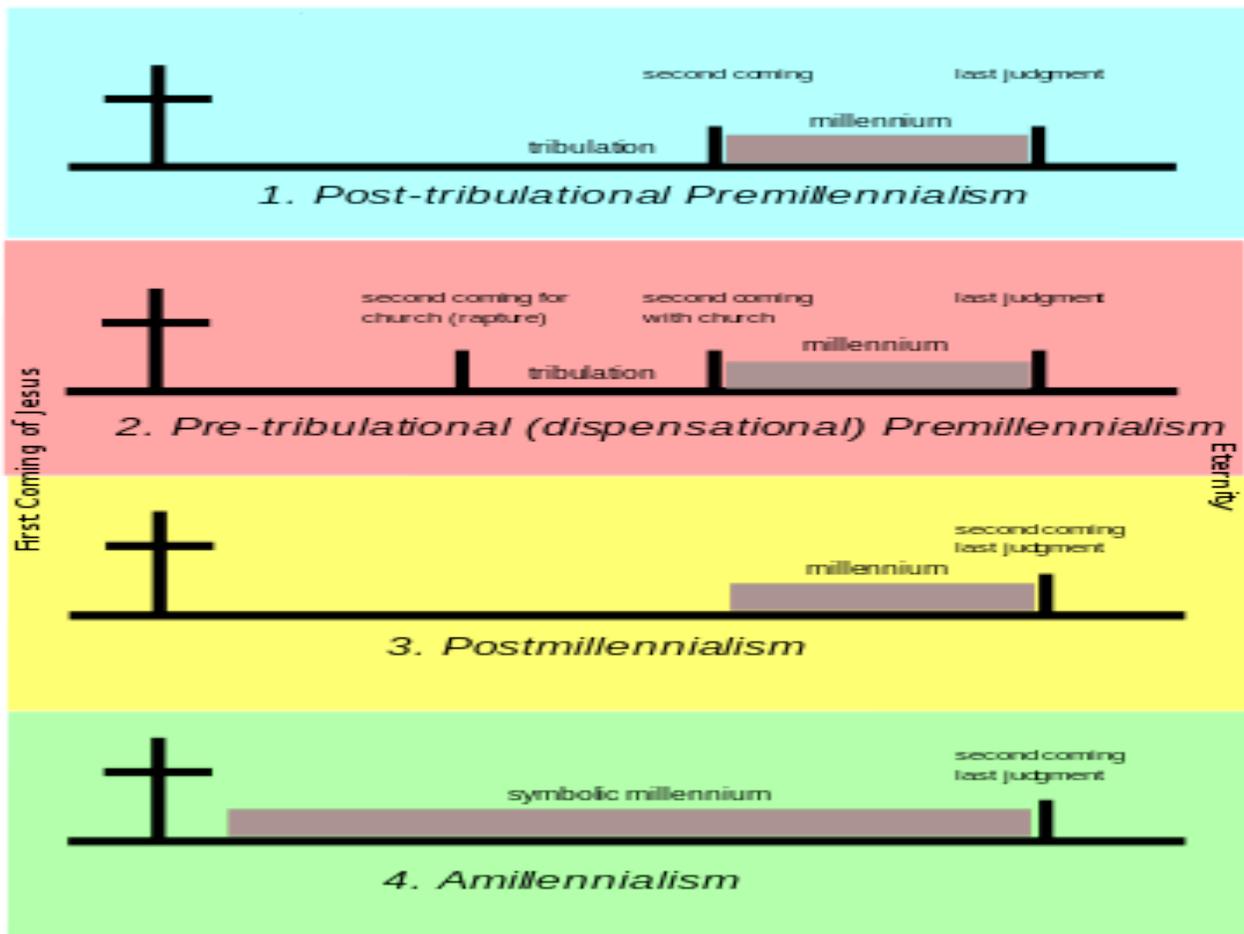


Session 2: Introduction to Interpreting the Book of Revelation

1. There are 4 major approaches to interpreting Revelation:
 - a. **Praeterist** (Past) theory that all of Revelation has already happened.
 - b. **Futurist** theory that all will still happen, except for the first 3 chapters.
 - c. **Dispensational** theory that Revelation describes separate, detailed eras of church history and the history of Israel.
 - d. **Church Historical** theory that Revelation offers a general and symbolic picture of church history from the time of Jesus until Judgment Day and into eternity.
2. Among Christians today, there are 4 major camps in the interpretation of Revelation. "Millennialism" relates to the topic of Jesus' 1000 year reign. The chart below illustrates the 4 approaches..

