

The Millennium

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everybody, and again, thank you to all of you who are coming early and putting in hours throughout the week. As we settle into our new space, we continue to be tremendously thankful for this space and what it's allowed us to do in terms of the life of our church.

There we go, just not going to touch that again. So let me ask you some questions. Why do some Christians believe in a rapture and others do not?

Have you ever wondered that? Have you ever thought about that? You maybe have friends or maybe yourself, you grew up in a church where something that was talked about a lot was the idea of a rapture. And why do some Christians believe in that and think a lot about it and others have maybe never thought about it before?

Why do some Christians think of the United States as God's chosen country? This is the place that God has chosen.

It's a city on a hill. It's a light for the world. And other Christians would vehemently reject that idea. Why are some Christians passionately supporters of Israel, the state of Israel, and other Christians not so much?

[1 : 16] A lot of this flows from eschatology, which is the word that means all of the various beliefs that Christians have about the end times.

What's going to happen at the end of time? Where is all this headed? And there's a lot of disagreement over exactly how that's going to play out. And much of the disagreement is rooted in the passage that we're going to be looking at this morning, Revelation chapter 20, verses 1 through 10.

There's a number of things happening here. For instance, an angel of the Lord comes down and chains up, binds Satan, and throws Satan in a pit.

There's also a period that is described as a period of 1,000 years. A lot of people refer to this as the millennium. There's a period of 1,000 years where Jesus and his saints rule.

And then we see that Satan is at some point released and things get bad again. And there's a kind of army gathered from the ends of the earth.

[2 : 25] But that army is soundly defeated. And ultimately Satan is defeated and thrown into a lake of fire. And again, like a lot of Revelation, we read this and it just sounds fantastic.

It sounds like something out of a movie. But the questions that arise are manifold. You know, what exactly is being described? When are these things going to take place?

Who's going to be involved? Is this just around the corner or is it, you know, thousands and thousands of years away? Is there any way that we can tell when we're getting close so that we can prepare?

These are all the questions that people ask. And so we're going to dive into that this morning. And, you know, 2,000 years of Christian debate.

Hopefully we're just going to clear all of it up. And we'll answer all the questions. And so I'll say that this is not going to be like a normal Sunday. I apologize for that. This is not going to be so much a time of preaching, which it normally is, as it is going to be a time of teaching.

[3 : 29] And we're going to put some stuff on the screen, which we don't ever do. But the reason that we're doing this is a couple of reasons. One, I think if you're here and you're a Christian, for many of us, this is probably something that we have an inkling of.

And yet it's very possible to grow up and spend your entire life as a Christian and never have any understanding of eschatology. You know, a lot of people grow up and they have no idea what their church believes. They have no idea why some people believe one thing and other people believe another thing.

And so we're going to dive in. And hopefully you're going to leave today with more clarity than when you arrived. And my hope is actually you'll have more of a sense of where you fall within all these questions.

And then if you're here and you're not a Christian, you may be thinking, oh, my gosh, you know, of all the weeks. But I would invite you, as we're talking about this, I would invite you to actually reflect on what you believe about the end of the world.

What you believe about life after death. Because everybody has an eschatology. Right? Everybody believes something. And we're going to be talking a little bit about why Christians believe the things that we believe.

[4 : 36] And I'd invite you to consider why do you believe the things that you believe? What's the foundation of those beliefs? And we're going to be looking at, again, Revelation chapter 20 verses 1 through 10. Here's our outline. Number one, why do people have different views?

Why do we disagree? Number two, what are the major views? That's going to be the bulk of our time. And then number three, what matters most? In all of this, what are the most important primary things that we need to focus on?

So let's pray and then we'll dive in. Lord, we thank you for your word. Lord, and we thank you for the parts that are clear and straightforward and rationally laid out.

And we thank you for the parts that are mysterious and beautiful and challenging. Lord, especially those places in Scripture that are hard to understand, they remind us of our dependence on you.

