

Eschatology – Concluding Thoughts
Fairfield Christian Reformed Church
May 17, 2020



John Piper
Debate Moderator¹

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

Biggest Problems with Each view

- Premillennial – how to get natural bodies and unbelievers in the millennium
- Postmillennial – how to harmonize 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and 2 Thess. 2:3-10
- Amillennial – how to reconstruct the clear meaning of *anastasis* “resurrection”

The Affect Missions and Carrying out the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20)^{2 3}

- Premillennial
 - o According to Matt. 24:1-14, despite increasing persecution of the Church, the Gospel must go out to all the world before Christ comes to usher in the thousand years of peace from persecution.
 - o What is the motivation for those who hold the premillennial view to send and support missionaries around the world, or to go themselves?

¹ “An Evening in Eschatology.” Bethlehem College and Seminary in Minneapolis, MN, Sept. 27, 2009.

² Fanning, Don, “Eschatology and Missions” (2009). *Themes of Theology that Impacts Missions*.

³ “Eschatology and Missions,” The Gospel Coalition.

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- Postmillennial
 - According to Matt. 13:31-33, the kingdom of God starts small, and grows and expands to his fullest form. At its fullest form is the culmination, therefore Christ comes following the completion of the Gospel's success. The world will be evangelized accompanied by a transformation of society.
 - What is the motivation for those who hold the postmillennial view to send and support missionaries around the world, or to go themselves?

- Amillennial
 - Similar to postmillennialism in regards to Gospel expansion, amillennialists also seek to bring about Christianized social-change, most prevalently through theocracy, to bring about the radical peace of God described by the Old Testament prophets.
 - What is the motivation for those who hold the amillennial view to send and support missionaries around the world, or to go themselves?

The CRC Position

Although the Christian Reformed Church is generally amillennialist in its eschatology and especially in its interpretation of the book of Revelation, its assemblies have never made a specific pronouncement to that effect. In response to a theological challenge to its underlying eschatology, the synod of the CRC adopted the following succinct statements in 1920, which implicitly reject dispensationalism and some facets of premillennialism:

. . . according to our creeds there is not the least bit of doubt in regard to

1. The unity of the church of all ages, [ancient] Israel not excluded. The church of all ages is one in essence.
2. The kingship of Christ. Christ is not only head of the church as an organic unity but also king of his church in the juridical sense of the word.⁴

Discussion Questions

- What is your reaction to the CRC position?
- Has watching this debate been helpful in providing clarity to you on the three positions? Or are you more confused than before watching the debate?
- Without revealing which view you hold, how many of you feel comfortable enough with the three views to be aware of where you stand or lean toward?
- If you are comfortable sharing which view you hold, what is the biggest point in favor of your view that convinced you?

⁴ CRC Statement on the Millennium