

# **Associated Gospel Churches - Articles of Faith and Doctrine**

## **The Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord**

**February 26, 2006**

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

## XV. The Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

*We believe that this present age will end with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, first to receive His Church unto Himself, and then to establish the throne of David upon the earth and to reign in righteousness over it for a thousand years.*

*2 Samuel 7:16; John 14:1-3; Psalm 72:7-8; Acts 1:10-11; Titus 2:13; Isaiah 9:6-7; Hebrews 9:28; Micah 5:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Luke 1:32-33*

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **first of 3 articles dealing with eschatology**
  - study of ‘last things’ / end times
  - deals with nature & timing of Christ’s second coming
  - area of significant controversy and disagreement among evangelicals for much of 20<sup>th</sup> century
    - **seems to have diminished significantly in late 20<sup>th</sup> century**

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Basic definitions**

- **Second coming**

- **a general reference to the final return of Jesus Christ from heaven to earth**

- “...so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.” (Hebrews 9:28)

- “‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.’” (Acts 1:11)

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Basic definitions**

- **“Rapture”**

- **a reference to the snatching away of believers from the earth, to meet the Lord**

- “After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

- “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” (John 14:2-3)

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Basic definitions**

- **Tribulation**

- **an older term used generally for hardships and sufferings that God's people pass through**
    - **with specific reference to the end times, refers to a period of intense, unparalleled suffering before Christ's return**
      - **the “great tribulation”**
      - **thought to last 7 years based on Daniel 9:24-27**

**“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.” (Matt. 24:21, ESV)**

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Basic definitions**

- **Millennium**

- **period of 1000 years mentioned in Revelation 20:1-6**

- **Satan is bound and thrown into a pit, to deceive nations no more**
      - **Christ's followers reign with Him**
      - **followed by coming of new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1)**

**“And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years... And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” (Rev. 20:1-4)**

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **3 basic eschatologic views**
  - **Amillennialism**
  - **Post-millennialism**
  - **Pre-millennialism**
    - **Dispensational (pre-tribulational) pre-millennialism**
      - **mid-tribulational variant**
    - **Historic (post-tribulational) pre-millennialism**



# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Amillennialism**

- **the view that there is no literal Millennium**

- **thousand years in Rev. 20 is symbolic of the present Church age in which we are living**

- exact length of age is uncertain/unknown (almost 2000 years, and counting)

- **Satan is “bound” (Rev. 20:2-3) in the sense that his influence is diminished during this age**

- thus, Gospel able to be preached to the nations

- evidenced by worldwide missionary activity

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Amillennialism**

- **the view that there is no literal Millennium**

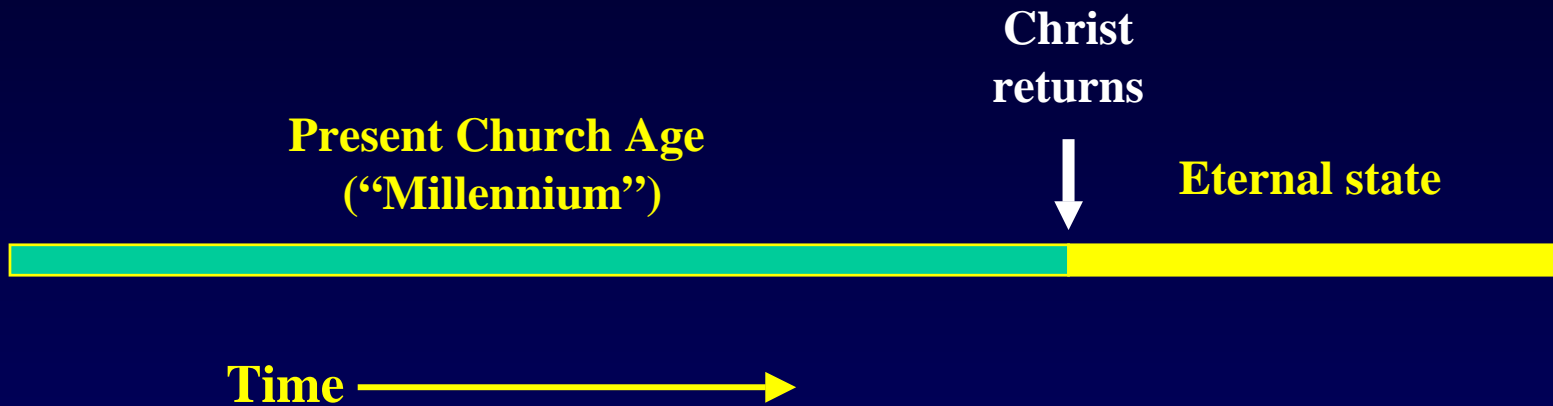
- **those said to reign with Christ in Rev. 20:4-6 are those who have died and are now with Christ in heaven**

