

Theology

Our Saviour Evangelical Free Church

Eschatology

Key Concepts:

- ➔ The Millennium
- ➔ Hell
- ➔ Heaven

Pages covered in *Bible Doctrine* by Wayne Grudem: 427-471.

The Second Coming

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-4 and Revelation 19:11-16

What will Christ's return be like?

4. Physical (Matt. 24:44; Acts 1:11)
5. Visible and Triumphant (Mark 8:38; Rev. 1:7)
6. The end of history and judge the world (John 5:28-29)

The Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21)

Scripture seems to indicate that there will be a period of hardship, persecution, and suffering unlike the world has ever seen. A popular, but unlikely, view is that Christians will be "raptured" prior to this tribulation and will not experience it. However, there is little Scriptural support for this view. Scripture also indicates that the tribulation will last a period of seven years.

What is the rapture?

Will Christians be taken out of this world for a period of time prior to the Second Coming of Christ during the Great Tribulation?

While this is a popular view, it is not supported very well by Scripture.

What will happen in the rapture?

The rapture will immediately proceed the Second Coming of Christ. Jesus will "snatch up" or "catch up" all believers, both living and dead, and will immediately return to earth with all the believers as His escort.

The Millennium

What is the millennium? (Read Rev. 20:4-5)

Following His Second Coming, Christ will reign with believers on earth for a period of 1000 years. During this time many of the unbelievers, but not all of them, will turn to Christ and be saved. It will be a period of unrivaled peace and glory here on earth. After the 1000 years are over, Satan will be released from his captivity and will lead a revolt against Christ of those who have not turned to Christ, but he will be defeated.

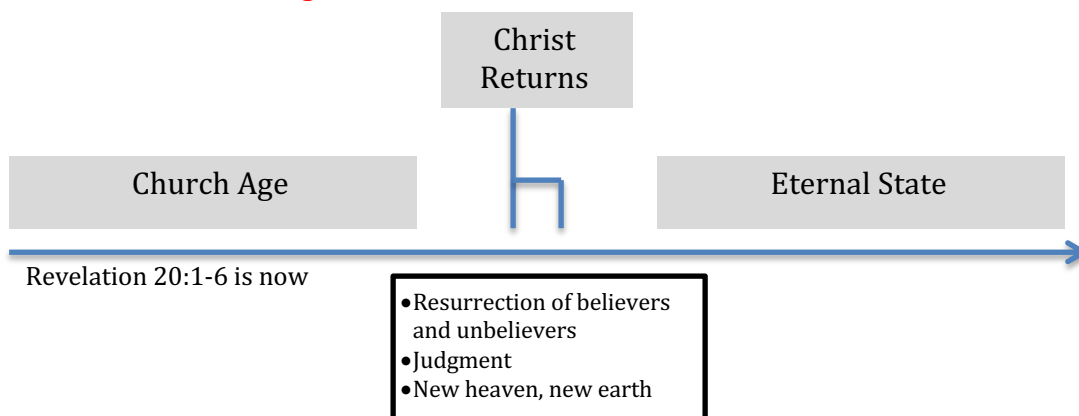
Is it a literal 1000 years?

There are good arguments to support either claim. They include the fact that Revelation is an apocalyptic book, given to much symbolism and approximations. On the other hand, many claim that the Bible says 1000, so it must be true. In either case, both a literal 1000 years and the belief that it will simply be a "long period of time" are equally valid and Biblical.

Views of the Millennium

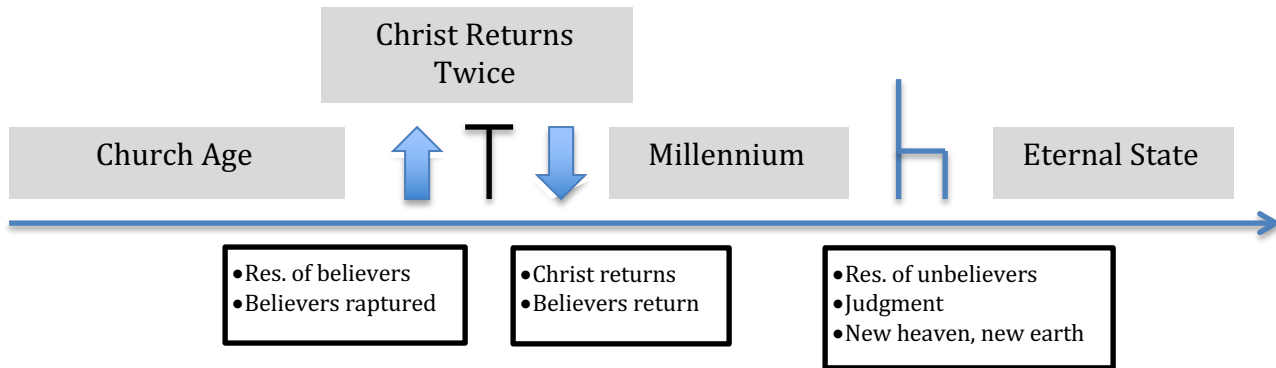
Amillennialism

This view suggests that we are currently in the millennium and that there will be no millennium to come. Christ will simply return again to restore all things and the eternal state will begin.



