

Millennium, Tribulation, Rapture

In Revelation 20:1–10, John sees a vision in which Satan is bound and some Christian martyrs are raised from the dead. Faithful saints reign with Christ for one thousand years, and then Satan is released, but only to be cast in the lake of fire following a final battle.

Over the centuries Christians have adopted various positions with regard to what they think this vision of the “millennium” means:

- **Premillennialism.** Christ returns before the millennium: his faithful saints rule with him on earth for one thousand years after the second coming but prior to the final judgment and establishment of the new kingdom.
- **Postmillennialism.** Christ returns after the millennium: his faithful saints will successfully evangelize the world and rule it in peace for one thousand years before Christ’s second coming.
- **Amillennialism.** Christ returns without any literal millennium: his faithful saints experience spiritual victory symbolized in Revelation as a triumph equivalent to a thousand-year reign.

Premillennialists take a futurist approach to interpreting Revelation and sometimes try to relate their understanding of the book to two other eschatological events: the *tribulation* (a seven-year period of woes thought to be described in Rev. 6–9 and specifically mentioned in Dan. 9:27; Rev. 11:2–3) and the *rapture* (a miraculous removal of God’s faithful from the earth thought to be referenced in Matt. 24:40–41; 1 Thess. 4:15–17; Rev. 4:1).

Thus, premillennialism yields subcategories:

- **Pretribulationism.** The rapture will come prior to the onset of the tribulation (so, the unfaithful who are left behind will receive a wake-up call regarding what is now to come).
- **Midtribulationism.** The rapture will come at some midpoint during the tribulation (so, the faithful may regard any onset of terrible woes as a possible sign that the rapture is near).
- **Posttribulationism.** The rapture will come after the tribulation, at the time of Jesus’ second coming (so, even the faithful should expect to endure suffering prior to Christ’s return).