- **Church age will last until Christ returns and all are resurrected**

- **believers raised to eternal life**
    - **unbelievers raised to face judgment**

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- Amillennialism



# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Amillennialism**

- **the view that there is no literal Millennium**

- **supporters argue**

- only one passage in Scripture (Rev. 20:1-6) explicitly speaks of the idea of a Millennial rule of Christ
      - this passage could just as easily be interpreted figuratively

- **critics argue**

- there are other hints of a Millennial rule of Christ in Scripture
      - no clear indication that Rev. 20:1-6 is meant to be interpreted figuratively rather than literally

- **a widely held view through Church history (after 3rd-4th c.)**

- recent proponents include D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

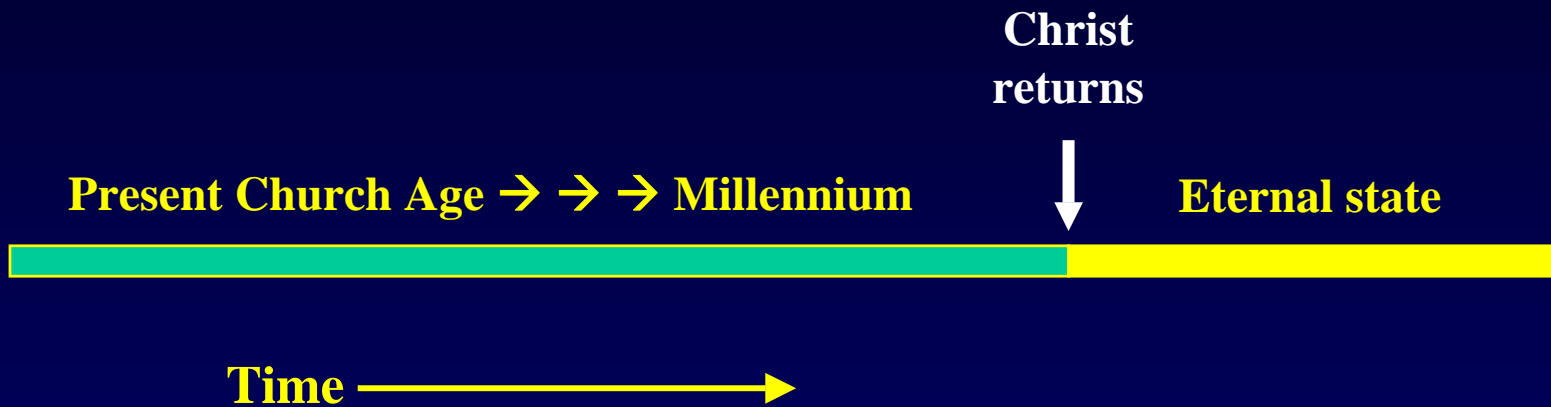
- **Post-millennialism**

- the view that the ‘millennium’ will come through the progress and success of the Gospel

- progress of the Gospel results in gradual conversion of more and more people
- increased Christian influence on society ushers in a golden age of peace and righteousness (the ‘Millennium’)
- outbreak of evil occurs after this period of peace & righteousness, but Christ comes in person to win the victory
  - followed by resurrection of believers & unbelievers, final judgment, age of eternity

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- Post-millennialism



# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Post-millennialism**

- the view that the ‘millennium’ will come through the progress and success of the Gospel

- characterized by tremendous optimism about the advance of the Gospel and its effects on the world

- view tends to gain in strength during ‘good times’ (revival, absence of war, etc.)
      - world is becoming more and more ‘Christian’
      - supporters argue that this is promised in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) and is evidenced today by world-wide missionary activity on an unprecedented scale

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Post-millennialism**

- the view that the ‘millennium’ will come through the progress and success of the Gospel

- characterized by tremendous optimism about the advance of the Gospel and its effects on the world

- critics argue

- this does not correspond with Scriptural view of the world or with reality – i.e. the world is actually getting more and more evil
        - postmillennialism has significant problems with interpreting some Scripture passages – e.g. those saying Christ could return at any time (since in post-millennialism, Christ only returns after long period of peace & righteousness)



# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Post-millennialism**

- the view that the ‘millennium’ will come through the progress and success of the Gospel

- typically sees passages referring to time of great tribulation as already having been fulfilled

- e.g. Matthew 24:1-35 (‘Signs of the End of the Age’ heading in NIV) – a problematic passage

- seen as being fulfilled in events surrounding siege and fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

- Christ “coming on the clouds” (Matt. 24:30) interpreted to refer to His judgment on the Jewish nation at that time

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Post-millennialism**

- the view the ‘millennium’ will come through the progress and success of the Gospel

- **emerged in 17th century**

- modern proponents include R.C. Sproul

- **seems to flavor some modern praise songs**

- e.g. Great Awakening, Let Your Glory Fall in this Room

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Post-millennialism**

- **post-millennialism in praise songs**

- **e.g. Let Your Glory Fall in this Room**

- Father of creation, unfold your sovereign plan

- Raise up a chosen generation that will march through the land

- All of creation is longing for your unveiling of power

- Would you release your anointing, O God let this be the hour...

- Ruler of the nations, the world has yet to see*

- The full release of your promise, the church in victory*

- Turn to us Lord and touch us, make us strong in your might*

- Overcome our weakness, that we could stand up and fight...*

- suggests that “full release” of God’s promise comes by our ‘fighting’

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Pre-millennialism**

- **the view that the second coming of Christ will be before the Millennium, during which He will reign personally and bodily on earth**

- **the present Church age continues until the Great Tribulation**

- **Christ takes His people up (rapture) to be with Him**

- **believers who have died are resurrected to meet Christ**

- **believers who are still alive are caught up together with resurrected believers “to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thes. 4:17)**

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Pre-millennialism**

- **the view that the second coming of Christ will be before the Millennium, during which He will reign personally and bodily on earth**

- **Christ comes after Great Tribulation and establishes Millennial kingdom on earth (Rev. 20:1-6)**

- **earthly rule; many more may become believers at this time**

- **after Millennium, brief outbreak of evil and rebellion**

- **Christ destroys opponents, followed by resurrection of unbelievers, final judgment, and inauguration of eternal state (new heavens and earth) (Rev. 20:7 – 22:21)**

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Pre-millennialism**

- **several variants, depending on timing of the Rapture**

- **Dispensational (pre-tribulational) pre-millennialism**

- modern proponents include John MacArthur

- **Mid-tribulational pre-millennialism**

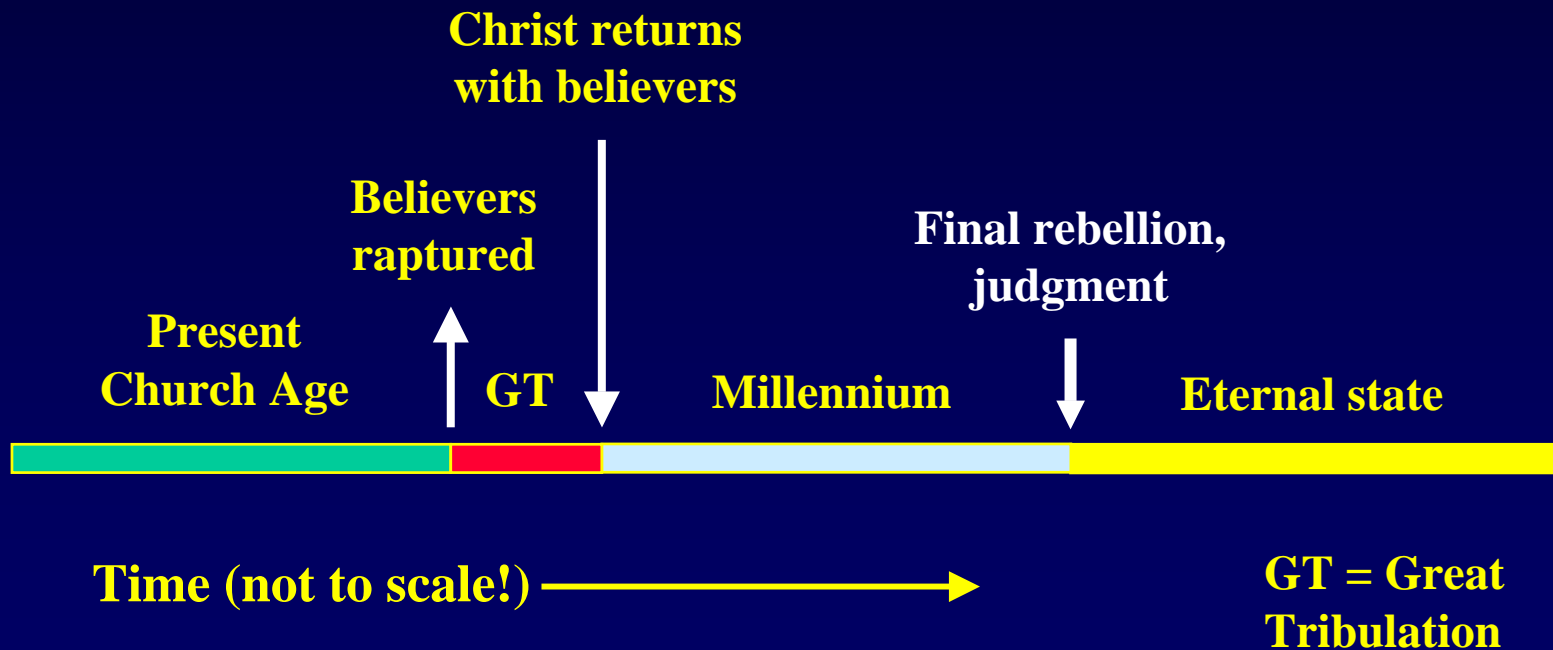
- modern proponents include Gleason Archer

