

# Is the End Near?

## **The Timing of Jesus' Second Coming**

# Introduction

- **Where is history headed?**
- **For centuries, Christians have debated about the timing of Jesus' return**
- **All Christians affirm that Jesus is coming back to establish his kingdom, to rule, and to reign**
- **The Bible talks about a millennium, a 1000-year reign of Christ on earth (Rev 20:1-6)**
- **When will Jesus return?**

# Postmillennialism

- **Jesus will return to reign on earth *after* a golden age**
- **This period began when Jesus was raised from the dead**
- **Because of the preaching of the gospel, the conditions in the world will become better**
- **This view was developed at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the scientific and industrial revolutions began in the West**
- **Europe experienced the longest period of peace**
- **Then came WWI and WWII**

# Defining Postmillennialism

- **“The return of Christ will occur after the millennium. Kenneth Gentry writes, “Postmillennialism expects the proclaiming of the gospel to win the vast majority of human beings to salvation in the present age. Increasing gospel success will gradually produce a time in history prior to Christ’s return in which, faith, righteousness, peace, and prosperity will prevail in the affairs of people and of nations. After an extensive era of such conditions the Lord will return visibly, bodily, and in great glory, ending history with the general resurrection and the great judgment of all humankind” (Gentry, 13-14)**

# Arguments for Postmillennialism

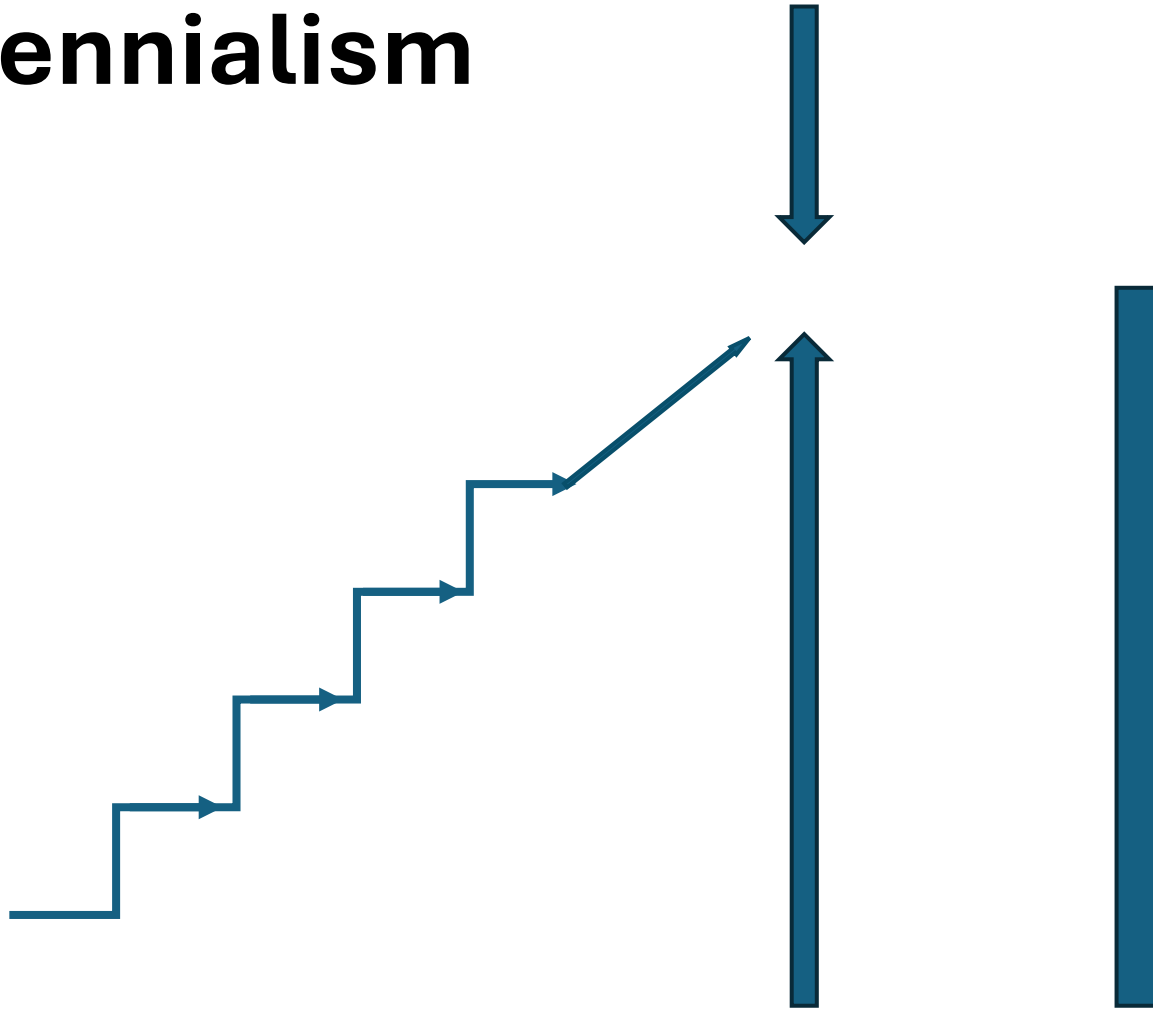
- <sup>31</sup> “He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. <sup>32</sup> Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it **grows**, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches” (Matt 13:31-33)
- “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will **build** my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matt 16:18)