Comparison of Christian millennial teachings



3. A History of the Interpretations of Revelation 20:1-10

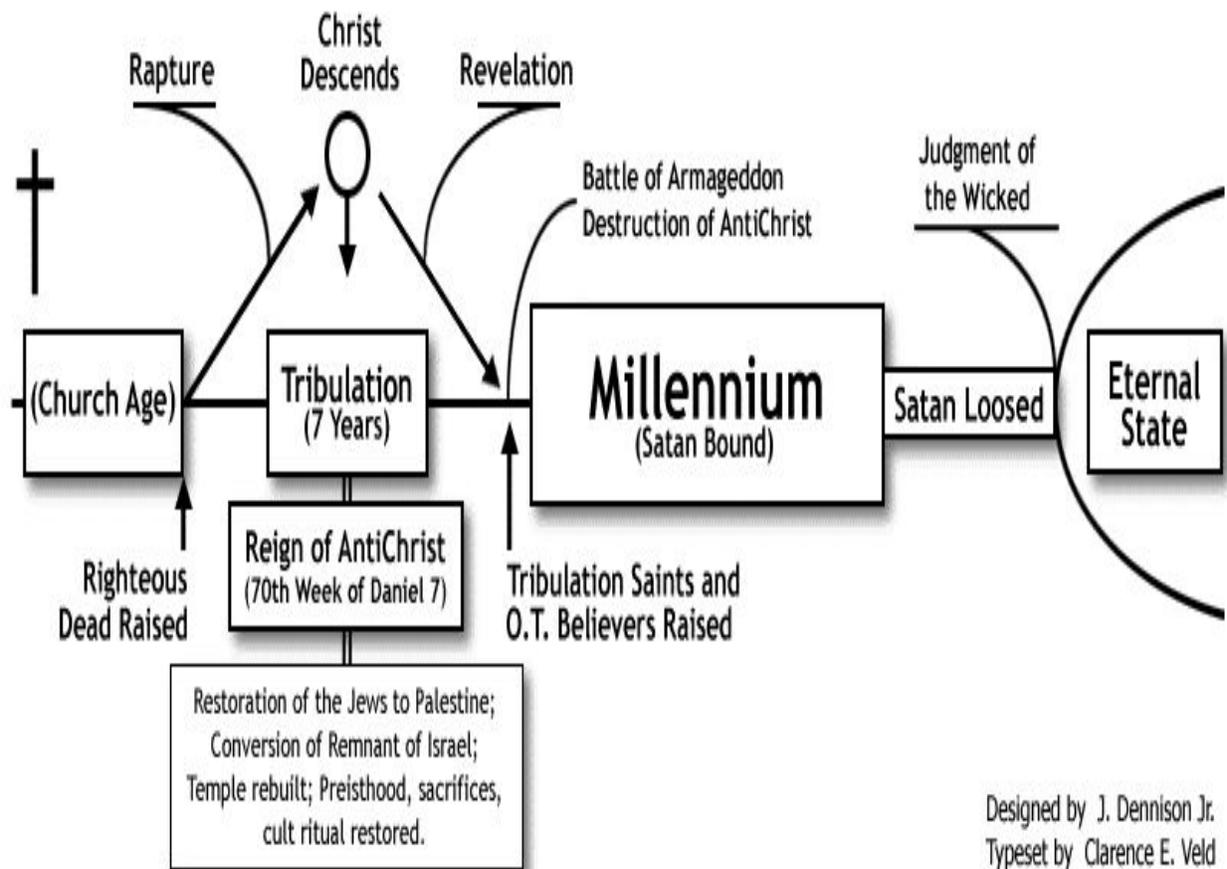
And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. ² He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³ He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

⁴ I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They^[a] 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 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 are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

⁷ When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. ⁹ They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

a. **Amillennialism:** views the reference to Jesus' 1000 reign as symbolic, not literal. Each of the seven visions in Revelation is seen as descriptive of how life is in the end times. The end times began when Jesus ascended into heaven, and they will finish when Jesus comes again on Judgment Day. In the amillennial view, there is no separate rapture – other than Judgment Day, when the dead are resurrected and caught up in the air. Amillennialism was the prominent orthodox viewpoint until dispensationalism became popular in the mid to late 1800's in the U.K. and the U.S.A. It is still the viewpoint of Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican churches, to name a few.

b. **Millennialism (Dispensational):** views the reference to Jesus' 1000 reign as literal, not symbolic. Each of the seven visions in Revelation is seen as a separate era of time and history, all moving toward Judgment Day. The dispensational view is illustrated below:



- c. Dispensationalism was made popular by John Nelson Darby, of the Plymouth Brethren, in the mid 1800's – initially in England, and eventually the U.S. It truly took off with the publication of the Scofield Bible, which contains extensive notes interpreting scripture through the Millennial lens. Later the formation of American Bible institutes and conferences, such as the Moody Bible Institute, cemented millennialism in the minds and hearts of American evangelicals today. Dallas Theological Seminary is one of the primary teaching seminaries, which promotes this view.
- i. Among the central tenets of millennialism are:
 1. A high regard for the literal “plain” reading of the Bible, as the inspired Word of God.
 2. Prophecy is linked to world history.
 3. Problems in society are seen as evidences of the “end times.”
 4. God has a separate track of salvation for Jews and the Christian Church.
 - ii. Most evangelical churches and denominations in America hold to one of the millennialistic viewpoints, most notably the Southern Baptist Convention, Bible Churches, non-denominational fellowship churches, etc.