Lord, that our faith is not about us getting everything right, figuring out which box everything goes in and systematizing our beliefs. Our faith rests in a person.

[5 : 42] And Lord, sometimes relationships are messy and sometimes relationships are complicated. We pray that you would help us understand more of what you have to say about these end times.

Not so much that we can put it on a chart, but so that we can love you more. So that we can be blown away by the majesty and the glory of the works of your hands. And it's in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, that we pray.

Amen. Amen. So let's first spend a few minutes asking ourselves, why do Christians disagree and have different views on this? And I would say there's a few things that will help determine where you fall in terms of your eschatology.

So number one, how do you read Scripture? What's your approach to Scripture? Do you read everything in a very straightforward, literal way?

The plainest meaning of the text is what it's saying? Or do you allow for the fact that there are genres in the Bible? That we would read historic narrative differently than we might read poetry?

[6 : 45] That we would read prophetic writing or apocalyptic writing differently than we would read poetry? Do you account for the fact that sometimes the Bible might use figurative language?

Right? So that's one thing. How do you read the Bible? Number two, what is your starting point? See, everybody's eschatology is rooted in some starting point in Scripture.

In other words, where do you go in the Bible? What passage do you go to and say, this is my framework? And then I'm going to read everything else in the Bible that has to do with the end times through the lens of this framework.

Right? So if you are, and we'll get into what these mean, if you're a premillennialist, you're probably going to start with Revelation chapter 20 or Daniel chapter 9. If you are a postmillennialist, again, we'll get into this, you're going to start in a different place, maybe somewhere like Matthew chapter 28.

And you're going to start there and you're going to say, this is the foundation, this is the framework, and I'm going to read everything else through that lens. So where's your starting point? And then number three, what determines our eschatology?

[7 : 52] Social and political factors. You know, what is your disposition? Are you the kind of person who tends to be an optimist? Do you tend to be a pessimist?

You know, when you look at the world, do you think that things are getting better over time? Do you think that things are getting worse and falling apart? That's going to influence your eschatology.

So what's your approach to scripture? What's your starting point? And then what are the social and political factors that shape your perception of the world and where all this is headed? All that's going to determine where you're likely to land.

Now, we're going to get into the major views, and what I want to do is I want to lay these views out, and it's going to be a bit artificial because a lot of these views agree on a lot of things.

So when you lay it out on a chart, it makes it look like they're completely different. So I want to emphasize, number one, the four views that we're going to look at have a lot of overlap with one another. There's just a few key areas that they disagree on.

[8 : 53] I'm going to emphasize those for the sake of clarity, okay? And number two, I'm going to share my opinion along the way, some of the things that I think. I'm going to share where I think the most credible view lies.

But I want to emphasize that all four views that we're going to talk about are held by faithful, Jesus-loving, Orthodox Christians.

And so this is not an opportunity for us to bash brothers and sisters in the church. This is an opportunity for us to learn about an area where we really disagree. And the great news that we come back to again and again and again in the life of our church is this, that our salvation and our hope does not hinge on our eschatology.

It hinges on Jesus Christ. And so it's in that hope and faith that we're going to explore some differences within the Christian family. So what are the major views?

The first one we're going to start with is called historic premillennialism. And I have this fancy pointer, and I'm hoping it's going to work for us.

[10 : 04] There we go. Okay, so the first view we're going to start with, and if this looks complicated, it is. We're going to look at historic premillennialism. Now, we call it historic premillennialism because it has a lot of history.

It goes back at least to Irenaeus in the second century. And versions of this eschatology have been held since the earliest days of the church. So that's why we call it historic premillennialism.

And then we call it premillennialism because this belief holds that Jesus is going to come back before the millennium that we read about in Revelation chapter 20.

So premillennium, Jesus returns before the millennium of Revelation 20. So let's just walk through this very briefly. We have Jesus' birth.

The kingdom of God is manifest. He lives. He is crucified, died. He rises from death. He ascends to the throne of heaven. And then there's this period of time here.

