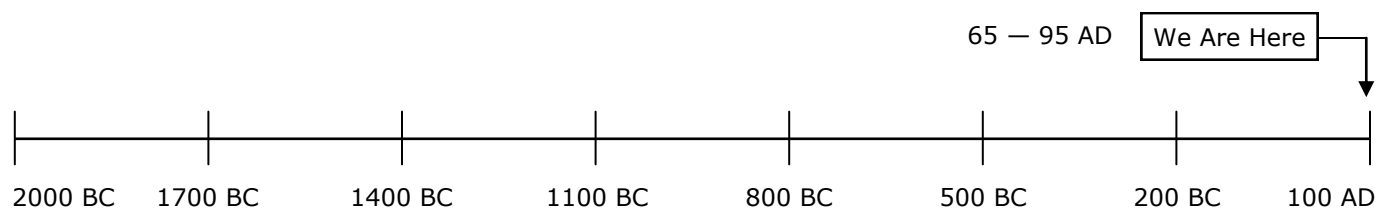


The End

Week 52: December 24-31 — *1, 2, 3 John; Jude; Revelation*

100% Complete — You Made It!



Helpful Resources

Overview of Bible History (p.37), Interpretive Challenges (p.265), Map of Seven Churches (p.123)

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

To complete the Bible in a year, we read five books, four of which were written by the same author — the Apostle John. The fifth book was written by Jesus' brother Jude and warned believers to watch out for false teachers. Though the books of *2 John*, *3 John*, and *Jude* are important in their own way, we will focus on John's first letter and the book of *Revelation*.

1 John: John, known as the "Apostle of Love," provided us with at least four ways to differentiate between true believers and unbelievers. How would you fare with his list?

1. **True believers do not practice sin** (1:5-2:2; 3:4-9): Christians still sin. However, they will not demonstrate patterns of sin; rather they will become more aware of it and will strive to overcome it. Sin will never be appropriate but rather appalling to them.
2. **True believers desire to obey God's Word** (2:3-6; 3:10): Just as children who love their parents will obey them, we who love our heavenly Father will obey Him (*John 14:21*). Genuine believers will abandon their agenda for the will of God in their lives.
3. **True believers will have genuine love for others** (2:7-11; 3:10-24; 4:7-21): How can a believer say that He has the love of Christ in him but then hate his neighbor? His love in our hearts can overcome any hatred, bias, prejudice, or barrier and allow us to love the unlovable. Also, a true believer will have a love for the Church.
4. **True believers will not desire the things of the world** (2:15-17): This world is under the influence of our enemy, and so the things of this world, its wares, its ways, and its wiles are anti-Christian. Thus, we need to sever ourselves from its attractions, for no man can love the world and love God. We should desire the world less the longer we live in it.

Revelation: Jesus issued some warnings about true believers in His messages to the seven churches (*Rev. 2:1-3:22*). Which category are you in?

1. **Ephesus** (2:1-7): Believers were *spiritually cold* because of a lack of passion or heart.
2. **Smyrna** (2:8-11): Believers were *spiritually strong* because of continual faith tests.
3. **Pergamum** (2:12-17): Believers were *spiritually weak* because of toleration of sin.
4. **Thyatira** (2:18-29): Believers were *spiritually blind* because they accepted false teaching.
5. **Sardis** (3:1-6): Believers were *spiritually dead* because they were sleeping.
6. **Philadelphia** (3:7-13): Believers were *spiritually faithful* because they were obedient.
7. **Laodicea** (3:14-22): Believers were *spiritually indifferent* and lacked commitment.

The remainder of *Revelation* is complex and mysterious. Keep in mind that we are still in the midst of Progressive Revelation (see chart); and, from where we stand, prophecy of the end is cloudy, at best; while we have a general idea of events to come, no man can claim to know the order or timing of them all. Here is what we know will happen.

Part 1: **Introduction** (1:1-4:11) — John relates the reasons for writing the book and describes a scene from heaven in which Christ's followers and the angels are worshipping God.

Part 2: **Seven Seals** (5:1-8:13) — Christ breaks the seals, which usher in an outpouring of God's wrath on the earth. As the first four seals are opened, riders appear on horses symbolizing war, famine, disease, and death. After the fifth seal is broken, John saw those in heaven who had been martyred. The sixth seal causes an earthquake, stars fall to earth, and the sky is rolled up. The final seal reveals seven angels with seven trumpets.

Part 3: **Seven Trumpets** (9:1-12) — These trumpets unleash more judgment. The first four bring hail, fire, a mountain of fire, and a falling star; also, the sun and moon are darkened. The fifth trumpet summons locusts that sting like scorpions, while the sixth trumpet heralds an army. Two witnesses are revealed in Jerusalem, who proclaim God's judgment for three and a half years. The last trumpet calls to battle the forces of good and evil and reveals an angel with seven bowls (12:1-13:18).

