

# Will Christ's Return Be Premillennial?

SEEING THE GLORIOUS HOPE OF THE GOSPEL IN A STUDY OF LAST THINGS

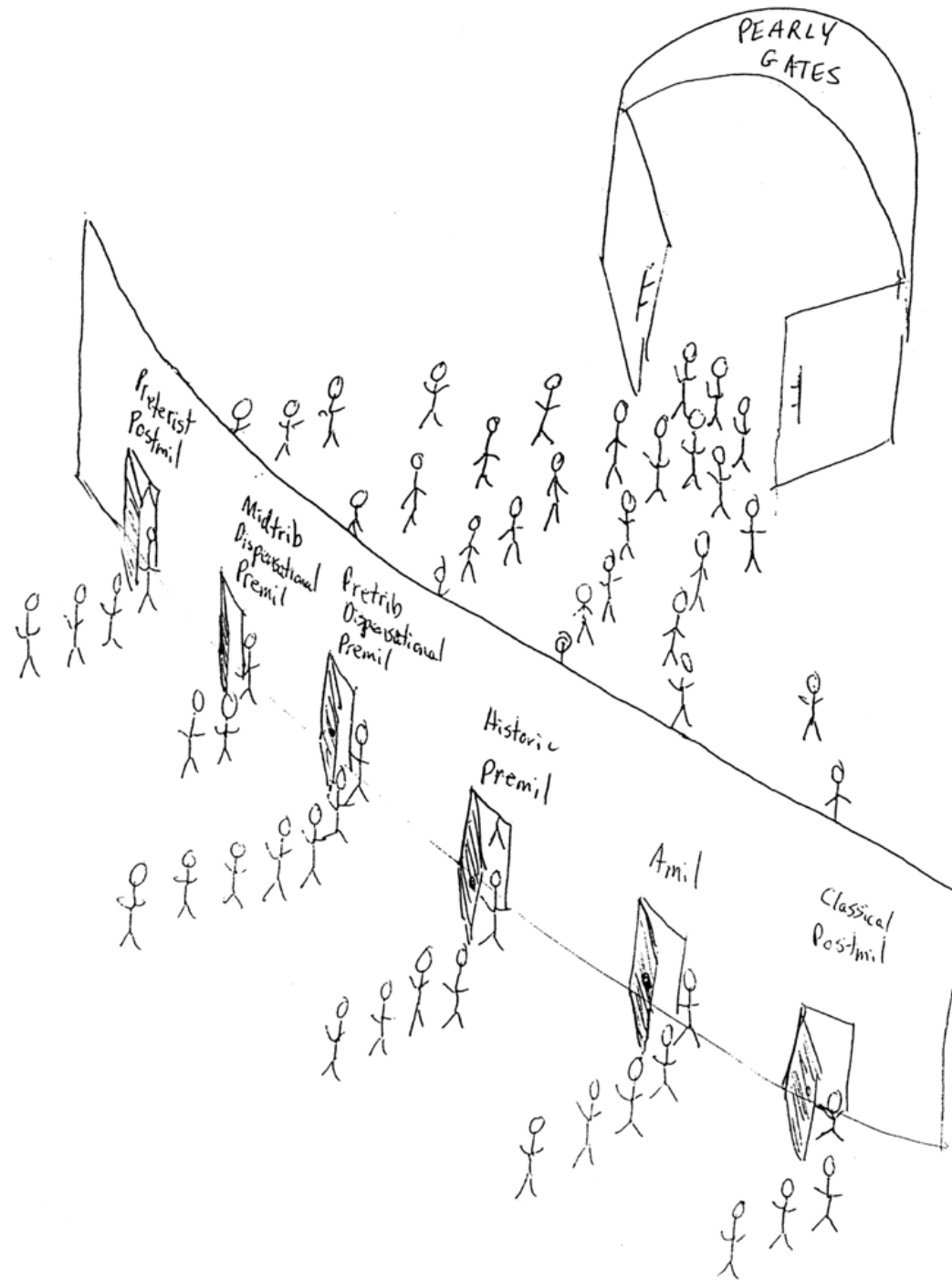
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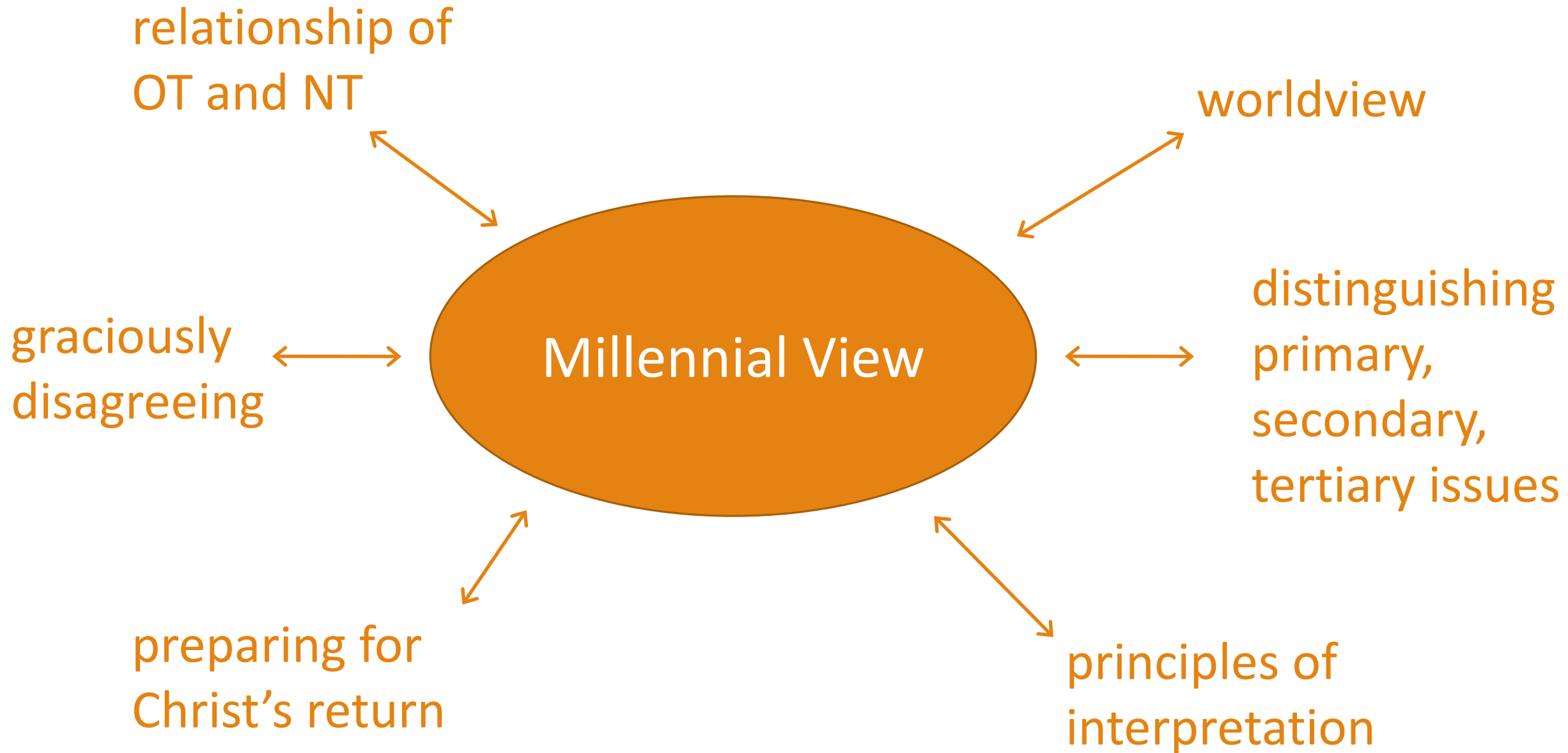
Premillennialism has strengths and weaknesses. The two-age structure taught by Jesus and the apostles helps us evaluate this position.

