

Week Eleven

Quarter 3

The Return of Christ: When and How?

The Millennium

Outline

- The Return of Christ: When and How?
 - There will be a sudden, personal, visible, bodily return of Christ
 - We should eagerly long for Christ's return
 - We do not know when Christ will return
 - All evangelicals agree on the final results of Christ's return
 - There is disagreement over the detail of future events
 - Could Christ come back at any time?
- The Millennium
 - Explanation of the three major views
 - A consideration of the arguments for Amillennialism
 - A consideration of the arguments for Postmillennialism
 - A consideration of the arguments for Premillennialism
 - The time of great tribulation

The Return of Christ: When and How?

- Eschatology – the study of the last things
- There will be a sudden, personal, visible, bodily return of Christ
 - “The Lord Himself will descend from heaven” (1 Thes 4:16a)
 - “You also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matt 24:44)
 - “Surely I [Jesus] am coming again soon” (Rev 22:20)
 - Others: John 14:3, Heb 9:28, James 5:8, 2 Pet 3:10, 1 John 3:2
 - His appearing will not be a mere spiritual coming to dwell within people’s hearts, but will be a personal and bodily return “in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11)

We Should Eagerly Long for Christ's Return

- John's response to Jesus was "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev 22:20)
- True Christianity trains us "to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:12-13)
- The term "Maranatha" in 1 Cor 16:22 means "Our Lord, come!"
- Do you really long for His return?
 - The degree of longing is probably related to the measure of your spiritual condition
 - What would you change if you longed for Him more?
 - Note: this should not keep you from taking on long-term commitments

We Do Not Know When Christ Will Return

- “The Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matt 24:44)
- “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour” (Matt 25:13)
- “But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch: for you do not know when the time will come” (Mark 13:32-33)
- It will be “at an unexpected hour” (Luke 12:40)
- Conclusions
 - Anyone claiming to know when Christ will come back is wrong
 - Many people have been deceived by such claims
 - Some have made a living through such foretelling / deception
 - Avoid all teachings that claim to know when Jesus will return

More Notes

- All evangelicals agree on the final results of Christ's return
 - Judgment of unbelievers
 - Reward for believers
 - Living with Christ in a new heaven and new earth for eternity
- There is disagreement over the details of future events
 - All camps believe in the inerrancy of scripture
 - All are committed to believe whatever is taught by scripture
 - These disagreements (discussed in Chapter 55) are a minor or secondary doctrine

Could Christ Come Back at Any Time?

- There are many verses supporting an unexpected coming
 - Matt 24:42-44, Matt 24:50, Matt 25:13, Mark 13:32-33, Mark 13:34-37, 1 Cor 16:22, Phil 3:20, 1 Thes 5:2, Titus 2:12-13, Heb 10:25, James 5:7-9, 1 Pet 4:7, Rev 1:3, Rev 22:7, Rev 22:12, Rev 22:20
 - See pages 1095-1096
- Conclusions
 - Christ's return is imminent
 - Commanded to be ready
 - Commanded to watch
 - We should be living in a constant expectancy of His return

Signs that Precede Christ's Return

- The preaching of the gospel to all nations (Mark 13:10)
- Tribulation (Mark 13:7-8, 19-20)
- False prophets working signs and wonders (Mark 13:22)
- Signs in the heavens (Mark 12:24-25)
- The coming of the man of sin and the rebellion (2 Thes 1:1-10)
- Salvation of Israel (Rom 11:12, 25-26)

Other Considerations for Interpreting Biblical Prophecy

- What examples of prophecy and the interpretation of that prophecy fully exist in scripture?
- What does that teach us about prophecy?
 - The dominant emphasis is not on predicting the future but proclaiming God's will
 - Most prophecy is symbolic and not literal
 - People's ability to correctly interpret such prophecy is extremely limited
 - How many people were expecting Jesus to come the way He did?
 - Why weren't more people waiting for Jesus to rise from the dead three days later?

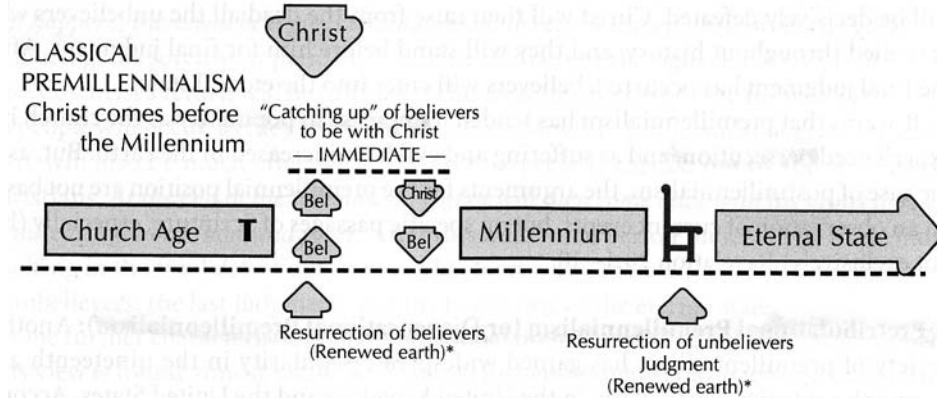
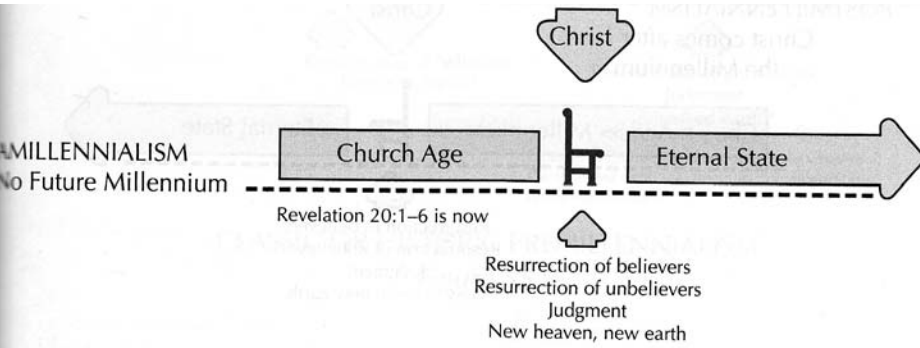
Other Considerations

