

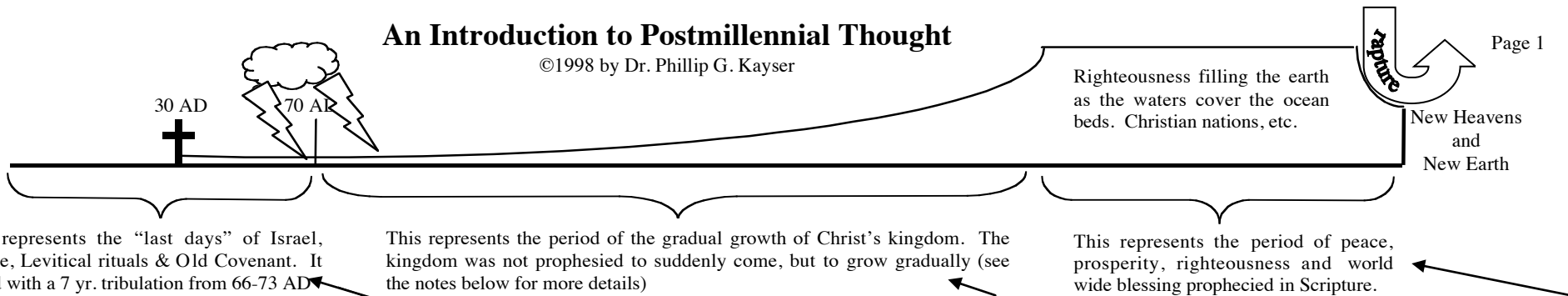
“Cliffs Notes” Summary of Eschatology

By

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An Introduction to Postmillennial Thought

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This represents the “last days” of Israel, temple, Levitical rituals & Old Covenant. It ended with a 7 yr. tribulation from 66-73 AD

This represents the period of the gradual growth of Christ’s kingdom. The kingdom was not prophesied to suddenly come, but to grow gradually (see the notes below for more details)

This represents the period of peace, prosperity, righteousness and world wide blessing prophesied in Scripture.

“The Last Days” How Does Scripture Use This Phrase?

Every reference to “last days” in the Bible refers to the time period of foreign domination of Israel that *culminates* in Israel’s destruction as a nation in 70 A.D. These are the last days of Israel, temple, sacrifices, priesthood, Old Covenant, typological law, etc. Thus, Hebrews uses the present tense when it says “**Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away**” (Heb. 8:13.) The final “shaking” and evidence of the new kingdom was to be the destruction of Jerusalem (Heb. 12:25-29 with Haggai 2:6). Notice how consistently the following Scriptures place “the last days” in the period leading up to 70 AD

- Hebrews 1:1** "God who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son." Christ's ministry was in the last days.
- Acts 2:16-17** "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh . . ." Peter lived in the last days.
- 1 Peter 1:20** "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." This indicates that Christ was born and lived in the last times.
- James 5:3** James, while rebuking the rich Jews who were persecuting the Jewish Christians, predicts the destruction of their

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The *Gradual* Growth Of Christ’s Kingdom

The kingdom of Christ is not portrayed as coming suddenly, but as growing gradually until it takes over the world.

- Is. 9:6-7** “Unto us a Child is born... Of the *increase* of His government and of peace *there will be no end.*”
- Luke 17:20** “The kingdom of God does not come with observation.”
- Matt. 13:31,32** Kingdom of heaven likened to a grain of mustard seed (very tiny reflecting the small number of true believers at Christ's crucifixion) which gradually (and imperceptibly) grows into a huge plant. The church is indeed very large now compared to what it was in Christ's day, but I believe it will continue to grow (see below).
- Matt. 13:33** "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened." In Scripture there are three things that leaven symbolizes: the spread of sin (1 Cor. 5:5-7), the influence of doctrine (Matt. 16:6,12; Gal. 5:7-12) and the growth of the kingdom (Lev. 23:15-22; Matt. 13:33; Luke 14:20-21). Notice that it does not say that the Kingdom of heaven has leaven in it, but that it is like leaven. Here leaven is a figure of growth, not of sin. It is just as arbitrary to force the meaning of leaven in other passages (sin), onto this passage as it would be to say that a lion must always represent Satan (it represents Christ often.). So this parable shows that the kingdom grows imperceptibly more and more until finally the whole world is "leavened" by the kingdom (not that the kingdom is leavened by the world.)
- Mark 4:26-29** “first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens...” This is followed by the parable of the Mustard Seed.

