

***Christ in Prophecy***  
**“Prophecy 9: End Time Viewpoints”**

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**Opening**

*Dr. Reagan:* I'm sure you've heard the terms Premillennial, Postmillennial, Amillennial, and even Panmillennial. What do they mean? And does it really matter? Is there really a viewpoint of end time Bible prophecy that makes any sense? One that is understandable and which really lines up with what the Bible says about the return of Jesus?

**Message**

*Dr. Reagan:* Greetings in the name of Jesus our blessed hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. This is the fifth in a series of programs on the fundamentals of Bible prophecy. In our first program we took a look at the way Bible prophecy has been ignored and the many ways in which it has been abused. In our second program we examined the importance of prophecy and we concluded that there are many reasons why every Christian should be interested in studying God's Prophetic Word. Our third program focused on the variety of Bible prophecy. We took a look at written prophecy, oral prophecy, acted prophecy, and symbolic prophecy. In our fourth program, we considered the interpretation of Bible prophecy and we saw that the key to understanding it is to accept it for its plain sense meaning. This week, we're going to take a look at the end time viewpoints, the different ways that people have interpreted what the Bible says about the Second Coming of Jesus.

*Dr. Reagan:* My topic for this session is end time viewpoints. Bible prophecy tends to be a very confusing subject for a lot of people because what it says about the end times has been interpreted in so many, many different ways. One of the jokes that goes around that illustrates this point is the joke about four pastors who were sitting together one day at lunch just talking and one of them said, “Hey fellows, you know, I'm Premillennial.” And everybody sat there for a moment and thought about it, and another one said, “Well you know what, I am Amillennial” and a third one said, “Well so what? I'm

Postmillennial.” The fourth one didn’t say a thing he just kept drinking his coffee. Finally they turned to him and said, “Well brother, what are you?” he said, “Well I haven’t got the slightest idea what’s happening in the end times, so I am a Panmillennialist, I believe it will all just pan out in the end.” Now, you know, I have never considered that joke to be funny, and the reason I don’t consider it to be funny is because I consider anybody who is a Panmillennialist to be a person who is just simply admitting that they are too lazy to spend the time to study the Word of God and develop an opinion. Just like any doctrine God wants us to study, and He wants us to develop an attitude about that, and an understanding of it. And He certainly does not want us to ignore Bible prophecy in the process.

There are basically four fundamental viewpoints about the end times. And what I want to do in this presentation is to give you a look at all four of these and I want to present them in historical order the way they developed in history.

The first is called, Historic Premillennialism. It’s called historic because it was the original view of the Church. It was the only view that existed for the first four hundred years of the Church. And there is no doubt about that, there’s not controversy about that. Even people who hold a different viewpoint will agree this was the only view that existed in the early Church. We know this from the writings of the Church fathers. It is called Premillennial, those are two Latin words really, Premillennial, before the Millennium. It means that there’s a belief here that Jesus Christ is coming back to this earth and He will be here on this earth during a 1,000 year period of time, when He will be reigning over all of the nations of the world, Premillennial.

Here is what that viewpoint looks like. It begins with Pentecost and the establishment of the Church. And the first period is the period of the Church Age. We’re not told how long that will last, we just lasted 1900 years plus. I think we’re near the end of it, but the Bible does not clearly reveal how long it will be. I have those two little lines across the mainline to indicate that the mainline is not drawn to scale because if it were drawn to scale it’d be longer than this screen. This particular period is going to be followed by a period called the Tribulation, lasting seven years. Three and a half years the little diamond point at which the Antichrist will walk into a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, he will defile the

temple, he will declare himself to be god and he will begin to persecute the Jewish people in their worst persecution in history.

The third period, also not drawn to scale, is the Millennium, of one thousand years, when Jesus will reign over all the earth will be flooded with peace righteousness and justice as the waters cover the sea. So we have three periods, the Church Age 1900 years plus, the Tribulation 7 years, the Millennium, a 1000 years. And then the last period, and that is eternity. Eternity on a new earth not eternity in Heaven. Heaven will come to earth and we will live on a new earth in glorified bodies in a new Jerusalem for all eternity.