Part 4: **Seven Bowls** (15:5-16:21) — These bowls complete God's judgment. They bring sores, oceans of blood, lakes and rivers of blood, extreme heat (the Euphrates dries up), the greatest earthquake, and 70-pound hailstones. In the midst of this judgment, "Babylon the Prostitute" is toppled and the mighty cities of the earth are destroyed.

Part 5: **Battle of Armageddon** (19:11-21) — The Anti-Christ gathers the world's armies against the Jews; Christ returns and prevents them from destroying His people.

Part 6: **Millennial Reign** (20:1-6) — After Satan is defeated at Armageddon, he is bound and imprisoned for 1000 years, while Christ and His followers rule the earth in peace. Once the millennium ends, Satan is released, judged, and punished in the lake of fire.

Part 7: **Eternal State** (20:11-22:6) — Once the Millennium ends, unbelievers will be judged at the Great White Throne. Here they will be sentenced to eternity in the lake of fire. Believers will witness the creation of a new heaven and earth and will live with Christ for eternity.

- **Personal Application**

It is not necessary for believers to understand the details of *Revelation*, just the outcome. God is sovereign, wicked men will be judged, evil will be thwarted, and Christ will triumph!

The Bottom Line

Our concern is not the *future* with Christ but, rather, how we live in the *present* for Christ.

Questions to Consider

1. How did reading *Revelation* affect you? Take time to consider the next several pages.
2. Make sure to read "The Tale of the Tree of Life" (after Review).
3. How are you planning to use the spiritual momentum of this year into the next?

No other New Testament book poses more difficult interpretative challenges than *Revelation*. The book's striking symbolism have produced four main interpretive approaches. Well-known pastor and theologian John MacArthur explains...

Preterist: *Revelation* is a description of first-century events in the Roman Empire. This view conflicts with the book's own repeated claim to be prophecy. It is impossible to see all of the events in *Revelation* as already fulfilled. The second coming of Christ, for example, obviously did not take place in the first century.

Historicist: *Revelation* is a panoramic view of church history from apostolic times to the present — seeing the symbolism of such events as the barbarian invasions of Rome, the rise of the Roman Catholic Church, the emergence of Islam, and the French Revolution. This interpretive method robs *Revelation* of any meaning for those to whom it was written. It also ignores the time limitations the book itself places on the unfolding events.

Idealist: *Revelation* is a timeless depiction of the cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil. In this view, the book contains neither historical allusions nor predictive prophecy. This view also ignores *Revelation's* prophetic character and, if carried to its logical conclusion, severs the books from any connection with actual events. *Revelation* becomes merely a collection of stories designed to teach spiritual truth.

Futurist: The events of *Revelation* are future and they depict actual people and events yet to appear on the world scene. Only this view does justice to *Revelation's* claim to be prophecy and interprets the book by the same grammatical-historical method as the rest of Scripture.

From the *MacArthur Study Bible*

Major Views of the Millennium

The word "millennium" means 1000 years and comes from *Revelation 20:1-6*. Throughout church history, there have been three [if not four] major views on this millennium.

A-millennialism: There is no future millennium. *Revelation 20:1-10* describes the present Church Age. The exact duration of this Age cannot be known, and the 1000 years is a figure of speech for a long period of time. The Church Age will continue until Christ's return, at which all of the end time events will happen at once with one resurrection not two.

Post-millennialism: Christ will come after the millennium. The progress of the Gospel will increase until there will be significant Christian influence on society and gradually a "millennial age" of peace will occur. At the end of this period, Christ will return, believers and unbelievers will be raised, and so on.

Historic Pre-millennialism: Christ will come before the millennium but after the Tribulation. The present Church Age will continue until a time of tribulation and suffering comes. After that, Christ will return to establish a millennial kingdom. When He comes, believers will be raised to rule for 1000 years. At the end, Satan will be loosed and will join forces with unbelievers to battle against Christ; they will be defeated. All unbelievers will face judgment while believers enter eternity with God.

Pre-Tribulation Pre-millennialism (a.k.a. Dispensational): Christ will come before the Tribulation and the Millennium. Jesus could return at any moment and believers will not endure the Great Tribulation. The Tribulation will be a great outpouring of God's wrath. It would not be appropriate for Christians to be on the earth at that time.

