

Centerpoint School of Theology

- 77 -

THE SECOND COMING

“Finally we believe,
according to God’s Word,
that when the time appointed by the Lord is come
(which is unknown to all creatures)
and the number of the elect is complete,
our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven,
bodily and visibly,
as he ascended,
with great glory and majesty,
to declare himself the judge
of the living and the dead.”

Article 37 Belgic Confession

Preliminaries:

1. “Eschatology”: the *logos* of the *eschaton* (account of what comes last). The word is used in different contexts to mean different things:
 - a. the *parousia*-constellation of events – all still future
 - b. the way in which the presence (here and now) of the kingdom of God (which has present and future aspects) calls forth a response (a decision) that has lasting (final) consequences. *This is the modern usage of the term.*
 - c. Both of these usages are biblical, though in the past only (a) was dominant. The combination of (a) and (b) explain why the New Testament speaks of the present existence as “the last days” (Acts 2:17; Hebrews 1:1).
2. The broad theme of eschatology is God PURPOSE (*telos*) of renewing and perfecting CREATION by eliminating all that sin has disordered and ruined.
 - a. In the BIG PICTURE, one thinks of passages like Romans 8:22, “For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now”, and Revelation 21 and 22 and description of the New Heaven and New Earth, and anticipated in Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22 (cf. 2 Peter 3:13).
 - b. The DETAILED picture includes the story of salvation (*heilsgeschichte*), the coming of the kingdom of God and the Second Coming with its attendant constellation of accompanying events.
3. THEOLOGICALLY and SYSTEMATICALLY, eschatology is important for understanding,
 - a. The UNITY of the Bible (promises made and promises kept)
 - b. The nature of the CHRISTIAN LIFE: salvation consists in a “now and “not yet” dimension (“we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared” 1 John 3:2); faith and hope; firstfruits here and now, fullness hereafter.
 - c. The SHAPE of WORLD HISTORY. The two kingdoms (Christ’s and Satan’s) grow to a climactic conflict before Christ re-appears. Christianity views history as LINEAR not CYCLICAL (Hinduism).
4. The PAROUSIA-CONSTELLATION of events include:
 - a. The PERSONAL appearance of Jesus in glory simultaneously to all
 - b. The resurrection of the dead
 - c. The final judgment

- d. The renewal of the cosmos
- 5. It provides a THEOLOGY of HOPE in the face of false hopes (Marxism, materialism) and no hope (existentialism, post-liberal pessimism)

The PAROUSIA:

- 1. Greek: *parousia* (official, royal arrival), *epiphaneia* (appearance), *apokalupsis* (uncovering, unveiling)
- 2. Care needs to be employed since much of material is conveyed in “apocalyptic” language, a genre requiring distinctive rules of interpretation.
- 3. The different “comings” of Christ and his kingdom:
 - a. The “coming” of Christ and his kingdom in the lifetime of the disciples:
 - i. “there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power” (Mark 9:1; cf. 14:62; Luke 22:69).
 - b. The “coming” in distinctive acts of judgment and power:
 - i. The Fall of Jerusalem in Matthew 24:27-34 (*see later lesson*)
 - c. The “coming” at the time of our death:
 - i. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (John 14:3).
 - d. The final “coming”:
 - i. “For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man” (Matthew 24:37)
 - ii. “He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20)
- 4. CHARACTERISTICS of the Second Coming (in sense d above)
 - a. PERSONAL
 - i. “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11); “Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of

Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matthew 24:44); “When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:4); “Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8); “so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Hebrews 9:28).

b. PHYSICAL

- i. “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

c. VISIBLE

- i. “When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:4); “so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Hebrews 9:28).

d. SUDDEN

- i. “For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. ⁴ But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵ For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. ⁶ So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation” (1 Thessalonians 5:2-8; cf. Matthew 24:37 – 25:13).

e. TRIUMPHANT

- i. “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16); “For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38).

- f. There remain fundamental questions that will be discussed in later studies:
- i. is it a single or a two-fold coming (secret rapture views involve a two-stage coming, sometimes distinguished as a “coming “for the saints” and a coming “with the saints”
 - ii. What are circumstances *on earth* at the time of his coming (pre-millennial, post-millennial and a-millennial answer this question differently)
 - iii. Can the Second Coming be predicted? This question can be asked in a crass way (putting an actual date on it), or in a subtler way, *are there signs that suggest that the Second Coming is near?*
 - iv. Related to iii above is the equally important question, is the Second Coming to be expected “at any moment” (is it “imminent”?). Could it take place in the next five seconds? If there are signs that precede it, and these signs have yet to appear, the answer is no. Secret Rapture views nuance this answer by introducing a first stage (Imminent) and second-stage that would then be more “predictable”.

5. The Second Coming should focus on JESUS:

- a. “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). *The very same Jesus. It is about HIM.*

Bibliography:

In addition to standard Systematic Theologies:

Introductory:

W. J. Grier, *The Momentous Event*

Venema, Cornelis, *The Promise of the Future*

Intense:

Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*

A. A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*

G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ*

Centerpoint School of Theology

- 78 -

WHEN WILL JESUS RETURN?

“It is not for you to know times or seasons
that the Father has fixed by his own authority”
(Acts 1:7)

Predictions of the Second Coming

Predicted Time	Claimant	Description
500	Hippolytus of Rome, Sextus Julius Africanus, Irenaeus	All three predicted Jesus would return in the year 500. One prediction was based on the dimension of Noah's Ark!
793 (April 6)	Beatus of Liébana	The Spanish monk prophesied the SC would be on this day
1000 (Jan)	Pope Sylvester II	The Millennium Apocalypse at the end of the Christian Millennium. Various Christian clerics predicted the end of the world on this date. Following the failure of the January 1, 1000 prediction, some theorists proposed that the end would occur 1000 years after Jesus' death (1033), instead of his birth.
1200 - 1260	Joachim of Fiore	Italian mystic
1370	Jean de Roquetaillade	The Antichrist was predicted to come in 1366 and the Millennium begin in 1368 or 1370.
1504	Sandro Botticelli	He believed he was living in the "Tribulation" period, and that the Millennium would begin in 3½ years from 1500
1524 (Feb 20)	Johannes Stöffler	A planetary alignment in Pisces was viewed by this astrologer as a sign of the Millennium
1524-1526	Thomas Müntzer	1525 would mark the beginning of the Millennium (Anabaptist)
1533 (Oct 19)	Michael Stifel	Mathematician. Judgement Day would start at 9 am that day
1673	William Aspinwall	Fifth Monarchist
1694	Johann Jacob	Believed the world would end this year
1694	John Mason & Johann Heinrich Alsted	Millennium would begin this year
1757	Emmanuel Swedenborg	Followed the Last Judgment in 1757, which took place in the spiritual world. This was one of many events recounted in his works resulting from visions of Jesus Christ

		returned. He tells of almost daily interaction with Christ over the course of almost 30 years. His return is not in the flesh, but in His Holy Spirit. "Neither shall they say see here or see there, for behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20)
1793-1795	Richard Brothers	Retired sailor eventually committed to an asylum
1814 (Dec 25)	Joanna Southcott	64-year-old claimed she was pregnant with the Christ child and that he would be born on Christmas Day, 1814. She died on the day of her prediction and an autopsy proved she was <i>not</i> pregnant!
1829 (Sept 15)	George Rapp	Founder and leader of the Harmony Society, predicted that on September 15, 1829, the three and one half years of the Sun Woman would end and Christ would begin his reign on earth. Dissension grew when Rapp's predictions went unfulfilled. In March 1832, a third of the group left and some began following a man named Bernard Müller who claimed to be the Lion of Judah. Nevertheless, most of the group stayed and Rapp continued to lead them until he died on August 7, 1847. His last words to his followers were, "If I did not so fully believe, that the Lord has designated me to place our society before His presence in the land of Canaan, I would consider this my last.
1836	John Wesley	Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, foresaw the Millennium beginning this year. He wrote that revelation 12:14 referred to the years 1058-1836, when Christ would come.
1840-1864	Jakob Lorber	Austrian musician who a vast amount during a 24-year period in which he claimed an inner voice of Jesus Christ spoke to him.
1844 (Oct 22)	William Miller Millerites	The fact that this failed to happen the way people were expecting was later referred to as the Great Disappointment. Some Millerites continued to set dates; others founded the Seventh day Adventist Church and the Advent Christian Church, which continue to expect a soon Second Coming but no longer set dates for it. Baha'is claim that Miller's prediction of the year 1844 was in fact calculated correctly, and refers to the advent of the Báb.

1847 (Aug 7)	George Rapp	See above
1861	Joseph Morris	Morris told his followers not to plant crops because he firmly believed that "Christ will come tomorrow"
1863	John Wroe	Founder of Christian Israelite Church
1874	Charles Taze Russell	The first president of what is now the Watchtower Society of the Jehovah Witnesses, calculated 1874 to be the year of Christ's Second Coming, and until his death taught that Christ was invisibly present, and ruling from the heavens from that date prophesied. Russell proclaimed Christ's invisible return in 1874, the resurrection of the saints in 1875, and predicted the end of the "harvest" and a rapture of the saints to heaven for 1878, and the final end of "the day of wrath" in 1914. 1874 was considered the end of 6,000 years of human history and the beginning of judgment by Christ
1890	Wovoka	The founder of the Ghost Dance movement
1891	Joseph Smith Mormons	In the History of the Church Volume 2, page 182, an eyewitness account of Joseph Smith's prophecy in 1835 is recorded as: "President Smith then stated that the meeting had been called, because God had commanded it; and it was made known to him by vision and by the Holy Spirit. He then gave a relation of some of the circumstances attending us while journeying to Zion--our trials, sufferings; and said God had not designed all this for nothing, but He had it in remembrance yet; and it was the will of God that those who went to Zion, with a determination to lay down their lives, if necessary, should be ordained to the ministry, and go forth to prune the vineyard for the last time, or the coming of the Lord, which was nigh--even fifty-six years should wind up the scene." Though this was not a prediction from Joseph Smith, he stated, "I believe the coming of the Son of Man will not be any sooner than that time." (D&C 130:14-17)
1901	Catholic Apostolic Church	Founded in 1831, claimed that Jesus would return by the time of the last of its 12 founding members died. The last member died in 1901.
1915	Jehovah's Witnesses	The "Second Coming" is important in the doctrine of Jehovah's Witnesses, although they do not use this term. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Christ's visible (to

		humans) return will be at Armageddon. They believe that 1914 marked the beginning of Christ's invisible presence (Matt. 24:3 gr. "parousia") as the King of God's Kingdom (Psalm 110; Revelation 12:10), and the beginning of the last days of the human ruled system of society. They believe the signs Christ revealed about his return in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 began to occur starting in 1914. In a parallel Biblical account at Revelation 6, they believe the ride of the symbolic four horsemen began in the same year, and that the first rider on the white horse depicts the Christ. He goes forth to complete his conquest of the earth, while the rule by human leaders continues for a short while until they meet their end at Armageddon by the power of the Christ (Revelation 19:11-21).
1915	John Chilembwe	Baptist educator and leader of a rebellion in Nyasaland
1917-1930	Sun Myung Moon	Followers of Reverend Sun Myung Moon consider him to be the Lord of Second Advent called by Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday at the age of 15 on a Korean Mountainside
1930-1939	Rudolf Steiner	Steiner described the physical incarnation of Christ as a unique event, but predicted that Christ would reappear in the etheric, or lowest spiritual, plane beginning in the 1930s. This would manifest in various ways: as a new spiritual approach to community life and between individuals; in more and more individuals discovering fully conscious access to the etheric plane(clairvoyance); and in Christ's appearance to groups of seekers gathered together
1935, 1943, 1972, 1975	Herbert W. Armstrong	<p>Armstrong, Pastor-General and self-proclaimed "Apostle" of the Radio Church of God, and then the Worldwide Church of God, felt the return of Jesus Christ might be in 1975. Of particular note was the book <i>1975 in Prophecy!</i> written by Armstrong and published by the Radio Church of God in 1956. Though, never explicitly stating a date in the booklet, the title led people to believe the date was the second coming. It was actively preached in sermons in the 1960s by all of his ministers that his church would "flee" to Petra, Jordan in 1972 and Christ would return 3 1/2 years later.</p> <p>After the failure to flee in 1972 (and a defection of his ministry) Armstrong was careful not to set specific dates but claimed that Christ would return before he died. He died January 1986.</p> <p>Armstrong had previously predicted in a 1934 edition of "The Plain Truth magazine that Christ would return in 1936. After that prediction failed in a 1940 edition of "The</p>

		<p>Plain Truth” magazine he stated "Christ will come after 3 1/2 years of tribulation in October 43. After those failed predictions and loss of members he moved his operation from Oregon to Pasadena, California.</p> <p>After Armstrong's death in 1986 his Worldwide Church of God and the empire he created slowly disintegrated, abandoning his beliefs and philosophies and eventually the name. His three college campuses and the majority of his Pasadena headquarter properties were closed and sold. His successors changed the name to Grace Communion International in 2009.</p>
1982 (Jun 21)	Benjamin Crème	<p>The followers of the New Age Theosophicalguru Benjamin Creme, like Alice A, Bailey, believe the Second Coming will occur when Maitreya (the being Theosophists identify as being Christ) makes his presence on Earth publicly known—Crème believes Maitreya has been on Earth since 1977, living in secret.</p> <p>Creme put advertisements in many of the world's major newspapers in early 1982 stating that the Second Coming would occur on Monday, 21 June 1982 (summer solstice in the northern hemisphere), at which time Christ (Maitreya) would announce his Second Coming on worldwide television (this is called the <i>Emergence</i> or <i>Day of Declaration</i> ; this is when, Creme's followers believe, the Maitreya will telepathically overshadow all of humanity when he appears on worldwide television)^[24] When this event did not occur, Crème claimed that the "world is not yet ready to receive Maitreya"; his followers continue to believe it will happen “soon”.</p>
1988	Edgar C. Whisenant	Published a book “88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will be in 1988”
1994 (Sept 6)	Harold Camping	General manger of Family radio and Bible Teacher, published a book, <i>1994?</i> , a prediction of Christ’s year of return.
1999-2009	Jerry Falwell	Fundamentalist predicted in 1999 that the SC would be within 10 years
2000	Ed Dobson	Pastor <i>The End: Why Jesus Could Return by A.D. 2000</i>
	Timothy Dwight IV	(May 14, 1752 – January 11, 1817) President of Yale College foresaw Christ’s Millennium starting in 2000