# Arguments for Postmillennialism

- <sup>18</sup> “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All **authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:18-20)

**Postmillennialism**

**Second Coming**



**Eternity**

# Amillennialism

- **Although the prefix “A” signifies none, proponents insist there is a millennium**
- **It is a realized millennium and it’s taking place *now***
- **The 1000-year period is symbolic, not literal**
- **It began with the resurrection of Jesus**
- **Christ is reigning in heaven with the souls of deceased Christians**
- **This intermediate period will culminate with the coming of Jesus, when eternity will be inaugurated**



# Defining Amillennialism

- **“Amillennialism declares that the present dispensation of the kingdom of God will be followed immediately by the kingdom of God in its consummate and eternal form. Rather than an interregnum that will occur between the present age and eternity, the millennium described in Rev 20 is a symbolic description of the church age. It represents the theological truths related to the present rule of Christ. Satan is in some sense already bound, and the saints are already reigning with Christ” (Berkhof, 708)**

# Arguments for Amillennialism

- “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God **has come** near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15)
- **Besides Rev 20, nowhere else in Scripture do we read about the millennium. It is simpler to say that Christ’s second coming and the last judgment take place at the same time. Then the new heaven and the new earth will descend (Rev 21-22)**
- “He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and **bound** him for a thousand years” (Rev 20:2)
- He is “bound” in the sense that he can no longer prevent the nations from hearing the gospel (cf. Matt 12:29)

# Arguments for Amillennialism

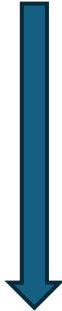
- **What about the statement that the martyrs came to life**
- **The term “anastasis” always refers to physical resurrection**
- **Amillennialists argue that the first resurrection in Rev 20:4 is spiritual and the second resurrection in Rev 20:5 is physical (Wright and Schreiner)**
- **John speaks of a “second death” or hell (Rev 20:6)**
- **There is a first or physical death for everyone**
- **The parallelism is that the first resurrection refers to spiritual life**
- **Thus, second resurrection refers to physical resurrection**

# Rev 20:1-6

- And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. <sup>2</sup> He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. <sup>3</sup> He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.
- <sup>4</sup> I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They **came to life** and **reigned with Christ** a thousand years. <sup>5</sup> (The rest of the dead did not **come to life** until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup> Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

# Amillennialism

# Second Coming



**Church is the kingdom**

**Eternity**

# Premillennialism

- **Jesus returns physically and reigns on earth *before* the 1000-year millennium, though not every proponent take it literally**
- **Historic premillennialism was the view of the early church fathers like Irenaeus, Papias, and Justin Martyr**
- **Dispensational premillennialism makes a clear distinction between Israel and the church**
- **Israel has a special place in the millennium, when God rules the world through the nation of Israel**

# Defining Premillennialism

- **“The two most central convictions of premillennialists about the future can be stated in relation to the word, *premillennial*. The foremost conviction is that Jesus is coming back. All hopes and expectations for the future are focused on his return. His coming will be prior to a millennial (1000-year) kingdom. They believe that when Jesus comes, he will raise the dead in two stages. First, he will raise some to participate with him in the millennial kingdom. After the millennium is over, he will raise the rest of the dead and institute the final judgment. Then will come the final and eternal destinies of the saved and lost” (Blaising, 157)**

# Arguments for Premillennialism

- **In Rev 19:11-21, Jesus returns and destroys his enemies, and the false prophet and the beast are thrown into hell**
- **In Rev 20, Satan is thrown into the abyss for 1000 years**
- **There appears to be a sequence here**
- **In Rev 12, Satan is cast down to the earth but was still active**
- **In Rev 20, Satan is bound for 1000 years during the millennium**
- **Right now, he is the prince of the power of the air, deceiving people and nations**