(Continued on page 3)

Scriptural Promises For the Christianization of World

- “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3; see also 22:17-18; 26:4; 28:14)
- “...your Seed shall possess the gate of His enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed...” (Gen. 22:17-18)
- “but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.” (Numb. 14:21)
- Psalm 2 (which began to be fulfilled in Acts) is a guarantee that Christ would eventually subdue all nations under the Gospel: “Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.” (v. 8)
- Psalm 22 begins with Christ crucifixion and ends by saying that as a result of the Gospel going forth “all the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You.” (v. 27)
- Psalm 72 is clearly a Psalm speaking of the whole world being Christianized. “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. Those who dwell in the wilderness will bow before Him, and His enemies will lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles will bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba will offer gifts. Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him.” (vv. 8-11)
- “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” (Hab. 2:14)
- “He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands shall wait for His law.” (Isaiah 42:4)

(Continued on page 3)

Last Days (Continued)

gold in 67-70 AD. In the middle of his denunciation he says, "Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped [notice the past tense, they have already done it] up treasure in the last days." (5:3)

- e. **Genesis 49:1** "And Jacob called his sons and said, 'Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days:' Notice that in the middle of his description of last days events he includes the fact that Shiloh (or Christ) would come in verse 10. And all commentators agree that this is referring to Jesus. When did Shiloh come? He came 2000 years ago in the last days of the Old Age and of the Old Covenant.
- f. **Numbers 24:14**. "And now, indeed, I am going to my people. Come, I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the last days." This whole vision is dealing with the time between Christ's first coming and 70 AD when there was an unbelievable number of wars, overthrowing of governments, famines, earthquakes and pestilences. But I just want to refer you to one verse that clearly establishes the time period. Verse 17 "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; [that is just another way of saying that this is the latter days. They were latter days from an Old Covenant Perspective, not from our perspective.] A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel." This is clearly referring to the birth of Jesus, because it was at Christ's birth that He arises out of Israel." At the Second Coming Christ will not arise out of Israel, but will come from heaven. Thus, Christ's birth is a "last days" event.
- g. **Deuteronomy 31:29** "For I know that after my death you will become corrupt, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands." While commentators differ on exactly which judgment upon Israel this speaks to, it fits either the Babylonian exile or 70 AD.
- h. **Ezekiel 38:14-16** "Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to God, 'Thus says the Lord God: 'On that day when My people Israel dwell safely, will you not know it? Then you will come from your place out of the far north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great company and a mighty army. You will come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land. It will be in the latter days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes" The time reference for this prophecy is the Maccabean war (166-142 BC). It can't refer to future because 1) nations still have a memory of Israel's exile that needs to be corrected (39:23-24), 2) weapons are made of wood and include large and small shields, bows, arrows, war clubs, spears (38:5; 39:3,9-10) in such abundance that they are used for fuel for 7 years (39:9-10), 3) technology is poor - seven months to bury the dead (39:12-16), they ride horses, use wood for fuel, etc. Clearly this was prior to 70 AD, and yet it was "last days." Again, proof that last days means last days of the Old Covenant.
- i. **Daniel 2:28** "But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days." In Daniel's interpretation we see that the image symbolized kingdoms beginning with Nebuchadnezzar right then and ending in the fourth kingdom which is Rome. And if you are to take the historical sequence at all seriously then you will find that Christ's first coming is spoken of as being "in the last days."

The following passages are often interpreted as if the "last days" refers to a period of time at the end of the world. But the *context* of the following texts show that they were already in the last days, though the last days events would intensify in the coming years before 70 AD as apostasy intensified. Thus these passages do not contradict our thesis, but reinforce it.

