

But Be On Guard

As we continue our study in the Olivet Discourse we need to remember the context of Jesus' words in Mark 13. After the disciples marvel at the beauty of the Temple, Jesus tells them that there will come a day when all of it will be destroyed. Later, some of the disciples ask Jesus, "when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished? (v. 13:4)" In His answer Jesus teaches not only about this present age (vv. 1-13), but also about the great Tribulation and destruction of Jerusalem.

Mark 13:14-23

14 "But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. **15** Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, **16** and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. **17** And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! **18** Pray that it may not happen in winter. **19** For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. **20** And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. **21** And then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. **22** For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. **23** But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.

There are some terms we need to define in order to better understand this passage. The first is "prophetic foreshortening." This is a term used to describe how in prophetic passages of Scripture events far removed in time and events in the near future are spoken of as if they were very close together. We can look at a mountain range for an illustration of this concept. When one stands far away from a mountain range, it seems as if each mountain peak follows one after the other, without gaps in between. Yet, as one walks, or drives, through the range, he realizes that there are quite large gaps between each particular mountain, maybe even miles.

The second term we need to define is the "abomination of desolation." This comes from verses in Daniel 8, 9, and 12 where Daniel prophesies about a coming desecration of the Jewish Temple. The first fulfillment of this was in 162 BC when Antiochus Epiphanies overran Jerusalem, outlawed the worship of God, and set up pagan worship in the Temple. But it seems obvious from Jesus' words in verse 14 that there is to be a second fulfillment of this prophecy.

The third term we must define is "tribulation." Used 25 times in the Bible, it usually refers to the suffering of God's people, especially as it is connected to the sufferings of Christ. The question before us is whether this tribulation refers to a 7-year period at the end of time, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, or a longer season of time leading up to the return of Christ.

1. **We Must Know and Understand God's Word (vv. 14-18)**

These verses seem to coincide perfectly with the events surrounding the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Titus and the Roman army surrounded Jerusalem, and in the months that followed, horrific things took place in the city as a result of infighting, starvation, and great depravity. The historian Josephus estimates that 1.1 million people died and the remaining 97,000 were taken as slaves.

Mark adds a parenthesis in the middle of recording Jesus' words in verse 14 ("let the reader understand"), and it appears from history that that is exactly what the Christians in Jerusalem did. Having remembered the words of Christ, understanding the events around them, and acting on those words, the Christians in Jerusalem fled to Pella and were spared the horrendous suffering of the siege and destruction. We too must be careful to be "readers" of God's Word, who "understand" that the Bible is not simply a book of philosophies and principles, but it is the redemptive story of God acting in human history.

2. We Must Not be Led Astray (vv. 19-23)

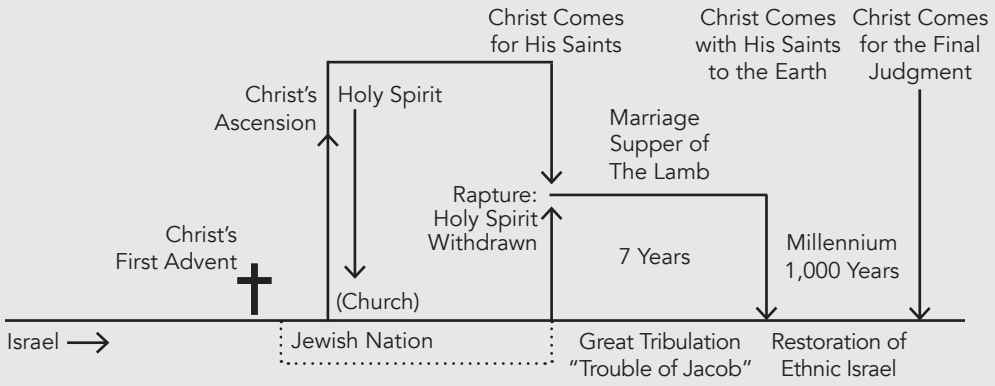
Though some might say that verses 14-23 are only about the destruction of Jerusalem, it seems to me that we have two "mountains" here, and that verses 19-23 have to do with a coming season of greater tribulation. During this season of tribulation many will be tempted to seek other saviors, other "christs." We must be careful to seek the Lord as our only salvation even as we face suffering.