[11 : 05] The kingdom of God remains spiritually, but Jesus is in heaven. And we're waiting. We're waiting for Jesus to come again. And in this view, things are going to progressively get worse and worse and worse, right?

Individual sin, systemic sin, institutional sin, government corruption. The world is going to progressively fall apart. Then there's going to be a time of apostasy and tribulation.

And then we're going to have the return of Christ. And at that time, the saints, all those who put their faith in Jesus, are going to rise from death.

And then the millennium is going to start. So see, Christ returns, then the millennium. Some people in this view believe that it's a literal thousand years. Others hold that it's a more symbolic time, a long time.

But the point is, the millennium starts after Jesus returns. During that time, Satan is bound. The kingdom of God is consummated. The saints and Jesus rule.

[12 : 09] And then at the end of the millennium, Satan is released. There's a massive final battle. Satan is defeated. Then we have the second resurrection, where everybody else rises from death.

Jesus judges all the nations. And then we move into the time of the new heavens and the new earth, and eternity ensues. So this is the first view.

And the rationale is pretty straightforward. This view is based on a chronological reading of Revelation. Right? Reading, you know, the order of the chapters is determining the order of events.

So you say, well, why would you say that Jesus comes before the millennium? Well, quite simply, it's because chapter 19 comes before chapter 20. Right? So in chapter 19, Jesus comes on a white horse.

Chapter 20, millennium, Jesus comes. And then we have the millennium. Pretty straightforward. So you can see why a lot of people would adopt this view. And a lot of people in contemporary times who I greatly respect still hold to this view.

[13 : 14] Now, in the mid to late 1800s, around the turn of the century, you know, early part of the 20th century, there was a view that arose that was an offshoot of historic premillennialism.

There are several different ways we can refer to it. I have it here titled as dispensationalism, but you can also refer to this as dispensational premillennialism.

Or you can refer to it as pre-tribulational premillennialism. I'll wait for you to write that down. It's not going to be on the test, but I just want you to know that.

Dispensationalism is similar to historic premillennialism with a few key differences. Okay? So it's similar in that we believe Christ is here.

There's this age of grace, the church age. Then we do believe that Jesus comes before the millennium. Here's the millennium, the nation's revolt, final judgment. The overall framework is roughly the same.

[14 : 15] Few key differences. Number one, dispensationalists believe in a rapture, which is this right here. They believe that we are in the age of grace now, that at some point there will be signs of the end times.

Things are going to get worse and worse and worse and worse and worse. And then there's going to be a kind of secret rapture. And this is based on a word that means to be snatched away.

It's not like emotional rapture. It's the idea is that in a moment people are going to cease to exist. It's kind of like the end of Avengers Infinity Wars, where people just, you're walking along and then all of a sudden they're gone, only they're not vaporized, they go to be with Jesus.

And I was trying to think of a good visual, and there's very few good visuals, and I don't know how many people have actually seen the movie Left Behind, but this happens in the movie Left Behind, where you just wake up one day and half the planet is gone.

And this has inspired a lot of wonder, but also a lot of fear in people. But there's a rapture, and all the Christians are taken away. And then there is a seven-year period of tribulation for everybody who is left behind.

[15 : 24] So, right, Tim LaHaye, the Left Behind series, the movie, all of that was inspired by this. There's seven years of tribulation for everybody left on the earth. During this time, a lot of Jews are going to supposedly come to faith.

Then Jesus comes back in his bodily form, and then we have the beginning of a literal thousand-year millennium. Literal thousand-year millennium.

Now, here's the other key difference. In the dispensationalist view, God has two separate programs. One for Israel and one for the Gentile church.

God's plan was to establish Israel as the kingdom of God, a nation-state with the kingdom of God centered in Jerusalem. God presented the opportunity to have a messianic kingdom to the Israelites in the ancient times.

They rejected it. And that kind of put God's plan on hold. And then God had to deal with all the Gentiles. And so the Gentiles, in this view, are kind of, and that would be most of us in this room, are kind of like a parenthesis within God's plan for Israel.