- j. **1 Timothy 4:1** "...in the latter times some will depart from the faith" and he goes on to describe their doctrines and describes precisely the apostasy that happened in the years prior to 70 AD. This was not just doctrine that would happen 2000 years from them, but something that related to their conduct. Timothy was to instruct the brethren in these things (v. 6), to reject the false doctrine (vv. 7ff.) and to command and teach these things (v. 10). If they were to command the things related to the latter times, then obviously there was an immediate bearing in their lives. Paul explains more of what he meant by latter day apostasy in 2 Tim. 3:
- k. **2 Timothy 3:1** "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come, men will be lovers of themselves [etc.]" In verse 5 Paul tells Timothy to turn away from them. If this is describing people at the second coming, how could Timothy turn away from them? In verses 7-8 he describes them in the present tense. "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith." And then in verse 9 he encourages Timothy by showing that this apostasy will not be something that will last for all time (he is talking only about the last days of the Old Covenant up to 70 AD, though of course the principles can be applied to any age): "but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all."
- l. **2 Peter 3:3** "Knowing this first, that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts . . . [in verse 5 he describes them further saying] For this they are deliberately forgetting [present tense. I.e. Peter is talking about people already in existence. Thus he was in the last days, though of course they would get worse in the years to come.]
- m. **Jude 8-19** He tells the church that they should not be surprised at all of the apostates and false teachers. He describes in the present tense false teachers who had crept into the church. In verse 12 he says, "These are [present tense] spots in your love feasts." He tells them in verse 17, "But you beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. [i.e., Don't be surprised by this] These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit." (vv. 17-19) Christ had prophesied in Luke 21 and Matthew 24 that such false teachers would arise, and the other apostles had prophesied the same things would occur in the last times before the end of Jerusalem and the end of the age (translated wrongly by KJV as "world" occasionally.)
- n. **1 John 2:18-19** "Little children, it is [present tense] the last hour [i.e., it was the midnight hour for Jerusalem and the Old Covenant people before judgment day came on the Jews in 70 AD]; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us . . ." The many antichrists that had already arisen were evidence that the last hour was here and that the Antichrist was at the doors.

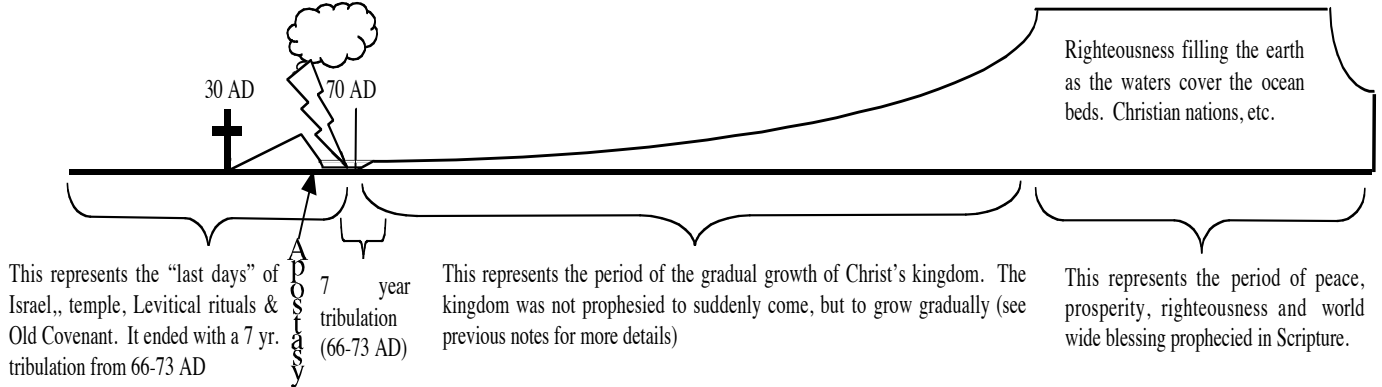
Gradual Growth of Christ's Kingdom (continued)

