

Summary: Understanding the End Times

Introduction

Imagine a photographer choosing the right lens to capture a moment. They say “the camera doesn’t lie,” and that may be true, but each lens is certainly going to capture the truth of the moment in very different ways—highlighting some things, cropping out others, and emphasizing different elements. No one lens is inherently “right” or “wrong” but we still need to make a choice—you can only capture a moment once.

This is true with different Christian views of the end times. The end times means the future time when Jesus returns and makes all things new. Some Christians understand the Bible in different ways when they read about the future. It’s not about who’s right or wrong, necessarily, but about understanding how our “lens” shapes how we see, interpret, and understand the truth of God’s word.

What is the Millennium?

The word 'millennium' means one thousand years. Christians talk about the millennium when they read Revelation 20 in the Bible. Some Christians believe this is a literal future time when Jesus will rule on earth for one thousand years. Other Christians believe the one thousand years is a symbolic picture that shows Jesus ruling now from heaven, while others incorporate parts of both. Even when Christians think differently, we all agree Jesus will return, evil will end, and God will make all things new.

Premillennial View

Premillennial Christians believe Jesus will come back before the millennium. In this view, Jesus returns, defeats evil, and then rules on earth for a literal thousand-year period before one last battle and the final judgement.

There are two main types: Historic Premillennialism and Dispensational Premillennialism. The main difference is over the *rapture*. Historic

Premillennialism teaches Christians will go through the tribulation before Jesus returns. Dispensational Premillennialism teaches that Christians will be taken up to meet Jesus in the air before this time of great trouble.

The dispensational view is popular in many churches today, but it is also new in Christian history, only about 200 years old.

A key strength is that it encourages believers to watch and prepare for Jesus. A challenge is for most of church history, the rapture was not something Christians ever understood would happen before Christ's final, visible return, and Christians were always prepared to go through the tribulation.

Postmillennial View

Postmillennial Christians believe the world will slowly become more peaceful and more full of faith because the Gospel grows in the hearts of many people.

They believe Jesus will return after this long time of blessing. In this view, the kingdom of God grows stronger in the world before Jesus returns. This belief encourages Christians to work to share the Gospel and bless society.

A challenge is that the Bible also says there will be trouble and suffering before Jesus comes again. Some churches today also have additional "Kingdom Now" or "Seven Mountain Mandate" teachings that can sound similar, but they focus too much on human success instead of Jesus' power.

Amillennial View

Amillennial Christians believe that the one thousand years in Revelation is a picture, not a number we count. They believe the millennium started when Jesus rose from the dead and will end when He returns.

In this view, Jesus is already ruling from heaven right now. Satan has some power, but he is limited by Christ. Christians who die are with Jesus now, and we wait for Him to return to judge the world and bring the new heaven and new earth.

A strength of this view is that it helps Christians understand Bible symbols and see that Jesus is King today, not only in the future. Some people misunderstand and think this view means Christians should not expect a final visible return, but this is not true. We can expect God to work now and in the future.

Our Church Position

Our church believes the Bible teaches both 'already' and 'not yet.'

This means **Jesus already rules today**, but His kingdom is **not fully seen until He returns**. We learn from each view we thought about last week:

From **Preterism** we learn God spoke first to real Christians in the first century.

From **Historicism** we see God working through history.

From **Idealism** we learn the Bible shows spiritual truth for every age.

From **Futurism** we believe many things are still in the future.

When it comes to the millennium, it may sound like we teach in a way close to Amillennialism, but this is not because we don't incorporate truths from the other views, but because it helps us live for Jesus today, not only thinking about the future. We believe Jesus will return, raise the dead, judge the world, and make all things new.

How We Should Live

These ideas should not make Christians fight or divide. Instead, they should help us trust God more. The most important truth is that Jesus wins. We do not need fear or confusion. We live today with faith, hope, and love. We serve God now, share the Gospel, and wait with joy for Jesus to return. Our hope is sure because God always keeps His promises.

Discussion Questions

1. Which view did you find easiest to understand? Why?
2. What does the Bible promise about the return of Jesus?
3. How can we live with hope while we wait for Jesus to return?
4. Why is it important to love other Christians even when they have different views?
5. What does 'already and not yet' mean for your life today?