

Eschatology – Premillennial  
Fairfield Christian Reformed Church  
April 26, 2020



John Piper  
Debate Moderator<sup>1</sup>

Jim Hamilton  
Premillennial

Doug Wilson  
Postmillennial

Sam Storms  
Amillennial

### The Three Historically held Positions

- Premillennial → Christ returns prior to his thousand-year reign on earth
  - o Hippolytus, Lewis Chafer, John Walvoord, D. Moody, John MacArthur, Thomas Schreiner
- Postmillennial → Christ returns after the symbolic thousand-year reign, which occurs through Christ's kingdom expansion on earth
  - o Charles Finney, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, Charles Hodge, B Warfield, NT Wright
- Amillennial → Christ returns after the symbolic thousand-year reign, which occurs in heaven, not on earth
  - o Augustine, John Calvin, Anthony Hoekema, Louis Berkhof, GC Berkhouwer

### Case Study<sup>2</sup>

The book had all the makings of a bestseller. Adventure, drama, action, mystery, even a touch of horror; it was all there. Paul finished reading the final few pages, put the book down, and reflected on the author's dramatized account of the events recorded in the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation. The author had a gift for bringing the biblical ideas to life.

Kelly, a friend from church, had recommended the book to Paul. She had told him the book was not only an excellent read—it had changed her life. With a new understanding of the way in which the end-times would unravel, Kelly again felt excited to be a Christian. She had explained to him how the book had enabled her to figure out the mysterious symbolism of Revelation. With this understanding, she was now able to see that the end-times scenario was unfolding right before her eyes.

Paul had to admit the book had held his attention from cover to cover. And he too felt a new urgency regarding the end-times. He was especially intrigued by the author's view that Christ would soon come and take Christians out of the world, wage war against his enemies, and then embark on a thousand-year period, which he called the millennium—the period when Christ and his church would rule the world.

Just then, the phone rang. It was Bob, a close friend of Paul's and a member of his Bible study group. The timing was perfect. Bob had majored in biblical studies in

<sup>1</sup> "An Evening in Eschatology." Bethlehem College and Seminary in Minneapolis, MN, Sept. 27, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Boyd, Gregory and Paul Eddy, "Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology." Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009.

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college and loved to discuss theological subjects. Paul explained the basic story line of the book and then asked Bob what he thought.

Bob hesitated before finally saying, “Actually Paul, I’ve looked through that book. I’ll agree that it seems to be an exciting book. But to be honest, I think the author’s interpretation of the book of Revelation is way off base, and I’m worried about its impact on people. The author treats the book of Revelation as though it is a snapshot of the future when in fact it is intended to be symbolic. The apostle John wasn’t writing about events that were going to take place in the lives of the people he was writing to. He tells us this at the very beginning of the book. I’m afraid Christians will read this book and waste time trying to interpret current events though this book the same way some people use horoscopes.”

After their conversation, Paul was left with many questions. How should Christians interpret the book of Revelation? Literally or symbolically? Does it speak about events in the first century or about events in the twenty-first century? And what about this idea of the millennium? Will Christ return soon and set up a thousand-year reign on the earth?

### **Discussion Questions, part one**

- What is your reaction to their statements on heaven as the intermediate state?
- Absent from the body is to be present with Christ. (2 Cor. 5:8-9)

### **Summary of the Premillennial View**

Jim Hamilton: “Christ comes, all believers rise, the unbelievers do not rise in this first resurrection, and then the believers all reign with Christ for a thousand years literally on the earth. [Satan is bound.] Jesus is here, in his resurrection body... There are unbelievers who survive his first coming and enter into the millennium and then they have offspring and that not necessarily everyone is regenerated in that period... After this thousand year reign there will be a releasing of Satan; he has been bound for these thousand years; there will be a final rebellion; they will be put down, and then the great white throne judgment will be setup...and then comes the new heavens and new earth.”

### **Read Revelation 20:1-10**

### **Discussion Question, part two**

- What is your reaction to this view?
- Jesus tells us two back-to-back parables describing the kingdom of God starting small and growing into something big (Matt. 13:31-33). Does this view undermine that kingdom strategy?
- Is it appropriate to rest the entirety of a position on only one passage of apocalyptic literature rather than harmonize it with the rest of the Bible?
- Since the earliest post-apostolic figures in Church history that we have a record of held the premillennial position. Isn’t it safe to assume the apostles did as well?