

What's all this about The Second Coming and the Christian Millennium?

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 here represents all positions and events with the dates when they were first believed.

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.