One last aspect of this chart and that is, according to this viewpoint, Jesus will appear in the Heavens at the end of the Tribulation and the Church will be taken up to meet Him and return immediately with Him. In other words, this viewpoint combines the Rapture with the Second Coming as all one event. People who don't like this often to refer to it as the yoyo Rapture, you go up and you go right back down just as fast as you go up. And you come back to reign with the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no concept in this viewpoint of a difference between a Rapture and a Second Coming, its all one event at the end of this particular period called the Tribulation. Now this is the literal interpretation of what the Scriptures say. And this is as I say was the only systematic view of the end times that existed during the first three hundred years of Church history.

In fact it was so strongly held that this man, Justin Martyr who lived from 100-165 AD, Justin Martyr wrote that anyone who had a different viewpoint than this was a heretic. Even back in those days people threw rocks at each other if they disagreed with each other over something. The fact that this view is the one that was held by the early Church fathers though does not make it the correct view. You have to understand that the early Church fathers were not prophetic scholars they wrote very little about Bible prophecy. You can go through all the writings of the early Church fathers and find almost nothing about Bible prophecy. When they did express something they expressed this viewpoint but they spent little time on it. Their concern was not Bible prophecy, their concern was primarily who was Jesus. Was He God in the flesh? Defining the nature of Jesus, defining the purpose of the Church, defining the fundamental doctrines of the Church. They didn't really have time for Bible prophecy.

The person who laid the groundwork for a radically different view was this man, Origin, who truly was a heretic in many regards. He lived from 185-254 AD he lived in northern Egypt in the city of Alexandria he was a great intellectual and he is the man who originated the process of spiritualizing Scripture. He was the first person that we have any record of who said Scripture does not mean what it says. But he applied this to all of Scripture not just Bible prophecy that it does not mean what it says. That there's always another meaning, a hidden meaning, and the true meaning of all Scripture is beneath the surface, so he tended to spiritualize or allegorize all of Scripture and make all of Scripture symbolic in nature. He did not particularly apply this to Bible prophecy, he just established this viewpoint of how to approach the Scriptures.

The person who took Origin's view and applied it to Bible prophecy was this man, Saint Augustine, who became the greatest of all the Church fathers because he had a greater impact upon the formation of Church doctrine than really all of the Church fathers put together. He was the one who took the spiritualizing viewpoint, the allegorizing viewpoint, and applied it to Bible prophecy, and in about 400 AD he did that and came up with a whole new system of interpretation. It was called Amillennialism. Very strange word, Amillennialism, sounds like you're clearing your throat. Well there's a reason it's called that. In the Greek language if you want to negate a word you put "a" in front of it and that negates it. So basically what this means using that Greek principle is Amillennialism means no Millennium. This is a view point that denies a literal Millennium.

Now they do believe in a Millennium but they believe in a spiritualized Millennium not a literal Millennium when Jesus will reign here upon this earth. So that is the way this particular viewpoint developed through the spiritualization of Scripture and that's how it got its name. Now here is what it looks like. This particular view starts out the same as the other. With the establishment of the Church on Pentecost, the Church Age lasting some 1900 years plus. Again they never said how long it will last, but at the end of the Church Age, Jesus appears and the Church is taken out of the world, and we go to live with Jesus and God the Father for eternity in Heaven. Quite a radically different view from the first one, completely based upon the spiritualization of Scripture. This view was immediately adopted by the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD.

And if you think about this view you can understand why it was adopted so quickly because it suddenly said there is no future for the Jewish people. There is no such thing as a kingdom where Jesus Christ is going to come back and reign from Jerusalem and the Jewish people will be established as the prime nation of the world. No the Church has replaced Israel the Church is now what it's all about. The Church is the kingdom and whoever is in charge of the Church is the vicar of Christ on earth. And therefore is the representative of God on earth and all nations of the world should subject themselves therefore to the Church and to its holy reign. You can understand why the Church loved this viewpoint and why it adopted it and why the Church holds this viewpoint to this very day.

Now since the view was so radically different it raised some very serious questions. Let's look at the questions. The first question, "Where is the Millennium?" Augustine's answer was, "We are in it right now." The Millennium began at the cross and it will continue until the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus is reigning in Heaven right now over all the nations of the earth. So we are in the Millennium. You know, I always have found that very difficult to accept because all I can say is if He's reigning over all the nations of the world today He is doing a very poor job of it. Because every nation on planet Earth including the United States of America is in revolt against God Almighty and His anointed one Jesus Christ. But this is the viewpoint. He is reigning in Heaven today He is reigning over all the nation of the world we are in the Millennium.