[16 : 32] It's kind of like we pause it, we deal with the Gentiles, and then at some point we're going to come back to the Jews. So that's what's happening here. God presses pause on Israel. He deals with the Gentiles.

He raptures them. Then they all come back. Then during the millennium, God resumes His plan. During the millennium, God establishes Israel as the kingdom on earth, centered in Jerusalem.

And there will be a kind of theocratic rule for a thousand years. And then the nations will revolt. They will be defeated. We'll have a final judgment. And then we'll enter the eternal state.

So again, a few key differences. If you've ever wondered why some American evangelicals are passionately pro-Israel in their politics, some of that flows out of this eschatology.

Because this eschatology has had a lot of profound impact, particularly on American evangelicals. We'll talk a little bit more about why down the road. So, for instance, in 1948 when the state of Israel was established, many American evangelicals saw this as a sign of the fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

[17 : 49] This is a sign that these events are starting to happen. And people have started to get geared up and excited that the end times were upon us. Now, I told you I'd share my opinion.

I'll share briefly here. Again, this is my opinion. I think that there's a big difference between historic premillennialism, which we looked at a moment ago, and dispensational premillennialism.

The first view, I think, has a pretty good biblical case behind it. And it has a lot of history behind it. It's been held back to at least the second century. So you look at something like that and you say, well, there's a lot of credibility, right?

On the other hand, I think that dispensational premillennialism is on shaky ground. And quite frankly, I think of all of the views, this is probably the weakest.

And there's a few concerns that I have with this view, and I'll just share a couple of them. My first concern with dispensationalism is that it fails to account for all of the various genres found in the Bible.

[18 : 51] So this view assumes that if you're reading something in the Bible, regardless of where it is, that you should take the plain, straightforward meaning. And yet we know that there are different genres in the Bible.

We know, for instance, that in the Psalms, in Psalm 22, when David says, I'm a worm and not a man, that we're not to infer from that a theological doctrine of David that David is, in fact, a talking worm.

We know that he's using figurative language. And we know that there are different places in the Bible that have different genres and that they need to be read accordingly, right? So in my view, this isn't accounted for enough.

Number two, a little more concerning, I see this having a negative impact on Christians. When I talk to Christians who come from this background, you often find that people can, because there are signs of the end times right here, a lot of people can get really fixated on trying to figure out what those signs are.

And so, for instance, when the European Union is formed, there are Christians who will say, well, this is obviously the beast. The EU is the beast, and this is a sign. And there are lots of predictions that are made about exactly when all this is going to play out, despite the fact that Jesus very clearly instructs us not to try to discern the times when all this will take place.

[20 : 12] So it can create a kind of paranoia. Also, I have found that the idea of rapture, and I meant no disrespect with the illustration earlier, but that idea has, I think, inspired a lot of fear.

I think there are a lot of kids who grow up learning about the rapture, terrified that if they're not right with God when they go to bed, they're going to wake up and their whole family is going to be gone. And the eggs are still going to be sizzling on the stove.

And they're going to be alone. And there's going to be planes dropping out of the sky and cars running into lampposts because their drivers are gone. So I think this creates a lot of fear. And I think one of the things the Bible is clear on is that when Jesus comes again, for Christians, it is going to be a time of great joy and great celebration.

That last trumpet blast when Jesus comes, this is going to be a time of global celebration for all of those who follow Jesus. So I don't think that any view should inspire fear in the hearts of believers.

Number three, maybe most concerning of all, the idea that God would have a separate plan for Israel and another separate plan for the church or for the Gentiles, to me seems utterly incompatible with much of the New Testament.

[21 : 23] You know, as Paul very clearly says, Jesus overcame the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles, the dividing wall of hostility. Jesus came to make one family out of all the nations of the earth.

And he says very clearly that Gentiles become children of Abraham by faith. And so when I read much of the New Testament, I think it's pretty clear that there's not two programs at work here.

