

1. **Introduction & Response to Question From Last Class About Rapture, Millenium Reign of Christ, Separate "Channels" for Israel and Gentile Believers, etc. (i.e, a Premil Dispensational View or Historic Premil)**
 - I do not know which of the many interpretations of Revelation is correct. A summary of viewpoints from earlier lessons is included below. I do know that some interpretations appear more consistent with and better fits with Scripture and its principles. There seem to be well-trained godly people supporting each of the interpretations. The interpretations are so different that they cannot all be right, but they can all be wrong or partially wrong.
 - As explained when we began last year, this class does not follow any specific one of the many interpretation versions. We consider the text of Revelation (in context of the old and new Testaments) and look for a thread of consistency. God has always had a plan that He is executing. That plan will culminate in a vast number of believers who will live eternally with Him in the New Jerusalem. Jesus who took to Himself the sins of believers, paid the death penalty and received the Father's wrath due those sins is the key to God's plan.
 - I approach questions about interpretation with questions of my own. In the case of the "Rapture" concept, does God ever create (or promote) Chaos or Does God only create order and beauty? In Genesis, Earth is described as initially formless and empty, a state of raw chaos. God actively shaped and changed the chaos to form order. I believe chaos and degradation exist on the finished earth because fallen Lucifer was permitted to successfully tempt (test) Adam and Eve to disobey God.
 - Rapture, as depicted by adherents to the concept, would cause enormous chaos, destruction, and death. Driverless autos, trucks, pilotless aircraft and all kinds of other deadly chaos (like the lack of control of nuclear reactors, insufficient control of all kinds of deadly processes, etc.) In other words, the results of a "left behind" rapture would be utter deadly chaos.
2. **Question:** Does God create chaos without a judgment reason? It seems unlikely. If a nonjudgement rapture occurred, what would be its source? The source would seem to not be God. The source could derive from Satan whose evil plans would seem to be enhanced by the creation of chaos
 - Why would God (or could He?) violate the attributes of His nature to positively create such chaos? He might indeed permit chaos as a judgment on evil, but I cannot believe He would deliberately create such deadly chaos simply to rescue believers before they could suffer in a great tribulation.
 - That doesn't fit the experience of the martyrs. Their experience in this world was that their lives were ended in agony and pain rather than deny God. Then God took them to Himself, not before.
3. **Final Comment:** On such subjects as "rapture" I much prefer to leave the discussion to others to, but I will always attempt to answer all direct questions to the best of my ability as God enables
 - My inclination with such issues is to always go back to fundamentals like God's attributes, the Genesis account of how humans died spiritually, lost their holiness, lost their eternal life, began to die physically and did so eventually, all because they wanted to make their own independent decisions. As a "Test," God allowed them to decide for themselves about eating the forbidden fruit. It is the only test Adam and Eve faced in the Garden. THEY FAILED!
 - They and all their descendants (including you and I) suffer the continuing effects brought about by their sinful rejection of God's one requirement that they obey their Creator.
 - When faced with questions about God's intent, focus on the positive attributes of God. He creates only order and beauty, never chaos and evil. He gave us Christ to undo the chaotic effects of sin brought about Adam and Eve's violation of God's one restriction placed on them.

4. **What God Requires of Us is Not Complicated.** It is the one thing He required of Adam and Eve. Simply obey Him. He has only our best interests in mind. He is the Creator. We are created. We can never be His equal. His desire is that we obediently follow Him to the New Jerusalem where we will live forever in His very presence.
 5. **Question:** “Does God’s nature permit Him to create chaos?” Much of chaos we know about produces confusion, death, and destruction. My contention is that God does not create that kind of chaos.
 6. Are there other types of chaos? Yes, and we are familiar with at least one type of “controlled chaos.”
 7. When God created the universe, He did so through a tightly controlled explosion that if uncontrolled would have been pure chaos. But His very precise control of the expansion of the initial material that resembled chaos enabled God to manage and fine-tune Cosmological factors as they developed so that the only result possible was the universe as we know it, a universe prepared for developing and sustaining life.
 8. The following set of comments is a summary of some things about God that I learned from science and engineering. God’s plan has controlled the universe from its beginning.
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Possible Timeline of the Universe

1. **The Beginning:** A microscopic point of energy expanded at an incredible speed.
2. **First Minutes:** The fledgling universe cooled down enough to form simple atoms like hydrogen and helium.
3. **Millions of Years Later:** Gravity pulled gas together to build the first stars and galaxies
4. **Today:** The universe continues to grow and expand.
5. **Measured Evidence** includes the **Expanding Universe:** Distant galaxies move away from earth.
6. **Leftover Heat:** Faint cosmic microwave background radiation echoes from the early universe.
7. **Element Ratios:** The actual amount of hydrogen and helium in space match theoretical prediction almost perfectly.

Finely-Tuned Universe

1. **Cosmological Constant (A):** The cosmological constant, which controls the acceleration of the universe’s expansion, must not allow expansion too fast or there could be no galaxies, stars, or planets. Expand too slowly, and the universe would have collapsed back in on itself before life was possible. The fine-tuning of the cosmological constant is about 1 part in 10^{120} .
2. **Primordial Inhomogeneity (Q):** Q represents the amplitude of density ripples in the early universe. It is a value of about 10^{-5} . A slightly smaller Q and gas clouds would never collapse to form galaxies. Slightly larger Q and galaxies would have formed too early and collapsed into massive black holes, preventing stable planetary systems from forming.

The Four Fundamental Forces

1. **Strong Nuclear Force Coupling Constant:** The force that holds atomic nuclei together. A change of as little as 1-2% would be catastrophic. Slightly weaker and protons couldn’t bind together. Then hydrogen would be the only element in the universe (no carbon, oxygen, water, and no life). Slightly larger and all hydrogen would have converted to helium during the Big Bang, meaning there would be no water, no long-lived stars.
2. **Weak Nuclear Force Coupling Constant:** A constant controlling the radioactive decay and nuclear fusion in stars. If slightly weaker, no hydrogen would have been converted to helium during the Big Bang. Stars would have no fuel. Slightly stronger and all hydrogen would have turned into helium instantly. It also fine tunes supernova explosions as required to scatter heavy life-essential elements (like iron and carbon) into space.

3. **Electromagnetic Force:** This force determines the strength of the bond between electrons and atomic nuclei. Slightly weaker and electrons would fly off making chemical bonds impossible. Slightly stronger and atoms would not share electrons, meaning there would be no chemical bonds, no chemical reactions, no complex molecules, no chemical reactions. Complex molecules (like DNA) could not form.
4. **Gravitational Force:** Gravity is an exceptionally weak force compared to the other forces (by a factor of 10^{36}). If gravity were slightly stronger, stars would burn through their fuel in millions of years rather than in billions of years. That would leave no time for the development of the factors God used to form life. If weaker, stars would never become hot or dense enough to ignite nuclear fusion which is essential to their function.

Matter and Mass Ratios

1. **Proton-to-Electron Mass Ratio:** The mass of a proton is about 1,836 times the mass of an electron. If this ratio were slightly different, stable molecular orbitals could not form. There would be no DNA and proteins, hence no life.
2. **Mass Difference Between Neutrons and Protons:** A neutron is heavier than a proton by about 0.14%. A slightly smaller ratio and protons would easily decay into neutrons, causing all atoms to collapse. If a slightly larger ratio, neutrons would have decayed so quickly after the Big Bang that heavy elements could never have formed.