	Edgar Cayce	Psychic
	Isaac Newton	Christ's Millennium would be in 2000 in his book <i>Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse of St. John</i>
2000 (April 6)	James Harmston	Leader of <i>True and Living Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Last days</i>
2011 (May 21) 2011 (Oct 21)	Harold Camping	<i>Main article: 2011 end times prediction</i> Camping claimed that the rapture would be on May 21, 2011 followed by the end of the world on October 21 of the same year. Camping wrote "Adam when?" and claimed the Biblical calendar meshes with the secular and is accurate from 11,013 BC–2011 AD
2011 (Sept 29) 2012 (May 27) 2013 (May 18)	Ronald Weinland	Weinland predicted Jesus would return on September 29, 2011. When his prediction failed to come true he moved the date of Jesus return to May 27, 2012. When that prediction failed he then moved the date to May 18, 2013 claiming that "a day with God is as a year" giving himself another year for his prophecy to take place. Weinland was convicted of tax evasion in 2012 and sentenced to 3½ years in federal prison
2012	Jack van Impe	Televangelist who has, over the years, predicted many specific years and dates for the second coming of Jesus, but has continued to move his prediction later. Many of these dates have already passed, and he recently pointed to 2012 as a possible date for the second coming. Van Impe no longer claims to know the exact date of the Second Coming, but quotes verses which imply that mankind should know when the second coming is near.
2015 (Sept 28)	Mark Blitz	Starting in 2008, Mark Biltz began teaching that Christ's return would correspond with the September 28 2015 Lunar Eclipse. His idea, known as the Blood Moon Prophecy, attracted attention from well-known pastor John Hagee (who stopped short of claiming Christ would return on that precise date) and mainstream media such as <i>USA Today</i>

2020	Jeane Dixon	Alleged psychic claimed that Armageddon would take place in 2020 and Jesus would return to defeat the unholy Trinity of the Antichrist, Satan and the False Prophet between 2020 and 2037
2021	F. Kenton Beshore	Beshore bases his prediction on the prior suggestion that Jesus could return in 1988, i.e., within one Biblical generation (40 years) of the founding of Israel in 1948. Beshore argues that the prediction was correct, but that the definition of a Biblical generation was incorrect and was actually 70–80 years, placing the Second Coming of Jesus between 2018 and 2028 and the Rapture by 2021 at the latest

2025	Alice A. Bailey	<p>In January 1946, the New Age Theosophical guru prophesied that Christ would return “sometime after AD 2025” (Theosophists identify "Christ" as being identical to a being they call Maitreya) to inaugurate the Age of Aquarius; thus, this event will be, according to Bailey, the New Age equivalent of the Christian concept of the Second Coming.</p> <p>Alice A. Bailey stated that St. Germain is the manager of the executive council of the Christ (Like C. W. Leadbeater, Alice A. Bailey refers to St. Germain as the <i>Master Rakoczi</i> or the <i>Master R.</i> in her books.); thus, according to Alice A. Bailey, St. Germain's primary task is to prepare the way for the Second Coming.</p>
2028	Kent Hovind	<p>2013, Hovind self-published a dissertation written in prison for D. Min. degree for the Patriot Bible University. In response to “When is the Lord Coming Back?” Hovind wrote, “During the feast of Trumpets in 2028.”</p>
By 2057	Frank J. Tipler	<p>In 1994, the physicist and intelligent design advocate Frank J. Tipler published a book called <i>The Physics of Immortality</i> in which he claimed to scientifically prove the existence of God as a consequence of what he calls the Omega Point Theory. In 2007, he published a sequel to “The Physics of Immortality” called <i>The Physics of Christianity</i> which applies the principles of the Omega Point Theory to the Christian religion. In this 2007 book, he asserts in the first chapter that the Second Coming of Christ will occur within 50 years, i.e., by 2057, and will be coincident with what futurist Ray Kurzweil calls the Singularity (which Kurzweil himself predicts will occur by 2045)</p>

1. Warnings about predicting the END
 - a. Acts 1:7, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority”
 - b. Mark 13:32, “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father”
2. *What* exactly is being predicted?
 - a. The Second Coming? The Rapture? The Beginning or end of “The Millennium”
3. Are there SIGNS that enable us to trace a trajectory towards the Second Coming?
 - a. Signs evidencing the progress of the gospel
 - i. The preaching of the gospel to all nations:
 1. “And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations” (Mark 13:10).
 - a. “The reason God decreed that the gospel would obtain people from every tribe and people and nation is that the aim of the gospel is the glorification of his grace and this ingathering of diverse peoples into one Christ-exalting, unified people who would glorify the power and beauty of his grace more than if he had done things another way. There is a strong confirmation of this in noticing that several texts which command the pursuit of all ethnic groups are explicit that this pursuit is for the glory of Christ.” (John Piper).
 - b. According to the Joshua Project (as of February 16) there are 16,598 people groups in the world. 7,165 of these are “unreached” (fewer than 2% evangelical).

Defining things somewhat differently, the research arm of the Southern International Missions Board estimates 11,310 people groups, of which 6,405 are unreached and 3,100 are “unengaged.”
 - ii. The salvation of the fullness of Israel:
 1. “And in this way all Israel will be saved” (Romans 11:26)
 - b. Signs indicating opposition to God:
 - i. Tribulation

- ii. Apostasy
 - iii. Antichrist
 - c. Signs indicating divine judgment
 - i. Wars
 - ii. Earthquakes
 - iii. Famines
 - d. The chronology of the Millennium and the Second Coming
- 4. Is the Second Coming Imminent or Impending?
 - a. Common in Dispensationalism, for example, to say the Second Coming is “imminent”
 - 1. Does this mean: “there are no predicted events that must occur before Jesus returns”?
 - a. Pretribulational dispensationalists divide the Second Coming into two phases:
 - i. “coming *for* the saints”: rapture (at any moment). Christ raptures the church and takes her to heaven for the “wedding of the Lamb”. During this seven year period all the commonly accepted climactic signs of the times on earth occur (Great Tribulation, the appearance of the Antichrist etc)
 - ii. “coming *with* the saints”: after seven years, Christ returns for the second phase of his Second Coming.
 - 2. A. A. Hoekema, for example, prefers to speak of the Second Coming as *impending* rather than *imminent*.
 - a. “We must be prepared for the possibility that the Parousia may yet be a long way off, and the New Testament data leave room for that possibility. On the other hand, to affirm with certainty that the Parousia is still a long way is to say too much. The exact time of the Parousia is unknown to us. Neither do we know exactly how the signs of the times will intensify. This uncertainty means that we must always be ready.” (*The Bible and the Future*, 136).

Centerpoint School of Theology

- 79 -

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

“And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. ²He answered them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’
³And in the morning, ‘It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.”
(Matthew 16:1-3)

1. MISTAKEN views of the Signs:

- a. They refer *exclusively* to those constellation-events that immediately accompany the Second Coming.
 - i. Problem: some of the signs refer to events that took place immediately subsequent to Christ's Resurrection-Ascension and within the lifetime of the apostles (e.g. Destruction of Jerusalem).
- b. They enable us to predict the *date* the Second Coming by inferring that their presence implies Jesus' return is imminent (see previous lecture).
- c. The signs are *always* abnormal, catastrophic and spectacular (wars, earthquakes, the Antichrist, Armageddon etc.)
 - i. "Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, 'The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you'" (Luke 17:20-21). (*Suggesting that many of the signs point to ordinary events that mark this period of history we currently occupy.*)
 - ii. "The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9).

2. IDENTIFYING the signs

a. Signs evidencing the **TRIUMPH** of God's **REDEMPTIVE PURPOSES**

- i. The preaching of the gospel to all nations:
 1. OLD TESTAMENT: a new day is promised in which all the nations will see the glory of the Lord and enter into the enjoyment of full salvation.
 - a. "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3).
 - b. "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your

offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. ⁸ And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God” (Gen. 17:4-8).

- c. Mention of God’s “rule” over the nations in the Psalms: 8, 19:1-4; 67:4; 103:19. “Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen!” (Psa. 72:19).
- d. ““And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh”” (Joel 2:28).

2. NEW TESTAMENT

- a. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19).
- b. “And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations” (Mark 13:10). (see previous lecture for Piper’s interpretation).
- c. “For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself” (Acts 2:39).
- d. The “mystery” of the gospel, includes God’s purpose to save an elect people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Eph. 1:3-14).

ii. The salvation of the fullness of Israel:

1. “And in this way all Israel will be saved” (Romans 11:26).

- a. Problem posed in Romans 9:1-6: has the promise to Israel (ethnic Jews) failed? How can he rejoice in the triumph of God’s grace in redemption (end of Romans 8), when the Jews remain hostile to the gospel?
- b. General Resolution: The Word of God has NOT failed. God’s purposes in election is being realized (9:11), a purpose that has always discriminated between children of Israel “according to the flesh” and children “according to the promise.” Throughout redemptive history, some were

brought to salvation and others hardened. GENERAL POINT: all those whom God elects to be saved will be saved.

c. Specific Resolution:

i. “The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable” (11:29). The hardening of the Jews (not all of them) has been the occasion for the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles. Natural branches of the olive tree are cut off and other branches are ingrafted into the same tree (Rom. 11:17-24). The poverty of Israel has been the occasion of the riches of the Gentiles (11:12). In turn, this leads to “jealousy” on the part of Israel and her “fullness” – “all Israel will be saved.”

ii. THREE VIEWS:

1. End-Time conversion of JEWS: the people of Israel as a totality (though not every Jew) will be converted sometime after the fullness of the Gentiles are saved.

a. Dispensationalists: see this as part of God’s program for Israel in the future millennium

b. Pre-millennialists see it as a future conversion of the Jewish nation after Jesus returns (see George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 561-563)

c. Conversion of a large number of Jews before Jesus returns (Hodge, Murray, Vos, Moo, Mathison, Venema). The view does *necessarily* imply a post-millennial point of view.

2. Salvation of elect Jew + Gentile alike (Calvin).

3. Total number of elect Jews gathered throughout history (Hoekema, Bavinck,

b. SIGNS indicating OPPOSITION and JUDGEMENT:

i. Tribulation

1. “See that no one leads you astray. ⁵For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. ⁶And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. ⁹“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. ¹⁰And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹²And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:4-14).

ii. The GREAT TRIBULATION

1. “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), ¹⁶then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, ¹⁸and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. ¹⁹And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! ²⁰Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. ²¹For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. ²²And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short” (Matt. 24:15-22; cf. Rev. 7:14).
 - a. Is this a reference to the events that led up to the destruction of the temple in AD 70?
 - b. Is this a reference to a period of intense tribulation at the time of the Second Coming?

- i. Classic Dispensationalism: pre-tribulationism (take place during the 7-year marriage of the Lamb).
- ii. Small minority of Dispensationalist have argued for mid-tribulation point of view.
- iii. Classic premillennialists have been post-tribulationist.

iii. Apostasy

- 1. “For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect” (Matt. 24:24).
- 2. “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith” (1 Tim. 4:1).
- 3. “But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty” (2 Tim. 3:1).
- 4. “Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion (some translations, “the apostasy”) comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,⁴ who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God” (2 Thess. 2:3-4).

iv. Antichrist and Man of Lawlessness

- 1. In only four places (in John) are the terms “antichrist” and “antichrists” used. Olivet Discourse refers to “false christs.”
- 2. Generally, it is a reference to something that characterizes the entire inter-adventual age rather than something specific to the Second Coming.
- 3. THE Antichrist? “Children, it is the last hour! As you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. From this we know that it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18).
- 4. Man of Lawlessness: 2 Thess. 2:1-10
 - a. “As to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we beg you, brothers and sisters,² not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by

spirit or by word or by letter, as though from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here. ³ Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction. ⁴ He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God. ⁵ Do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you? ⁶ And you know what is now restraining him, so that he may be revealed when his time comes. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but only until the one who now restrains it is removed. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the breath of his mouth, annihilating him by the manifestation of his coming. ⁹ The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders, ¹⁰ and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.”

- i. Associated with period of great apostasy and disobedience in the period immediately before the Second Coming
 - ii. The language implies it will be *a particular person*.
 - iii. His claim to divine status and worship (cf. “abomination of Desolation” in Daniel and Oliver Discourse. Antiochus Epiphanes and ?).
 - iv. The identity of the restraint or restrainer (vv. 6, 7); “preaching of the gospel” (Calvin), secular government (Hendriksen), the Holy Spirit (Dispensationalism).
- c. Signs indicating divine judgment (see lecture on Olivet Discourse)
- i. Wars
 - ii. Earthquakes
 - iii. Famines
 - iv. Armageddon

1. “And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Harmagedon” (Rev. 16:16).
 - a. Dispensationalists teach this will conclude the 7-year period between Christ’s coming *for* his saints and Christ’s coming *with* his saints prior to the millennium [New Scofield Reference Bible on Rev. 16:16].
 - b. Most see it as a reference to Mount Megiddo, a site on the great plain of Esdraelon in Issachar, near the valley of Jezreel (see Judges 5:19), and may reflect the OT battle in Judges 4 and 5 leading his people to victory over King Jabin and his general, Sisera through the leadership of Deborah and Barak.

Centerpoint School of Theology

- 80 -

**THE OLIVET DISCOURSE
MATTHEW 24**

Matthew 24 & 25

Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple.² But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

³ As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”⁴ And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray.⁵ For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray.⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.⁸ All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

⁹ “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake.¹⁰ And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.¹¹ And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.¹² And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved.¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

¹⁵ “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.¹⁷ Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house,¹⁸ and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.¹⁹ And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!²⁰ Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.²² And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.²³ Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it.²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand.²⁶ So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it.²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.²⁸ Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

²⁹ “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.³¹ And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

³² “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near.³³ So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.³⁴ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³⁶ “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.³⁷ For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark,³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left.⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into.⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

⁴⁵ “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time?⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.⁴⁷ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.⁴⁸ But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards,⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and put him with the

hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

25 “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³ For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵ As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. ⁶ But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ ⁷ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹ But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ ¹⁰ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. ¹¹ Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ ¹² But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ ¹³ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

¹⁴ “For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶ He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷ So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸ But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money. ¹⁹ Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.’ ²¹ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ²² And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.’ ²³ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ²⁴ He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, ²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ ²⁶ But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? ²⁷ Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸ So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰ And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

General Considerations:

1. The Discourse is an answer to the question in 24:3, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” which is in itself raised by Jesus observation earlier in the city: “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down” (24:2).
2. The question in verse 3 looks as though – for the disciples – the destruction of the temple (24:2) and “end of the age” (*Parousia*). Cf. “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?” (Mark 13:4). Compare the question they ask a few months later in Acts 1:6, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”
3. Therefore, the period envisaged in Matthew 24 covers the entire interadventual age, from the time of the disciples through the Second Coming.
 - a. Note: verse 14, “and then the end will come [καὶ τότε ἔξει τὸ τέλος].”
 - b. And verse 27, 37, 39 mentions “the coming of the Son of man [ἡ παρουσία τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου].”
4. Outline:
 - a. 24: 4-14: main features of interadventual period.
 - i. v.6 “the end is not yet” implying that “wars and rumors of wars” and v. 7 “famines and earthquakes” do not imply that the Parousia is imminent, but are instead the “beginning [ὠδίνων] of the birth pains” (v.8).
 - ii. A reminder of the extended period covered in interadventual history with the promise of a worldwide preaching of the gospel to all nations “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (24:14).
 - iii. Verse 14 brings to the “end” and therefore vv. 4-14 comprise a unit of thought covering the entire interadventual age.
 - b. 24:15 is paralleled in Luke 21:20:
 - i. “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)” (Matt. 24:14).
 - ii. “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near” (Luke 21:20).