6. **Ezekiel 47:1-5.** These chapters describe the tremendous growth of the church with dimensions of a Jerusalem - a new Jerusalem that can't fit into Palestine. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit is pictured by a river that comes out of the temple. But especially notice miracle of this river. Without any tributaries coming in, this river keeps getting deeper and deeper until it finally brings healing to all the nations.
7. **Daniel 2:31-45** Notice that this stone cut without hands breaks the kingdoms and gradually replaces them by growing into a great mountain that finally fills the whole earth. The last kingdom there is clearly Rome (the four kingdoms are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome). If we are to interpret the passage "literally" (I prefer the phrase "grammatically and historically") then we cannot say that it is a revived future Roman empire which "literally" speaking would have to be spoken of as a "fifth kingdom" which was "many days after" and would not even be connected to the rest of the image. Daniel does not say that. He says, "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom." (v. 44) and he goes on to point out that after the kingdom has been set up it "shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." (v. 44) That theme of gradually displacing humanistic kingdoms can be seen in the other prophecies in Daniel, but I will just mention chapter 7:
8. **Daniel 7.** Daniel 7 has been talking about Christ destroying the kingdoms of the world and establishing his own kingdom. In verse 12 he says that God does not displace all unbelieving kingdoms at once for He says, "As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time." (v. 12). All of this was begun and made possible by Christ's ascension to the throne in heaven for verse 13 says, "I was watching in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed."
9. **Matthew 7:13-14 and Matthew 8:11** shows a striking contrast between the few who were being saved in Christ's day (Matt 7:13-14 uses the present tense) and the multitudes who would be saved in the future (Matt. 8:11 uses the future tense.) In the rest of the New Testament you have a striking change in language from the "few" that are saved prior to Pentecost (Matt. 7:13-14) and the "little flock" (Luke 12:32) to "many" (Acts 4:4; 9:42; 10:27; 12:12; 17:12; 18:8; 19:18,19), "multiplied greatly," "a great many" (6:7), "many myriads" ((21:20), "have turned the world upside down" (17:6), "so with power the word of the Lord increased and triumphed" (19:20).
10. **Romans 11** describes the gradual change that will occur in history from a remnant (minority) of Jewish & Gentile believers to a fullness (majority) of Jewish & Gentile believers.
11. The outline of Acts forms a paradigm for conquest. Notice especially the note of triumph expressed at the end of each section as the kingdom spreads from Jerusalem (1:1-6:7) to Judea and Samaria (6:8-9:31), to Syria and Herod's kingdom (9:32-12:24) to Asia (12:25-16:5) to Europe (16:6-19:20) to finally Rome itself crumbling as the Rock of Christ smites it (19:21-28:31)

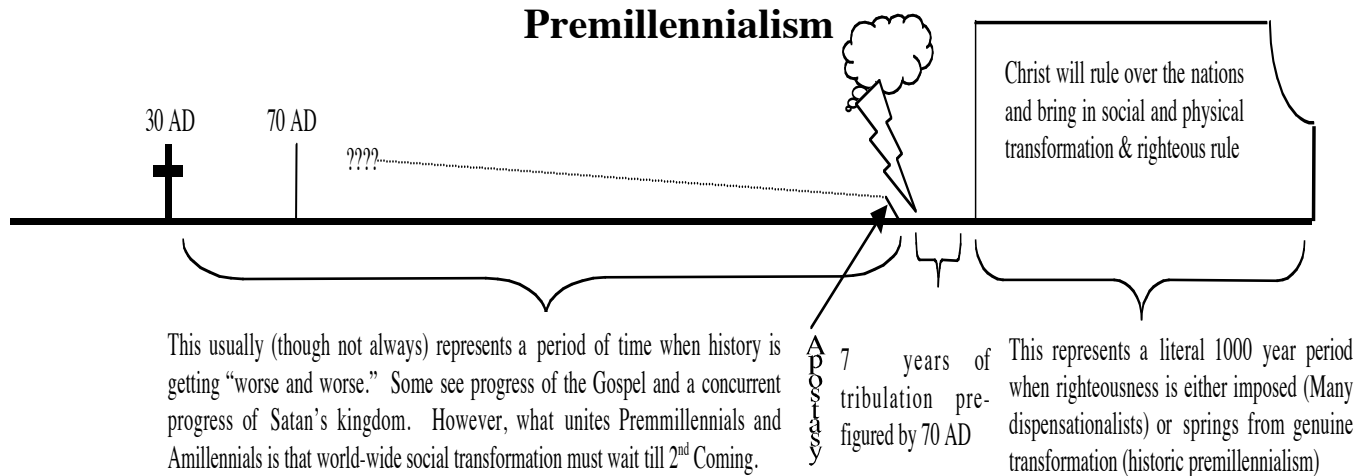
Promises of World Wide Christianization (continued)