There is one gospel, one set of promises, one faith, one people. But again, this is a view that is held by Orthodox faithful Christians.

That's my opinion. If there are those in this room who come from this background, again, I mean no disrespect, but as a pastor, I feel that I need to at least share my concerns. So those are the two pre-millennial views.

The views that hold that Jesus comes before the millennium. The last two are a bit different. The first two views assume that things are going to get worse and worse and worse and worse.

[22 : 28] Post-millennialism is the opposite. This is the view that says things are going to get better. So post-millennialism, hopefully you can figure out by now, this is the view that Christ comes after the millennium, talked about in Revelation chapter 20.

In other words, we have the start of the millennium, which is debatable. Right? So we're in the church age now, and at some point, this view says the millennium will start.

And when that millennium starts, there will be a time of tremendous expansion of Christianity. There's going to be a time of increased peace and prosperity in the world. Large numbers of ethnic Jews are going to come to faith in Jesus Christ.

In other words, this is the view that says it is up to us, it is up to you and me, to usher in the kingdom of God. It's our job to spread the gospel to the four corners of the earth, to bring all other religions and all other nations under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

When that happens, only when that happens, will Jesus come back. And so this is a view that, again, has some history to it.

[23 : 37] And if you've ever wondered, you know, if you look back in the kind of founding of our country and all of the people that write about the new world and this kind of emerging country, the United States, there's a lot of language that's used about this being a city on a hill, God's chosen nation, God's holy people, God's special elect, you know, all of that is coming right out of post-millennial eschatology.

This is a view that was very popular among many of the Puritans who were a part of establishing the culture that our country was founded in. So that Puritan post-millennial culture very much viewed the United States as the kind of, you know, the kind of flagship of the millennium, of the expansion of Christianity that was going to result in the second coming of Jesus Christ.

And this is a view that's held by some of my great heroes. People like Jonathan Edwards and Charles Spurgeon were post-millennialists. It's a view that continues to have wide support today among even a lot of brothers and sisters in my own theological tradition of Reformed theology.

A lot of people are post-millennial in their eschatology. And then, of course, though, it had kind of a heyday in, you know, around the kind of founding of our country.

But then a few things happened, right? We had the Civil War, right? We had the Great World Wars. We had things like Vietnam. We had the Cold War where, you know, some of us who are older and remember this were doing drills in case the nukes were launched.

[25 : 18] You know, and there was a sense during the Cold War that we were on the precipice of nuclear holocaust. And so with all of those things happening, it became increasingly difficult to justify the idea that the world was becoming a better place.

It just didn't seem to fit with reality. And so around that time, between the Civil War, going through the World Wars, a lot of evangelicals in our country shifted away from postmillennial eschatology and they adopted a more premillennial view, including a dispensationalist premillennial view.

But this is postmillennialism. Now, as I said, I think all of these views have strengths and weaknesses, and I don't think that we can prove that one is absolutely true over and above all the rest.

The one that I tend to preference is what is termed the amillennial view. That's this view. Now, I actually don't like the term amillennial. I think it's a bit misleading.

Amillennial simply means no millennium. But that's a little misleading because this view doesn't say that there's no millennium. It just says that the millennium is a figure of speech. Right?

[26 : 25] That when we talk about a period of a thousand years and the Bible says that, it's simply a figure of speech like much of Revelation. And so there are other places in the Bible that use this number, right? Psalm 50 talks about God owning cattle on a thousand hills.

Now, we're not going to say, well, that must have been, you know, one, two, three, four. That's not how we read it. We read it as a lot of hills, a lot of cattle. In the same way, 1 Chronicles 16 talks about God being faithful for a thousand generations.

We don't start and say, this is the first generation, the second generation, a lot of generations. God is faithful for a long, long, long, long time. And so in the same way, when we read a thousand years, we simply read it as, this is going to be a long time.