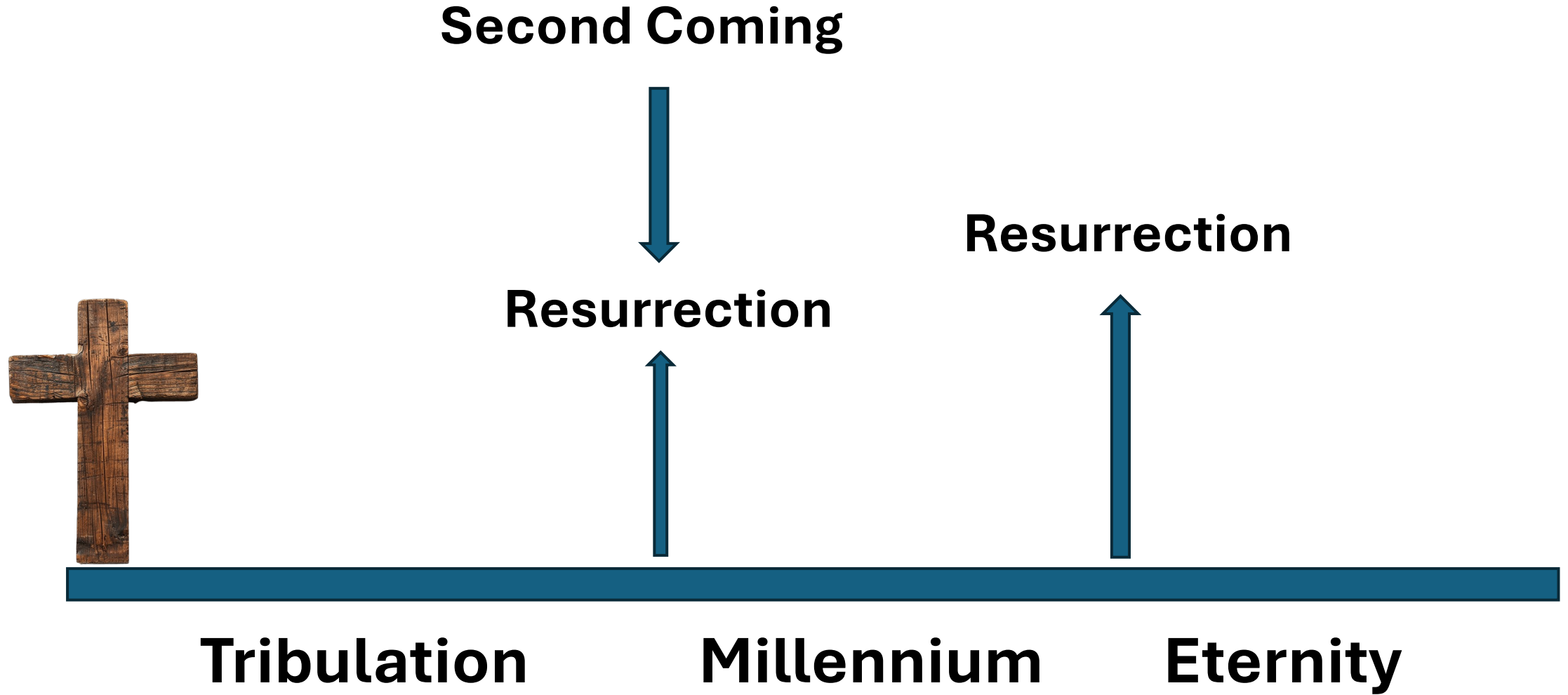
# Arguments for Premillennialism

- In Rev 20:4, John says the martyrs “**came to life**” (anastasis) for “a thousand years”
- The term “anastasis” is normally used to refer to physical resurrection (Rev 2)
- In Rev 20:5, John then says: “(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended)”
- The same term “anastasis” is used for “**come to life**”
- Thus, the millennium is sandwiched between two physical resurrections

# Rev 20:1-6

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# Historic Premillennialism



**Second  
Coming**

**Dispensational Premillennialism**

**Resurrection**

**Resurrection**



**Millennium**

**Eternity**

# Conclusion

- **We need humility and show love toward one another who disagree on end time positions**
- **Theologians have rightly said that they have not settled the issue**
- **Christians should agree on the main thing that Jesus is coming back, righteousness will prevail, unbelievers punished, and Satan will be defeated**
- **God will bring peace to this earth, where there is a new creation coming and we will see God's face and enjoy him forever**

# Discussion Question

- **What difference, if any, do end time views have on Christian life and ministry?**