8. **Isaiah 2:2-4** "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall rebuke many people; 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."
9. **Isaiah 9:6-7** "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."
10. **Isaiah 11:9** "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." (Thousands of similar prophetic passages can be given.)
11. The prophecies of total Christian conquest cannot be applied to the eternal state (as Amillennials do) for five reasons:
 - a. There are things going on that will not happen in the eternal state such as 1) giving birth and aging (e.g., Psalm 22:30-31; Isaiah 65:20; Zech. 8:3-5), 2) continued (though unsuccessful) opposition to the kingdom (e.g., Psalm 72:4,9; Is. 11:4,13-15; Mic. 4:3), 3) continuing conversion of people (Psalm 72:27), 4) death (e.g., Psalm 22:29; 72:14; Isaiah 65:20), 5) sin (e.g., Isaiah 65:20; Zech. 14:17-19), 5) suffering (e.g., Psalm 72:10-11,17; Isaiah 2:2-4; Zech. 14:16-17).
 - b. The curse, though diminished, continues (Isaiah 65:25)
12. The prophecies of total Christian conquest do not begin to be fulfilled in the future (as Premillennials say) since the context of these prophecies tie the beginnings to the first coming
 - a. e.g., Isaiah 9:6-7 begins with the birth of Christ
 - b. Daniel 2 ties Christ's kingdom together with the time of the fourth empire: Rome
 - c. Christ's reception of the world-conquering kingdom in Daniel 7 begins with His ascension, not His Second Coming: "I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, [Notice this isn't coming *from* the Ancient of Days to earth, which would be the Second Coming, but it portrays His first century coming *to* heaven on the clouds of heaven) and they brought Him near before Him. *Then* [i.e., at the ascension of Christ] to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed." (Daniel 7:13-14)