- iii. This makes it clearer that Matthew 24:15 is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem.
- c. 24:16-20 are warnings and exhortations relative to this period culminating in the events of AD 70.
- d. 24:21 describe the tribulation involved, 24: 23-24 with deceivers (cf. vv 5, 11). Note verse 21 refers to “great tribulation” [] and some (Hoekema, *Bible and the Future*, 151, refer this to “a final climactic tribulation just before Christ returns.” Others (e.g. John Murray) see it as a reference to AD 70).
- e. 24:7 brings us to the *Parousia*. It will be public and visible in character. When it happens, no one will be in any doubt. Hence the error of deceivers who will say at the time of Jerusalem’s destruction, “‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’” (24:23) is paralleled by those who will say at the time of his return, “‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’” (24:26).
- f. 24:8 brings us to Christ’s Second Coming: “‘Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.’” (the point being that it will be visible – where there is a body there are vultures. *I don’t think we seek a deeper meaning of this verse other than an illustration of visibility*).
- g. 24:29-31: “‘Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.³¹ And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.’”
 - i. The ‘tribulation of those days’ (29) extend consideration of the period in view right up to the threshold of what is envisaged in 29-31 and could be inclusive of the section 4-14. In other words, “those days” is the entirety of the interadventual age.
 - ii. 24:30, “‘Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man’” is an echo of verse 3, “‘the sign of your coming and of the end of the age.’” The parallel in Luke 21:28 reads, “Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” The idea of final redemption (eschatological) suggests this a reference to the Second Coming.
 - iii. 24:31 “And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.’” The trumpet reminds us of 1 Cor. 15:52 and 1 Thess. 4:16 which mention a trumpet at the Second Coming.

- h. 24:32-33 the lesson(s) to be learned. Believers are not to filled with horror, but know that when they see these things, the end has come.
- i. 24:34, “Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” *This has been the occasion of more controversy than any other verse in the chapter.*
 - i. “This generation” is a reference to “race” or Israel.
 - ii. “This generation” is a reference to those who were alive when Jesus spoke these words. How can this be *if vv 29-31* bring us up to the point of the Second Coming. Semi-preterists argue that the case for 29-31 being a reference to the *Parousia* is undone by this very consideration. (see, Keith Mathison, *From Age to Age*, 378).
 - iii. It includes “the end” (v.14) and “the coming of the Son of Man” in verse 27. In which case “all things” must be given a more restricted sense (everything except v.14 and 27).
 - iv. Jesus is answering THE FIRST PART OF THE DISCIPLES' QUESTION.
- j. 24:37-39 the sudden and unexpected nature of the *Parousia*
- k. 24:40-41 the separation that takes place at the advent
- l. FOUR PICTURES
 - i. 24:42-44 the HOUSEHOLDER – lessons are watchfulness and preparedness (42,44).
 - ii. 24:45-51 the FAITHFUL AND WISE SERVANT – lesson is faithfulness (50).
 - iii. 25:1-13 TEN VIRGINS – lesson is preparedness (13)
 - iv. 25:14-30 TALENTS – lesson is a warning of retribution (30, cf. 24:51)
- m. 25:31, ““When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.”” And it seems we are at the same point as we were in 24:27.
- n. 25:31-46 The judgment he will execute at his coming

Centerpoint School of Theology

- 81 -

REVELATION 20

And

THE MILLENNIUM

Revelation 20

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. ² And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, ³ and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

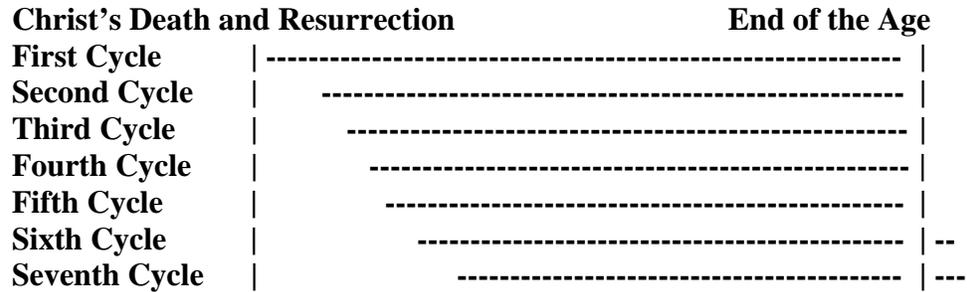
⁴ Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

⁷ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹ And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, ¹⁰ and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

1. The BOOK of Revelation as a whole

- a. It consists of SEVEN sections forming a progressive parallelism, each section depicting the complete inter-adventual age from the time of Christ's first coming to the the time of his second coming.
- i. Chapters 1-3: John sees the risen, glorified Christ walking in the midst of seven golden lampstands. Letters are written to seven churches in Asia Minor. The issues referred to in these letters are issues contemporary with the time when the book was first written. But they have application for the entire period, up to our time and beyond. This will be true of the entire book of Revelation.
 - ii. Chapters 4-7: John is caught up to heaven and sees God sitting on his throne. He sees the Lamb which had been slain taking the scroll with its seven seals from the hand of the one sitting on the throne. As the victorious Lamb, he has power to open the seals and as he does so, various judgments on the world are described. At 6:15-17 there is a reference to the final judgment and in 7:15-17 a description of the final blessedness.
 - iii. Chapters 8-11: Seven trumpets. The church is avenged, protected and victorious. The section ends with a reference to the final judgment at 11:18.
 - iv. Chapters 12-14: a woman giving birth to a son while the dragon waits to devour him as soon as he is born – a reference to the birth of Christ. The rest describes a continued opposition of the dragon to the church. A final judgment scene ends this section at 14:14-15.
 - v. Chapters 15-16: Seven bowls. Final judgment scene at 16:19-20.
 - vi. Chapters 17-19: Fall of Babylon, Beast of the Earth and Beast of the Sea. 19:11 describes the Second Coming followed at 19:19-20 by a description of the final judgment.
 - vii. Chapters 20-22: the doom of the Dragon completing the description of the overthrow of Christ's enemies. On this view, the final judgment is described at 20:11-12, 14-15.
- b. Progressive- Parallelism:
- i. Each vision or cycle parallels or re-tells (recapitulates) previous visions or cycles, but progressively reveals more about the future (multi-perspectival in information, emphasis, aspect, or detail), thus spending more time describing the future and less about the past.



ii. Major Interpretive Views of Revelation as a whole:

1. Futurist: regards the visions of chapters 4–22 as referring to events that lie in the future, events that will occur immediately prior to Christ's second coming and the end of history. Many, though not all, futurists are premillennialists and dispensationalists.
 - a. **STRENGTH**: Revelation teaches continued, and even increased, suffering for the people of God before the end of history. Futurism also properly emphasizes that the ultimate triumph of Christ and His people will occur only at the second coming of Christ.
 - b. **WEAKNESS**: views the bulk of the book of Revelation as describing events in a distant future. Consequently, much of the book had little direct relevance for those persecuted believers to whom the book was originally addressed.

2. Preterism: opposite of futurism. Revelation primarily refers to events that occurred in the past, either in the period prior to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70 or in the early Christian centuries leading up to the destruction of the Roman Empire in the fifth century AD.
 - a. **STRENGTH**: focuses on the relevance of the book's teaching to its first recipients, the church of the first century.
 - b. **WEAKNESS**: The problem with a consistently preterist reading of Revelation, however, is that the book becomes largely irrelevant to the present struggles of the church or its expectation for the future fulfillment of God's promises.

3. Historicist: visionary symbolization of the sequence of events that will occur throughout the course of the history of the church, from Christ's first coming until His second coming at the end of the present age.

Historicist interpreters of the book typically read its visions as a presentation in chronological order of the most significant developments in the history of redemption, from the time of its writing until the second coming, the millennium, the last judgment, and the final state. {Tends to be specific, thus harlot Babylon in Revelation 17 is the Roman Catholic Church and the papacy; Beast from the sea in Revelation 13 with the rise of Islam).

- a. **STRENGTH:** visions of Revelation do refer to events that were occurring at the time of its original writing and throughout the history of the church until Christ's second coming.
 - b. **WEAKNESS:** assumption that the visions of Revelation reflect a simple chronological sequence of events rather than presentations of the same events from different angles of vision.
4. **Idealist:** Sometimes called "idealism," this approach views the visions of Revelation as a portrayal of the church's struggle throughout the entire period between the first and second comings of Christ. Idealism acknowledges that the book of Revelation was originally written to encourage the early church in its struggles under religious and political persecution. But it also maintains that the letters to the seven churches and the visions of the book reflect circumstances that characterize the entire church age, from Christ's first coming until His return at the end of the present age. Whereas futurists, preterists, and historicists identify the harlot Babylon in Revelation 17 with an endtime, first-century, or historical figure, respectively, idealists argue that Babylon symbolizes a variety of political and religious forms of opposition to the church and the gospel that recur throughout history.

2. Revelation 20:1-3

- a. The passage seems to be more about the Incarnation than future events:
 - i. Seems to reflect Revelation 12:
 1. Rev 12:9 "And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him." Rev 20:2 "And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years."
 2. Satan is "bound." Just as in Revelation 12:9, where Satan is hurled to the earth. Cf. Luke 10:17, "“Lord, even the demons are subject to us in

your name!” So, Rev 20:2 evokes Jesus’ words about binding the Strong Man (Mark 3:27).

3. Satan deceives the nations no more. [Premillennialists see this as future since is “evident” that this is not currently the case.]

3. Revelation 20:4-6

- a. Premillennialists take this to be descriptive of the reign of the saints with Christ on earth during the millennium.
- b. Thrones (θρονος 20:4) on which are seated those with authority to judge. Used over 40 times in Revelation. Except in the case of the throne of Satan or Beast (Rev 2:13, 13:2 and 16:10), the location is in heaven. Strong case to be made that the thrones here are in heaven not on earth.
- c. “they came to life (ἐζήσαν) and reign with Christ for a thousand years” (20:4). The most natural way to take this is exegetically: i.e. the souls of those who were beheaded. Also, the 1,000 years should be viewed identically with verse 3.
- d. The problem of verse 5: “The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.” Premillennialists see here proof positive of a thousand-year reign of Christ on earth after the Second Coming.
 - i. Can mean a physical resurrection (Matthew 9:18; Romans 14:9; 2 Corinthians 13:4; Revelation 2:8).
 - ii. Does it *have to* mean a physical body resurrection/ It appears that bodily resurrection is in view in verses 11-13. Perhaps not. The clue is verse 4a. The rest of the verse is describing the souls of those who have been raised. Note the parallel in Revelation 6:9, “I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.” What we have here is what is promised in John 11:25, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” Revelation 20:4-6 is an actualization of that.

4. Revelation 20:7-10

- a. Judgment of Satan linking his doom with that of the Beast and the false prophet in the lake of burning sulphur.

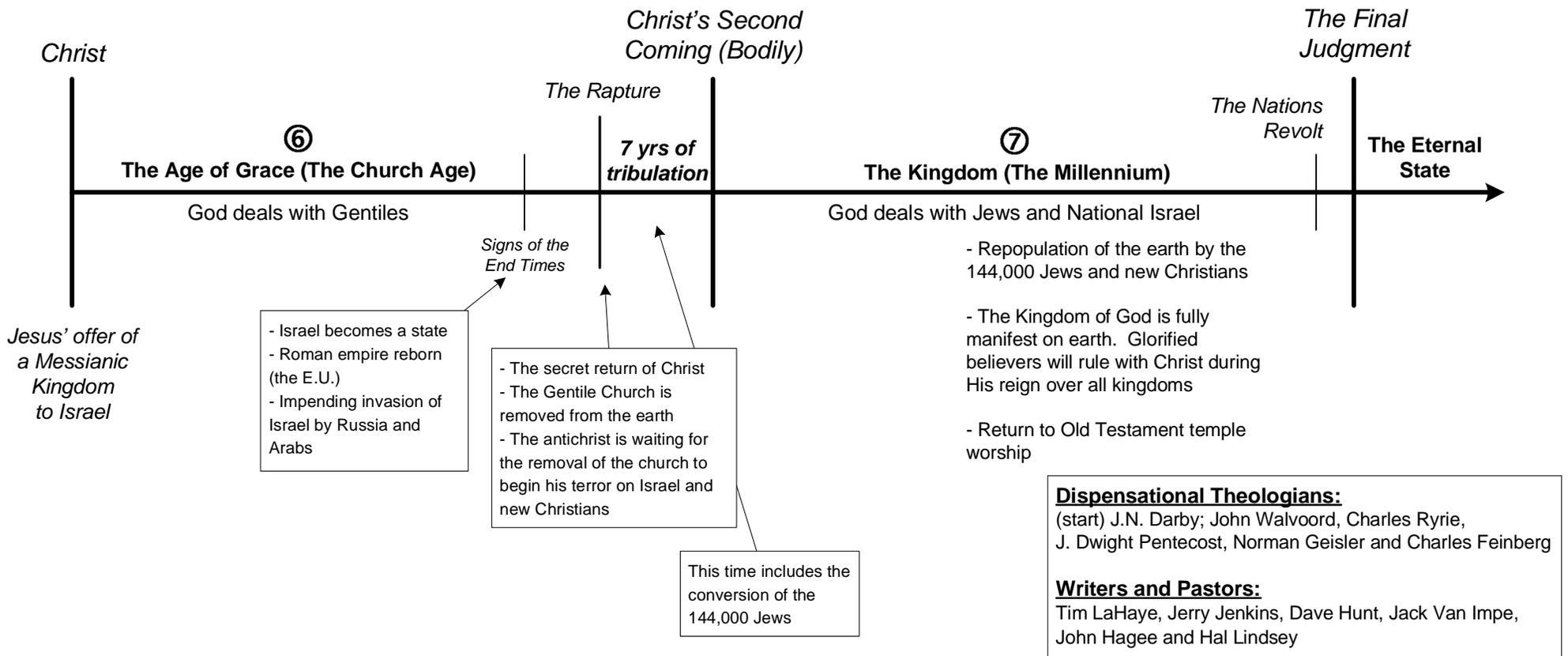
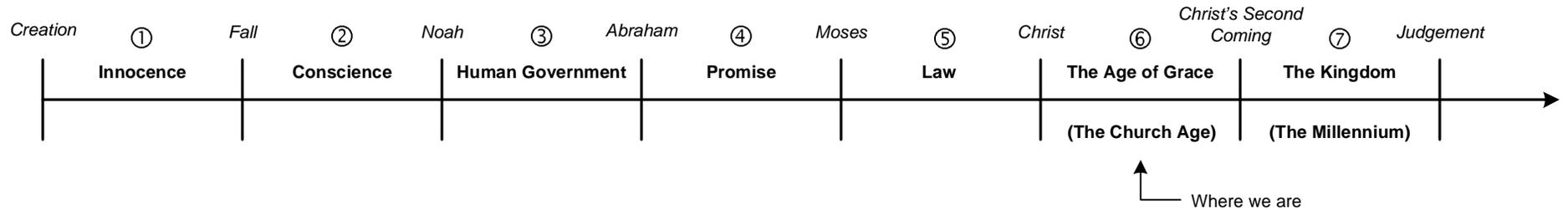
5. Revelation 20:11-15

- a. The last judgment when all the dead will be raised and judged according to their deeds and those whose names are not in the Book of Life will also be condemned to

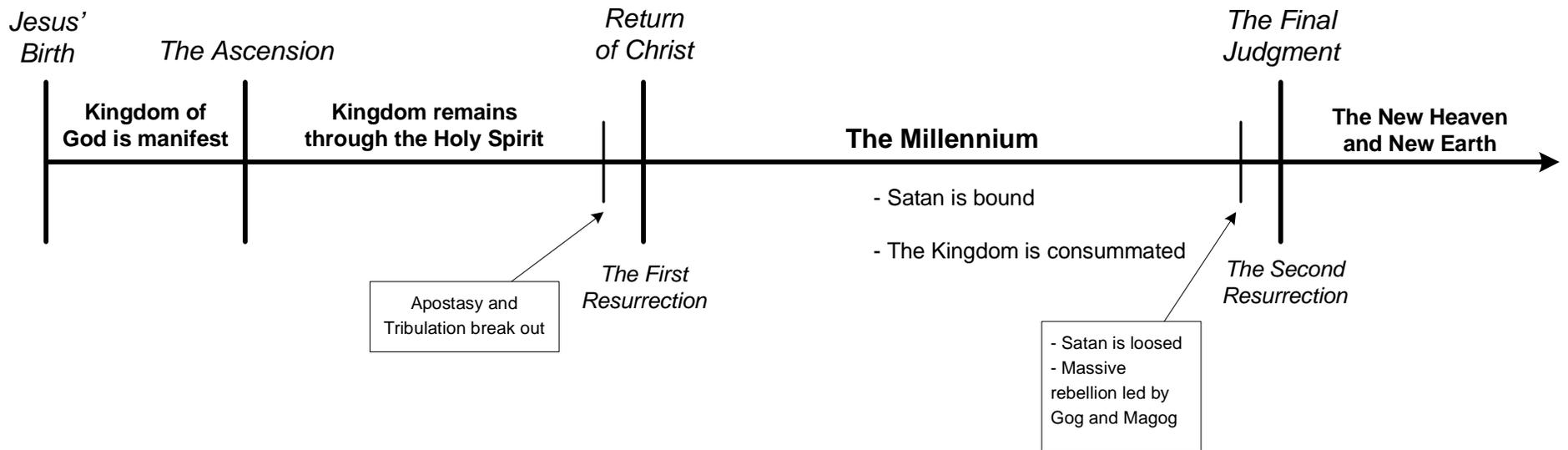
the lake of fire. Then all Christ's enemies will have been made a stool for his feet; the time of the New City of God will have come.

