

Major Views on the End Times

That branch of theology which covers the end times is called 'eschatology' (ēs-kǎ-**tol'**-ǎ-gē), from the Greek ἔσχατος, ἔσχατη, ἔσχατον (eschatos, eschatē, eschaton) meaning 'last.' There are major views on how the end times will play out. Their respective names derive from how each view understands the relationship between the second coming of Christ and the millennium. The term 'millennium' means '1000 years' and refers to the 1000 years between the two resurrections, during which Satan is bound and the saints reign with Christ in Revelation 20:1-6. The exact nature of this 1000 years (whether literal or figurative), the exact nature of all the attendant elements (e.g., the antichrist; the tribulation), and the relationship of Christ's return to this 1000 years constitutes the differences between the three major end-time, or eschatological, views.

Common ground

There are several elements which all three views hold in common. First, all three views can be found to be held by Bible believing Christians. Second, all three views teach the literal, physical return of Jesus Christ to the earth. Third, all three views teach the literal, physical resurrection of human beings. Fourth, all three views teach a real heaven for the saved and a real hell for the unsaved. In contrasting the three views, it may be helpful to see how each view stands on several specific elements commonly associated with the end times.

Premillennialism

Premillennialism maintains that the second coming of Christ will precede a literal millennial (1000 year) reign of Christ on the earth. Premillennialism is the most common eschatology among contemporary evangelical churches, as well as fundamentalist churches. Its current popularity is due partially from the influence of the *Scofield Reference Bible*. Though there are variations within different camps of Premillennialism, there are some characteristics that are more common.

Thus, the order of events according to most Premillennialists is

- (1) the First Coming of Christ
- (2) the Church Age (Luke 21:24)
- (3) the Rapture of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)
- (4) the 7 year Tribulation (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:21; Revelation 7:14)
- (5) the Second Coming of Christ (Matthew 24:29-31; Revelation 19:11-16)
- (6) the Millennium (the fullness of the Kingdom of God) (Revelation 20:1-6)
- (8) the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15)
- (9) the Eternal State (1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Revelation 21-22)

Postmillennialism

Postmillennialism maintains that the second coming of Christ will follow a literal millennial reign of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Thus, the order of events according to Postmillennialism is

- (1) the First Coming of Christ
- (2) the Church Age/the Tribulation (Luke 21:24)
- (3) the Millennium/the fullness of the Kingdom of God (Revelation 20:1-6)
- (4) the Rapture of the Church/the Second Coming of Christ/the Great White Throne Judgment (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Matthew 24:29-31; Revelation 19:11-16; Revelation 20:11-15)
- (5) the Eternal State (1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Revelation 21-22)

Amillennialism

Amillennialism maintains that there is no literal millennial reign, but rather the millennium is representative of the Kingdom of God which is reigning now as Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father.

Thus, the order of events according to Amillennialism is

- (1) the First Coming of Christ
- (2) the Tribulation/the Anti-Christ (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:21; Revelation 7:14)
- (3) the Church Age/the Tribulation/the Millennium/the Anti-Christ/the Kingdom of God (Luke 21:24; Revelation 20:1-6)
- (4) the Rapture of the Church/the Second Coming of Christ/the Great White Throne Judgment (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Matthew 24:29-31; Revelation 19:11-16; Revelation 20:11-15)
- (5) the Eternal State (1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Revelation 21-22)

	Premillennialism	Postmillennialism	Amillennialism
Millennium (from the Latin for 1,000):	The 1000 years of Rev. 20:1-6 are literal and future.	The millennium is literal and future.	There is no literal 1000 year reign of Christ on the earth, but rather the millennium is symbolic of the reign of Christ right now in the lives of His followers.
Rapture (from the Latin for "caught up" in 1 Thes. 4:17):	The rapture of the Church (1 Thes. 4:16-17) is a separate event from the Second Coming of Christ. Most maintain that the rapture of the Church precedes the Tribulation (referred to as Pre-tribulationists) and is the next event expected to happen in the end-time scenario. Among Premillennialists are also found Mid-tribulationists (the Rapture happens in the middle of the Tribulation) and Post-tribulationists (the Rapture happens at the end of the Tribulation).	The Rapture of the Church occurs at the Second Coming of Christ.	The Rapture of the Church occurs at the Second Coming of Christ.
Tribulation:	After the Rapture and preceding the Second Coming, the world will experience a period of 7 years called the Tribulation (Dan. 9:27; Mat. 24:21; Rev. 7:14). The last 3½ years of the Tribulation are called the Great Tribulation and will involve the reign of terror of the Anti-Christ. (Rev. 7:14; 13:11-18)	The Tribulation is not a literal future period, but is synonymous with the general persecution against the Church.	The Tribulation is not a literal future period, but is synonymous with the general persecution against the Church. Some Amillennialists maintain that the Great Tribulation of Mat. 24:21 occurred at 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem.
Anti-Christ:	The Anti-Christ is a literal person whose appearance is yet future and whose reign of terror will occur during the Tribulation, preceding the Second Coming and the Millennium.	The Anti-Christ does not refer to a literal person, but rather to the general opposition to the Kingdom of God. (1 John 2:18)	The Anti-Christ does not refer to a literal person, but rather to the general opposition to the Kingdom of God. If any reference can be made to a literal person, it was an event which accompanied the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD (Luke 21:20-24; 1 John 2:18)
Second Coming:	The Second coming of Christ will precede the millennium.	The Second Coming of Christ will follow the Millennial kingdom.	There is no event which is to precede the future Second Coming of Christ. The Second Coming will be the consummation of history and will inaugurate the Eternal State.
Resurrection:	There are two types of resurrections, viz., a resurrection unto life (also called the first resurrection, John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:4-6) and a resurrection unto condemnation (John 5:28-29). The destiny, not the timing, determines whether a resurrection is of the first resurrection. Thus, the resurrection of the saved will occur in several component parts (1 Cor. 15:20-24): a resurrection of the saved at the Rapture, a resurrection of the saved at the beginning of the Millennium at the Second Coming (of those saved during the Tribulation), and a resurrection of the unsaved end of the millennium (Rev. 20:4-6).	There will be a general resurrection of everyone at once, at the Second Coming of Christ. The saved are resurrected unto life and the unsaved are resurrected unto condemnation.	There will be a general resurrection of everyone at once, at the Second Coming of Christ. The saved are resurrected unto life and the unsaved are resurrected unto condemnation.
Kingdom of God:	The fullness of the Kingdom of God awaits the return of the King physically to reign on earth.	The fullness Kingdom of God is yet future and is brought about by the reign of Christ through His Church, prior to His Second Coming.	The Kingdom of God is present, as Jesus is currently seated at the right hand of God. (Mat. 26:64; Mark 12:36; 16:19; Acts 2:32-33; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22)