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Five Millennial Views of Revelation
Part 2 - Dispensational Premillennialism

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Introduction

Just because of the nature of the type of literature, the book of Revelation is one of the most difficult books of the Bible to interpret. In fact, over the centuries, different people have interpreted it in quite different ways. And because very few know much about the book, it remains rather confusing for most people. To top it off, it is also not uncommon for individuals to hear teachings of more than one approach, and not knowing how to distinguish between them, end up having a very mixed up understanding.

This article is part two of a five part series designed to give an explanation of the five major millennial views – Historic Premillennialism, Dispensational Premillennialism, Postmillennialism, Amillennialism, and Preterism. It is our hope that this explanation will help you become able to clearly distinguish between the various views. Please accept my apologies for the fact that this article is considerably longer than the others. That could not be helped based on the fact that Dispensational Premillennialism is simply that much more complex than all the others.

What is a Dispensation?

Before we dive into this section, we need to first define the word dispensation. In dealing with the topic of the end times in the Bible, most people associate this word with Premillennialism. However, not all dispensational systems are associated with that approach to understanding theology – or even with millennialism at all.

In theology, a dispensation is a generic term that has to do with the divine administration of a period of time. Each

dispensation is understood to be a divinely constituted age. As it relates to biblical theology, it is simply a method, scheme, or system that defines time frames in which God carries out His purposes towards men. It is a theological system that recognizes various ages by which God has ordered the affairs of the world and the progress of history.

There are actually two dispensational systems that do not correspond at all to the more well known Dispensational Premillennialism. In fact, these two don't even address the topic of the Millennium.

The first of these is the three dispensation scheme. This one is not well known by most, and is not even associated with a particular group. Its three dispensations are:

1. Patriarchal Age - From the creation through the period of the patriarchs.
2. Mosaic Age - The period of the Law covering the entire Old Testament period after God gave the Law through Moses.
3. Christian Age - The period of the Church following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ through the period of God's kingship after Christ's return.

Additionally, there is a four dispensation scheme that is also not well known. As with the three dispensation model, this one is also not associated with any particular group. Its dispensational grouping consists of:

1. Patriarchal - From the creation through the period of the patriarchs.
2. Mosaic - The period of the Law covering the entire Old Testament period after God gave the Law through Moses.

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3. Ecclesial (Christian) - The period of the Church following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
4. Zionite - The period of God's kingdom after Christ's return.

By far the most prominent dispensational system, though, is the one associated with premillennialism. This system has seven or eight dispensations depending on whose system one is discussing.

Definition and Explanation

While Historic Premillennialism is the oldest millennial theory, Dispensational Premillennialism is the newest. It is an approach to understanding the end times that breaks history down into various time periods, but does so based on its own unique underlying theology.

In our current day, in America, this approach is the most popular among Evangelical Christians. It has been made popular by numerous books and movies that portray the end times using this particular approach.

Dispensational Premillennialism traces its roots to Englishman John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) in the 1830s. Darby was a rather religious man and became a curate in the Church of England. A curate is a priest or transitional deacon who is in their first post after ordination and is still in training. Because of a political disagreement within the church, Darby resigned his post in protest.

Soon after leaving the Church of England, Darby fell from a horse and was seriously injured. During his time of recovery, as he studied the Bible, he came to believe that the "kingdom" described in the Book of Isaiah, and in other places in the Old Testament, was entirely different from the Christian church. Over the next several years, as he studied further, he developed his new premillennial theology and called it dispensationalism after the division of history into dispensations or eras.

During that period of his life, Darby also joined an interdenominational group of believers, then following that he joined the Plymouth Brethren and became one of the early leaders of that church. It was in the Brethren Church environment that his dispensational ideas were accepted and flourished.

Darby's approach identified dispensations (time periods) throughout Scripture where he perceived changes in God's method of dealing with mankind – particularly as it related to sin and man's responsibility. According to his system, each age of God's plan is administered in a particular way, and humanity is responsible to serve as God's steward based on the dispensation they live in.