Dispensationalism

Overview - The Seven Dispensations

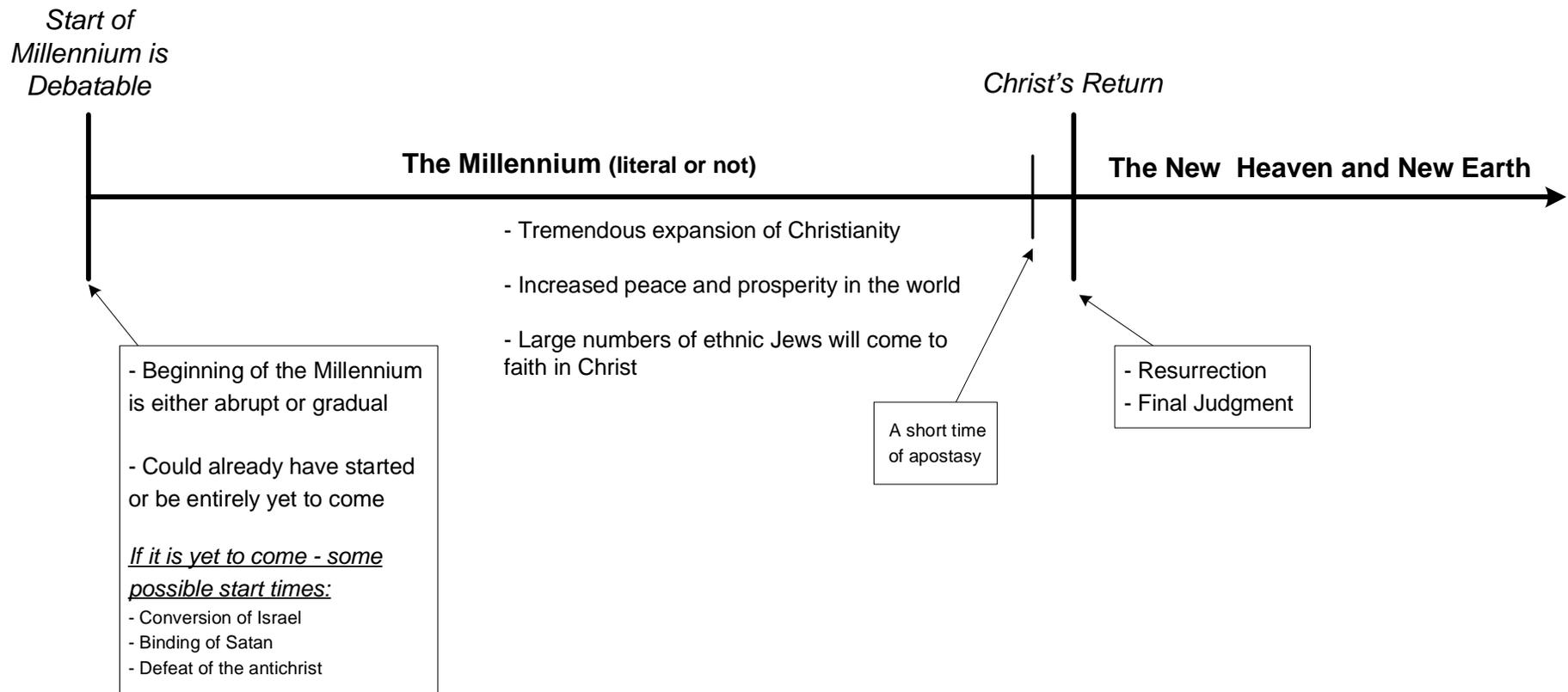


Historic Premillennialism



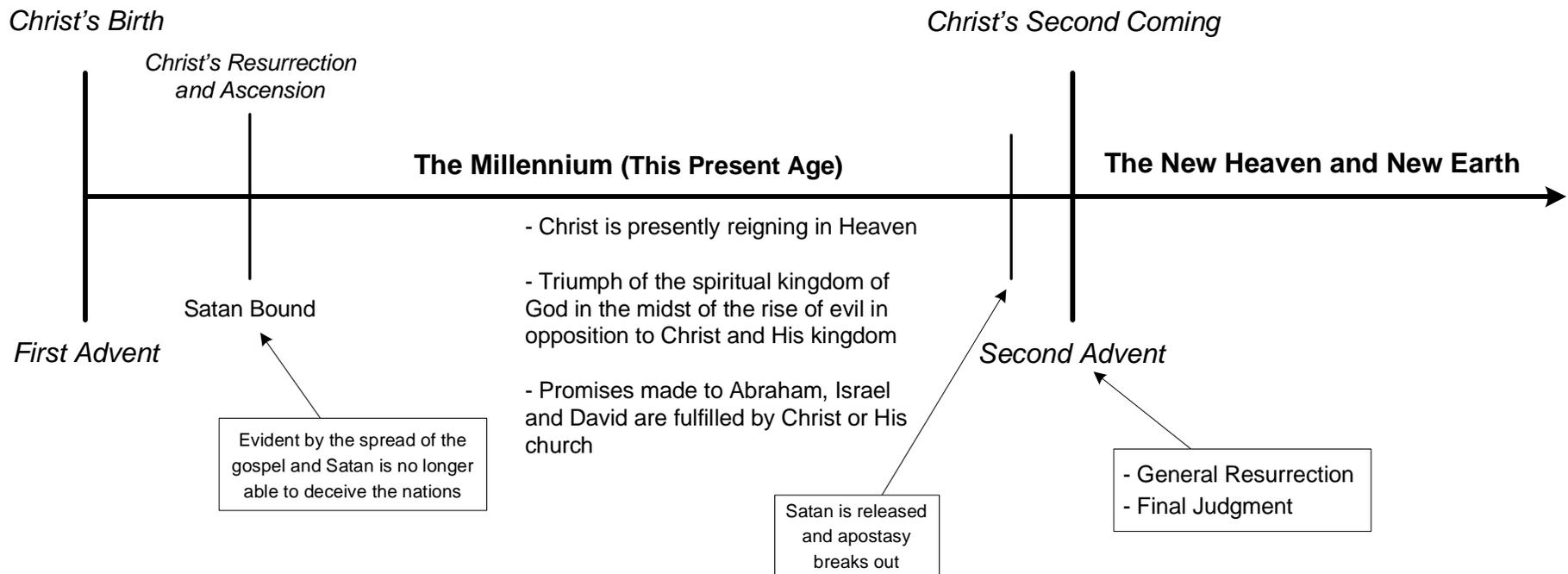
Historic Premillennial Theologians:
George Eldon Ladd, John W. Montgomery, J. Barton Payne,
R. Laird Harris, Henry Alford, Theodore Zahn, James Boice

Postmillennialism



Postmillennial Theologians:
Charles Hodge, A.A. Hodge, B.B. Warfield,
John Jefferson Davis

Amillennialism



Amillennial Theologians:
Geerhardus Vos, Herman Ridderbos, Anthony Hoekema, Cornelius Venema, Meredith G. Kline

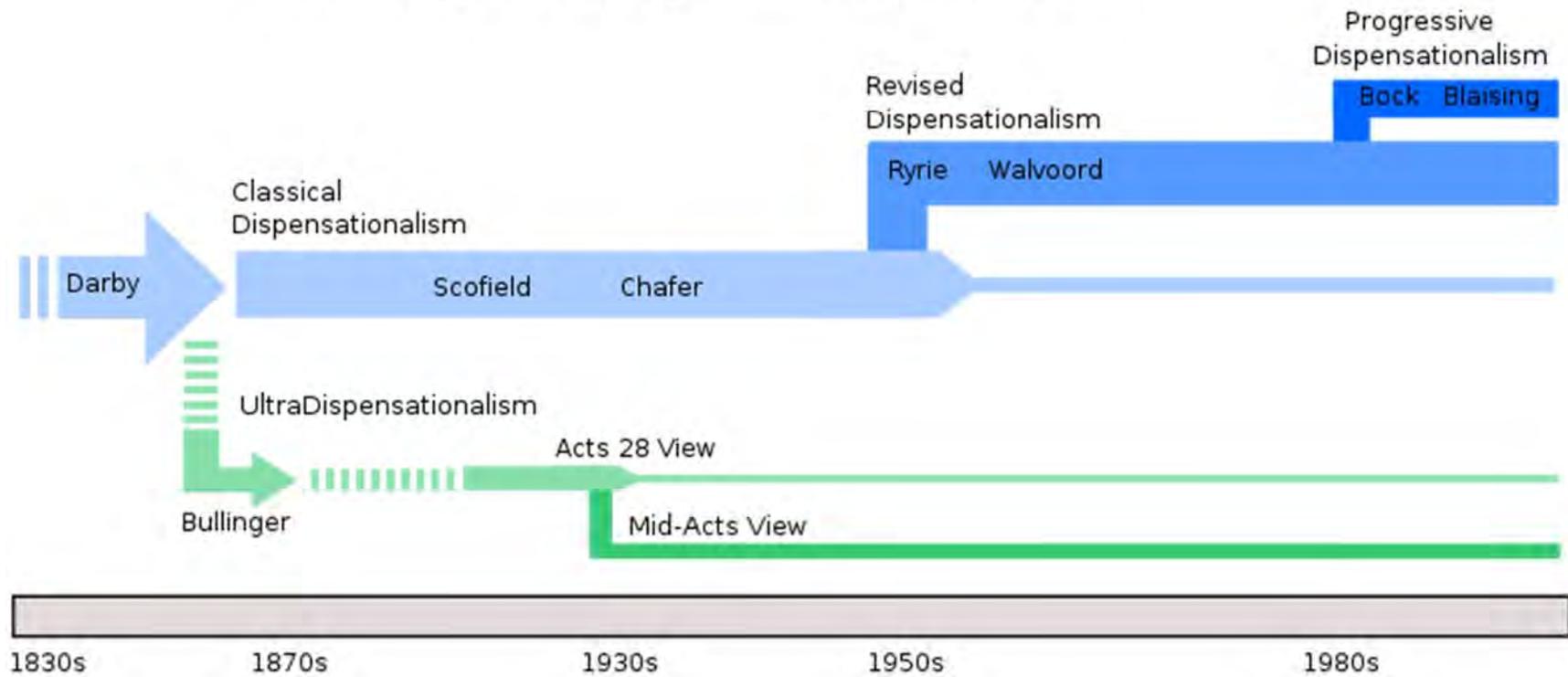
Close to Amillennial Theologians:
Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin

Progressive Dispensationalism:

Divine Presence and Power Revealed
in Progress of Redemption

		Christ Ascended			
The Kingly Acts of God	The Kingdom of God	The Eschatological Kingdom of God			
		In the person of Jesus Christ	In the community of Christ (The Church)	In the Millennial Empire of Christ	In eternal fulfillment
		Christ Descended			
Past Dispensations		Jesus Christ	Present Dispensations	Millennial	Eternal
		Future Dispensation			

History of Dispensationalism



Centerpoint School of Theology

- 82 -

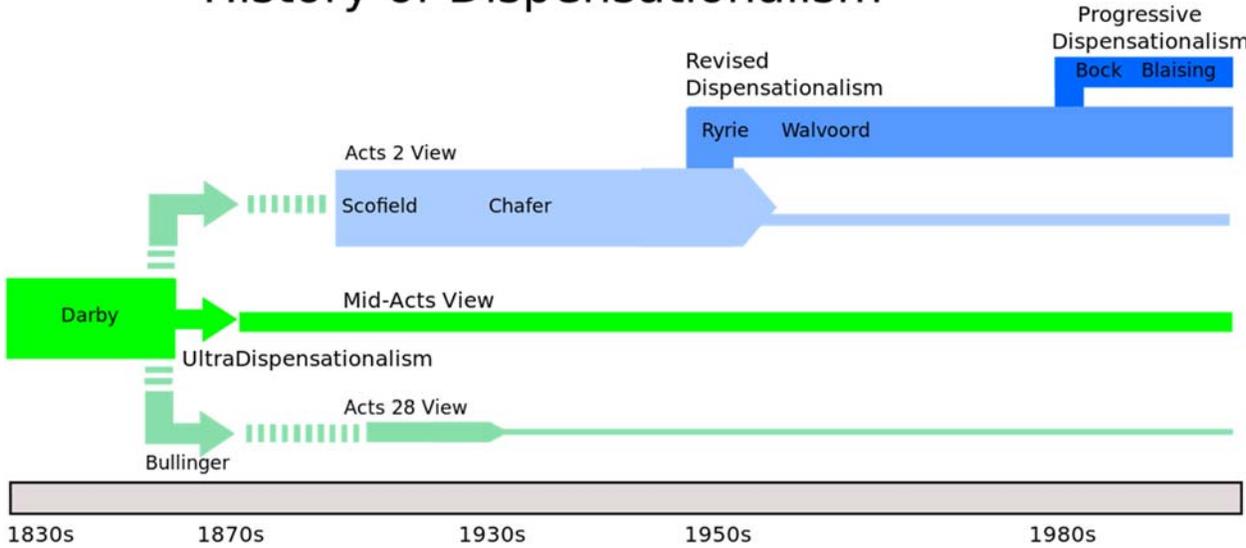
DISPENSATIONALISM

Dispensationalism	COVENANT THEOLOGY
1. May be Arminian or modified Calvinist. Almost never 5-point Calvinist.	1. Always Calvinist. Usually 5 point.
2. Stresses 'literal' interpretation of the Bible.	2. Accepts both literal and figurative interpretation of the Bible.
3. Usually does not accept the idea of the 'Analogy of Faith.'	3. Almost always accepts the idea of the 'Analogy of Faith.'
4. 'Israel' always means only the literal, physical descendants of Jacob.	4. 'Israel' may mean either literal, physical descendants of Jacob or the figurative, spiritual Israel, depending on context.
5. 'Israel of God' in Gal. 6:16 means physical Israel alone.	5. 'Israel of God' in Gal. 6:16 means spiritual Israel, parallel to Gal. 3:29, Rom. 2:28-29, 9:6, Phil. 3:3.
6. God has 2 peoples with 2 separate destinies: Israel (earthly) and the Church (heavenly).	6. God has always had only 1 people, the Church gradually developed.
7. The Church was born at Pentecost.	7. The Church began in the O.T. (Acts 7:38) and reached fulfillment in the N.T.
8. The Church was not prophesied as such in the O.T. but was a hidden mystery until the N.T.	8. There are many O.T. prophecies of the N.T. Church.
9. All O.T. prophecies for 'Israel,' are for literal Israel, not the Church.	9. Some O.T. prophecies are for literal Israel, others are for spiritual Israel.
10. God's main purpose in history is literal Israel.	10. God's main purpose in history is Christ and secondarily the Church.
11. The Church is a parenthesis in God's program for the ages.	11. The Church is the culmination of God's saying purpose for the ages.
12. The main heir to Abraham's covenant was Isaac and literal Israel.	12. The main heir to Abraham's covenant was Christ and spiritual Israel.
13. There was no eternal Covenant of Redemption within the Trinity.	13. The eternal Covenant of Redemption was within the Trinity to effect election.
14. There was no Covenant of Works with Adam in the Garden of Eden.	14. God made a conditional Covenant of Works with Adam as representative for all his posterity.