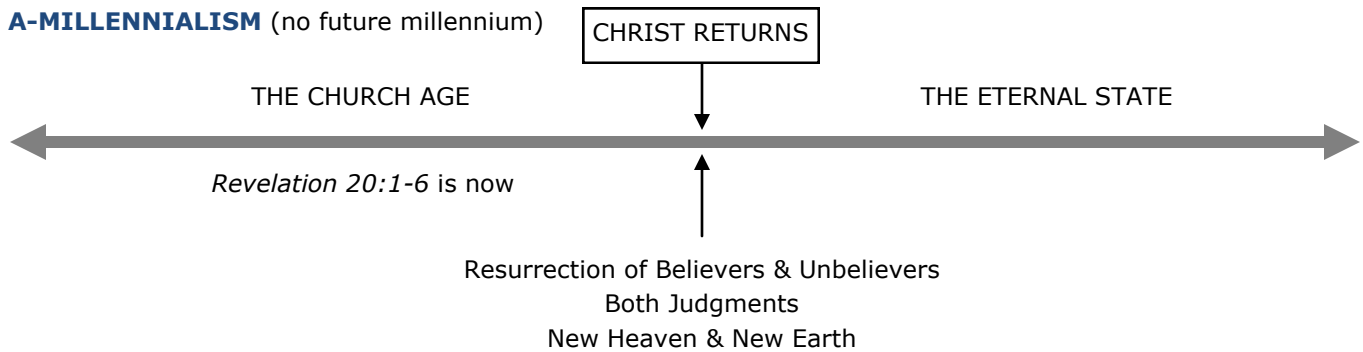
From Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*

Order of End Time Events

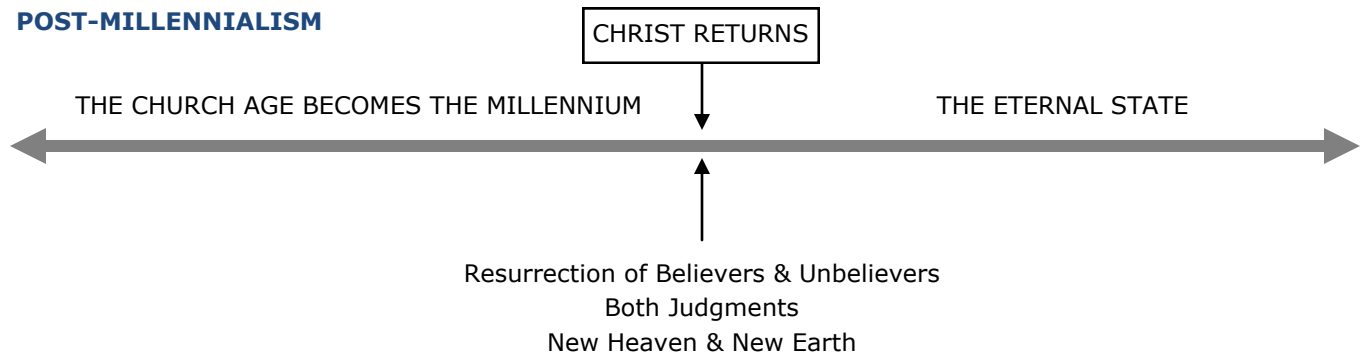
The Four Major Views

BiAY.org | Weekly Reviews

A-MILLENNIALISM (no future millennium)

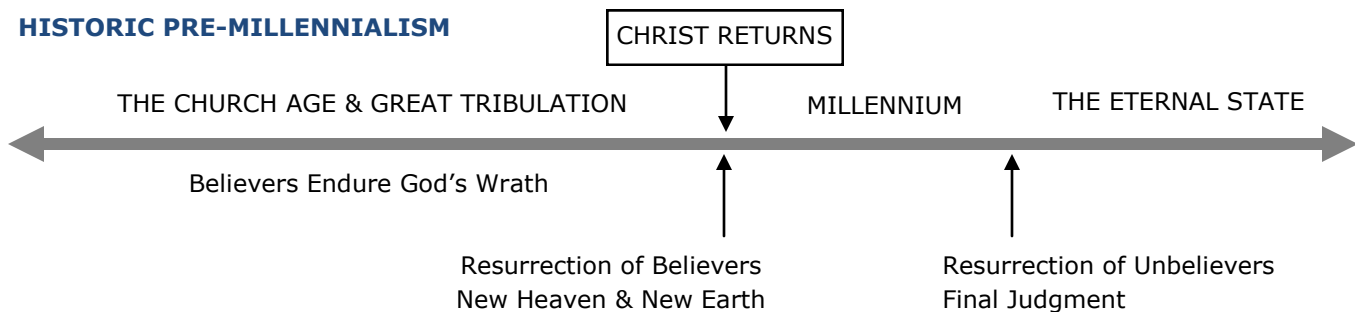


POST-MILLENNIALISM



Classic or

HISTORIC PRE-MILLENNIALISM



Dispensational or

PRE-TRIBULATION PRE-MILLENNIALISM