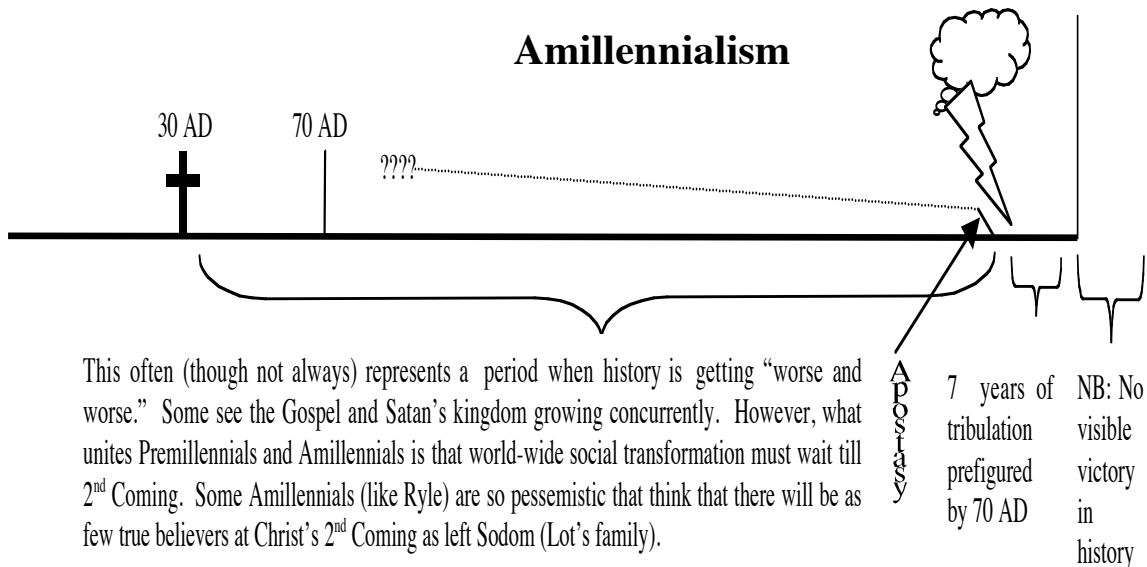
Postmillennialism

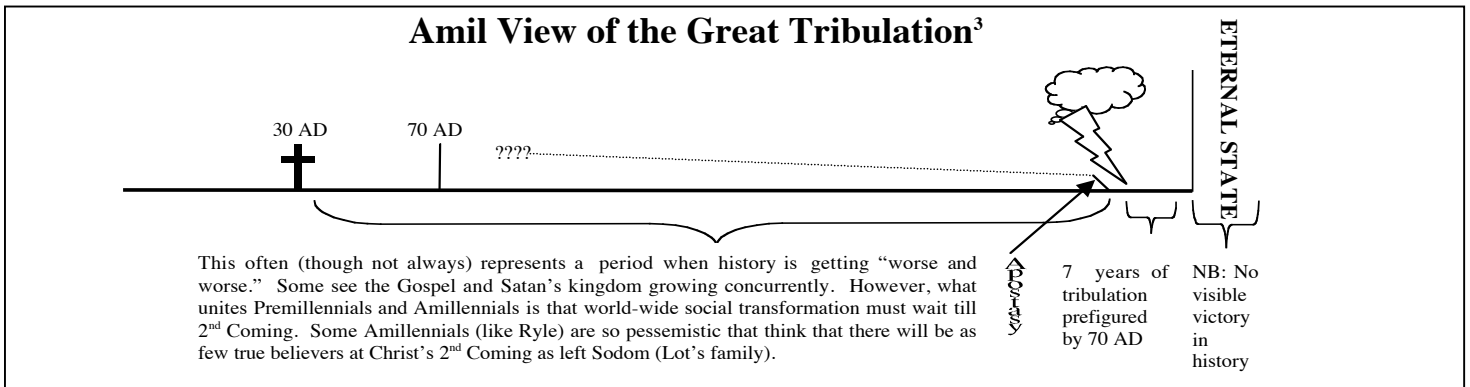
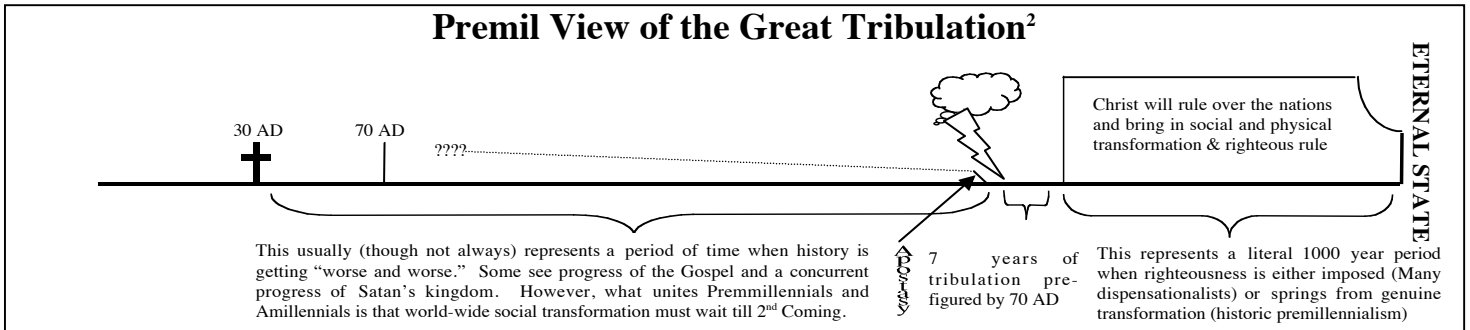
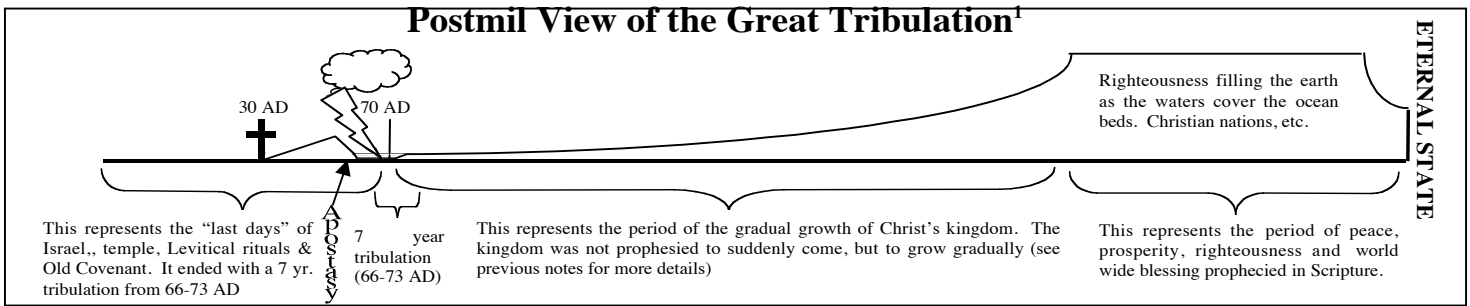