<p>15. There was no Covenant of Grace concerning Adam.</p> <p>16. Israel was rash to accept the Covenant at Mt. Sinai.</p> <p>17. The ‘New Covenant’ of Jer. 31:31- 34 is only for literal Israel and is not the New Covenant of Lk. 22:20</p> <p>18. God’s program in history is mainly through separate dispensations.</p> <p>19. Some Dispensationalists have said that O.T. sinners were saved by works.</p> <p>20. Most Dispensationalists teach that men in the O.T. were saved by faith in a revelation peculiar to their Dispensation, but this did not include faith in the Messiah as their sin-bearer.</p> <p>21. The O.T. sacrifices were not recognized as the Gospel or types of the Messiah as sin-bearer, but only seen as such in retrospect.</p> <p>22. The Holy Spirit indwells only believers in the Dispensation of Grace, not O.T. and not after the Rapture.</p> <p>23. Jesus made an offer of the literal Kingdom to Israel; since Israel rejected it, it is postponed.</p> <p>24. O.T. believers were not ‘in Christ,’ nor part of the Body or Bride of Christ.</p> <p>25. The Law has been abolished.</p> <p>26. O.T. laws are no longer in effect unless repeated in the N.T.</p>	<p>15. God made a Covenant of Grace with Christ and His people, including Adam.</p> <p>16. Israel was right to accept the Covenant at Mt. Sinai.</p> <p>17. The ‘New Covenant’ of Jer. 31 is the same as in Lk. 22; both are for spiritual Israel according to Heb. 8.</p> <p>18. God’s program in history is mainly through related covenants.</p> <p>19. No man has ever been saved by works, but only by grace.</p> <p>20. All men who have ever been saved have been saved by faith in Christ as their sin-bearer, which has been progressively revealed in every age.</p> <p>21. O.T. believers believed in the Gospel of Messiah as sin-bearer mainly by the sacrifices as types and prophecies.</p> <p>22. The Holy Spirit has indwelt believers in all ages, especially in the present N.T. era, and will not be withdrawn.</p> <p>23. Jesus made only an offer of the spiritual Kingdom, which was rejected by literal Israel but has gradually been accepted by spiritual Israel.</p> <p>24. Believers in all ages are all ‘in Christ’ and part of the Body and Bride of Christ.</p> <p>25. The Law has 3 uses: to restrain sin in society, to lead to Christ, and to instruct Christians in godliness. The ceremonial laws have been abolished; the civil laws have been abolished except for their general equity; the moral laws continue.</p> <p>26. O.T. laws are still in effect unless abrogated in the N.T.</p>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p>27. The Millennium is the Kingdom of God Dispensationalists are always Pre-Millennial and usually Pre-Tribulational.</p> <p>28. The O.T. animal sacrifices will be restored in the Millennium.</p> <p>29. The Millennium will fulfill the Covenant to Abraham. Israel has a future.</p> <p>30. David will sit on the Millennial throne in Jerusalem.</p>	<p>27. The Church is the Kingdom of God. Covenanters are usually Amillennial, sometimes Pre-Millennial or Post-Millennial, rarely Pre-Tribulational.</p> <p>28. The O.T. sacrifices were fulfilled and forever abolished in Christ.</p> <p>29. Christ fulfilled the Covenant to Abraham. Some Covenanters believe in a future for literal Israel, most don't.</p> <p>30. Christ alone sits on the throne. Saints rule under Him.</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

History of Dispensationalism

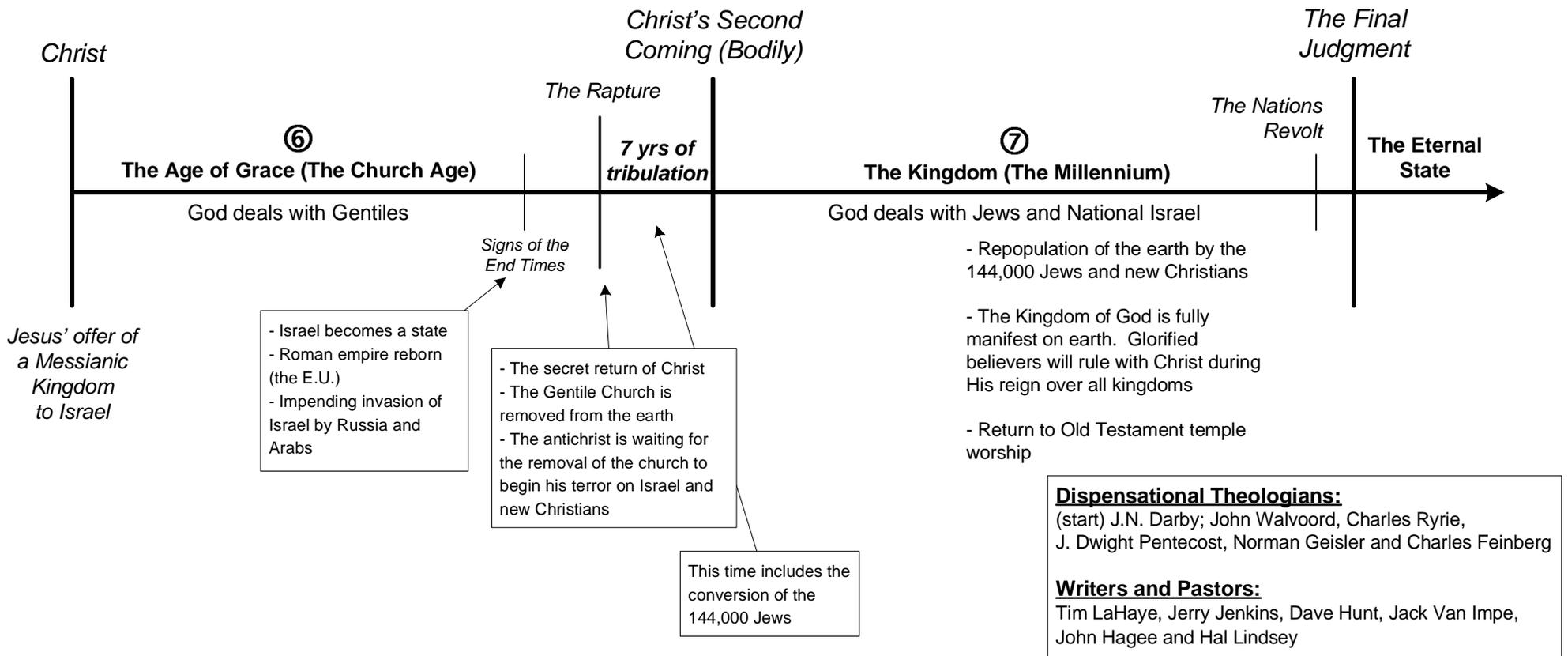
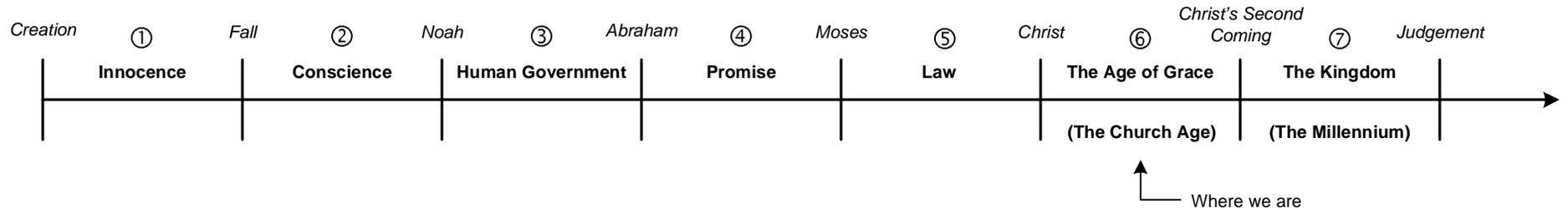


(A very, very) Brief Bibliography

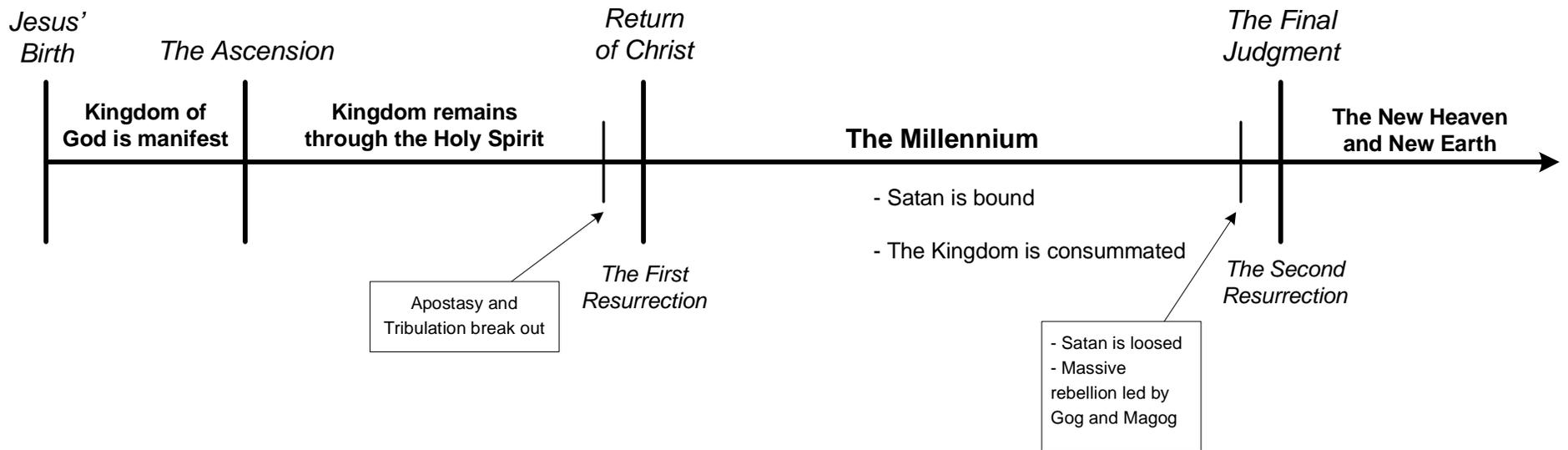
- Poythress, Vern S., *Understanding Dispensationalists*, Zondervan, 1987.
- Richard Belcher, *A Comparison of Dispensational and Covenant Theology*. Columbia, SC: Richbarry Press, 1986
- Blaissing, Craig and Darrell Bock (eds.), *Dispensationalism Israel and the Church*, Zondervan Publishing House, 1992
- Keith A. Mathison, *Dispensationalism: Rightly Dividing the People of God?* Presbyterian & Reformed, 1995
- Venema, Cornelis, *The Promise of the Future* Banner of Truth, 2000 (chapter 8)

