain prophetic passages, or passages talking of the age to come, we need to ask the questions: “Is this true of the current (church) age?”, “Can this be true of the eternal state?”, and if not, “Does this necessitate an intermediate kingdom?”

### **1. The Old Testament Indications of an Intermediate Kingdom**

- In various passages within the Old Testament, the psalmists/prophets looked ahead to the coming Messiah, His rule and reign, and the characteristics of His kingdom.
- However, some passages describe features of the coming kingdom that are not compatible with the perfection of the eternal state.

- **Isaiah 24:21-23** - *So it will happen in that day, that the LORD will punish the host of heaven on high, and the kings of the earth on earth. They will be gathered together like prisoners in the dungeon, and will be confined in prison; and after many days they will be punished. Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, for the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and His glory will be before His elders.*
  - Isaiah 24 details the coming judgment at the Lord's return.
  - As we come to vv. 21-23, notice the sequence of events:
    - In that day, when the Lord returns, there will be an initial judgment (v. 21)
    - There is a gap of "many days" in which the punished are incarcerated (v. 22a)
    - After this time, there will be a final judgment. (v. 22b)
  - Compare this to Revelation 19-20
    - Christ returns and wipes out the nations, casting the Antichrist and the false prophet into the lake of fire and binding Satan (Rev 19:11-20:3)
    - Christ reigns on the earth for a thousand years (Rev 20:4-6)
    - Satan is loosed, the final rebellion is crushed, and all unbelievers are resurrected for final judgment (20:7-15)
  - This would necessitate an intermediate kingdom and would align with Rev 19-20.
    - Additionally, Isa 25-27 detail the kingdom conditions and blessings that will occur after the earth's judgment.
- **Micah 4:1-5**
  - Micah is pronouncing judgment upon Israel and Judah (Micah 1:1-7) and, in the context of this passage, upon the corrupt leadership at that time (3:1-3, 5, 9-11).
  - In Micah 4, he transitions to talking about what will come about "*in the last days*".
  - Things that will characterize this time:
    - Christ will be on the earth, ruling from Zion (vv. 1-3)
    - The nations will be streaming to this location to learn from the Lord (v. 2)
    - He will be judging and settling disputes between different peoples (v. 3)
    - This will be a time of true peace and prosperity for God's people (v. 4)
  - We have to ask: "What time is this describing?"
    - Christ will be physically ruling on earth (not in the present age)
    - The nations will stream to Zion to learn from the Lord (not the present age)
    - There will be disputes to settle between nations (not the eternal state)
    - The Lord will usher in lasting peace (not the present age)
  - Therefore, this must be describing an intermediate state after the Lord's coming.

## ▪ Zechariah 14

- Zechariah 14 pictures a coming day when Jesus will return to this world, arriving on the Mount of Olives (vv. 3–5), defeating the invading enemies of Jerusalem (vv. 12–15), and establishing His messianic kingdom (vv. 8–11).
- Once the Lord has established Himself as “king over all the earth” (v. 9), He will reign over the nations of the world (vv. 16–21).
- Look to the sequence of events:
  - The nations attack Jerusalem (vv. 1–2)
  - The Lord returns and intervenes on Israel’s behalf (vv. 3–7)
  - The Lord destroys most of Israel’s enemies in the battle (vv. 12–15)
  - The Lord is established in Jerusalem as king of the earth (vv. 8–11)
  - The survivors worship the Lord annually in Jerusalem (vv. 16–19)
  - Some survivors of battle refuse to worship Him (vv. 16–19)
  - The Lord punishes those who refuse by withholding rain (vv. 16–19)
  - God’s people continue to worship the Lord in holiness (vv. 20–21)
- Key to note is that human rebellion and divine judgment exist after the second coming of Christ (vv. 1-15) and during an earthly reign of Christ (vv. 16-21).
- This would necessitate an intermediate kingdom between the coming of Christ and the eternal state.

## 2. The New Testament Indications of an Intermediate Kingdom

### ▪ 1 Corinthians 15:23-28 –

- Notice the timeline of events that is stated in vv. 23-24
  - Christ is resurrected as the first fruits (23a)
  - Christ’s people are resurrected at His second coming (23b)
  - Christ hands over the kingdom to the Father in the end (24a)
- However, what must happen first BEFORE all things are given to the Father:
  - Christ reigns on the earth and works to abolish all rule/power/authority, subjugating all His enemies (24b-25) and abolishing death, the final enemy (26)
- This would necessitate time between Christ’s second coming and the end, a time when He is ruling and reigning on the earth.

