

The Doctrine of Future Things

Eschatology

For some, eschatology is a study in _____, for all things will end in death – the death of the individual and the death of the universe. For others the _____ is modified by a vague hope in some sort of life after death. For the Christian the Bible provides clear and detailed teaching concerning the future so he may know with certainty what lies ahead.

eschatology – the theology of last things.

The scope of eschatology includes the biblical teaching concerning the intermediate state, the resurrections, the Rapture of the church, the second advent of Christ, and the Millennium.

There are three basic systems of eschatology – 1) premillennialism (Fundamentalist), 2) postmillennialism (Presbyterian and Reformed), and 3) amillennialism (Church of God). Dispensationalism will also be discussed.

The word _____ is derived from two Latin words, *mille*, meaning thousand, and *annum*, meaning year. The term is found just six times in Scripture, all in the first seven verses of Revelation chapter 20. Premillennialists take the word literally, while postmillennialists and amillennialists take the word figuratively, as meaning an indefinitely long period.

A Definition of Postmillennialism

postmillennialism – “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 in the hearts of individuals, that the world is eventually to be Christianized, and that the return of Christ is to occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace commonly called the ‘Millennium.’ . . . the second coming of Christ will be followed immediately by the general resurrection, the general judgment, and the introduction of heaven and hell in their fullness.” – Loraine Boettner.

millennium – “A period in the later days of the church militant, when, under the special influence of the Holy Spirit, the spirit of the _____ shall appear again, true religion be greatly quickened and revived, and the members of Christ’s churches become so conscious of their strength in Christ that they shall, to an extent unknown before, triumph over the power of evil both within and without” – A. H. Strong.

Method of interpretation - Postmillennial interpretation is largely spiritualized with regard to prophecy. However, Revelation 20 will be fulfilled in the earthly kingdom that is brought in through the church’s efforts.

References: 1) Basic Theology, Charles C. Ryrie, pp. 439-452; 2) Postmillennialism, Loraine Boettner, Introduction.

A Definition of Amillennialism

Amillennialism is the view of last things that holds there will be no Millennium before the end of the world. Until the end there will be a parallel development of both good and evil, God’s kingdom and Satan’s. After the second coming of Christ at the end of the world there will be a general resurrection and judgment of all people, followed by the eternal order of all things – the absolute perfect kingdom of God, in which there will be no sin, suffering, or death.

Method of interpretation - Amillennial interpretation spiritualizes the promises made to Israel as a nation and says they are fulfilled in the church. According to this view, Revelation 20 describes the scene of souls in heaven during the time between the first and second comings of Christ.

A Definition of Premillennialism

Premillennialism is the view that holds that the second coming of Christ will occur prior to the Millennium which will see the establishment of Christ’s kingdom on this earth for a literal 1,000 years. It also understands that there will be several occasions where resurrections and judgments will take place. Eternity will begin after the 1,000 years are concluded. Within premillennialism there are those who hold differing views as to the time of the Rapture.

- It is probably safe to say that pretribulational premillennialists believe in the inerrancy of the Bible almost without exception.

Method of interpretation - Premillennialism follows the plain, normal, _____, historical, and grammatical method of interpretation. Revelation 20 is understood literally.

A Definition of Dispensationalism

“The system of Bible interpretation represented by the writings of John N. Darby, a leader in the Plymouth Brethren group in England, about 1830, and the Scofield Reference Bible, which divides the history of mankind into seven distinct periods, or ‘dispensations’, and affirms that in each period God deals with the human race on the basis of some one specific principle.” – Loraine Boettner.

While historic Premillennialism has held that the Church will go through the Tribulation, Dispensationalism holds that the Church will be raptured and so taken out of the world before that event, and that following the Rapture there will be a seven year period, during the first half of which the Jews are in covenant relationship with the Antichrist and dwell in Palestine but in the last half they endure terrible persecution under the Antichrist. At the end of the seven year period Christ returns, annihilates the Antichrist, and establishes His kingdom in Jerusalem.

Dispensationalists are thus double ‘pre-s’ – Pre-tribulational Pre-millennialists.

Why Study Prophecy?

2 Cor. 4:17	A. Provides joy in the midst of affliction.
1 John 3:3	B. Cleanses and encourages holy living.
2 Tim. 3:16-17	C. Is profitable, like all Scripture, for a number of important needs in the Christian's life.
2 Cor. 5:8	D. Gives facts about life after death.
	E. Gives truth about the end of history.
	F. Gives proof of the reliability of all Scripture, for the number of prophecies that have come to pass precisely as predicted cannot be accounted for by chance but only by God.
	G. Draws our heart to worship the God who is in complete control and will accomplish His will in history.

Fill in the Blanks

despair (2x)
millennium
martyrs
literal