

## Simplified Definitions: Eschatology

### Eschatology

The doctrines pertaining to the end of time and the events surrounding it.

### Millennialism

A millennium is a period of 1,000 years. Millennialism refers to the belief in the imminent end of the world and the establishment of a new and radically different one, frequently lasting 1,000 years. Many religions have forms of millennialism.

### Amillennialism

The Christian belief that there is no millennial reign of Christ on Earth before the end. References to a thousand years in Rev 20 are speaking symbolically of the Gospel Age (in fact the plural 'thousands' is used). 10 x 10 x 10 is symbolic of divine completeness and fulness – the fulness of the elect saved by the Gospel. There is no teaching about a millennial age in the Bible; there is only teaching about a new age after the return of Christ and the judgment. Advocates: the majority of Reformed theologians since the Reformation.

### Postmillennialism

The Belief that the world gets better and better over time, that the power of the Gospel expands and there is a golden age of 1,000 years before Christ returns. This view was rare in the early church but became popular with some Puritans who often connected it with the idea of a Jewish revival. Today it is evidenced in two major forms: 1) Charismatic Dominionism: a triumphalist concept of a powerful Charismatic church ruling over all before Christ returns (often manifest in the rule of super-apostles and prophets and preaching of global revival). 2) Theonomy ('God's law') or Reconstructionism: the minor US Reformed church view that the Law of Moses will be the universal law in a reconstructed society where all nations are subject to Christ.

### Historic Premillennialism

The view that Christ will return to Earth before a millennium begins, whereby he reigns over all sinful nations before the Final Judgment for 1,000 years. This view was popular with a few early church theologians based on certain Jewish ideas (e.g. Irenaeus); however, it quickly faded away and was considered a radical, minority view during the Middle Ages and the Reformation ('Chiliasm', *chilioi* Gk. for 1,000). It grew in popularity in the late 19<sup>th</sup> - early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some posit a revival amongst Jews and the establishment of Israel. Advocates: John Bengel, JP Lange, Henry Alford, Charles Ellicott, HG Guinness, SH Kellog, RC Trench, GE Ladd, Millard Erickson. Some Reformed theologians hold a covenantal form of this view, such as: JO Buswell, J Barton Payne, R Laird Harris.

### Dispensational Premillennialism (Dispensationalism)

This is a radical new development of Premillennialism that began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its precursors were the Jesuits Francisco Ribera, Robert Bellarmine and Manuel Lacunza. Its initial propagator was the scandalous Catholic Apostolic church of Edward Irving in London; it was only later taken on board by John Darby and the Brethren. Key novelties are: a fundamental division between the church and Israel with Israel being God's primary concern and the church a mere stopgap. The division of history into several dispensations (economies, stewardship) where different systems prevailed. [See separate Truth Bomb.]