What about the thousand years? Well, Augustine believed it really would be a thousand years and the Lord would come back at the end of a thousand years. But when the thousand years past, those who held this viewpoint simply spiritualized the thousand years and said, "Well it doesn't really mean a thousand years, it just means an indefinite period of time." And it will be the time between the first coming and the Second Coming, regardless of the length of that time.

Another question, "How could we be living in the Millennium when there is so much evil in the world?" The Bible describes the Millennium as a time of peace and prosperity and righteousness. How could we say that we are in the Millennium? And the answer to that always has been, "Well it's all relative, you see the Holy Spirit is in the world today, the Holy Spirit came as a result of the establishment of the Church, the Holy Spirit is in the

world in a special way and because the Holy Spirit is here, evil is restrained. If the Holy Spirit were not here, boy it would be a hundred times worse than it is." So relatively speaking, we're in the Millennium because it's not as bad as it could be. Not the way I read the Scripture but that's the explanation.

Okay, where is the Tribulation? Where is the Tribulation? There's no Tribulation in this viewpoint. The answer again, "We're in the Tribulation now." The Tribulation is spiritualized. And again the idea is we are simultaneously in the Millennium and in the Tribulation. We are in the Millennium because the Holy Spirit is in the world, we are in the Tribulation because the Church is being persecuted and always will be.

What about the seven years that the Bible says the Tribulation will answer? Well the seven years doesn't mean seven years. The number seven just stands for perfection. It stands for completion. So you know, the Tribulation might last 2000 years but the seven years just simply means a complete period of time. You see how all of this is based on the spiritualization of everything, the words, the concepts, the numbers, everything has to be spiritualized.

Where is the second resurrection? The Bible says there's going to be two resurrections, a resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust. Where is it? There's only one resurrection here, the resurrection that occurs at the end of the Church Age. It's a major problem for this viewpoint. Augustine's answer was, "The first resurrection was a spiritual one, the first resurrection is the one that you experience whenever you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. The second resurrection though will be a literal one at the end of the Church Age." About the only thing he made literal. So he makes one resurrection spiritual, the other one literal, and that way he comes up with two resurrections.

Okay, next question. Where is the new earth? The Bible says we're going to spend eternity on a new earth. Where is that new earth? His answer, that's just code language, code language for Heaven. Certainly we're not going to spend eternity on a new earth because that would violate one of the fundamental principles of Greek philosophy. One of the fundamental principles of Greek philosophy is that everything material is evil. And therefore those things that are holy and spiritual cannot be mixed with those things that

are material and therefore the release of the spirit from the body is a good thing because it gets away from this evil thing. That's where Gnosticism came from. The Gnostics began to say, "How could God who is holy be inside a real human body since the body is evil, therefore Jesus was just a spirit and not a real being." So he spiritualized it and said no it's just going to be Heaven.

Where is Satan? Is Satan bound during this time? The Bible says during the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ, Satan will be bound. Is he bound? The amazing answer then and today by Amillennialists today is "Yes, Satan is bound. He was bound at the cross and he's bound now." I was teaching this one time and a guy got so upset he jumped up and interrupted me. He said, "What do you mean he's bound?" I said, "Well I'm not saying this, I'm saying this is this viewpoint." He said, "Well I'll tell you one thing buddy! If he's bound now he's bound on a very long chain cause he's always chewing on my leg!" and I said, "Well, all I've got to say is 'amen! That's right!'" Furthermore the argument is that as a result of the Holy Spirit coming into the world and the Holy Spirit indwelling believers, Satan is bound because He who is within us is greater than he who is in the world. That is the argument. But if you look at the Scripture, the Scripture doesn't say that, what the Scripture says is that Satan will be bound in a special way, he will be bound so that he can no longer deceive the nations. Well, are the nations deceived today? I think so. Therefore I do not believe that Satan has been bound in the way in which this viewpoint holds because when he's bound the nations will no longer be deceived.

Okay, that is what we call the Amillennial view. It is the dominate view in Christianity today. This is the majority viewpoint. This is the view that is held by the Roman Catholic Church, it is the viewpoint that is held by vast majority of main line Protestant denominations. The overwhelming majority of all professing Christians on planet earth today believe in this particular viewpoint of the end times.