# When will Christ return?

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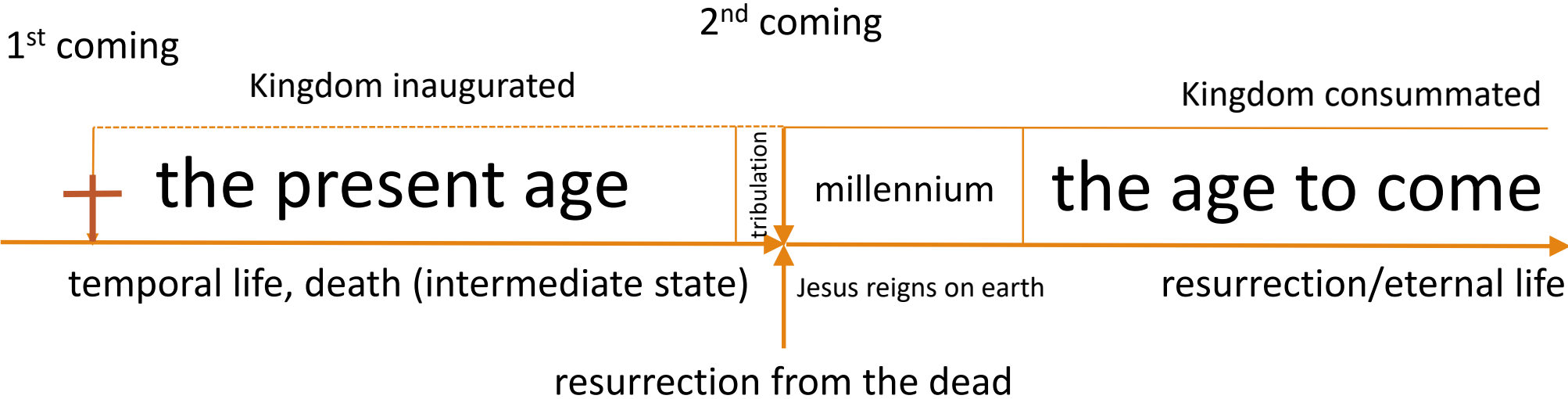
- Before the millennium—*premillennialism*
- After the millennium—*postmillennialism*
- No literal millennium—*amillennialism*





# Overview of Premillennialism

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# The Millennium in Premillennialism

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- Jesus will return to earth, judge his enemies, and give resurrection bodies to believers.
- Jesus will then reign on earth for 1000 years.
- The earth will enjoy a time of unprecedented peace, righteousness, and justice.
- Sin and death will still be possible, and not everyone will be a Christian.

# Why?

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Premillennialists (especially dispensational premillennialists) emphasize a literal interpretation of Scripture, including prophecy.

Revelation 19 describes the return of Christ in judgment.

11 ¶ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, “Come, gather for the great supper of God, 18 to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.”

21 And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

# Why?

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Taken chronologically, Revelation 20 teaches a distinct period after the Second Coming but before the final judgment and the new earth.

1 ¶ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. 2 And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 3 and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while. 4 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years. 7 And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth.



# Further justification

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- The millennium provides time and place in which OT prophecies concerning the rule of the Messiah can be fulfilled.
- Isaiah 65 describes a time that is much better than the present but in which death still occurs:

17 ¶ “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. 19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. 20 No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.

*Dispensational premillennialists also believe the millennium allows for the fulfillment of the land promises to Abraham and the nation of Israel.*

# Strengths of Premillennialism

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- majority view among evangelicals
- encourages more detailed study of prophecy
- encourages expectation concerning return of Christ
- a straightforward chronological reading of Revelation 19-20 leads to premillennialism
- in this scheme, the Christian worldview will be vindicated in and to a sinful world
- emphasizes the necessity of God's intervening power in this world
- literal hermeneutic is very simple, in the case of dispensationalism

# Weaknesses of Premillennialism

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- view of eschatology controlled by interpretation of one highly figurative passage in a figurative book. No other passage mentions a millennium.
- none of Christ's many prosaic statements concerning the end of the age require a millennium
- this view is very complex
- may promote pessimism and resignation of cultural mandate in the face of evil

# Critique of Premillennialism

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Seems to contradict the two-age view, in which we saw that the Second Coming and resurrection of the dead usher in the eternal age.

Luke 20:34 And Jesus said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, 35 *but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, 36 for they cannot die anymore*, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

According to premillennialism, believers who are alive at Jesus’ coming will enter into the millennium without resurrected bodies.

- Do they not count as worthy to attain to that age?
- Or is the millennium not part of the age to come?

# Mix of Resurrected and Unresurrected

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Must be resurrected believers in this millennium if Christ is on earth (I Thes. 4:17).

Resurrected saints won't marry or die (Luke 20:34-36) but will intermingle for 1000 years with those who do marry and die.

So...

- Resurrected believers will have to leave heaven -- an environment of bliss and sinlessness -- to enter an environment alongside sinners that still suffers the effects of sin.
- Where do unresurrected believers go when they die? (Rev 20:5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.)

# Creation and Bodies Renewed Together

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Romans 8:18-23

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

# Righteous Shine When This Age Closes

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Matthew 13:40-43

40 Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom *all causes of sin and all law-breakers*, 42 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the *righteous will shine like the sun* in the kingdom of their Father.

# Problems for Dispensational Premil

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Dispensationalists insist on interpreting literally, while allowing for figures of speech. This approach is too wooden and does not account for the NT use of the OT:

Jesus said the OT Elijah prophecy was fulfilled in John the Baptist:

- Matt. 11:10-12 10 And the disciples asked him, “Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” 11 He answered, “Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. 12 But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased.

temple restoration prophecy fulfilled in Christ's exaltation and calling of Gentiles

Acts 15:14-17 14 Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. 15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, 16 “ ‘After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, 17 that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord.



# Animal sacrifices in the millennium?

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Ezekiel 40 prophecies the rebuilding of the temple and the renewal of the sacrificial system.

Dispensational interpretation forces them to see this fulfilled during the millennium.

*This contradicts the entire message of Hebrews about the fact that Christ was the final sacrifice.*

Heb 10:12-14 12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. 14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

# Encourage One Another

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1 Thes. 4:16-18

16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

# Conclusion and Preview

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- Premillennialism arises from a chronological reading of Revelation 19-20 and is concerned to take Scripture seriously at face value. However, it leads to serious tensions with the straightforward teaching of Scripture concerning the close of the age and the age to come.
- Preview: What are the alternatives? What are the strengths and weaknesses of postmillennialism?