## ▪ Revelation 19:11-20:11-15

- While we have discussed this passage at length, one thing in particular to highlight is the timeline of events at the return of Jesus Christ in Revelation 19-22:
  - Jesus returns in glory (19:11-16).
  - Jesus brings judgment to the false prophet, the beast, and the unbelieving armies of the earth (19:17-21).
  - Satan is imprisoned in the abyss for 1,000 years (20:1-3).
  - Jesus establishes His kingdom on earth where He reigns with the resurrected saints in perfect righteousness (20:4-6).
  - Satan is released and judged once and for all (20:7-10).
  - The wicked are resurrected, judged, and thrown into the lake of fire (20:11-15).
  - The eternal state of the new heaven & earth begins (21-22).
- To fit within an amillennial or postmillennial framework, the assumption must be that every portion of Rev 19:11-22:21 happens sequentially, EXCEPT for Rev 20:1-6.
- A literal reading of this is the clearest evidence for a future Millennial Kingdom.

## EXCURSUS: THE NEED FOR A 7-YEAR TRIBULATION

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- While passages on the Millennial Kingdom are critical for us to understand, understanding how Scripture frames up the Tribulation period is helpful for us to understand a right view of eschatological events.
  - Primarily, understanding the Tribulation as not only judgment upon the world, but also a time dedicated to preparing Israel for its Messiah.
- One passage in the Old Testament gives great clarity to this is found in Daniel 9, and has led to the tribulation being described as “Daniel’s Seventieth Week”.
  - **Daniel 9:24-27** - *Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”*



- During this time, Israel is in captivity in Babylon; Jerusalem and the temple have been destroyed.
- In the context, Daniel is praying for deliverance (9:16-19)
- After this, the angel, Gabriel, gives Daniel vision of 70 weeks (9:24):
  - A “week” – literally in Hebrew “a unit of seven”
  - Therefore, 70 units of 7 years which would equal 490 years
- There are three divisions spoke of in these 70 weeks, accounting for 3 separate periods of time throughout redemptive history:
  - 7 weeks (49 years) – The time it takes to rebuild Jerusalem (v. 25a)
    - This began with Artaxerxes’ decree to rebuild Jerusalem in 445 BC
    - This ended 49 years later when city was completed in 396 BC
  - 62 weeks (434 years) = The time from completion of Jerusalem to coming of Messiah (v. 25b)
    - This began with the completion of rebuilding of Jerusalem.
    - This ended with Messiah’s arrival in Jerusalem.
    - This leads to a total of 483 years from decree to arrival of Messiah which was fulfilled at the triumphal entry in A.D. 30
      - *Note:* the 483 years is based on the 360-day year used by ancient Jews, meaning 476 years based on our calendar.
    - “After the 62 weeks” (v. 26), 2 things happen:
      - Messiah killed – 30 AD
      - Jerusalem destroyed – 70 AD
    - These events happen AFTER 69 weeks but BEFORE 70th week
      - Seems to indicate a gap of time (allowing for church age)
  - 1 week (7 years) = Tribulation (v. 27)
    - Question: When does this final week occur?
      - When “he” (Antichrist) makes a covenant with Israel (vs. 27)
    - This would necessitate a 7-year tribulation, not simply viewing the tribulation allegorically within the entirety of the church age.
  - And what is the purpose of the seventy weeks?
    - **Daniel 9:24 - Seventy weeks have been decreed *for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.***
  - This has Israel in view, pointing them back to their Messiah, and preparing them to receive Him!

# HOW DO WE RESPOND TO THIS?

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## 1. Develop Theology Through Exegesis

- When starting with a theological system or particular views/ presuppositions and using that as the lens through which you do your exegesis, it really is no longer exegesis.
  - Exegesis (lit. “to lead out of”) – deriving meaning from the text
  - Eisegesis (lit. “to lead into”) – injecting ideas into the text to derive meaning
- We must allow our exegesis to determine our theology, not the other way around.
  - With that, while every person brings presuppositions to the text, we must hold those with an open hand and be willing to let them go if they are not supported through Scripture (1 Thess 5:21-22).

## 2. Approach Scripture Through Faithful Hermeneutics

- We must interpret Scripture faithfully and with consistency.
  - This means allowing Scripture to be understood and fulfilled literally (accounting for literary devices and figures of speech), within its original context, to its intended audience, for the intended purposes of the author.
  - Put simply: We take God at His word!

## 3. Live Now in Light of Future Hope

- As those who are called to fix our hope completely on the grace to be given at the return of Christ, we need to understand what it is that we’re fixing our hope on.
- Therefore, we should desire to understand what God’s word says about His future plans for the church, Israel, and all of creation.
- As we reflect on these truths, living with an eternal perspective, it should develop in us a greater hope and desire to grow in holiness.
  - **1 Peter 1:13-15** - *Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”*

## FURTHER READING:

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- *Premillennialism: Why There Must Be a Future Earthly Kingdom of Jesus* by Michael Vlach
- *Amillennialism and the Age to Come: A Premillennial Critique of the Two-Age Model* by Matt Waymeyer
- *Understanding End Times Prophecy: A Comprehensive Approach* by Paul Benware
- *He Will Reign Forever: A Biblical Theology of the Kingdom of God* by Michael Vlach