It could be multiple millennia. It could be thousands upon thousands upon thousands of years. It's a long time. And this is the view that goes back to St. Augustine. It's the view that was held by Thomas Aquinas.

It's the view that's held in the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, swaths of the Anglican Church, and other Reformed churches. So, this approach basically says that because Revelation is apocalyptic literature, it's full of symbolic, figurative language.

[27 : 41] And so we read it that way. And if you've been tracking with our series in Revelation, you know this has been our approach to Revelation. So one of the big differences is, we don't read Revelation chronologically.

Just because chapter 20 comes after chapter 19, we don't think that the events of chapter 20 come after the events of chapter 19. So, we read Revelation recognizing that I think there's a pretty clear literary structure to this book.

The literary structure is that it's structured in sequences of seven. There are seven seals that are broken. There are seven trumpet blasts. There are seven bowls that are poured out.

And these sequences of seven, I think, are patterned after the seven days of creation. And so what you see there is a story is being told and retold and retold again and again and again with each sequence, which is the way we've laid this out.

And I think this is the story of the church. So I think every time the sequence starts over, you're starting at the birth of the church again. And then we tell the whole story of the life of the church all the way until Jesus comes again and all of creation is consummated.

[28 : 50] And so when we read it this way, we recognize that Revelation is partly about the past, it's partly about the present, and it's partly about the future. Right? See, if you're a premillennialist, either variety, and by the way, there are many subtypes to all these views, either variety of premillennialists, you're reading Revelation as primarily about future events.

This is distant future or maybe near future, but most of what we read in Revelation, you know, the tribulation, according to a premillennialist, starts at around chapter 4 of Revelation, goes through chapter 19.

So all that crazy stuff that's happening, all that is the tribulation. Right? That's if you're a premillennialist. If you're an amillennialist, you would say, you know, some of this happened in the past.

Persecution of Christians under Nero, the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, these are analogous to events that are described in the book of Revelation. So some of it is in the past, but also we see patterns emerge.

A lot of what we read in the book of Revelation describes ongoing, recurring themes and challenges that Christians will have to face again and again and again until Christ comes.

[30 : 04] So a lot of it is about the present. And then there are also things, specifically the last couple of chapters of Revelation, that are very clearly about the ultimate future, the new heavens and the new earth.

That's very clearly describing, in my opinion, something that will happen at the end of time. But you see, the layout is pretty simple. And one of the reasons that I like this layout is because I think that it aligns and resonates with other scripture.

Right? So my starting point, I said everybody has a framework, this is where my bias comes from, is I start with the letters of Paul. Because I think that when I read scripture and I think about genre, the one place in scripture that is written to teach, in other words, it's written to give us doctrine, would be the epistles.

So I look at Paul's epistles, I look at Peter's epistles, and I look at what they say about the end times. And then I try to map how I read Revelation onto their framework. And so we see Jesus is born, Jesus lives and ministers, he dies on the cross, he's resurrected, he ascends.

And then at that point, the church is born at Pentecost, and that is the beginning of the millennium, which is not a literal millennium, it's just this present age. But what we would say is that Christ is presently reigning in heaven.

[31 : 24] That there is triumph of the spiritual kingdom, even in the midst of the rise of evil in opposition to Christ. And that all of the promises made to Abraham and Israel and David are fulfilled by Christ or his church.

So again, not two separate programs. Promises were made to Israel. They're fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ and in his church. Then at some point in the future, Satan will be released and defeated.

We believe that Jesus will then come again. There will be one general resurrection, not two resurrections. So you say, well, what's up with that place where it talks about this is the first resurrection and blessed are those who go through the first resurrection?

Well, and that comes from Revelation chapter 20. We would believe that as Paul says that when you are baptized, it is a death and resurrection, that when you are baptized and you enter the church, that is the first resurrection.

From that point on, you are one with Christ. You are with Christ. You are in Christ. And then the second resurrection, so to speak, would in this view simply be the general resurrection.