Premillennialism



Amillennialism





Relation of cross to historical victory:

All three schools of thought agree that the church is ordained to defeat at some periods of history (cf. Dan. 7:21,28). The question is “When has God ordained apostasy, and when has He ordained victory? *Is it the cross or the 2nd Coming that is definitive in reversing history?*”

- Amillennialism sees Christ’s victory over all enemies as occurring **in eternity after the 2nd Coming**. It sees the victory of the cross in *personal* terms now, but not in cosmic, worldwide or even societal terms within history.
- Premillennialism (unlike Amillennialism) sees Christ’s victory over all enemies as occurring **in history**, but (like Amillennialism), sees this as only possible **after the 2nd Coming**. It sees victory of the cross as personal now, but cosmic only at Second Coming
- Postmillennialism sees Christ’s total victory as occurring **in history before the 2nd Coming** and this **conquest begins at the 1st Coming**. 1 Corinthians 15 says that the “*last enemy... death*” will be overcome at Christ’s 2nd Coming. This means that every other enemy will be overcome prior to His 2nd Coming. The cross therefore genuinely reverses history and stands as the crux of all history.

Timing of the Great Tribulation:

The Great Tribulation happened from 66-73 AD. (See lectures for more details.)

- Every passage that describes the Great Tribulation fits the seven year war of 66-73 AD. This tribulation was broken up into two 3 1/2 year periods as described in Daniel 7,9,12. The first 3 1/2 year period is further broken up into three sections corresponding to the length from beginning to beginning of the three Roman campaigns. The first campaign (of Cestius) started a yearlong period of trouble. The second campaign of Vespasian and Titus started a two-year period. The last campaign from the time Titus left Rome again for Jerusalem lasted half a year. Thus “time, times, and half a time.” In the middle of this week Titus cut off sacrifice and offering (Dan. 9:27). Counting from the abomination of desolation being brought to the temple (August 30, 70 AD) until Masada fell in March 30, 74 is exactly the “1335 days” of Dan. 12:12. All other hostilities had ceased 45 days earlier (the end of the “1290 days” of Dan. 12:11). For more details, purchase the prophetic sections of my Daniel series from Trinity Presbyterian Church.
- Christ said that the Great Tribulation would “come upon this generation” (Matt 23:36), and that “this generation will by no means pass away till all these things are fulfilled” (Matt 24:34). A generation was 40 years, the time from 30 AD to 70 AD. The worst of New Testament history is over and the “increase” of Christ’s kingdom (Is. 9:7) has been steady ever since. This gives hope and faith.

¹Exceptions: There are some Postmillennialists who believe that the Great Tribulation is future, but they are a minority.