Dispensationalism

Overview - The Seven Dispensations

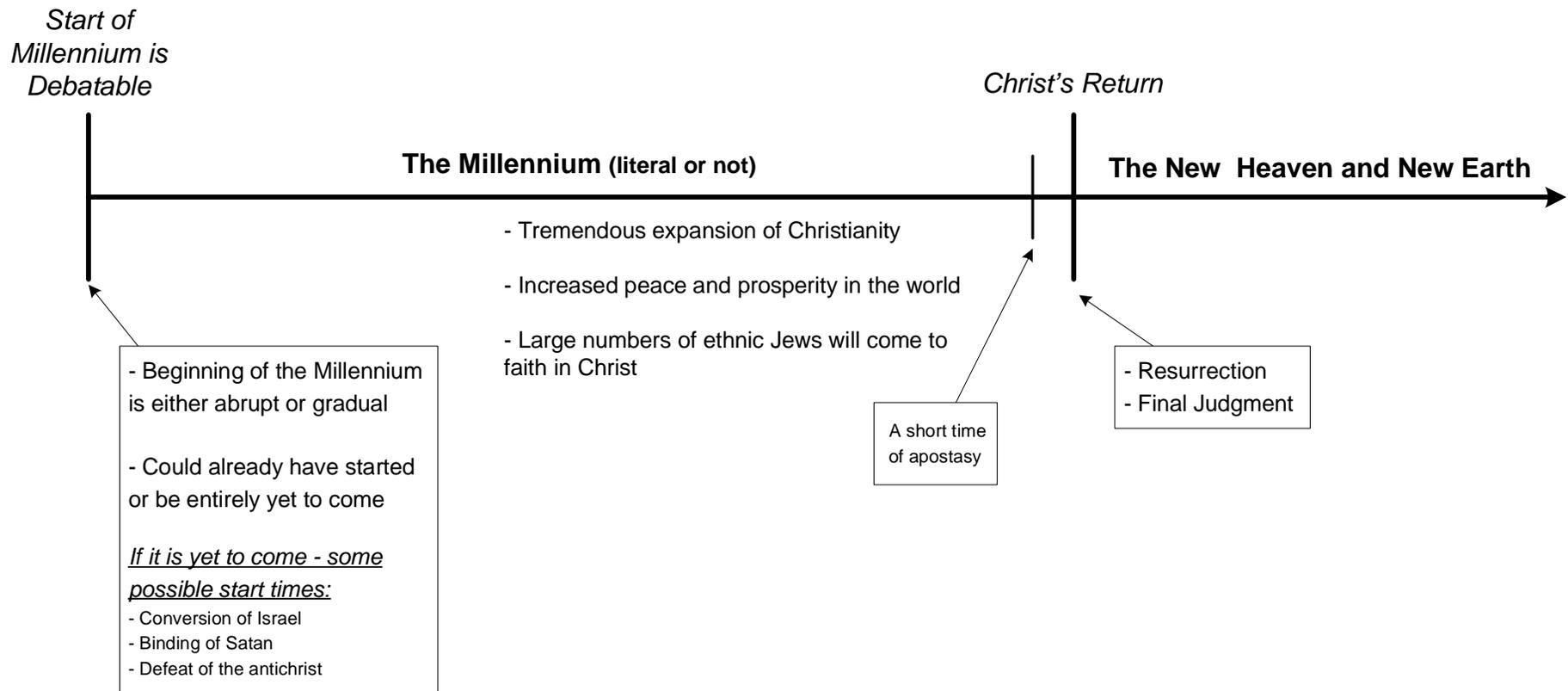


Historic Premillennialism



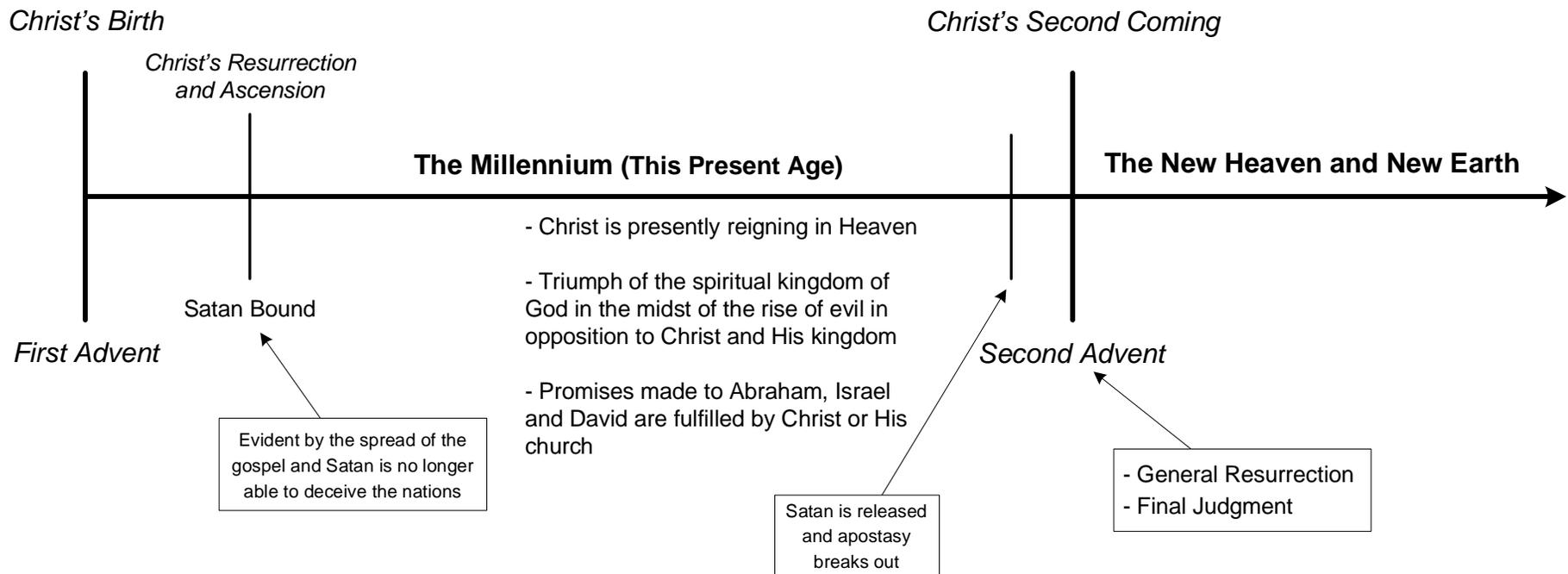
Historic Premillennial Theologians:
George Eldon Ladd, John W. Montgomery, J. Barton Payne,
R. Laird Harris, Henry Alford, Theodore Zahn, James Boice

Postmillennialism



Postmillennial Theologians:
Charles Hodge, A.A. Hodge, B.B. Warfield,
John Jefferson Davis

Amillennialism



Amillennial Theologians:
Geerhardus Vos, Herman Ridderbos, Anthony Hoekema, Cornelius Venema, Meredith G. Kline

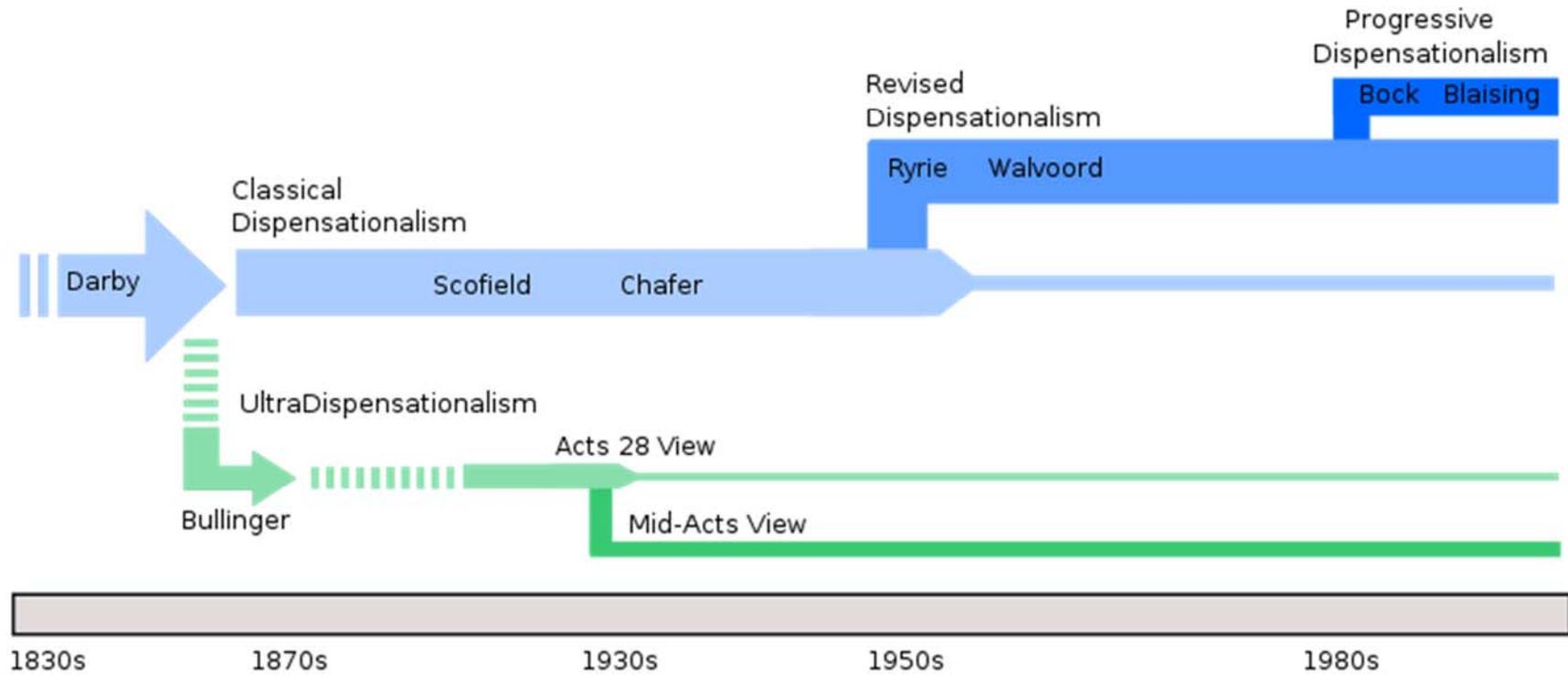
Close to Amillennial Theologians:
Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin

Progressive Dispensationalism:

Divine Presence and Power Revealed
in Progress of Redemption

		Christ Ascended			
The Kingly Acts of God	The Kingdom of God	The Eschatological Kingdom of God			
		In the person of Jesus Christ	In the community of Christ (The Church)	In the Millennial Empire of Christ	In eternal fulfillment
		Christ Descended			
Past Dispensations		Jesus Christ	Present Dispensations	Millennial	Eternal
		Future Dispensation			

History of Dispensationalism



Centerpoint School of Theology

- 83 -

**(HISTORIC)
PREMILLENNIALISM**

1. History of Premillennialism

- a. Chiliasm. (Gk. χίλιοι [chilioi])
- b. Often claimed (by Premillennialists) that the first Christians were premillennial. The Seventh Day Adventist historian, LeRoy Froom (*Prophetic Faith of our Fathers* 1:207) writes, “The early church was distinctively premillennialist in her cherished expectation of Christ’s Second advent.”
 - i. Some truth in it. Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165, *Dialogue with Trypho*); Papias of Hierapolis (A.D. 70-163; fragments of his work remain in Irenaeus and Eusebius).
 - ii. Several reasons to explain this:
 1. Jewish expectation of return of Messiah on earth (cf. Acts 1:6)
 2. The determinative pattern of creation: 6 days followed by one. And since “a day is as a thousand years” (2 Pet. 3:8), expectation was that world would last 6,000 years followed by a 1,000 millennial reign. And Revelation 20 seemed to confirm that view.
- c. A strong objection emerged to chiliasm for many reasons:
 - i. Association with Montanists (ancient equivalent of Pentecostalism)
 - ii. Gaius the presbyter’s rejection of Revelation (as a work written by Cerinthus)
 - iii. Alexandrian school. Dionysius of Alexandria, in the late third century, makes the argument that Revelation was written by another John besides the apostle. Eusebius appears to agree with him. But, it is worth noting that Dionysius does not reject the book on these grounds (despite the impression many give that he did), but still regards it as holy and inspired.
 - iv. Major denial: Augustine. *City of God* (*Book XX*, written A.D. 413-426). In Book XX, chapter 7 he confesses that he once held to chiliasm but now considers the view as too “worldly.” He takes the position adopted by Tychonius the Donatist, taking 1,000 years as the entire inter-adventual age.
 - v. Council of Ephesus (Third Ecumenical Council, A.D. 431) rejected chiliasm as a fable and a deviation from biblical orthodoxy.
- d. Returns to favor at the time of the Reformation:

- i. Guillaume Postel (1510-1581), a cosmic feminist who believed he had been reborn as the Shekinah, the Holy Spirit, and proclaimed a restoration of the millennium in 1556.
- ii. Mainstream: Johann Heinrich Alsted (German: 1588-1638), *Diatribē de mille annis Apocalypticis* (1627) and translated into English in 1643 as *The Beloved City*. It had already influenced Joseph Mede (1586-1638), *Apocalyptica* (1627).
- iii. Later, in the wake of the French Revolution, prophetic interest increased and led to the Albury Park Prophetic Conferences in the 1820s. Edward Irving attended and preached a series of millenarian sermons at St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh which influenced Horatius Bonar. Irving translated the Spanish chiliast and Jesuit, Manuel Lacunza: *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty*.
- iv. Split in nineteenth century into Dispensationalism (Darby, and eventually the Scofield Reference Bible and Dallas Seminary) and Historic Premillennialism (George Eldon Ladd and many New Testament scholars in the twentieth century).

2. The Pre-Millennial View of Revelation 20

a. Essentially consists of three presuppositions:

- i. Revelation 19-20 is one, continuous narrative. Chapter 19 describes for us the BEAST and the FALSE PROPHET. Chapter 20 then describes in *historical sequence* the defeat of the one who lies behind them, viz., Satan (v.7, Gk. ὁ Σατανᾶς, *the Satan*). This victory is represented as taking place in TWO stages separated by 1,000 years:
 1. At the beginning of it – Christ will bind Satan, raise his people and reign with them (where?) for 1,000 years
 2. At the end of it – Satan will be set free, finally overcome, and the general resurrection will take place.
- ii. Revelation 20:4 is interpreted as a PHYSICAL RESURRECTION. Also, since verse 6 mentions a “second death” implies that there are TWO DEATHS and TWO RESURRECTIONS in view. The first resurrection is the that of the ELECT and the second the general resurrection.
- iii. Revelation 20:2-3 tells us that “the Satan” is seized and bound in such a way that he can no longer “deceive the nations.” Clearly (!), it is implied, this *cannot* refer to the present time since so many are deceived.

It must therefore be a reference to the future, a time immediately preceded by the first resurrection.

SEE HISTORIC PRE-MILLENNIAL CHART

b. Major Arguments against the Premillennial Exegesis of Revelation 20

i. The flow of the Book of Revelation as a whole.

1. This is not necessarily determinative. But if Revelation is viewed as recapitulatory and progressive parallel structure, then the book is constantly covering the *same* ground (with Revelation 1-11 from the perspective of the conflict of the church and Revelation 12-22 from the ultimate, heavenly conflict).
2. See previous lecture on Revelation 20

2. Premillennial view of 1 Corinthians 15:23-26

- a. “But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”
- b. The common feature of all premillennial teaching is the claim that Christ’s return at the end of the age will take place before the period known as the millennium.
- c. Evaluation:

i. General Teaching of Scripture about Second Coming. See, Cornelis Venema’s evaluation here.

1. Christ’s coming will be a visible, public event that will bring about the salvation of the people of God and the realization of the kingdom of God in fullness (Matt. 24:27, 33, Luke 17:24; 21:27—28, 31).
2. When Christ is revealed from heaven, he will bring rest immediately and simultaneously for his beleaguered church and eternal punishment upon the unbelieving and impenitent (2 Thess. 1:6—10).
3. In the New Testament descriptions of the believer’s expectation for the future, the common thread is a focus upon the return of Christ as the event that brings the fullness of salvation, beyond which

there is no further event that will surpass it in redemptive significance (cf. 1 Cor. 1:7, 8, Phil. 1:6,10, 1 John 2:28, 1 Tim. 4:8, 2 Tim. 4:1). The premillennial teaching that Christ's return will introduce a millennial period, whose conclusion will be marked by a new outbreak and manifestation of Satanic opposition to Christ and his people (Satan's 'little season' of Revelation 20:3), hardly seems to fit this focus and expectation.

ii. Specific Evaluation of 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, esp. 23-26.

1. George Eldon Ladd argues that this passage teaches three stages in the unfolding of redemptive history:

- a. The resurrection of Christ
- b. Parousia when those who are Christ's will share in the resurrection.
- c. "Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death." The adverbs translated 'then' are *epeita*, *eita*, which denote a sequence: 'after that'. There are three distinct stages: Jesus' resurrection; after that (*epeita*) the resurrection of believers at the resurrection; after that (*eita*) the end (*telos*). An unidentified interval falls between Christ's resurrection and his parousia, and a second undefined interval falls between the parousia and the *telos*, when Christ completes the subjugation of his enemies. (Ladd, Ladd, 'Historic Premillennialism', in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse, p. 39.)