This new form of premillennialism came to the United States following the Civil War. In America, it was adopted by American theologian C.I. Scofield who wrote the Scofield Reference Bible based on Darby's system. It was this work that massively popularized Dispensational Premillennialism among the American populace. It was further spread through Hal Lindsey's 1970s best selling book, *The Late, Great Planet Earth*, and Tim Lahaye's *Left Behind* series. Some of the more recent proponents who have popularized it even further include John MacArthur, Jerry Falwell, Charles Ryrie, David Jeremiah, Chuck Swindoll, Charles Stanley, and Norman Geisler.

Over the years, dispensationalists have had disagreements over the number and names of the various time periods and the timing of the Tribulation – a discussion and debate that continues to this day. That said, generally speaking, Scofield's seven-fold approach remains the most popular.

The Place of Revelation in Dispensational Premillennialism

In Dispensational Premillennialism, the book of Revelation serves as a

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prophetic blueprint of the end times. It is believed to lay out a chronological sequence of events that will happen at the end of the world. Premillennial Dispensationalists believe that the time sequence Revelation expresses begins with the Church Age, then moves to the Rapture, the Tribulation, the second coming of Christ, the Millennium, and finally to the eternal state. They see every chapter after Revelation 4 as unfulfilled prophecy.

Underlying Philosophy of Dispensational Premillennialism

Dispensational Premillennialism has two primary distinctives:

1. The first is a consistently literal interpretation of Scripture. This is particularly true when it comes to Bible prophecy. Many Old Testament prophecies, in particular, are interpreted in a literal way outside of their original context, and are then applied to an adherent's conception of how history will unfold in the future.

2. Second is a belief that God's engagement with Israel is completely separate from His interaction with the Church. That is, God has devised two entirely different salvation systems – one that applies to the Jews based on the covenants God made with Israel in the Old Testament, and the other that applies to the Gentiles based on a new covenant.

Many people think that the focus of Dispensational Premillennialism lies in one's interpretation of the book of Revelation. Obviously, the teachings in Revelation contribute to the overall beliefs taught in this view. However, in its essence, Dispensational Premillennialism is an entire system for interpreting the Bible based on a strictly literal translation of certain passages assumed to pertain to the end times. These passages are found in both the Old and New Testaments.

Dispensationalists begin with the presupposition that God has acted progressively in relationship to mankind in the different dispensations throughout the entirety of biblical history. They believe that each period gives more insight about God's self-revelation and His plan of salvation.

Dispensationalism also asserts that the Church, as it emerged in the New Testament, was not even conceived of by the Old Testament prophets. It puts forth the idea that it was God's plan that the Jews in the Old Testament period would accept God's kingdom. But when they rejected it, God introduced the Church Age as a means of bypassing that rejection.

One other very important dispensational belief about the end times is that the Church and Israel are two distinct identities with two completely different redemptive plans. With that as its basis, it asserts that God's redemptive plan for national Israel is completely different from His redemptive plan for the Gentiles.

Dispensationalists hold to a strictly literal interpretation of the Bible as the best hermeneutic (interpretive) approach. Their approach to a literal interpretation gives each word the meaning it would commonly have in everyday usage, though they do make allowances for certain obvious symbols, figures of speech, and types. However, it is understood that even symbols and figurative sayings have literal meanings behind them. So, for example, when the Bible speaks of "a thousand years" in Revelation 20, dispensationalists interpret it as a literal period of 1,000 years (the dispensation of the Kingdom), since they see no compelling reason to interpret it otherwise. Another example is that the scroll with the seals in chapter five and the bowls in chapters 15 and 16 are understood to be literal instruments in the hand of God in heaven.

For dispensationalists, there are at least two reasons why they believe using a literal approach to interpretation is the best way to view Scripture. First, in a general sense, the purpose of language itself requires people to interpret words literally unless there is some compelling reason for a figurative interpretation. They understand words to be the vehicles that carry meaning between those trying to communicate with one another. The second reason is based on their reading of the Bible. When looking at prophecies about Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, each one is considered to have been fulfilled literally. Looking at Jesus' birth, His ministry, His death, and His resurrection, we can see that all of these occurred literally as Old Testament Scripture predicted. Dispensationalists carry this principle over to the New Testament and assert that messianic prophecies there are also literal.

At this point, it must also be understood that the passages dispensationalists select and interpret as prophesy are considered to be prophesying events that will objectively occur in the future. They also believe that if a literal interpretative methodology is not used in studying the Scriptures, there is no objective standard by which to understand the Bible.

This also carries an assumption. It assumes that a nonliteral interpretation cannot carry an objective meaning. To be fair, that is not necessarily true, as different genres of literature must be interpreted using methodologies that fit with each one. In fact, even dispensationalists often distinguish between what they consider actual events that will happen in the future and the imagery used to predict those events. For instance, the four horsemen in chapter six are understood to be symbolic figures representing actual agents or forces God will unleash to carry out His judgment, not literal riders on horses.

One of the key principles of dispensational theology is that there are two distinct peoples of God, Israel and the Church, and that God deals with each in entirely different ways. As is true with all people who adhere to genuine New Testament theology, they believe that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone. However, they see it applying differently in the Old Testament and New Testament. With the Jews, the "faith alone" is in God as understood in the Old Testament, while in the New Testament the faith is specifically in God the Son.

As a result of the belief that there are two distinct people's of God, dispensationalists hold that the Church has not replaced Israel, and that God's promises to Israel have not been transferred to the Church. They believe that the promises God made to Israel in the Old Testament (for land, many descendants, and blessings) will be ultimately fulfilled in the thousand-year reign of Christ on the Earth that is referred to in Revelation 20. They believe that in the Church Age, God is focusing His attention on the Church, and in the future He will once again focus His attention back on Israel. To back up this approach, they point to Romans 9 - 11 and Daniel 9:24.

Dispensational Premillennialism Storyline

The most prominent system of Dispensational Premillennialism follows Scofield's seven dispensation approach. There are those who make their divisions using eight dispensations, but these are not substantially different from Schofield's system. Essentially, what most eight dispensation advocates do is to simply make their divisions in different places by dividing one of his divisions into two. For the purpose of this explanation, we will stick with seven.

Dispensational Premillennialists understand the Bible to be organized into seven dispensations. These are:

1. Innocence (Genesis 1:1 - 3:7)
2. Conscience (Genesis 3:8 - 8:22)
3. Human Government (Genesis 9:1 - 11:32)
4. Promise (Genesis 12:1 - Exodus 19:25)
5. Law (Exodus 20:1 - Acts 2:4)
6. Grace (Acts 2:4 - Revelation 20:3)
7. Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:4-6)

The seven dispensations are not seen as paths to salvation, but are considered to be ways in which God has related to man through the ages. According to Dispensational Premillennialism, each dispensation describes a recognizable pattern of how God worked with people who lived in that era. Each of the seven dispensations will reflect the following fourfold pattern. The pattern can be described as:

1. A responsibility,
2. A failure,
3. A judgment, and
4. Grace to move on.

1. Dispensation of Innocence (Genesis 1:1 - 3:7)

The Period of Innocence is sometimes also referred to as the Adamic Period, the Adamic Covenant, or Adamic Law. It begins with Adam prior to the Fall, and ends with Adam and Eve being expelled from the Garden of Eden in Genesis chapter three.

This period represents the very beginning of the time of man's creation. God placed Adam and Eve in a perfect world – the Garden of Eden – and shared with them the kind of obedience that was needed for them to please Him, along with the consequences of disobedience.

This dispensation lasted until Adam and Eve deliberately disobeyed God by eating of the forbidden fruit. At that point they were expelled from the Garden as judgment for their sin.

- a. Responsibility - In this period, the duty of Adam and Eve was to interact personally with God and exercise their stewardship responsibility in the garden.
- b. Failure - The failure occurred with the Fall, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command to not eat of the Tree of Knowledge.
- c. Judgment - Judgment in this dispensation happened when God kicked Adam and Eve out of the garden because of their disobedience.
- d. Grace to Move On - God's grace was demonstrated in His provision for Adam and Eve once they no longer had access to the garden.