- How prophecy is to be interpreted must be understood first
 - “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, even the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John” (Rev 1:1, ASV)
 - Signified (*semaino*) – to show by signs or emblems
- Allusion - a passing or casual reference; an incidental mention of something, either directly or by implication
 - There are more than 500 references to the Old Testament in Revelation
 - Out of 404 verses in Revelation, only 126 do not have an Old Testament allusion

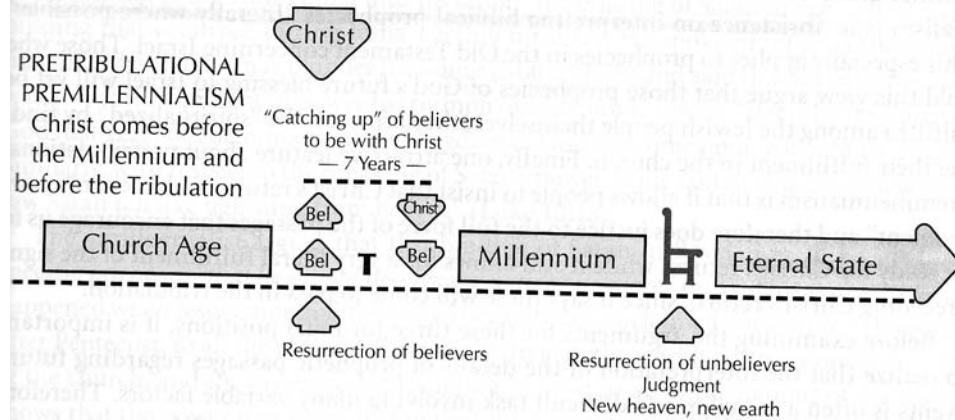
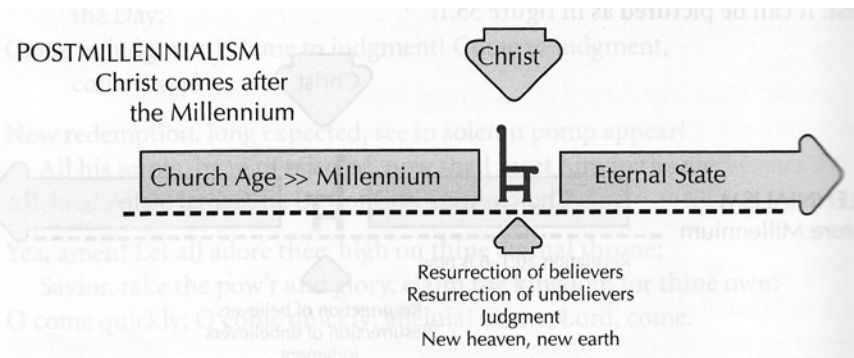
The Millennium

- Definition – one thousand years
- Comes from Revelation 20:4-5
 - Certain people “came to life, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended”
 - Just prior, we learn that an angel had seized the devil “and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years were ended”
- Four views:
 - Amillennialism
 - Postmillennialism
 - Classic Premillennialism
 - Pretribulational Premillennialism

The Four Views



* Classical Premillennialists differ over whether the renewed earth will begin in the millennium or the eternal state.



Three Views of Interpreting Signs Preceding Christ's Return

- Christ cannot come at any time
 - Held by many (most?) dispensationalists and premillennialists
 - None have happened yet
- Christ can come at any time
 - Held by all amillennialists, postmillennialists, and some dispensationalists and premillennialists
 - All have (or may have) already happened
 - The preaching of the gospel to all nations (Acts 1); language groups today exist that did not exist then
 - Tribulation (Fall of Jerusalem in 66-70 AD)
 - False prophets working signs and wonders (Ongoing)
 - Signs in the heavens (Not sure how to interpret / Fall of Jerusalem / symbols?)
 - The coming of the man of sin and the rebellion (Ongoing – is it a literal man?)
 - Salvation of Israel (has already happened)
- Grudem's phrase: "It is unlikely, but possible, that these signs have been fulfilled already"

Reading For Next Week

- Chapter 56
 - The Final Judgment and Eternal Punishment
 - Homework – questions 1-7