Discussion Questions

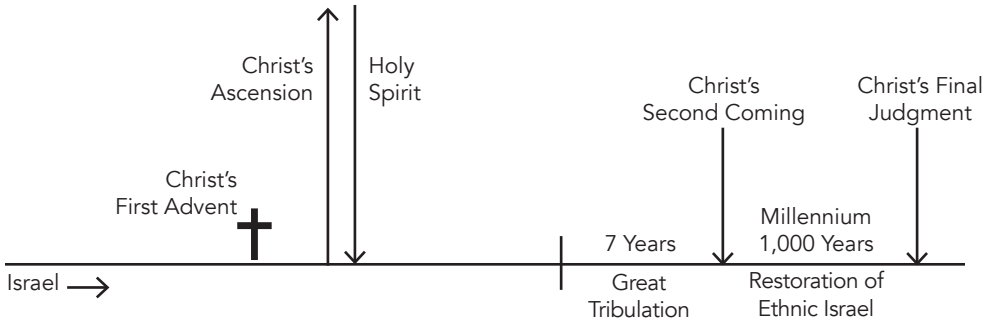
1. What are the dangers of seeing God's Word as a collection of philosophical sayings and principles, instead of the redemptive story of God acting in human history?
2. What are some areas of Scripture you need to know and understand?
3. What are the things that keep us from putting into practice the Scripture we hear and study? What are the Scriptures that you believe God is calling you to act on today?
4. What are some of the things God's Word tells us about the "tribulation" His people will face? (read John 15:18-19; 2 Timothy 3:10-12; 1 Peter 4:12-19)
5. What are some other "saviors" we are tempted to look to when we face economic, political, emotional, physical, or spiritual suffering?
6. What are some of God's promises in the midst of our suffering? (read John 16:33; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18)

Four Views of the Millennium

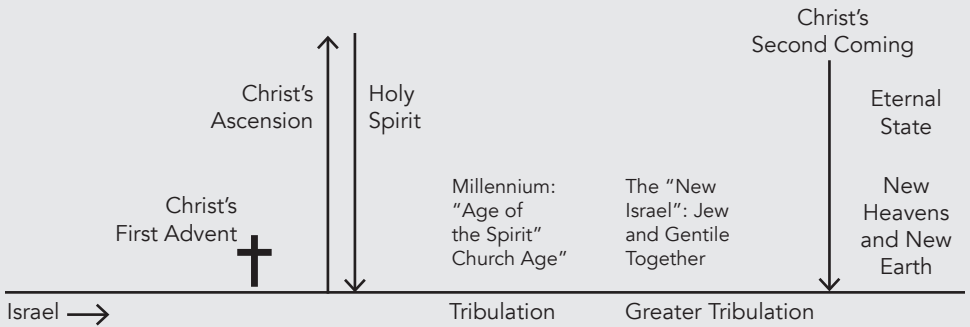
Pre Tribulational Premillennialism



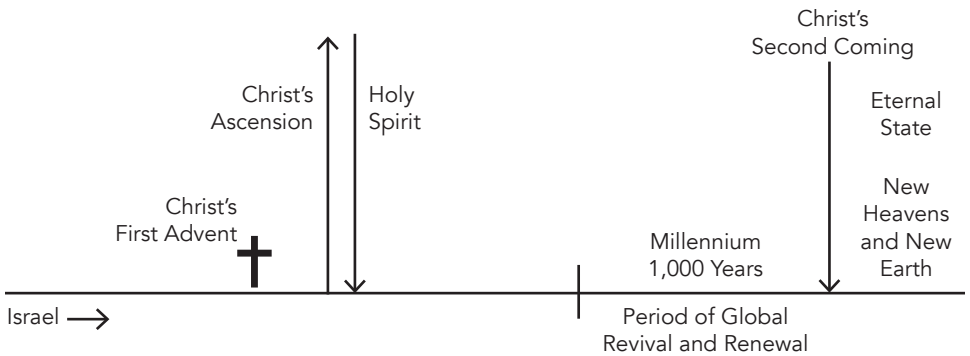
Post Tribulational (Historical) Premillennialism