²Exceptions: In recent years some Premillennials have been anticipating the greatest awakening the world has ever seen as occurring immediately before the 2nd Coming. The chart reflects the predominant view, and the logical one given their placing of the Great Tribulation as future to us.

³Exceptions: Some Amils like Jay Adams see the tribulation of Revelation as past. Some Amils are so optimistic that for practical purposes they are Postmil.

I. Colossians 1

A. Christ's relation to "all things" in this universe is clear:

- 1. He is the firstborn⁴ over all creation (v. 15)
- 2. He created for Himself all things in heaven (v. 16)
- all things on earth (v. 16)
- all things visible (v. 16)
- all things invisible (v. 16)
- thrones (v. 16)
- dominions (v. 16)
- principalities (v. 16)
- powers (v. 16)
- all things (v. 16)
- 3. He is to have the preeminence in all things (v. 17-18)
- 4. He will reconcile through His blood all things on earth (v. 20)
- all things in heaven (v. 20)

- B. At Christ's resurrection/ascension He was made head of the church in order that He might have the pre-eminence in "all things" (v. 18). Thus the church has a key role to play in Christ's pre-eminence in all things.
- C. Christ's sacrifice was for the purpose of reconciling "all things to Himself" (v. 20) It has cosmic implications.
- D. If the reconciliation of individuals (v. 21) is gradual (rather than all at once), we should expect the same gradual reconciliation of the rest of the "all things" (v. 20). The "reconciling of the world" (Rom. 11:15) comes through the Gospel. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19) through our message, "be reconciled to God!" (2 Cor. 5:20).
- E. The "all things" under point A (above) are not "reconciled" to Christ if they are only destroyed.
- F. Reconciliation must be in history if Christ inherits all things ("for Him" v. 16). At the end of History there will be nothing to inherit since He will hand the kingdom to God at the Second Coming. (See exposition below.)

I. 1 Corinthians 15

A. Intro: There is a distinction between Christ's present reign as Mediator (vv. 24-28) and the Triune God's eternal Kingdom (vv. 24,28,50). This is a distinction that is consistent in Scripture. Just as an example, Matthew 13:41,43 distinguishes the two. Christ has reigned and will reign eternally as God, but as Messiah (the 2nd Adam and the 2nd David) He has a Kingdom appointed during a period in history.

B. 1 Corinthians 15 teaches that during His mediatorial reign Christ must:

- 1. put down all rule
- all authority
- all power (v. 24)
- 2. put under His feet all enemies (v. 25)
- all things except God (v. 27)
- 3. destroy last enemy death (v. 26)
- 4. subdue to Himself all things (v. 28)

C. From this, the following deductions can be made:

- 1. Syllogism #1
 - every enemy will be destroyed (point B)
 - death is the last enemy to be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26)
 - therefore every other enemy must be destroyed before death is destroyed.
- 2. Syllogism #2
 - the last enemy (death) is destroyed at the time of our rapture/resurrection ("then" vv. 50-56)
 - this occurs "in a twinkling of an eye" (v. 52), before Christ arrives on earth, but while Christ is still coming in the clouds of heaven (1 Thes. 4:15-17)
 - therefore, every other enemy must be destroyed prior to the Second Coming.
- 3. Syllogism #3
 - our death will be destroyed when our bodies are given life (vs. 54-55)
 - all enemies (including death) are destroyed when Christ puts them under His feet (vs. 25-27)
 - to put something under Christ's feet is to bring it into submission to His reign (v. 28; v. 27 quoting Ps. 8)
 - Therefore, destruction of enemies is equivalent to turning an enemy into its opposite (death to life; enmity to friendship; rebellion to submission)
- 4. Syllogism #4
 - we do not yet see all things subjected to Christ's reign ("till" v 26; Ps. 8 in v. 27 - cf Heb. 2:3-9; v. 28 - "when")
 - subjection of everything except for death (v. 26-27) must occur before the Second Coming (syllogisms 1-3).
 - therefore the subjection of all things to Christ is a gradual process over time that culminates in the Second Coming.

⁴In Biblical language, the "firstborn" received the inheritance and became head of the family, with all the responsibilities of headship.