[32 : 31] This is when everybody who has died is brought back and then Christ judges and then renews the heavens and the earth. So that's this timeline.

Now there's one other reference, I think, in Revelation 20 that we have to kind of address and that is the binding of Satan. You know, if all of this is figurative language, then what do we do with the beginning of the chapter that talks about God binding Satan with chains and throwing him in an abyss?

Again, I think this is somewhat figurative language, but I think it's describing something real. It's interesting when Jesus, in Mark chapter 3, is casting out demons and healing people and the scribes and the religious leaders come and they accuse Jesus of doing the work of Satan.

This is demonic, they say. And what does Jesus say? If I was doing the work of Satan, then a house would be divided against itself. This would be Satan combating Satan. Obviously, that's not what's going on.

And then he tells this strange parable. He says, if you want to plunder a strong man's house, the first thing you have to do is bind the strong man. And only when you have bound the strong man can you plunder his house.

[33 : 45] You say, well, what's he talking about there? What's the exact same language that's used here? What I think this shows us is that when Jesus came, when Jesus came and when Jesus announced his ministry, the kingdom of God is at hand, part of what he was announcing is that Satan has been bound.

And because Satan has been bound, Jesus is now plundering his house. Right? He's giving sight to the blind. He's making the lame walk.

He's raising people from death. He's casting out demons. He's forgiving sins. And in all of these ways, he's plundering the strong man's house. Because Satan's power has been limited.

And I think that this is the call upon the church as well. That the good news is Satan has been bound. Jesus reigns on the throne of heaven with the saints. And the church, like this church, we have spiritual authority to plunder the strong man's house.

And so all of the work we do proclaiming the gospel, all of the work we do seeking justice and mercy and reconciliation in our city, all of that is plundering the strong man's house.

[34 : 57] It is setting captives free. So now that we've laid out all of the various views, I just want to draw all this together and say a few concluding remarks.

Number one, okay, what do I take away from this? Okay, what's going to be on the test? Here's the first thing that's going to be on the test. All of these traditions have value. I think that every single person in this room would do well to have the biblical devotion of the dispensationalists who hold God's word above all else.

I think everyone in this room would do well to have the endurance of the historic premillennialists who are ready to face tribulation. They're ready because they want to follow Jesus no matter what it costs them.

I think everybody in this room would do well to have the zeal of the postmillennialists who desire to see the gospel spread to the four corners of the earth. And by the way, this is what drove many of the early missionary movements.

The gospel needs to go everywhere, which is true. Jesus said it. And I think everybody here would do well to have the boldness of the amillennialist who believes that Satan has been bound.

[36 : 10] The church has spiritual authority and it is our calling to plunder the strong man's house and set captives free. So all of these traditions have value. And at the end of the day, all of these views agree on the most important things.

Number one, Jesus is our only hope in life and in death. He gave his life on the cross to reconcile us to God. Number two, Jesus is coming back.

He's coming. All these views agree. He's coming back. Number three, Satan and all of the injustice and evil and oppression and suffering in the world will be eradicated once and for all.

We all agree on that. And number four, this world, this heavens and this earth will be completely renewed. And if this all sounds a little abstract and irrelevant and like you just mistakenly walked into a seminary class or something like that, I just want us to reflect on this.

If any of this is true, if some such future reality as we have described is actually awaiting us, how does that change our priorities?

[37 : 26] Right? Are we living for and investing in things in a way that reflects that we believe this is all there is? Or are we living for and investing in things that reflect our understanding that this is just a foretaste and everything that really matters is yet to come?

Everything that really matters will last into eternity. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your word and again, our hope, our singular hope, is in you, Jesus Christ.

And Lord, I pray that having a little more clarity on these varying views would not lead us to greater division or greater confusion, but that ultimately they would give us a greater sense of hope that Lord, you're coming, that you hate evil and brokenness more than we do, and that your plan is to put the world right.

And it's in that hope that we place our hope, Lord, and may we be faithful to our calling as your people until you come again. In your son's name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.