Now this brings us to the third view. The third view of end time events was developed by an English Unitarian minister of all things. An English Unitarian minister by the name of Daniel Whitby who lived from 1638-1726. It was in the 17<sup>th</sup> century there that he began to develop this new view of the end times. And this view was a product of 17<sup>th</sup> century rationalistic thinking. It is therefore grounded, the whole view, grounded upon a basic

fallacy. It's grounded upon an assumption that is unbiblical as it can possibly be. The assumption it's grounded upon is the goodness of man. The essential goodness of man and the perfectibility of man. People who hold this viewpoint believe that man can be perfected and that man is gonna get better and better and better and better until finally the Church takes over the whole world and the Church reigns over the whole world. This was an expression of the enlightenment attitude at the period of time that Daniel Whitby wrote. Remember this is by a Unitarian minister who didn't even believe in the divinity of Christ.

Now, here is what postmillennialism looks like. It begins with the Church Age and it says that during the Church Age the Church will be expanding worldwide, we will be converting more and more and more and more people until finally the Church converts the world. When the Church converts the world the Millennium will begin. What's often referred to in their writings as the golden age and for one thousand years the Church will reign over the earth and peace righteousness and justice that will be the Millennium, a literal Millennium of a thousand years. At the end of that Millennium Jesus will appear in the Heavens, the Church will be taken out and we will go to live with Jesus forever in Heaven. So in this particular viewpoint there is no particular Tribulation, in this particular viewpoint the Millennium will be the Church reigning over the world after the Church has converted the world. And Jesus will come at the end of the Millennium never return to this earth, simply appear in the Heavens take us out. It is called Postmillennial because it says Jesus will come after, post, after the Millennium. As you can see this is a very unbiblical viewpoint, very unbiblical. Because if the Bible teaches anything and Jesus teaches it point blank, it teaches that the Church will never convert the world. It teaches in fact the exact opposite, that the vast majority of all people will always reject the Gospel because of the hardness of people's hearts, the Gospel will be rejected. What did Jesus say? The road to Heaven is very narrow, the road to hell is very wide. It's just absolutely contrary to what the Bible teaches.

Okay this brings us to the fourth viewpoint. The fourth viewpoint, which is called Modern Premillennialism was developed by this man, John Darby who lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. And this photograph was taken on a very bad hair day for John Darby, but John Darby was quite a Bible scholar and student. And he was a member of the Plymouth Brethren in England and they held prophetic conferences all over Europe for years and years in



the early 1800's. During those conferences, they kept trying to deal with a difficult problem. And that problem was that the Bible says that there are certain prophecies that have to be fulfilled before Jesus comes, yet the Bible says the return of Jesus is imminent. It could occur at any moment. They kept wrestling with that and wrestling with that, how can we solve that problem? How can we solve the problem that says Jesus can come only after certain prophecies are fulfilled and yet the coming of Jesus is imminent and can occur any moment. And they finally got an idea one day and that was that the coming of Jesus is going to be in two stages, first the Rapture taking the Church out of the world, followed by the Second Coming. That the Rapture was an imminent event, that the Rapture could occur literally at any moment. The Second Coming was an event that could occur only after certain prophecies were fulfilled. They felt like they have solved the dilemma of Scripture where it says that the coming of the Lord is imminent yet it says the Second Coming must be preceded by a whole series of prophecies. And so they came up with a new viewpoint. This viewpoint was called the Modern Premillennial.

It starts as the others with the establishment of the Church, the Church Age, followed by the Tribulation of 7 years, followed by the Millennium of 1000 years, followed by eternity on a new earth. So to this point it's exactly like the first viewpoint. No difference whatsoever. Where the difference comes is the insertion of the Rapture. Jesus appears at the end of the Church Age and takes the Church out of the world. And then the Church is in Heaven with Jesus during the period of the Tribulation. At the end of the Tribulation the Church returns with Jesus to this earth and begins to reign with him for a thousand years. So the separation of the Rapture from the Second Coming is the distinctive aspect of this particular viewpoint and this is what we call Modern Premillennialism.

Now, this particular view raises a problem also, the Bible says there's only two resurrections but this viewpoint has several. The first resurrection it would point to is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that occurred after His crucifixion. The Bible refers to it as the first fruits of the righteous, the first fruits of the righteous. The second resurrection occurs at the end of the Church Age, that's the resurrection of Church Age saints who are taken up to meet the Lord in the sky. The third resurrection takes place at the end of the Tribulation, this is the resurrection of the Tribulation martyrs, and the resurrection of the Old Testament Saints. You see Old Testament Saints are not part of the Rapture.