- **Historic (post-tribulational) pre-millennialism**

- modern proponents include John Piper

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

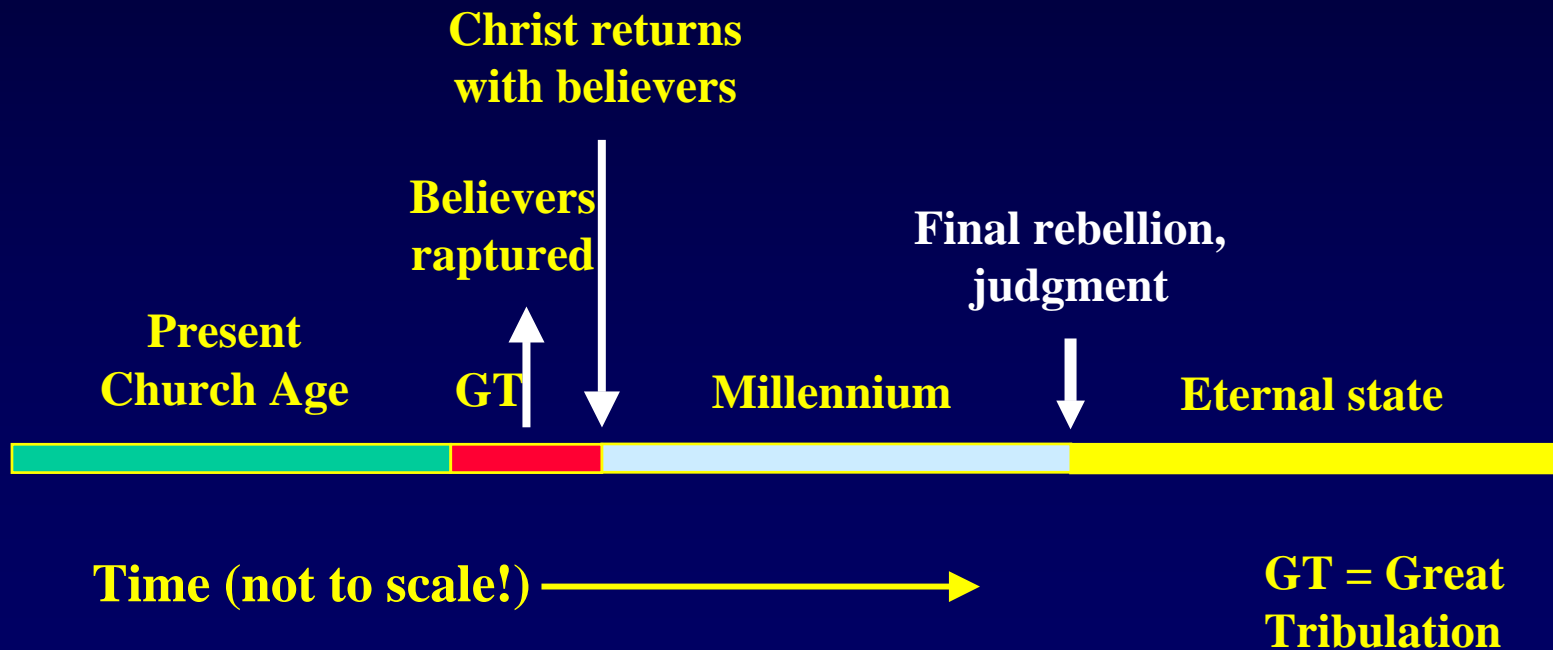
- **Pre-millennialism**
  - **Dispensational (pre-tribulational) premillennialism**



# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- Pre-millennialism

- Dispensational premillennialism - midtribulational variant

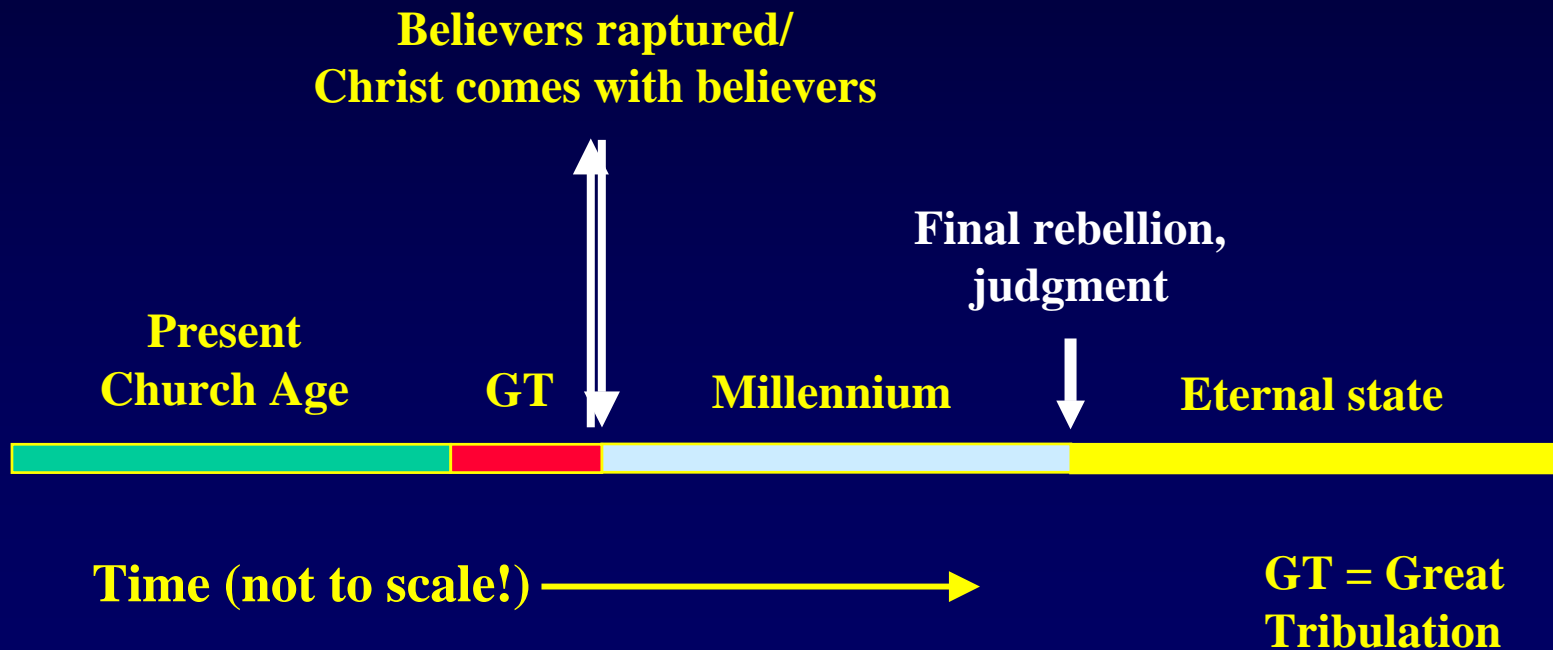




# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Pre-millennialism**

- **Historic (post-tribulational) premillennialism**



# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Historic pre-millennialism**
  - **post-tribulational rapture**
    - **i.e. rapture coincides with / immediately precedes Christ's return to set up the Millennial kingdom**
    - **widely held through Church history**
      - view tended to gain strength in times of persecution
      - position of many early Church Fathers up to 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> c. (e.g. Irenaeus, Justin, Tertullian)
      - gradually fell out of favor for a time; considered heretical in some circles during Middle Ages

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Historic pre-millennialism**
  - **post-tribulational rapture**
    - **supporters argue this view follows Scripture most literally**
    - **earthly Millennial rule of Christ with His followers explicitly taught in Rev. 20, but hinted at in many places (OT & NT)**
      - e.g. Psalm 72:7-14 (also 2 Sam. 7:16, Micah 5:2, and others)

“In his days the righteous will flourish; prosperity will abound till the moon is no more. He will rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. The desert tribes will bow before him and his enemies will lick the dust... All kings will bow down to him and all nations will serve him... He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence...”