2. Dispensation of Conscience (Genesis 3:8 - 8:22)

The Period of Conscience begins immediately after the Fall and ends with the worldwide flood that destroyed all of mankind except for Noah's family. They were able to survive by building an ark that was used to save life on earth.

Personal knowledge of good and evil became evident during the second dispensation as Adam and Eve had their consciences awakened. During that period, man became responsible to do good and abstain from evil, and to approach God through offering sacrifices. God expelled them from the Garden to a place east of it (Genesis 3:24) which became their place of worship. They were prevented from reentering the Garden by cherubim wielding flaming swords.

This dispensation continued through the time of Noah, ending with the judgment of the Flood. The intervening time was a period of increasing human population (Genesis 6:1) along with increasing evil (Genesis 6:5). As a result, God brought judgment on the earth in the form of a worldwide flood that destroyed everyone except Noah and his family.

- a. Responsibility - In this period, the population of mankind expanded and they were expected by God to follow His guidance.
- b. Failure - Rather than be obedient to God, wickedness took over the entirety of mankind except for Noah's family.
- c. Judgment - Because of man's wickedness, God sent a worldwide flood to destroy the world in order to start over.
- d. Grace to Move On - God saved mankind by protecting Noah and his family with an ark that survived the flood. God then began to repopulate the earth with his family.

3. Dispensation of Human Government (Genesis 9:1 - 11:32)

Some dispensationalists use the term "Noahide Law" to designate this period. Following the Great Flood, God gave humanity the responsibility of governing human affairs. This dispensation ended with the dispersion of mankind throughout the world based on what happened at the Tower of Babel.

After the flood, humanity once again began to increase until there were enough people to require human society to be managed. Human beings were given this management responsibility as stewards, and institutions were established for that purpose.

As the population increased, the rejection of God also increased to the point that people began seeking a way to get to God on their own. This resulted in the attempt to reach God by building the tower of Babel. With that, God forced the dispersion of people by causing them to speak different languages. At that point, the various groups moved in different directions and established societies in different parts of the world. In that era, human governments were established in the many locations.

- a. Responsibility - During this era, larger concentrations of people began settling in cities, and people had the responsibility of managing the populations.
- b. Failure - The people rebelled against God by coming to the conclusion they could reach Him by their own acts. This was demonstrated by the building of the Tower of Babel.
- c. Judgment - God judged mankind by causing them to speak different languages. This forced people to disperse to different locations.
- d. Grace to Move On - Rather than destroying the people, God simply caused them to disperse with the chance to refocus on following Him.

4. Dispensation of Promise (Genesis 12:1 - Exodus 19:25)

The dispensation of Promise covered the period from Abraham to Moses. It is also sometimes referred to as Abrahamic Law or Abrahamic Covenant. This era began with Abraham and the covenant God made with him. It continued with exile in and exodus from Egypt, and finally ended with Israel's refusal to enter Canaan that led to the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

The Age of Promise originated with the covenant God made with Abraham in Genesis 15:18 – that He was giving the land of Israel to Abraham and his descendants. It needs to be understood that the dispensation and the covenant are not the same. The covenant was unconditional and was to continue as a blessing in perpetuity. While the covenant was never abrogated, the blessings of the covenant were lost when Israel went to Egypt. The dispensation, however, continued and didn't end until Israel left Egypt and received the Law from Moses.

- a. Responsibility - In this dispensation, God more fully revealed Himself and His ways to a group He chose and called to be His covenant people.
- b. Failure - After being freed from bondage in Egypt, the people turned away from worshipping God and following His guidance.
- c. Judgment - As a result of their rebellion, God made them wander in the wilderness for 40 years so that the disobedient generation would die off.
- d. Grace to Move On - After the 40 years of wandering, the people were allowed to enter and take over the Promised Land. God also, through Moses, gave them the Law so that they would understand more about Him and how to properly worship Him.