The Rapture is a promise to the Church. It's a promise to the Bride of Christ. It's at the third one that the Old Testament saints are resurrected and the Tribulation martyrs and then these three are put together as the first resurrection. The argument being, that when Jesus refers and the Scriptures refer to two resurrections it's referring to two resurrections in kind, not two resurrections in number. There are two resurrections in kind, the resurrection of the just, and the resurrection of the unjust. The resurrection of the unjust will occur at the end of the Millennial reign. The resurrection of the just will occur in three stages. All of which constitute the first resurrection, the resurrection of the just. And those correspond with the Jewish cycle of agriculture. In the Jewish cycle of agriculture when it came time to bring in a crop like the wheat crop from the field, the first thing they did was to take a part of the very finest and offer it up to God as the first fruits. Then they waited awhile and did the general harvest but they left the corners of the field which were the gleanings. So every harvest was in three stages. The first fruits the general harvest, and then the gleanings. The first fruit is Jesus Christ, the general harvest, the Church Age saints, the gleanings, the Old Testament Saints and the Tribulation martyrs.

Now let me just make a very brief comment about the separation of the Rapture and the Second Coming. Where in the world did they get that concept from? Well they got it right out of Scripture, it's always been there. If you take a look at first Thessalonians four, and you compare it with Revelation 19, those are the only two detailed descriptions in the Scripture of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and they have nothing in common. First Thessalonians four is as different from Revelation 19 as night is from day. The only thing they have in common is that both focus upon Jesus Christ. In First Thessalonians 4 Jesus comes in grace, in Revelation 20 He returns in wrath. First Thessalonians 4 He comes as a Bridegroom, in Revelation 20 He comes as a King. In first Thessalonians 4 He comes for His Church, in Revelation 19 He brings His Church with him. And I could go on and on. The two are just as different as they can be.

Furthermore, the Bible says no one can know the date of the Lord's return but folks there's a problem there. Anybody can calculate the date of the Second Coming. Because the Second Coming is going to occur exactly 2520 days after a peace treaty is signed that allows Israel to rebuilt the temple. The Bible says so, 2520 days. Anybody here during the Tribulation will be able to calculate the exact date that Jesus is going to

return. Therefore when the Bible says nobody can know the date of the Lord's return it has to be referring to the Rapture not to the Second Coming. The Rapture is the event that no one knows when it will occur because it's imminent and could occur any moment.

Most important is that word imminence. The Bible says over and over the return of the Lord is imminent. Something that is imminent means it can happen any moment the Second Coming of the Lord cannot happen any moment there are too many prophecies that have to be fulfilled. But the Rapture could occur any moment. There is not one prophecy that has to be fulfilled. And for that reason the Plymouth Brethren separated the Rapture from the Second Coming. And since that time, lo and behold we have discovered that many had done it before that. More and more manuscripts are being discovered by the underground Church that existed during the period that the Roman Catholic Church dominated. The underground Church that was terribly persecuted more and more documents are found where they relied upon the literal meaning of the Word and came up with the idea that there would be a Rapture that would be separate and apart from the Second Coming of the Church.

Now, let me conclude by mentioning that the similarities between these viewpoints. The similarities are more important than the differences. All agree that Jesus is coming back for his saints, all agree that the redeemed will spend eternity in the presence of God. The differences are significant, two of the views the Amillennial and Postmillennial deny that Jesus will ever reign over this world. And one of the views, the Postmillennial denies the soon coming of the Lord, if you hold that view you cannot believe that the Lord is coming soon because there's too many prophecies that must be fulfilled. I want to end with an appeal, and a reminder. The key here is spiritualization, always spiritualization. If you spiritualize Scripture you'll have one view if you don't if you take its literal meaning you'll have another. An appeal, accept the message of Scripture for its plain sense meaning. Don't play games with God's word by spiritualizing it. And then the reminder, the first coming prophecies meant what they said, that should be our guide for interpreting the prophecies of the Second Coming.

Well folks, that's our program for this week. I hope it has been a blessing to you and I hope you will be back with us next week when we will continue this series on the fundamentals of Bible prophecy by taking a look at the signs of the times. We will look in

detail at the six major categories of signs that point to the soon return of Jesus and we will see that one category, the signs of Israel, are more important than all the rest put together. Until next week this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb and Lion Ministries saying look up! Be watchful! For our redemption is drawing near!

**End of Program**