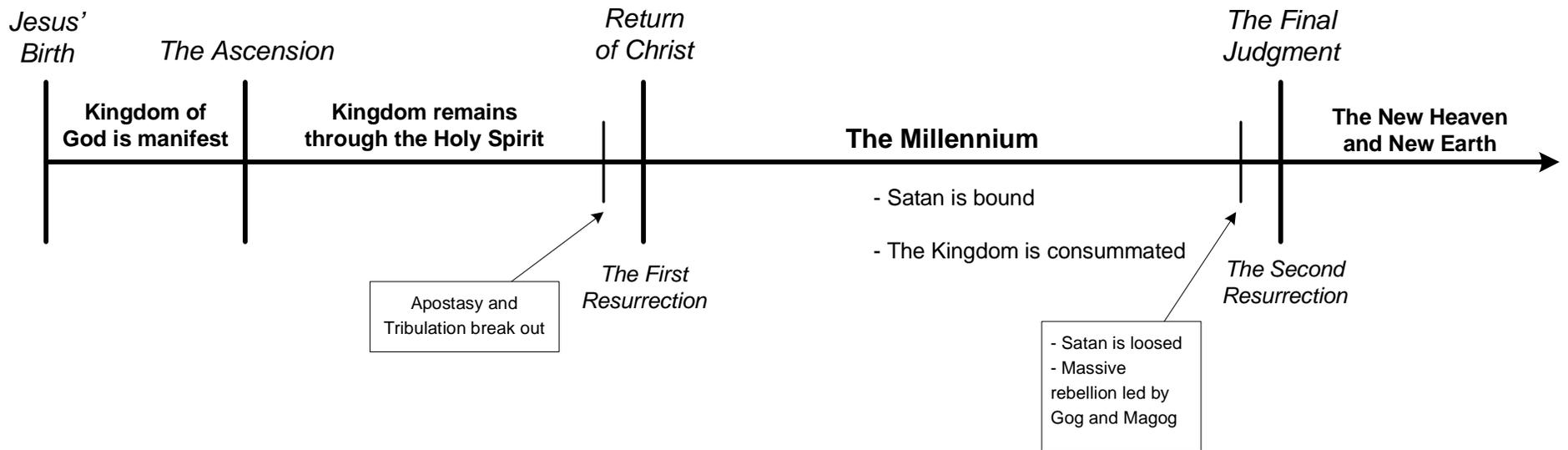
2. Analysis

- a. First, in all the other New Testament instances where the words used in this passage ('*epeita* . . . *eita*') are found, they are used to express events in the closest temporal connection, without any protracted period of time intervening (Luke 8:12, Mark 4:17, John 20:27). In the immediate context of 1 Corinthians 15:23—26, we find the same adverbs used inter-changeably, and there, too, they express a simple sequence of events (1 Cor. 15:5—7). Furthermore, the second of these two, 'and then', is used alone in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 to express an immediate

sequence of events. If context and ordinary usage have a bearing upon the interpretation of a text, then it seems evident that these words ought to be read as expressing a simple sequence of events — when Christ comes, the dead in Christ will be raised and the end state will ensue with all things subject to him.

- b. The New Testament generally and the epistles of Paul particularly, show a close connection between the ‘coming’ (parousia) of Christ and the ‘end’ (telos). However, on Ladd’s and the premillennialists’ construction of this passage, these terms in 1 Corinthians 15:23—26 refer to distinct events, separated by a period of one thousand years. In 1 Corinthians 1:7—8, the Apostle Paul speaks of the ‘revelation’ and the ‘day’ of the Lord as the end to which believers look forward and until which they will be kept blameless. When Christ is revealed, the end will come and the believer’s need to persevere in hope will conclude (cf. 2 Cor. 1:13—14, Matt. 10:22; 24:6, 13—14, Mark 13:7,13, Luke 21:9, Heb. 3:6, 14; 6:11, 1 Pet. 4:7). Thus, treating the ‘coming’ of Christ and the ‘end’ in 1 Corinthians 15:23—26 as events that are closely connected, or even conjoined, is in keeping with the ordinary pattern found in the New Testament. That pattern is broken by Ladd’s view.
- c. The believer’s victory over death is said in 1 Corinthians 15:54—55 to occur when believers receive resurrection bodies. This coincides with what is said in 1 Corinthians 15:23—26 to occur in conjunction with both the ‘coming’ of Christ and the ‘end’, when the believer’s last enemy, death, will be overcome. The simplest and most obvious reading of these verses in their context is that when Christ comes and believers share in his resurrection, this event will coincide with or introduce the ‘end’, that circumstance in which death has been swallowed up in victory.

Historic Premillennialism



Historic Premillennial Theologians:
George Eldon Ladd, John W. Montgomery, J. Barton Payne,
R. Laird Harris, Henry Alford, Theodore Zahn, James Boice

Centerpoint School of Theology

-84-

POSTMILLENNIALISM

“In short, postmillennialism is set apart from the other two schools of thought [Premillennialism and amillennialism] by its essential *optimism* for the kingdom in the *present* age.”

Greg Bahnsen

“The Prima Facie Acceptability of Postmillennialism” in
The Journal of Christian Reconstruction, III, Winter 1976-77, p. 66.

“Postmillennialism expects the proclaiming of the Spirit-blessed gospel of Jesus Christ to win the vast majority of human beings to salvation in the present age. Increasing gospel success will gradually produce a time in history prior to Christ’s return in which faith, righteousness, peace, and prosperity will prevail in the affairs of people and of nations. After an extensive era of such conditions the Lord will return visibly, bodily, and in great glory, ending history with the general resurrection and the great judgment of all human kind.”

Kenneth Gentry, “Postmillennialism,” in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, ed. Darrell Bock. (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI, 1999), pp. 13-14.

1. Preliminary Observations:

- a. Both a-millennial and post-millennial viewpoint differ from pre-millennial on the crucial issue of the timing of the Second Coming relative to the millennium. A-mils and Post-mils both view the millennium as taking place BEFORE the Second Coming, whereas pre-mils view the millennium as taking place AFTER the Second Coming.
- b. The *stricter* classification (pre-, a-, and post-) are recent (20th century). In the seventeenth century, for example (the century of the great Confessions) eschatological classification was made solely on the issue above. A-mils and post-mils were therefore blurred. The term “amillennialism” (widely accepted and accepted today) was coined in the 1930s, largely in a pejorative sense for those who had “no view” of the millennium, or who “spiritualized” the reference to “a thousand years.” The two world wars of the twentieth century most certainly created a pessimism about the future whereby talk of a “Golden Age” was seen as unrealistic. In this sense, B.B. Warfield and Geerhardus Vos were both regarded as post-millennial, a classification question by some today. (See, for example, Richard B. Gaffin, “Theonomy and Eschatology,” in *Theonomy: A Reformed Critique* ed. William Barker (Zondervan, 1991).
- c. The Problem of Definition: Some amillennials have a fairly optimistic view of the future, for example. When does such optimism become full-blown postmillennialism? Depending on how we define postmillennialism, therefore, consider the following statements:
 - i. Postmillennialism is the “predominant” view of the Christian Church (Kenneth Gentry in *He Shall Have Dominion*).
 - ii. Postmillennialism is a “significant opinion” in the reformed tradition (Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology of Victory*).

2. History of Postmillennialism (in its modern form)

- a. Daniel Whitby, *Paraphrase and Commentary on the New Testament* (1703). English theologian and commentator. An Arminian priest of the Church of England, Whitby was strongly anti-Calvinistic and was accused of Unitarian tendencies.
- b. Thomas Brightman (1562-1607) commentator. His exegesis of the Revelation, published posthumously, proved influential.
- c. John Cotton (1585-1652). A New England puritan.
- d. John Owen (1616-1683). Owen preached a sermon before the House of Commons in 1651 (during the period when England was a republic) called “The Kingdom of Christ” in which he expressed the expectation that “multitudes of the nations would

be converted and come under the Lordship of Christ.” He was the principal author of the Savoy Declaration (1658) which contained the following statement.

- i. “As the Lord in his care and love towards his Church, hath in his infinite wise providence exercised it with great variety in all ages, for the good of them that love him, and his own glory; so according to his promise, we expect that in the latter days, antichrist being destroyed, the Jews called, and the adversaries of the kingdom of his dear Son broken, the churches of Christ being enlarged, and edified through a free and plentiful communication of light and grace, shall enjoy in this world a more quiet, peaceable and glorious condition than they have enjoyed.”
- e. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758). Jonathan Edwards’s 1739 sermon series, published posthumously in 1774 as *A History of the Work of Redemption*. One of the first “biblical theology” approaches to the Scriptures. When all of New England was convulsed by spiritual awakening in the early 1740s, he could not hold back: “’Tis not unlikely that this work of God’s Spirit, that is so extraordinary and wonderful, is the dawning, or at least a prelude, of that glorious work of God, so often foretold in Scripture. ... And there are many things that make it probable that this work will begin in America.”
 - f. Archibald Alexander (1772-1851). Presbyterian and theologian at Princeton Seminary.
 - g. Joseph Addison Alexander (1809-1861). Archibald Alexander’s son. In his commentary on Isaiah, J. A. Alexander clearly indicates that the prophecies of Isaiah, which describe an age of peace to come in the distant future, are to be understood in strictly postmillennial terms. In commenting upon Isaiah 2:2-4, Alexander sets out the following points:
 - i. “The prophet sees the church, at some distant period, exalted and conspicuous, and the nations resorting to it for instruction in the true religion, as a consequence of which he sees war cease and universal peace prevail.... The prophecy begins with an abrupt prediction of the exaltation of the church, the confluence of nations to it, and a general pacification as the consequence.... This confluence of nations is described more fully, and its motive stated in their own words, namely, a desire to be instructed in the true religion. He who appeared in the preceding verses as the lawgiver and teacher of the nations, is now represented as an arbiter or umpire, ending their disputes by a pacific intervention, as a necessary consequence of which war ceases, the very knowledge of the art is lost, and its implements applied to other uses....The event is suspended upon a previous condition, viz., the confluence of nations to the church, which has not yet taken place; a strong inducement to diffuse the gospel, which, in the mean time, is peaceful in its spirit, tendency, and actual effect, wherever and so far as it exerts its influence without

obstruction.” [Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah, Reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1953), pp. 96-98].

- h. Charles Hodge (1797-1878). “It has, therefore, been almost the universal belief that the original state of man was as the Bible teaches, his highest state, from which the nations of the earth have more or less deteriorated. This primitive state, however, was distinguished by the intellectual, moral and religious superiority of men rather than by superiority in the arts or natural sciences. The Scriptural doctrine, therefore, is consistent with the admitted fact that separate nations, and the human race as a whole, have made great advances in all branches of knowledge and in all the arts of life. Nor is it inconsistent with the belief that the world under the influence of Christianity is constantly improving, and will ultimately attain, under the reign of Christ, millennial perfection and glory.” (Systematic Theology, 2:94).
- i. A. A. Hodge (1823-1886, C. Hodge’s son).
 - i. “What is the Scriptural doctrine concerning the millennium?” *His Answer*:
1st. The Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, clearly reveal that the gospel is to exercise an influence over all branches of the human family, immeasurably more extensive and more thoroughly transforming than any it has ever realized in time past. This end is to be gradually attained through the spiritual presence of Christ in the ordinary dispensation of Providence, and ministrations of his church....2nd. The period of this general prevalency of the gospel will continue a thousand years, and is hence designated the millennium. - Rev. xx. 2-7. 3d. The Jews are to be converted to Christianity either at the commencement or during the continuance of this period....4th. At the end of these thousand years, and before the coming of Christ, there will be a comparatively short season of apostasy and violent conflict between the kingdoms of light and darkness....5th. Christ’s advent, the general resurrection and judgment, will be simultaneous, and immediately succeeded by the burning of the old, and the revelation of the new earth and heavens. (*Outlines of Theology*, Reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: The Zondervan Corporation, 1972), pp. 568-69.).
- j. 20th Century:
 - i. J. Marcellus Kik (*An Eschatology of Victory*)
 - ii. John Jefferson Davis (*Victory of Christ’s Kingdom*)
 - iii. Iain Murray (*The Puritan Hope*)
- k. Reconstructionist:
 - i. Greg Bahsen (1948-1995). Calvinist philosopher and Apologist (presuppositionalism). Professor at RTS Jackson.

- ii. Gary North (1942 -). Economic historian and reconstructionist.
- iii. David Chilton (1951-1997). Author: *Paradise Restored* (1985), *The Days of Vengeance* (1987), and *The Great Tribulation* (1987).
- iv. Kenneth Gentry (1950 -). Ordained minister of RPCGA.

3. Main Features of Postmillennialism:

a. Triumph of the Gospel:

- i. “We have defined Postmillennialism as that view of the last things which holds that the Kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individuals, that the world eventually is to be Christianized, and that the return of Christ is to occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace commonly called the millennium.” (Lorraine Boettner, “Postmillennialism,” in *The Meaning of of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse, p. 117).

b. A Golden Age. *Some interpret the 1,000 years more literally than others.*

c. Sequence of end-time events:

- i. Gospel advance
- ii. Nations are “converted”
- iii. Millennium commences
- iv. Satan is released for a little while
- v. Second Coming

d. Conversion of Jews (Romans 11:26 “all Israel will be saved”)

e. *Some: Dominion of Christ and Reconstructionism.*

4. Biblical Case *for* postmillennialism

a. Promises of universal blessing:

- i. “I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth...” (Gen. 13:16); “And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.”

Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be” (Gen. 15:5); “will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you” (Gen. 17:6); “I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies,¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice” (Gen. 22:17-18); “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:18-10); “He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field.³² It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”³³ He told them another parable. “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.” (Matt. 13:31-33).

b. Present Dominion of Christ:

i. Messianic Psalms (2, 22, 45, 67, 72, 110)

ii. Isaianic Prophecies:

1. It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the LORD
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be lifted up above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it,
³ and many peoples shall come, and say:
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”
For out of Zion shall go the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
⁴ He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore. (Isa. 2:2-4)

2. Cf. Isa 9:6-7; 11:6, 9-10; 40:4-5; 49:6

iii. Preterist View of Signs of the times

iv. Millennium of Revelation 20

Centerpoint School of Theology

-85-

AMILLENNIALISM

“Instead of trying to connect the signs of the end to current events, the church is to be about its divinely commissioned task of preaching the gospel. Jesus has not called us to speculate about his coming. Instead, he has called us to persevere to the end during the calamity of nations, the groaning of the earth, the rise of false teachers, and in the face of persecution. He has called us to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.”

— Kim Riddlebarger, Case for Amillennialism, A: Understanding the End Times

1. Preliminary Observations:

- a. There are basically TWO main schools of thought:
 - i. Those that view the millennium occurring AFTER the Second Coming (or some aspect of it):
 1. Dispensationalism
 2. Historic (or Classical) Premillennialism
 - ii. Those that view the millennium occurring BEFORE the Second Coming:
 1. Postmillennialism
 2. Amillennialism
 - iii. The term: A-millennialism. Literally, “no-millennium” (which is misleading).
 - iv. In contrast to both premillennial and postmillennial views, it does not anticipate a “Golden Age” either AFTER (Premillennialism) or BEFORE (Postmillennialism). Because of this, some postmillennialists refer to this view as *pessimillennialism*.
 - v. Jay Adams: “Realized Millennialism” (*The Time is At Hand*).
Cornelis Venema: “Now millennialism” (*The Promise of the Future*).