5. Dispensation of Law (Exodus 20:1 - Acts 2:4)

The fifth dispensation stretched from Moses to the crucifixion of Christ. It is also referred to as Mosaic Law. The finality of this dispensation was represented by the destruction of the Jerusalem temple by the Romans in 70 A.D. This ended the temple sacrifice and forced all of the Jews out of Israel to be scattered throughout the world.

The Law era began specifically when Israel accepted the Law from Moses in Exodus 19:8. From that time on, Israel was obliged to follow it. They failed at this miserably time after time throughout the entire dispensation. While this period ended officially at the cross, the judgment associated with it occurred with Rome destroying the temple and ejecting the Jews from Israel in 70 A.D.

- a. Responsibility - During this dispensation, the Jews had the Law and were commanded by God to follow it. There were numerous times when they rejected it and followed other gods, but usually, at some point, would return to Him.
- b. Failure - Rather than faithfully follow God, the people rejected Him when they rejected Christ the Messiah.
- c. Judgment - As a result, God allowed the Romans to destroy the temple and disperse the Jews throughout the world.
- d. Grace to Move On - Through Christ, God established a new covenant that allowed people, including the Gentiles, to fulfill His ultimate goal of knowing Him in a personal relationship.

6. Dispensation of Grace (Acts 2:4 - Revelation 3)

The sixth dispensation is also referred to as the Age of Grace or the Church Age. It covers the period of time from Christ's crucifixion to the rapture of the Church, and represents the present dispensation. Under the Law, God required righteousness from man based on the teachings of the Law – which was accomplished by works. With grace, however, God provided righteousness to man by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Revelation 2 - 3 (the letters to the seven churches) have been interpreted in one of two different ways. They are seen either as literal letters to real first-century churches, and/or symbolic representations of successive “church ages.” These chapters are considered a part of the Church Age.

This dispensation began with the death and resurrection of Christ and will continue until an unknown point in time that God determines. The end of the dispensation will be brought about by the apostasy of the Church, and will usher in the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

- a. Responsibility - With this dispensation, access to God is available to everyone in the entire world, and it is up to each individual to give their life to Him through Christ.
- b. Failure - As time progresses, people will increasingly reject Christ.
- c. Judgment - In God's timing, when the world has rejected Him to a particular level, He will rapture the Church and allow Satan to create chaos in the world.
- d. Grace to Move On - Those who are faithful to God will be brought into His kingdom.

Separate Time Frame Interlude: The Great Tribulation (A period between the sixth and seventh dispensations).

As the end of the Age of Grace approaches, the Church will become increasingly apostate. This will be the sign that the present dispensation is coming to a close. At God's appointed time, Christ will come down from heaven and rapture the Church. Believers who are alive at that time will meet Christ in the air and He will escort them to heaven. This is not considered to be Christ's second coming. That does not occur until the end of the Great Tribulation.

Those who are not believers will remain on Earth and be forced to live through the seven year period of the Great Tribulation. This seven years of tribulation represents God's righteous judgment. It will be marked by various divine judgments, heavenly disturbances, natural disasters, and various plagues (see Revelation 6 - 16). While this will be a terrible time of oppression, there will be people who come to Christ, both Jews and Gentiles, during that time.

[Note: The Great Tribulation is not seen as a separate dispensation, but occurs at the end of the Age of Grace. Some count this as a part of the Age of Grace itself, while others see it as a separate period of time not counted in any dispensation.

There is a great deal of dispute about how the period of seven years is derived. However, dispensationalists generally interpret certain verses in Daniel in a way that provides them with this seven-year period. Daniel 9:24 is interpreted to mean there will be a period when sin and iniquity will be righteously judged. In this verse, the 70 weeks are interpreted as being 70 weeks of years (490 years) – each week representing seven years. They reason that there will be seven weeks until the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and 62 more weeks until the Messiah comes and is killed. This leaves one week (seven years) yet to be fulfilled. This is considered to be accomplished during the Great Tribulation.

Also, there are those who believe the seven year tribulation is divided into two parts, with only the second half referred to as The Great Tribulation. In this view, the Rapture occurs at the 3½ year mark, and Christ's second coming occurs 3½ years later at the end of the seven year period.]

What is presented after Revelation 3 and running through chapter 18 is viewed as events that occur during the Great Tribulation. Before the Great Tribulation occurs, the Church will be raptured and will no longer be on the earth. Dispensational Premillennialists believe in a pre-tribulation rapture based on passages like 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and Revelation 3:10. Thus, they see the story of Revelation describing events in the Tribulation as happening to Israel and the nations (non-Christians who were not raptured), not to the Church.

Revelation 6 - 18, in particular, is seen as a detailed account of the seven-year Great Tribulation. This period is actually considered to be separate from the dispensations, and occurs between the sixth and seventh dispensations. In these chapters, the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments are interpreted to unfold sequentially and progressively – each prophesying an intensification of God's wrath.

The Antichrist (Beast), False Prophet, and Satan dominate this period. In these chapters, the focus shifts to ethnic Israel, the 144,000, the rebuilding of the temple, and Israel's eventual national conversion.

Revelation 19 is believed to reveal Christ's return at the end of the Tribulation together with His saints who were raptured before it began. Immediately upon His return, Christ will take on the Antichrist and his armies at the Battle of Armageddon and defeat them.

7. Dispensation of the Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20)

The seventh and final dispensation is characterized by Christ's thousand-year reign on earth from His throne in Jerusalem. It ends with a final rebellion by Satan in which he is defeated and sent, along with all unbelievers, to eternal condemnation in Hell.

In Premillennial Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church are distinct from one another and will have completely different outcomes in the Millennium. In this period, God's promises to Israel in the Old Testament that they would inherit the land will be literally fulfilled on the Earth, while the Church will reign with Jesus throughout the earth.

After the seven years of the Great Tribulation, Christ will return for His second coming, bringing with Him Christians who had previously died in the Lord, the raptured saints, and the faithful Old Testament Jews who were already in heaven. All of these will return with Him in glorified bodies. At that point, the battle of Armageddon will occur and Christ will defeat the armies of Earth led by the Antichrist. Then, Satan will be bound for a thousand years.

With that victory, Jesus will take up His throne in Jerusalem and set up His thousand-year earthly rule as king. There He will rule over the entire earth (Isaiah 2:3) bringing peace and righteousness to the world. At that point, the nation of Israel will be restored and the Jews will finally live out the promise God made to the nation that they would inherit the land. Throughout His reign, there will be no war (Isaiah 2:4), and even the animals will dwell together in harmony (Isaiah 11:6-9).

During the Millennium, there will be two classes of people on earth – those with glorified bodies and those with natural physical bodies.

The people with glorified bodies are the believers who died in Christ before the Rapture, those who met Christ in the air at the Rapture, and the faithful Old Testament Jews who died before the Rapture. According to some interpreters, this will also include people who came to Christ and were martyred during the Tribulation. Jews with glorified bodies will live in Israel alongside mortal Jews to fulfill the Old Testament covenant promises. Christians with glorified bodies will rule as administrators throughout the world for the duration of Christ's thousand-year reign.

Those with physical bodies will be the Jews and Gentiles who became Christians during the Tribulation and survived it. At the beginning of the Millennium, as Jesus sets up His millennial kingdom, there will be a judgment of sheep and

goats (Matthew 25:3-46). The sheep are people who came to Christ during the Tribulation, while the goats are those who did not. The sheep will be allowed into the Millennial kingdom while the goats will be cast into the Lake of Fire. No unbelievers will enter Christ's Millennial kingdom. Those mortals who become a part of Christ's millennial kingdom will live long and prosperous lives throughout the entire period.

Mortal Jews, along with those with glorified bodies, will live in the land of Israel during the entire Millennium where they will possess the land and literally fulfill the covenant God made with the nation in the Old Testament. The mortals will marry, have families, and repopulate the land (Isaiah 65:20). Temple sacrifice will also be reinstated, though it will have a symbolic significance rather than something necessary for the forgiveness of sins (Ezekiel 40 - 48).