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Historic pre-millennialism**
  - **other Scriptures**

**“For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he 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. *He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.* The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.” (Isaiah 9:6-7)**

**“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; His kingdom will never end.” (Luke 1:32-33)**

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Dispensational pre-millennialism**
  - **pre-tribulational rapture**
    - **i.e. rapture occurs *BEFORE* Great Tribulation**
    - **Christ's second coming involves 2 stages**
      - **first, to take away believers (rapture) before Great Tribulation**
      - **then, coming with believers after Great Tribulation (i.e. 7 years later) to establish the Millennial kingdom on earth**

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Dispensational pre-millennialism**
  - **pre-tribulational rapture**
    - **distinctive view of the nation of Israel**
      - **Jews saved en masse during Great Tribulation – represent God's people on earth during Tribulation**
    - **as with historic pre-millennialism, outbreak of rebellion occurs after Millennium, followed by Christ's final victory, resurrection of unbelievers to judgment, and eternal state**

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Dispensational pre-millennialism**
  - **pre-tribulational rapture**
    - **relatively recent development in Church history**
      - gained popularity in 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> c. UK & USA
      - more recently popularized by “*Left Behind*” series
    - **variant of dispensational pre-millennialism places rapture in the middle of the Great Tribulation (after 3.5 years)**
      - “mid-tribulational” position – based on division of 70<sup>th</sup> week in Daniel into 2 halves (e.g. Dan. 7:25, 9:27, 12:7-11)

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Dispensational pre-millennialism**
  - **pre-tribulational rapture**
    - **supporters argue**
      - **Rev. 20:1-6 speaks of 2 resurrections – first of believers before the Millennium, then of everyone else afterwards**
      - **this view preserves the unique place of Israel in the history of redemption**
      - **pre-tribulational rapture position best reconciles Scripture passages speaking of Christ returning at any time with passages that suggest that certain signs must be fulfilled first before Christ returns**
        - **i.e. Christ could return at any time to take believers away**
        - **any signs not yet fulfilled will be fulfilled in the 7 years before His return to establish Millennial reign**



# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Dispensational pre-millennialism**
  - **pre-tribulational rapture**
    - **critics argue**
      - no direct Biblical warrant for 2 separate “second comings” of Christ (i.e. first to take believers away, then later to establish Millennial kingdom)
      - other Scriptures imply only one single resurrection, and Rev. 20:1-6 should be interpreted in light of the rest of Scripture
      - passages teaching that Christ’s return is imminent and that certain signs must be fulfilled before His return can be reconciled other in ways

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **Dispensational pre-millennialism**

- **The historical AGC position**

- **AGC Statement on Pretribulation Rapture**

**“The Associated Gospel Churches are free to admit persons to the ministry of the AGC who may not hold to a Pretribulation Rapture. However, the AGC does ask that all candidates hold and understand the belief that:**

- 1. Christ’s return is imminent;**
- 2. the historic position of the AGC is a pretribulation rapture;**
- 3. this issue is not ever to become one of contention or division in our churches.”**

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **The Second Coming of our Lord**
  - **points of agreement**
    - **Christ *IS* coming again soon – suddenly, visibly, and bodily**
    - **we do not know when Christ will return**
    - **we should eagerly long for His return, watching and praying**
      - **guard against complacency, lest we be caught unprepared**
  - **“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ...” (Titus 2:11-13)**

# Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

- **The Second Coming of our Lord**
  - **different understandings of when/how events surrounding Christ's return will occur**
    - **need to approach this with humility, knowing our understanding of these matters is limited**
  - **“this issue is not ever to become one of contention or division in our churches.”**

***“Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”*** (Rev. 22:20b)

**Next class**

**The Resurrection of the Body**

**March 5, 2006**

# References

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- **Grudem, W. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), p. 1091-1139.**
- **Piper, J. *Definitions and Observations Concerning the Second Coming of Christ*. (1987) Posted at [www.DesiringGod.org](http://www.DesiringGod.org)**