2. History of Amillennialism:

- a. The term itself probably arises in the 1930’s
- b. Augustine: viewed the millennium as the growth of the church in the present age. This view largely influenced the Middle Ages and early Protestant Reformation.
 - i. “This binding of Satan began when the church began to spread from Judaea into other regions, and lasts yet, and shall do until his time be expired.” (*City of God*, 20:8).
 - ii. Augustine’s interpretation of Revelation 20 is not very specific. As in his entire discussion of this doctrine, the treatment is cursory and brief. He discusses Revelation 20 in three or four pages and dismisses without any real argument the literal view.
- c. The Lutheran Church formally rejected chiliasm in The Augsburg Confession: Article XVII condemns the Anabaptists (of Munster—historically most Anabaptist groups were amillennial) and others “who now scatter Jewish opinions that, before the

resurrection of the dead, the godly shall occupy the kingdom of the world, the wicked being everywhere suppressed.

- d. Likewise, the Swiss Reformer, Heinrich Bullinger wrote up the Second Helvetic Confession which reads “We also reject the Jewish dream of a millennium, or golden age on earth, before the last judgment.” (Philip Schaff, *History of Creeds* Vol. 1, 307).
- e. John Calvin wrote in *Institutes* that chiliasm is a “fiction” that is “too childish either to need or to be worth a refutation.” He interpreted the thousand-year period of Revelation 20 non-literally, applying it to the “various disturbances that awaited the church, while still toiling on earth.” (Institutes 25:5).
- f. Today: Modern representatives would include,
 - i. A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*
 - ii. Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*
 - iii. G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ*
 - iv. William E. Cox, *Amillennialism Today* (1972!)
 - v. William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*
 - vi. Robert Strimple, ‘Amillennialism’ in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, ed. Darrell L. Bock
 - vii. Cornelis Venema, *The Promise of the Future*
 - viii. Meredith Kline, *The First Resurrection*
 - ix. Greg Beale, *Revelation*

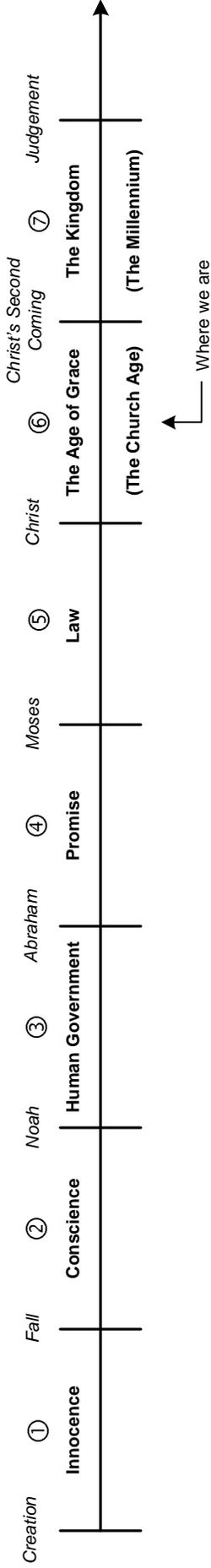
3. Main Features of Amillennialism

- a. The Kingdom is NOW:
 - i. The thousand years of Revelation 20 is a symbolic representation of Christ’s present reign with the saints. During the the time between Christ’s first advent and his return at the end of the age, Satan is bound in such a manner that he cannot deceive the nations any longer. 1,000 = 10x10x10. It is therefore opposed to all forms of *chiliasm*. It rejects the idea that the kingdom is to be established in some way in the future.

- ii. The SIGNS of the TIMES. Amillennialism sees the signs (tribulation, apostasy, spirit of Antichrist) as present and future realities. Postmillennialists see these particular signs as predictive of events prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.
- iii. Revelation 20. Most Amillennialists read Revelation 20 as depicting the entire history from first to second advent. Unlike postmillennialists who read Revelation 19 and 20 as chronologically successive (Revelation 19 describing the commencement of the millennium and Revelation 20 the millennium itself), amillennialists view the vision of the millennium as a symbolic representation of the period of the church's mission in the world.
- iv. The Question of Optimism: Hope for the Future. This is far more subjective an assessment, and postmillennialists often criticize amillennialists for a lack of belief in Christ present and future victory. Words like "pessimism" and "optimism" are used.

Dispensationalism

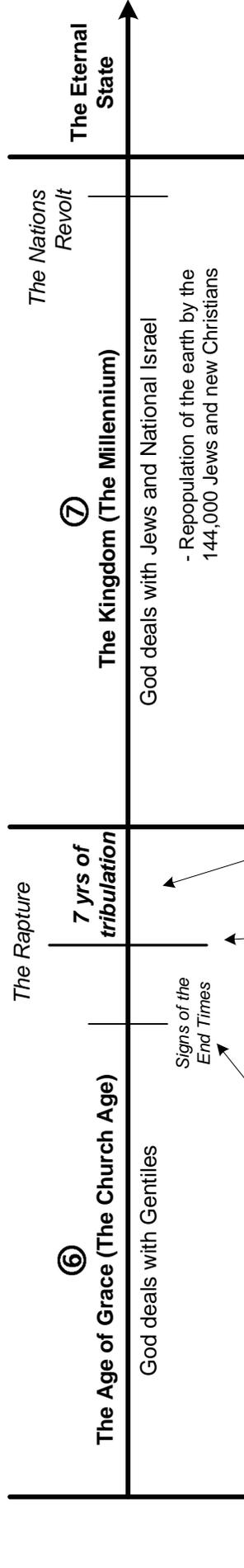
Overview - The Seven Dispensations



The Final Judgment

Christ

Christ's Second Coming (Bodily)



God deals with Gentiles

God deals with Jews and National Israel

Jesus' offer of a Messianic Kingdom to Israel

- Israel becomes a state
- Roman empire reborn (the E.U.)
- Impending invasion of Israel by Russia and Arabs

- The secret return of Christ
- The Gentile Church is removed from the earth
- The antichrist is waiting for the removal of the church to begin his terror on Israel and new Christians

- Repopulation of the earth by the 144,000 Jews and new Christians

- The Kingdom of God is fully manifest on earth. Glorified believers will rule with Christ during His reign over all kingdoms

- Return to Old Testament temple worship

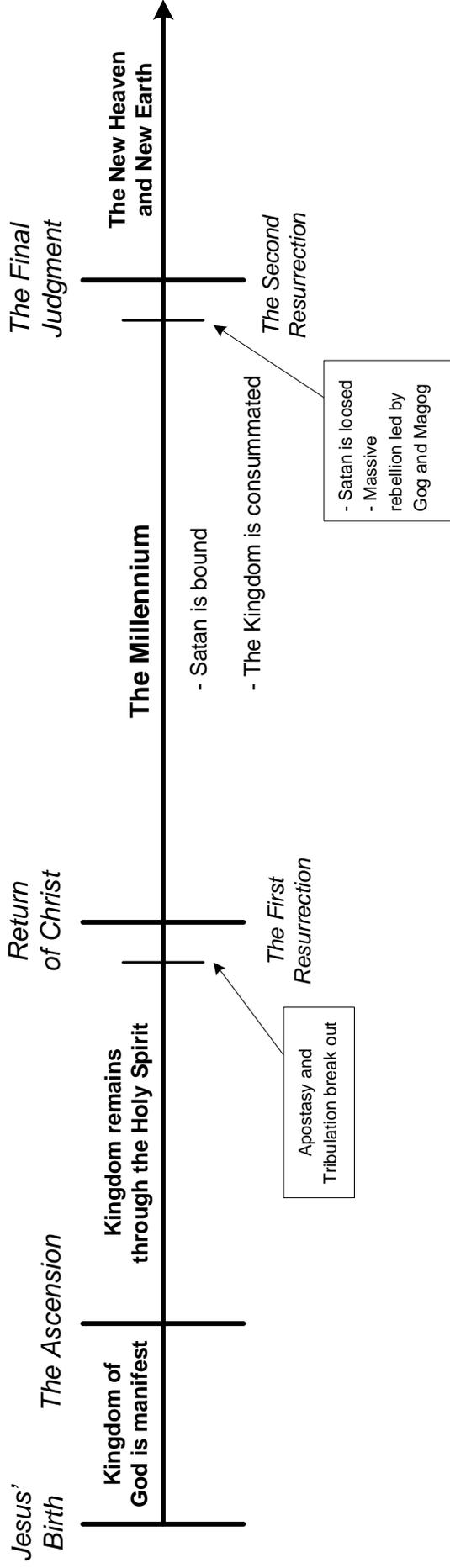
Dispensational Theologians:

(start) J.N. Darby; John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, J. Dwight Pentecost, Norman Geisler and Charles Feinberg

Writers and Pastors:

Tim LaHaye, Jerry Jenkins, Dave Hunt, Jack Van Impe, John Hagee and Hal Lindsey

Historic Premillennialism



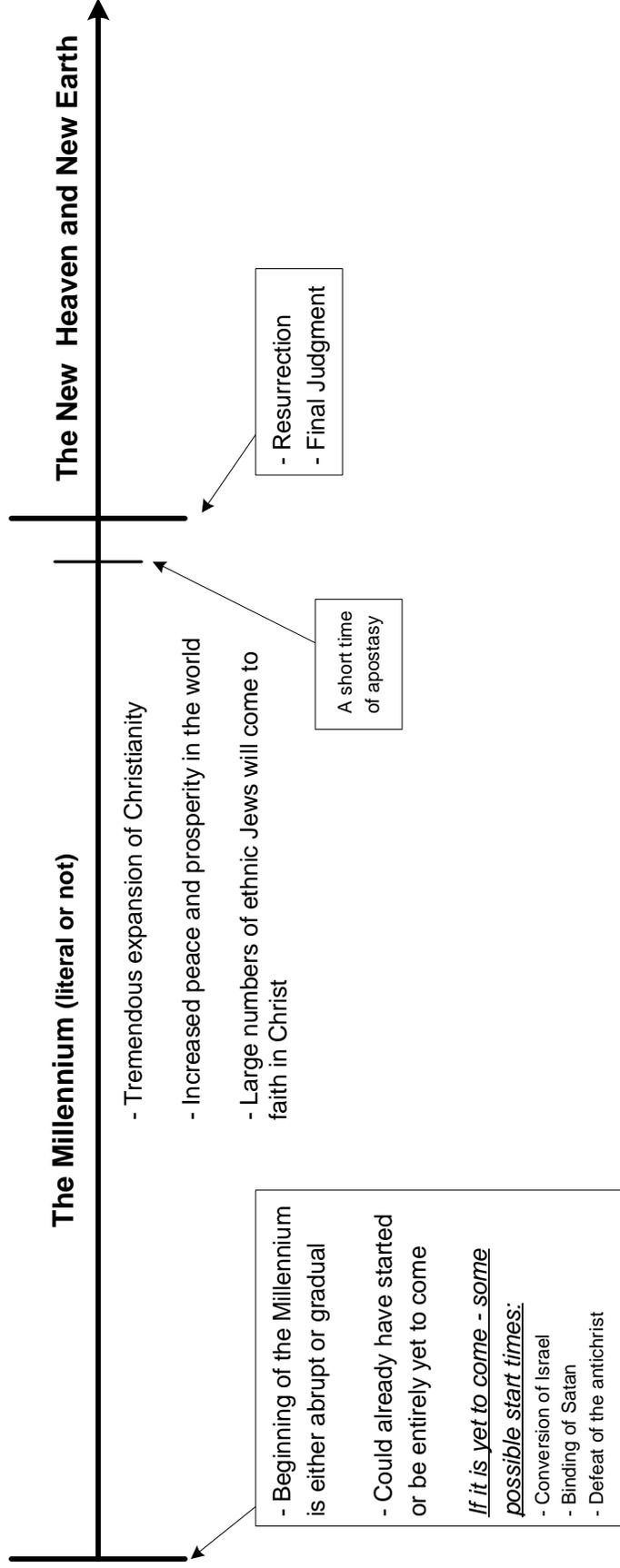
Historic Premillennial Theologians:

George Eldon Ladd, John W. Montgomery, J. Barton Payne, R. Laird Harris, Henry Alford, Theodore Zahn, James Boice

Postmillennialism

Start of
Millennium is
Debatable

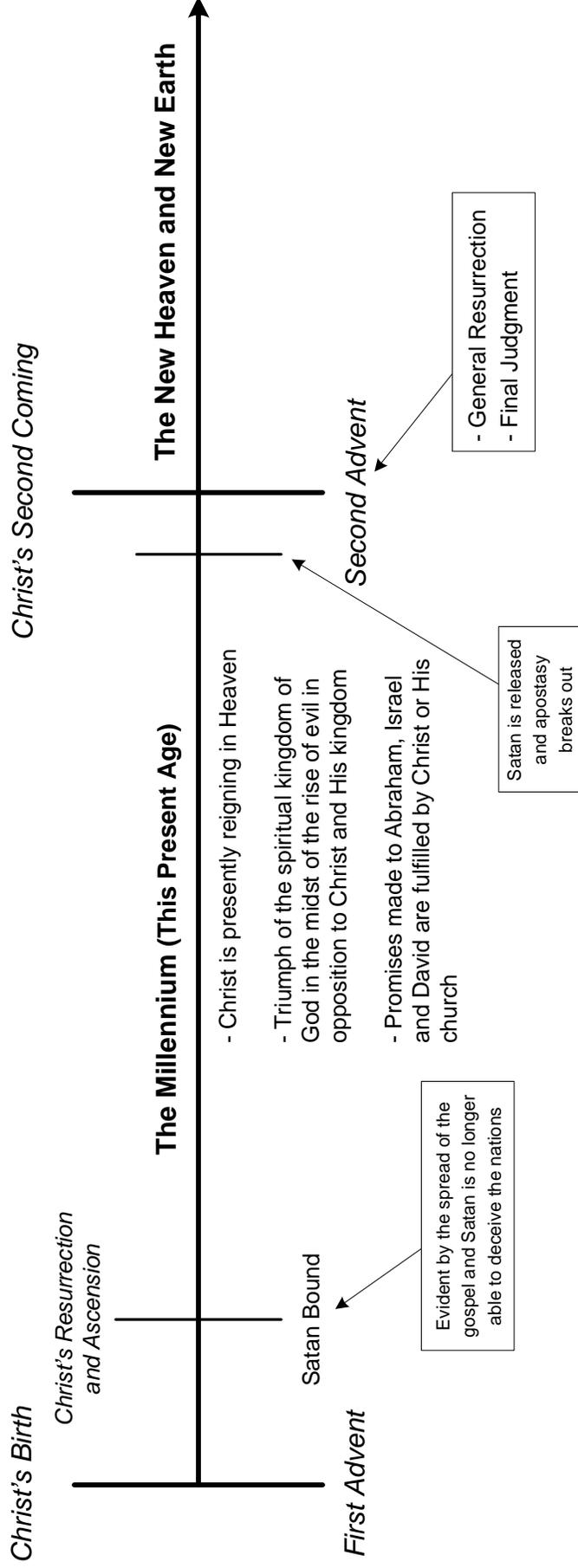
Christ's Return



Postmillennial Theologians:

Charles Hodge, A.A. Hodge, B.B. Warfield,
John Jefferson Davis

Amillennialism



Amillennial Theologians:
Geerhardus Vos, Herman Ridderbos, Anthony Hoekema, Cornelius Venema, Meredith G. Kline

Close to Amillennial Theologians:
Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin