

A Very Simple Summary of the Main Eschatological Positions¹

The variety of eschatological systems all emanate from different ways of interpreting the symbolic language of Revelation 20:1-7, which is the only passage to mention a thousand year millennium. For this reason, each system is called (-)millennialism (from the Latin).

Historic Premillennialism

History	Only a few ancient church fathers held this view based upon Jewish ideas (the cosmic week of 1,000 years for each day, the millennium being the 7 th day). The idea was opposed during the Reformation and later held by very few Puritans. It rose in popularity in the 19 th century and exploded in the 20 th .
The end	A time of apostasy and a great tribulation.
Christ's Second Coming	Just before ('pre') the millennium, which it ushers in. [Post tribulational.]
Thousand Years	Literal and future.
Millennial kingdom	An earthly kingdom.
Proponents	George Eldon Ladd, Ellicott, H. Grattan Guinness, S.H. Kellog, Millard Erickson.

Dispensational Premillennialism (Dispensationalism)

History	No mention of this idea in history at all. No church father held this view, not one reformer or Puritan and no evangelical until the middle of the 19 th century. It was based on the ideas of two Jesuits (Lacunza and Ribera), mixed up with occultic ramblings of an immature, sick young girl whose 'prophecy' was taken up by the heretical church of Edward Irving in 1830. After proclaiming this new revelation, the ideas were shaped by John Darby and popularised by William Kelly and CI Scofield. It took firm hold in America and was popularised in the UK by Brethren and US preachers in the 20 th century.
The end	A time of apostasy and a great tribulation lasting 7 years.
Christ's Second Coming	There are a variety of Dispensational schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Pre-tribulational</i> - Christ appears before the great tribulation to take away saints in a secret rapture.• <i>Mid-tribulational</i> - Christ appears after three and a half years (several variations).• <i>Post-tribulational</i> - Christ appears at the end of the tribulational.
Thousand Years	Literal and future.

¹ Eschatology is the doctrine of the last things, the end times: Christ's second coming, death, judgment, heaven and the new earth.

Millennial Kingdom	An earthly and Jewish kingdom.
Other ideas	The key tenet is that there is a separation between Israel and the church resulting in: two covenants, two ways of salvation, two people of God, two (or more) judgments, various dispensations of church history etc.
Proponents	Hal Lindsey, Harry Ironside, R.A. Torrey, A.T.Pierson, E. W. Bullinger, C. I. Scofield, L. S. Chafer, John Darby, C.H.M. (Mackintosh), William Kelly, Moody, Charles Ryrie, John Walvoord, Arno Gaebelein,

Postmillennialism

History	Not at all common in early church history but fairly widespread after the Reformation and amongst Puritan groups.
The end	A time of success in evangelisation. Brief apostasy at the end of the millennium.
Christ's Second Coming	After ('post') the 1,000 years of church success.
Thousand Years	Not necessarily exactly 1,000 years.
Millennial Kingdom	A future golden church age, but an earthly kingdom.
Varieties	In history the doctrine was mild and held by some sound men. A modern variety has emerged which is rampant and dangerous. This teaches that the church will become very powerful and will rule the world. One aspect is held by Charismatics who believe that supernatural gifts will lead them to political power and glory (Dominionism, Triumphalism). Some reformed extremists believe that a renewal of Mosaic law will be used as international law (Reconstructionism or Theonomy).
Proponents	Reformed theologians: Lorraine Boettner, David Brown, Charles Hodge, W.G.T. Shedd, B.B. Warfield, Jonathan Edwards, Matthew Henry's Commentary, (also Adam Clarke's Commentary). Theonomists: Rousas Rushdoony & co. Charismatics: Rob Joyner etc.

Amillennialism

History	The amillennial (lit. 'no-millennium') position can be clearly traced from the apostles, through the early and later church fathers, through the medieval church, the Reformation, the Puritan movements, the evangelical leaders and revivals of the 18 th -19 th century and to most sound theologians of the 20 th century. It declined with the rise of premillennialism in the later half of the 20 th century.
The end	A time of apostasy, deception and a great tribulation.
Christ's Second Coming	Is at the end of time and will usher in the last judgment followed by the renewal of the earth and unification with heaven.
Thousand Years	The 1,000 years is a symbolic statement meaning the fulness (10x10x10) of God's kingdom.
Millennial Kingdom	There is no literal millennial kingdom. The millennium is spiritual and is a reference to the age of grace, the church age.

Proponents

Most reformed theologians e.g: Augustine, O.T. Allis, Louis Berkhof, W. Hendriksen, Abraham Kuyper, Leon Morris, G. Vos, Herman Hoeksema, Anthony Hoekema.

Some key facts to bear in mind

- Christ's kingdom is not earthly: Jn 3:3, 5, 18:36; Lk 11:20, 17:20-21; 1 Cor 15:50.
- Symbolic books must be very carefully interpreted and compared to the rest of scripture.
- Numbers are often symbolical (Ps 50:10) and usually are in apocalyptic books.
- The millennium starts when Satan is bound which occurs when at Christ's first coming (Matt 12:29). Satan is bound from deceiving the world to join in battle against the church, but is released at the end to foment rebellion (2 Thess 2:6-7). Dispensationalism and Premillennialism teach that it has yet to occur since this is what enables the millennium to take place.
- Is it possible for the Lord of glory (Jesus is now raised, ascended and glorified as King in heaven) to be able to reign on a material throne in a fleshly kingdom over men full of sin for 1,000 years? All sin will be obliterated in the presence of a holy God. Rev 21 shows that God and the church dwell on earth after heaven and earth are renewed.
- The words for Christ's second coming are all synonymous and interchangeable. There is no support, based on Greek words, for a second coming (for the saints) before the tribulation and then a second second coming (with the saints) later.
- The separation of Jewish and Gentile Christians is unbiblical (Eph 2:11-16). The idea of a postponed Jewish kingdom with a temporary Gentile one has no basis in scripture.
- The notion of a material temple being built in Israel with sin offerings is blasphemy (Heb 10:10-14).
- There is no NT indication of the re-establishment of the OT Jewish theocracy, rather the opposite. At his ascension, Jesus sat on David's throne: Rev 3:7+; Acts 2:29-36, 3:13-15, 4:25-28, 5:29-31; Heb 10:12-13, therefore, the OT prophecies predicting this kingdom must refer to the present dispensation of grace, not a future reign of Christ on earth.
- The enforced literal interpretation technique vital to Dispensationalism is untenable. [Isa 54:13, 61:6; Jer 3:16, 31:31-34; Hos 14:2; Mic 6:6-8 for instance point to a spiritual fulfilment.] The contention that 'Zion' and 'Jerusalem' always refer literally to a mountain and a city is not true: Isa 49:14, 51:3, 52:1-2 both refer to Israel as the OT church also see Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22; Rev 3:12, 21:9.]
- The second coming, final judgment and the end of the world occur at the same time [2 Pt 3:7-13; Rev 20:11, 21:1]. There is no indication that they are separated by 1000 years [Mt 13:37-43, 47-50]. The separation of the good and evil is at '*the end*' not a 1000 years before [Matt 24:29-31, 25:31-46; Jn 5:25-29; 1 Cor 15:22-26; Phil 3:20-21; Rm 2:5, 6, 16; 1 Thess 4:15-16; Rev 20:11-15].
- It is not possible for people to be converted after Christ returns since he only comes when the full number of the elect are saved (Rm 11:25-26, Matt 24:31).
- If Dispensationalism is in error, so is the Jewish Roots movement which rests upon it.

These are just simple, cursory notes. Full explanations are available in other papers.