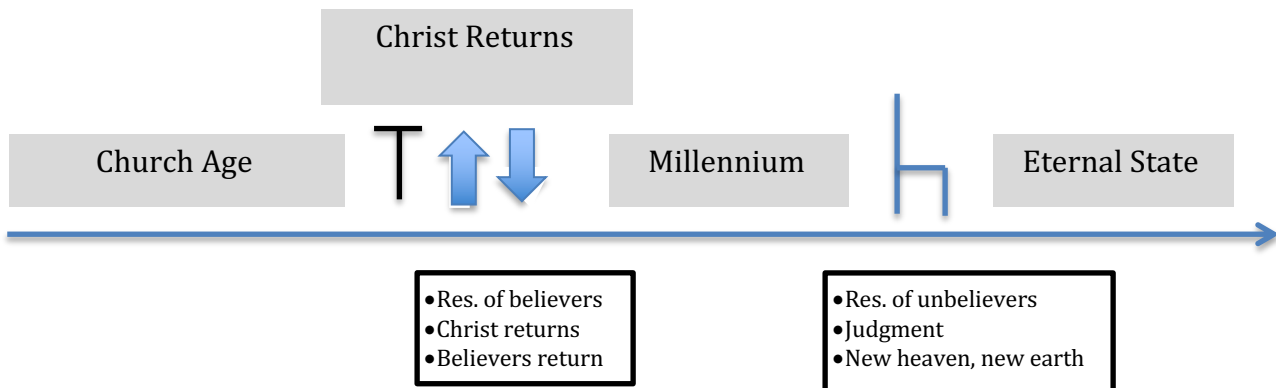
Dispensational Premillennialism

Christ will not only return prior to the millennium, but prior to the Great Tribulation as well. This is the classic view of the pretribulation “rapture” where believers are suddenly gone from earth for a period of time before they return with Christ for His millennial reign.



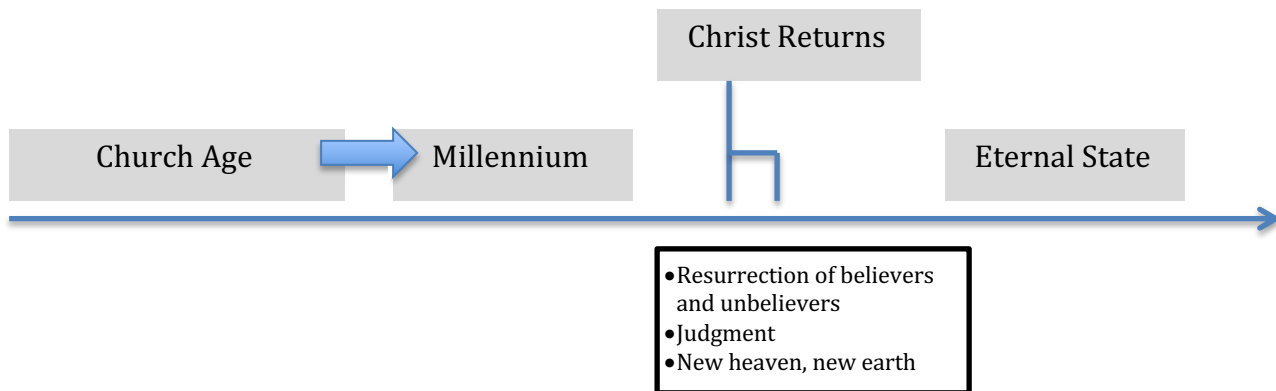
Classic Premillennialism

This position states that Christ will return prior to the millennium with all believers as His escorts. In this scenario the believers will experience the Great Tribulation just prior to Christ's Second coming and will be “raptured” immediately prior to the event.



Postmillennialism

Postmillennialism believes that Christ will return after the millennium. This view states that the progress of the gospel and the power of the church will gradually increase and a larger and larger portion of the world's population will be Christians. As a result, there will be a significant Christian influence on society and gradually a millennial age will occur on earth. The millennium will not necessarily last for a literal 1000 years, but will be a long period of time. According to postmillennialism, there will not be a specific period of tribulation.



Heaven and Hell

The Final Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15)

What will happen?

6. Jesus Christ will be the judge.
7. Unbelievers will be judged.
8. Believers will be judged.
9. Angels will be judged.
10. Believers will help in the work of judgment.

Hell (see Luke 16:22-24, Rev. 14:9-11)

Definition: Hell is a place of eternal conscious punishment for the wicked.

What about annihilationism?

Annihilationism is a theological belief that states that those who are punished by God in the final judgment will be punished for a time, but eventually, they will simply cease to exist or be annihilated. This view is popular with a small segment of the Christian world, including John Stott and Seventh Day Adventists (who should probably not be considered Christians).

Heaven (see Isa. 65:17, Matt. 25:34, Rev. 21:2)

Definition: Heaven is the place where God most fully makes known His presence to bless.

Could “Heaven” just be a state of mind?

This view has been advocated, mostly outside of the church, but finds almost no Scriptural support, since Heaven is routinely referred to as a physical place.

What will Heaven be like (according to the Bible)?

5. The creation will be renewed (Rom. 8:19-21, Rev. 21:1).
6. Believers will receive resurrection bodies (see previous discussion of glorification)
7. Time will continue, but will be unending (Rev. 21:24-26, 22:2).
8. The residents of Heaven will live and participate with God (Rev. 19:9, 21:10-11).

Discussion & Application Questions

How does the reality of Heaven encourage you to live today? Do you feel that you frequently think, make decisions, interact with others, and work with Heaven in view? If you do not, why do you think this is the case?

Does the reality of Hell motivate you to share the Gospel with anyone who does not know Christ in a personal way? Who is that person and when will you share the Gospel with him/her?

Do you feel strongly about a particular position relating to the millennium? If so, are you willing to approach that study humbly and acknowledge a great deal of ambiguity in the Scriptures related to it? How primary do you believe that doctrine to be?

If the return of Christ is imminent, how does that affect your life? Do you feel as though it is far away or may never occur? How can you go about each day with a greater hope in the return of Christ and a greater longing for it?