Amillennialism



Post Millennialism



We all agree:

- The Bible is true.
- Jesus Christ is coming back—personally, visibly, and gloriously.
- We must wait expectantly, watchfully, and prayerfully.
- Every human will be resurrected.
- Every human will be judged.
- Believers will inherit new heavens and new earth.

The Four Historic Interpretive Frameworks for Revelation and Olivet Discourse

	Preterist	Historicist	Futurist	Idealist
Typical View	A contemporary history, esp. the destruction of Jerusalem	A prophetic survey of church history	A prophecy regarding the end of this age	A philosophy of history with some allusions to historical events
Structure and Outline of Revelation Chapters 4-19	4-11: the church's struggle against Judaism, ending with destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70; 12-19: the church's struggle with paganism, ending with fall of Rome, 476; 20-22: triumph of the church	1 day = 1 year, as in Ezekiel 4:4-6; 4-7; Breaking seven seals = barbarian invasion of Rome; 8-11 Trumpets = foreign invasions of empire ending with fall of Constantinople (1453); 12-13 Beasts = aspects of Papacy; 14-16 Bowls of wrath = Judgment on the papacy; 17-19 Fall of Roman Church	Structure given in Rev. 1:19; 1: "the things which you have seen;" 2-3: "the things which are;" 4-22: "the things which shall be;" 4-5: Rapture of church; 6-19: 7 yr. Tribulation; 20: millennium; 21-22: eternal state	Progressive parallelism over the entire Christian era. Seven recapitulating spans of history: 4:1-8:1; 8:2-11:19; 12:1-14:20; 15:1-16:21; 17:1-19:10; 19:11-21; 20:1-22:21
Typical View of Millennium	Postmillennial	Amillennial, Postmillennial, or Historic Premillennial (Post-tribulational)	Dispensational, Premillennial (pre-tribulational)	Amillennial
Advocates	Hugo Grotius, Milton Terry, David Chilton	Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley	Hal Lindsey, Tim Lahaye, Charles Ryrie	William Hendriksen, Leon Morris
Strengths	Immediate relevance to first readers; answers Rev. 1:1, 19; 22:10; consistent with events of A.D. 70; consistent with Mk. 13, Mt. 24; Lk. 21; God's "coming" consistent with O.T.; optimistic view of history	Relevant to church age (esp. in the West); chronologically continuous; consistent with Gibbon's <i>Decline and Fall of Roman Empire</i>	Structure from Rev. 1:19; faith in supernatural foretelling; global application; accounts for sequence in Daniel; literal interpretation of scriptures, esp. promise/fulfillment of O.T.	Sensitive to genre; consistent with rest of N.T.; relevant to all generations of all places; accounts for several structural hints in the text
Weaknesses	Heavily dependent on pre-70 A.D. dating; localized in scope; time bound in relevance; open to anti-supernaturalism	Exegesis driven by European anti-Catholic ideology; exegesis too mathematical and mechanical; disagreements among exegetes; exegesis always climaxes in present generation of interpreter	"newspaper exegesis;" inconsistency w/literalism; insensitivity to genre; irrelevance of Rev. chps. 4-20 to church; pessimistic view of history, inciting fear of future	Questionable dealing of Rev. 1:1; questionable dealing of Rev. 1:19; progressive parallelism forced on Rev. ch. 20; open to anti-supernaturalism