Mortal believing Gentiles will live throughout the world in their own lands. They will also marry, have families, and repopulate the rest of the world (Isaiah 65:20).

Both the Jews and Gentiles will be subject to Christ's righteous rule during this time. Thus, the earth will be fully populated by the end of the Millennium.

[**Note:** There will be those born during the millennial period who will not believe. They will ultimately be the ones Satan leads in rebellion against Christ at the end of the Millennium at the war of Gog and Magog.]

- a. Responsibility - When Christ returns, He will reign as the king of the world from His throne in Jerusalem.
- b. Failure - At the end of Christ's thousand-year reign, Satan will be released and lead a rebellion against Him.
- c. Judgment - Christ will defeat Satan and his followers, and after their defeat they will be relegated to Hell.
- d. Grace to Move On - Those who are faithful to Christ will be transported to live eternally in the new heavens and new earth.

Separate Time Frame (or for some, an eighth dispensation) - The Eternal State (Revelation 20 - 21)

Chapters 20 - 21 depict the Millennium, final judgment, eternal state, and the new creation. At the end of the Millennium, Satan will be released for a short time to deceive the nations (Revelation 20:7). With this, he will gather the rebellious ones throughout the world for a final battle of Gog and Magog (Revelation 20:8-9). In that battle, fire will descend from heaven and devour the rebels ending the war. (Revelation 20:10). At that point, Satan will be judged and permanently cast into the Lake of Fire. Following that battle, God will institute the Great White Throne Judgment where unbelievers will be judged and cast into Hell with Satan.

After the Great White Throne Judgment, the present heavens and earth will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10-13) and the new heavens and new earth will be created. The new heavens and earth represent the entire created order being renewed. Everything that had been corrupted by sin, death, and decay from the time of Adam and Eve will be transformed into a perfect, incorruptible creation.

Once that is put into place, the New Jerusalem will descend from heaven to the new earth (Revelation 21:2). This will be the eternal dwelling place of God. It will also be the eternal dwelling place of the Church (the Bride of Christ). It will be located somehow in relation to the New Earth. Some believe it will actually descend to the Earth, while others believe it will hover over the Earth.

With that, all those who do not yet have glorified bodies will receive them – Jews and Gentiles alike. In the eternal state, while it transcends national divisions, Israel's identity will still be memorialized in the New Jerusalem's gates (Revelation 21:12-13). All saints of all ages will then dwell together forever in the New Heavens and New Earth (Revelation 22:3-5).

Dispensational Premillennialism Timeline

1. First Dispensation - Age of Innocence (Genesis 1:1 - 3:7) - This period begins with Adam prior to the Fall and ends with Adam and Eve being expelled from the Garden of Eden.

2. Second Dispensation - Age of Conscience (Genesis 3:8 - 8:22) This dispensation begins immediately after the Fall and ends with the worldwide flood that destroyed all of mankind except for Noah's family.
3. Third Dispensation - Age of Human Government (Genesis 8:15 - 11:32) - Following the Great Flood, God gave humanity the responsibility of governing human affairs. This dispensation ended with the dispersion of mankind throughout the world based on what happened at the Tower of Babel.
4. Fourth Dispensation - The Age of Promise (Genesis 12:1 - Exodus 19:25) - The dispensation of Promise covered the period from Abraham to Moses.
5. Fifth Dispensation - Dispensation of Law (Exodus 19:3 - Acts 1:26) - The fifth dispensation stretched from Moses to the crucifixion of Christ.
6. Sixth Dispensation - Age of Grace (Acts 2:4 - Revelation 20:3) - This dispensation covers the period of time from Christ's crucifixion to the rapture of the Church.

Extradispensational Period - The Great Tribulation

7. Seventh Dispensation - Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:4-6) - The seventh and final dispensation is characterized by Christ's 1000 year reign on earth from His throne in Jerusalem.

Extradispensational Period - The Eternal State

Conclusion

We will next, in part 3, deal with Postmillennialism. Once again, it is my hope that this deep dive into the various interpretive approaches to understanding the book of Revelation will be a great help in your personal understanding of Scripture and of a biblical worldview.

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