

What's all this about The Second Coming?

The study of events concerning The Second Coming is called Eschatology, from two Greek words meaning "last" (ἔσχατος) and "study" (-λογία), is the study of 'end things'.

There are several basic historical positions; Premillennial, Amillennial and Postmillennial. "Millennial" means one thousand.

1. Pre Millennial: We are living now before the one thousand years. The Second Coming begins the one thousand years Reign of Jesus Christ from his capitol Jerusalem.
2. A Millennial: We are living now during the "one thousand" years. The number 1,000 is not literal. The prefix A generally means it is counter to the word to which it is attached.
3. Post Millennial: The church will bring in the one thousands year reign and live it out before Jesus returns bodily.

Millennium patterns 2 and 3 do not involve a literal 1,000 years, but rather a figurative or symbolic "1,000" years.

Premillennialism is largely based upon a literal interpretation of Revelation 20:1-6 in the New Testament which adherents claim describes Jesus' coming to the earth and subsequent reign at the end of an apocalyptic period of tribulation.

In studying the end times there are several patterns regarding both the Tribulation, the Rapture, and the Millennium. My chart below represents all positions and events with the dates when they were first believed:

1	<i>Classical Pre-Millennial</i> 30 . . . 400 A.D. . . . <i>Present</i>	The Present Age	 Tribulation Increases	TR	1,000 Year Reign = Millennium	New Heaven & New Earth
2	<i>Dispensational Pre-Millennial</i> 1830 A.D. . . . <i>Present</i>	The Present Age	- Secret Rapture	The Great Tribulation	TR	1,000 Year Reign = Millennium	New Heaven & New Earth
3	<i>A-Millennial</i> 400 A.D. . . . <i>Present</i>	The Present Age . . . Intermittent Tribulation . . .			TR	New Heaven & New Earth	
4	<i>Post-Millennial</i> <i>Late 1800's . . . Present</i>	The Present Age . . . Intermittent Tribulation Church Subdues The World (Theonomy)			TR	New Heaven & New Earth	
5	<i>Positive Pre-Millennial</i> <i>Present (Developing)</i>	The Present Age . . . Intermittent Tribulation Church Subdues The World (7 Mountains)			TR	1,000 Year Reign = Millennium	New Heaven & New Earth

TR = TRIUMPHANT RETURN

Classical Pre Millennialism was the usual position of most Christians from the day of Pentecost until the influence of Augustine. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, was a North African who

dominated Christian theology in his day. Since this was the original interpretation I accept it as accurate. At the Triumphant Return the 1,000 reign begins followed by the creation of the New Heaven and the New Earth.

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will 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.”

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed.”

1 Corinthians 15:51 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

Dispensational Pre Millennialism originated in the 1830's A.D. It was an outgrowth of the Irvingite Movement in Scotland and the visions of a young woman named Mary McDonald and developed by the Darby school of Prophecy. The Great Tribulation is a world wide event that is integral to Dispensational Pre Millennialism. Dispensationalists believe that God has dealt with the world and the church in 7 different dispensations. This is contrary to the Reformed Protestant view that God's true covenant of faith that God initiated with Abraham and was fulfilled by Jesus and his ministry.

The Great Tribulation is usually understood as the 7 year period just prior to the Second Coming or visible Glorious Return of Christ in Dispensational Pre Millennialism.

The word “Rapture” is not in the Bible. It is the “Catching Away.” Dispensational Pre Millennialism believes that this catching away will precede the Triumphal Return by 7 years and it will be secret. The true Christian believers will simply disappear and those “Left behind” will have no clue what happened to them. They may believe that they were taken by aliens. So, the true believers get to miss the great tribulation. Some scholars disagree that the scriptures used to support this theory are not obvious. The Rapture patterns below are a part of the Dispensational Pre Millennial position:

- A. Pre Tribulation Rapture: The Church leaves before the tribulation.
- B. Mid Tribulation Rapture: The Church leaves in the middle of the tribulation at 3 ½ years.
- C. Post Tribulation Rapture: The Church leaves at the end of the tribulation.

Dispensationalism was established by:

John Nelson Darby, 1800 – 1882, founder of the Darby School of Prophecy in Britain; in 1827 he conceived the doctrine of the “secret rapture”.

C.I.Scofield, 1843 – 1921, editor of the Scofield Reference Bible.

Dwight L. Moody, 1837 - 1899, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago.

Hal Lindsay and others.

The Church Subdues The World – Dominionism

The Post Millennial position is now supported by two prominent Dominionist teachings which oppose Dispensationalism.

Seven Mountains dominionism seeks to place Christians in control over the seven forces that shape and control our culture. It was conceived in 1975 by Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade, and Loren Cunningham, founder of Youth With a Mission. Many Evangelicals are now embracing Seven Mountains dominionism.

The Seven Mountains are:

1. Business
2. Government
3. Media
4. Arts and Entertainment
5. Education
6. Family
7. Religion

The dominionism of Theonomy is a little more complicated but has very similar goals. Some Theonomists claim that their methods rely solely on conversions and that the Seven Mountains people seek to impose Christian values on others.

Modern Theonomy was largely formed by Dr. Rousas Rushdoony and has been carried on by others.

Summary

The one thing no one ever knows; The day or hour of the Second Coming. Many have looked at the signs or published a private revelation, and/or started whole denominations, and said “it is right upon us,” or “This week for sure,” or some other such foolishness. To date they have all been wrong! He did not come = 100%. He did come = 0%.

You have to decide for yourself. No one else can decide for you about the particulars. No matter how you decide, be prepared to change your decision. One thing is for sure, He said he would return and He will.

Guidelines

Which interpretation of Scripture is the best?

If at all possible, take the most obvious meaning first.

Check the context, context, context.

Discuss it with other sincere believers.

Be willing to talk to many believers.

Do not be afraid to listen to opposing views.

For instance, if you are a Dispensational Pre Millennial realize that the Dominionists have a point about the need to be an agent of change in this world before the Second Coming. We are to be salt and light.

Hold your conclusions loosely.