

[ Christian Views on Jesus' Second Coming ]

# Four Views of *the* End Times

Historical  
Premillennialism

Amillennialism

Dispensational  
Premillennialism

Postmillennialism



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# The End Times Intrigue

For 2,000 years people have wondered about the events of the end times and when Jesus will return. Terms such as *millennium*, *tribulation*, *666*, and *antichrist* are used in the media and the supermarket tabloids, but questions remain:

- Will Jesus return physically and reign on earth for 1,000 years?
- Will Christians go through a seven-year tribulation?
- Will the second coming of Christ occur at the same time that believers meet Christ in the air (the rapture)?
- Will Christians be raptured (removed from this earth) and other people “left behind”?
- What does the nation of Israel have to do with the end times?

There are four different views of end-times events, but all share some key points:

- Jesus will come again for those who love him.
- Jesus calls his followers to be ready all the time.
- No one knows the day or the hour.

Jesus said, “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” —Matthew 24:36

“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

—Matthew 24:12–13

## What JESUS Taught about the End

Jesus promised his disciples that he would come again. Before his return there would be:

“Birth Pains” (Events before the “signs” of the end)

- Many will claim to be the Messiah.
- People will be deceived by these messiahs.
- Wars, famine, earthquakes, pestilence.
- Believers in Christ persecuted and killed.
- Believers will be witnesses of Jesus to kings.
- Many will turn away from the faith.
- Betrayals by parents, brothers, and friends.
- Increase in wickedness.
- Fearful events and signs from heaven.

## The Signs of the End

- Jerusalem surrounded by armies.
- The “abomination of desolation.”
- Great tribulation like never before.
- Jerusalem will be trampled on by Gentiles.
- False prophets perform signs, miracles.
- Sun darkens, moon doesn’t shine, stars fall.
- Severe ocean activity disturbs the nations.
- People will faint with terror.
- Jesus will appear in the sky.
- The trumpet will sound.
- Angels will gather God’s elect.

(Matthew 24–25; Mark 13; Luke 21)

## What PAUL Taught about the End

- 1] The Lord will descend.
- 2] The dead in Christ will rise first.
- 3] The living will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord and be with him forever.
- 4] Don’t believe those who say the Day of the Lord has already come.
- 5] The Day of the Lord will be preceded by:
  - Rebellion
  - The revelation of the man of lawlessness who will:
    - *Oppose and exalt himself over God*
    - *Set himself up in God’s temple*
    - *Proclaim to be God*
    - *Be revealed when the one holding him back is taken out of the way*
    - *Be accompanied by satanic, counterfeit miracles*
    - *Deceive those who do not love the truth*
- 6] When Jesus comes, the man of lawlessness will be overthrown and destroyed.  
(1 Thessalonians 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 2)

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# Important Words to Know

[ **Church age** ] The time period from the beginning of the church (about AD 30) until Jesus Christ returns for everyone who has trusted in him, as promised in John 14.

[ **Eschatology** ] Study of the Bible's teachings about the events leading up to the second coming of Jesus (from Greek, *eschatos* [final] + *logos* [word or idea] = "a word about the final things").

[ **First coming of Christ** ] The earthly life and ministry of Jesus Christ, about 4 BC–AD 30.

[ **Millennium** ] The thousand-year reign of Jesus on earth, described in Revelation 20:4–6 (from Latin, *mille*, thousand).

- **Premillennial:** The belief that the millennium is a *future* event and Jesus will return *before* (pre-) the millennium.
- **Amillennial:** The millennium is a symbol of Christ's present reign among his people.
- **Postmillennial:** Jesus will return *after* (post-) the millennium. The millennium is a time in which most of the world submits to Jesus, and peace and justice reign.

[ **Preterism** ] Preterism is the eschatological viewpoint that suggests some, if not all, biblical prophecies about the end times refer to specific events that happened in the first century. Some preterist interpretations include: the antichrist refers to Emperor Nero; the tribulation refers to the Jewish War; and the Destruction of the temple occurred in AD 70 (from Latin, *praeter*, beyond or after).

[ **Rapture** ] Event described in 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17, when Jesus Christ returns for his people. Dispensational premillennialists believe that the rapture and the second coming of Jesus are *two separate events*. They place the rapture *before* the great tribulation and the second coming *after* the tribulation. Historical premillennialists, amillennialists, and postmillennialists understand the second coming of Jesus and the event described in 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17 as the same event (from Latin, *raptus*, carry away).

[ **Second coming of Christ** ] The bodily return of Jesus to earth to reign as king.

[ **Tribulation, Great** ] Time when disasters happen on the earth and people who are faithful to Jesus suffer intense persecution, possibly lasting seven years (Revelation 7:14).

- Premillennialists place the great tribulation near the end.
- Dispensational premillennialists typically believe that the tribulation will last exactly seven years.
- Many historical premillennialists view the reference to "seven years" as a symbol of the completeness of God's dealings with the world as the end of time approaches.
- Most amillennialists and postmillennialists treat the tribulation as a symbol of calamities and persecutions that have occurred throughout church history.

Some amillennialists and postmillennialists are *preterists*—they believe that the great tribulation occurred between AD 63 and 70, during the Jewish-Roman conflict that ended with the destruction of the Jewish temple.

# Four Views of the End Times

	Dispensational Premillennialism	Historical Premillennialism	Amillennialism	Postmillennialism
Will Jesus return physically?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
When will Jesus return?	After a 7-year tribulation; before the millennium.	After tribulation; before the millennium.	Anytime; a detailed time frame is not important.	After the millennium.
Do the rapture and second coming of Christ occur at the same time?	No, they are events separated by either 7 years (pre-tribulation rapture) or 3½ years (mid-tribulation rapture).	Yes	Yes	Yes
Will there be a great tribulation?	Yes	Yes	The tribulation occurs any time Christians are persecuted or wars and disasters occur.	Tribulation is either the first-century Jewish-Roman War or the ongoing conflict between good and evil prior to millennium.
Will Christians suffer during the tribulation?	Christians are either raptured before the tribulation (pre-tribulation rapture) or 3½ years into the tribulation (mid-tribulation rapture).	Yes, Christians will go through the tribulation and endure suffering and persecution for the cause of Christ.	Yes, Christians will suffer and endure persecution until Jesus returns; persecution will increase in the end.	Yes, Christians are called to share the gospel, and tribulation will occur when that gospel is opposed.
Will there be a literal 1,000-year millennium?	Yes, after the 7-year tribulation, Christ will return and reign for 1,000 years.	Yes, after the tribulation, Christ will return and reign for 1,000 years.	No, the millennium refers to the reign of Christ in the hearts of his believers.	No, the millennium refers to a period of peace when the gospel reaches all people.
Who is saved?	Christians only	Christians only	Christians only	Christians only
Is the modern state of Israel relevant to the prophecies in Revelation?	Yes	No	No	No
When was this view most held?	Became popular about 1860. Has increased in popularity.	The earliest view of the end times, emerging at the end of the first century.	Popularized in AD 400. Continues to be accepted today.	May have been popular as early as AD 300. Less popular today.

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