Chaos Resolved

1. As God created, He seems to have progressed through a necessary period of Big Bang controlled chaos to a point where He resolved the chaos, completed creation, and declared the result to be “very good.”
2. Noah’s flood was a judgment on evil that produced chaos and death that was almost universal.
3. An end-times rapture to prevent believers from suffering during a period of tribulation seems different in character and doesn’t fit with the picture of tortured martyrs through the ages willingly suffering and dying rather than deny God.
4. Martyrs died (and many still die today) in agony and pain. Only then are they taken to God where they are given a place to rest under His altar.
5. If rapture that avoids tribulation is possible, why was it necessary for the martyrs to remain on earth during their tribulation? Why not “rapture” them?
6. I don’t pretend to know all the details of God’s plan for His people. Some things are simply baffling. Many people in OT Israel so misunderstood the many prophecies about Messiah that when the promised One came, they crucified Him and asked God to count His blood against them and their descendants.
7. One thing I do know. Ultimately God’s people from all the ages will be drawn together to live eternally in the New Jerusalem in God’s very presence.
8. Before the consummation of all things, will there be an end-times’ rapture that takes believers (living and dead) away from earth to be with God? If so, what will be its nature? I don’t know “what such a rapture would look like if it did occur! I’m content to leave “all that” to God. I believe my task is to strive with all my might to obey the things He clearly commands.
9. What I am confident of is that the destiny of believers through the ages is and has always been in God’s hands and He ultimately intends believers to live eternally in His presence in the New Jerusalem. What more do we need to know? Certainly not all the details. Trust God and obey Him. There is no other way.
10. We know our ultimate destination is a forever-life in the very presence of our Creator Lord and God. How glorious and gracious that promise should sound to our anxious ears!
11. **Next:** Review material from the first two lessons on Revelation from 2025. First an introductory summary. Then info on the 4 principal methodologies used in interpreting Revelation. Finally, a summary of the Eschatological Prophecy viewpoints used in interpreting Revelation.

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1. **Revelation – 22 chapters, 404 verses:** The following material is copied from the first 2 lessons on Revelation in 2025. Many people consider Revelation difficult to understand. Difficult or not, it is undeniable that interpretations of Revelation differ significantly in details and perspective - from “most of what is written has already happened” to “most of what is written is still to happen.”
- Winston Churchill once described the former Soviet Union as a “*riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma*.” Many Christians (perhaps most) would accept that statement as a good description of Revelation.
 - Yet, the first few verses of Revelation show that John believed his visions were not only understandable but would bring comfort, courage, and hope to God’s people through what they reveal about God and His plan for the ages.
 - Few writings have had more dramatic effects than Revelation. It has inspired countless sermons, books, paintings, other artistic works such as musical compositions like the “Hallelujah Chorus” in Handel’s “Messiah.
 - The “Hallelujah Chorus” is a jubilant, choral work celebrating Christ’s divine sovereignty, resurrection, and ultimate triumph as “King of Kings.”
1. **Summary of Revelation:** There is an ongoing spiritual war. God sovereignly rules the universe and will win! In Christ, He will cause history’s consummation as He chooses.
- History’s consummation will be consistent with God’s plan to have for Himself a holy people who can live in eternity with Him (Heb 12:14, “*without holiness no one will see the Lord*”). Christ is the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end.
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2. **Introduction:** The study of Revelation falls under the general topic of eschatology (the study of last things).
- Jesus said no one except the Father knows the time of His return. That truth has not stopped people from being confident about predictions of the day He will return.
 - Since the resurrection, hundreds of wrong predictions have been made for the day Christ will return.
 - Revelation has been subject to a great variety of different interpretations. Today we will briefly survey 4 major categories of interpretation. Different interpretations assume not only different sequencing of end-time events (what comes first, etc.) but also, different numbers and types of pre-return events
 - Examples of interpretation issues: (1.) Does Christ return before or after the 1000-year reign? (2.) When does the 1000-year reign begin? (3.) Will there be a “rapture” before the second coming of Christ? (4.) Will there be one or two resurrections of the dead? (5.) What does Jesus’ Olivet Discourse say about Temple destruction and end times?
3. **Positions:** There are 4 common interpretations based on the positioning of the millennial or 1000-year reign of Christ (discussed in Revelation 20).

(1.) **Historic Premillennialism (Premil):** Before Christ returns the world will be evangelized, the great tribulation will occur, and Antichrist will come.

- Premils believe the present church age will continue until the time of Great Tribulation and ends when the tribulation ends. Christ will then return to establish a literal earthly millennial kingdom. Satan will be bound. Believers who have died will be resurrected.
- Resurrected believers and those still alive will receive glorified resurrection bodies and reign with Christ on earth for the 1000 years. Many unbelievers remaining on earth will believe in Christ and be saved.
- At the end of the millennium, Satan will be released to lead a final rebellion among the many unbelievers who remain unconverted.
- Satan will be decisively defeated. A second resurrection will occur in which the unbelieving dead will be raised for final judgment before the eternal state.

(2.) **Dispensational Premillennialism (Dispen Premil):** A relatively modern view from the late 1800s, its origin is often connected with John Nelson Darby (1800-1882).

- Compared to other views, this view interprets prophecy literally and chronologically.
- A central tenet of dispensational premillennialism is Christ will return in two stages.
- First in the rapture, where believers are taken to heaven. Then a seven-year tribulation in which the Anti-Christ will, through deception, set up a false kingdom. The Temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt and sacrifices re-established.
- After the tribulation, Christ will again return to forcibly overthrow the Anti-Christ and to reign physically on earth for 1000 years.
- Satan will be released at the end of the literal 1000 years and cause a rebellion which Christ will defeat. There will be a final judgment for believers and unbelievers.
- Dispensational premillennialism emphasizes distinctions between Israel and the Church, viewing them as two separate entities with distinct destinies.

(3.) **Amillennialism (Amil):** Amils consider Christ's Second Coming to be a single event, rather than occurring in two phases. "Amil" implies "no millennium," but that is not what is believed. Amils do believe in a millennium but of a different conception.

- For Amils, the binding of Satan (Revelation 20) for a thousand years coincides with the present rule of Christ through the church. Both began at the death and resurrection of Jesus (John 12:31-33) and continues until the Parousia (second Coming).
- The millennium is thus the Spiritual reign of Christ and his saints. The number 1000 is symbolic. It represents a long and complete time ($1000 = 10 \times 10 \times 10$).
- Some believe the millennial reign refers only to the deceased saints in heaven. Others believe that through the Church, the reign is also earthly in a spiritual sense.
- Amil believes Satan was bound by Christ's victory in the Cross and Resurrection. The binding means the Gospel will be unhindered by Satan deceiving the nations.
- Satan will continue to have significant but limited influence. Amil believes "Satan's binding" to be specifically – *"that he might not deceive the nations"* (Rev. 20:3).
- Amils tend to conceptualize the Kingdom as primarily spiritual in nature until the end when Christ returns and inaugurates a physical reign.
- The end appears to occur 7 times in Revelation, indicating the book is not meant to be read as a straightforward chronology. It is a progressive parallelism with each cycle retelling aspects of the history of redemption and moving closer to the End.
- Amils usually take a symbolic approach to interpreting the book of Revelation and see it as 7 cycles of recapitulation rather than straight line chronology.
- Amils believe the First Resurrection alludes to a person's regeneration in which they are resurrected from spiritual death to spiritual life and become a Christian. Converted people reign presently with Christ (cf. Eph 2:1-7; Col 3:1-4).
- Amils believe, throughout history the gospel goes through both good and bad times.
- Most Amils believe in a final apostasy and increasing persecution near the End.
- Amils believe there are "already/not yet" truths in God's plan. The kingdom began with Christ, who now reigns from heaven, but its full realization is yet to come.
- Many OT promises to Israel are spiritually fulfilled in Christ and the Church. As the true Israel of God, the church fulfills promises made to Israel (Rm 4:1-16; Gal 6:16).

(4.) **Postmillennialism (Postmil):** Postmils believe Christ's return will be after the millennium. Postmil and Amil share many beliefs. Amils consider that the Church will experience both victories and suffering until the second coming. Amillennialists were known as Postmillennialists until the 1900s. The two differ from Premil in agreeing Christ's Final Coming brings only one physical resurrection (both righteous and wicked). Then the final judgment and the new heavens and new earth.

- Both agree God's promises to OT Israel are fulfilled through Christ and the Church (indeed, all the promises of God find their yes and Amen in Christ – 2 Cor. 1:20).
 - Thus, national Israel does not feature as prominently in these systems, although both affirm that God will save many Jewish people through the expanse of the Gospel.
 - Both agree that the 1000-year Millennium of Revelation 20 is a figurative period where the Gospel is preached throughout the world because Satan is bound. According to this view, believers will gradually increase until a majority of the world becomes Christian.
 - Not all will be regenerated and saved, but the influence of the Gospel will be pervasive. On the Last Day, Christ will return, believers and unbelievers will all be raised. Final Judgment, new heavens and earth, and the entrance into the eternal state will occur.
 - The Bible repeatedly affirms Christ shall reign until He has put every enemy under His feet. The last enemy to be defeated before the end is death itself (Ps 110:1; 1 Cor 15:25-26; etc.). For that reason, Postmil does not stress an "any moment" return of Christ.
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1. **Eschatological Prophecy**: Five common ways of understanding Bible prophecies related to the Last Days are Futurist, Idealist, Historicist, Preterist, and Eclectic.
2. **Futurist**: Futurist considers most prophecies in Revelation concerning the Last Days and those of Jesus' Olivet Discourse as being in the future to us.
 - This view expects things to get worse as the fulfillment gets closer. Many Premils, Dispen Mils and Amils hold to some form of Futurism.
3. **(2.) Idealist**: Spiritual view that accepts allegorical representations of the types of things or events in Revelation that believers may expect in the time between the inauguration and consummation of Christ's kingdom.
 - Idealist doesn't see the events in Revelation as tied to any one specific event in history.
 - It focuses on principles and ideas of the cosmic spiritual conflict of our war with Satan which will repeat in various forms until the Second Coming.
 - It focuses on patterns repeated throughout the world and history. It is distinct from the other views in that it does not see any of the prophecies (except the Second Coming, and Final Judgment) as ever being fulfilled in a literal, physical, earthly sense. This view is predominantly held by Amils.
4. **(3.) Historicist**: Revelation is considered a kind of template for history. Historicism is concerned with tracking the church's development over the centuries and attempting to align historical events with what is described in Revelation. That has turned out to be an extremely tricky task.
5. **(4.) Partial Preterist**: Preter, in Latin, means "past." "Partial Preterist" is a historic, orthodox position that assumes many Biblical prophecies have been fulfilled but not all.
 - "Hyper Preterist" assumes all prophecies have been fulfilled and denies a future physical Final Coming of Christ. It is recognized as heresy by Evangelical Christians.
 - Partial Preterist believes predictions made about the Temple's destruction in Jesus's Olivet Discourse (a few days before His Crucifixion) were fulfilled in events leading up to the Temple's destruction in 70 AD which signaled the end of the "Old Covenant" age.
 - Jesus made the predictions saying, "this generation" (meaning His contemporaries) will not pass away before all this takes place. A generation was considered 40 years.
 - Early Christian writers used the 70 AD fulfillment of events predicted in the Olivet discourse to verify the truth of Jesus's Olivet prophecies.
 - Partial Preterist believes many NT references to the Last Days refer to the tribulation that occurred during the time between when Roman Legions surrounded Jerusalem, permitting no one to leave and no food to go into the city and the fall of Jerusalem and destruction the Temple. Jesus' return at the end is still future.
 - Much of Revelation concerns the time of the siege and fall of Jerusalem. John writes as a "partner in the present tribulation" (Rev. 1:9). He wrote about what was "soon to take place" (v. 1). The time markers he gives about the Last Days are "soon," "shortly," and "quickly." Jesus is "at the gate" and "near."