

Jesus's Second Coming

Jesus's second coming is directly related to what the Bible calls '*the last days*' or '*the end times*.' There are 4 major viewpoints as to what happens in the years prior to Jesus's return and what happens directly afterwards.

Amillennialism

This viewpoint suggests that immediately after Jesus returns, he establishes the New Earth and the New Heaven as the final and eternal age in which believers will live forever. There are differences in this viewpoint as to what exactly happens just prior to Jesus's return.

Premillennialism

Most premillennialists believe that before Jesus comes there will be a unique season of 7 years on the earth which is generally called the Tribulation. The last 3 and half years of this 7 year period are called the Great Tribulation where God's wrath explodes on the earth against all ungodliness. Then, after Jesus returns, there is a 1000 year period where Jesus rules on earth from Jerusalem. This period is referred to as the Millennium. After this 1000 years, Jesus then establishes the New Heaven and New Earth which is the final and eternal abode of all believers.

Postmillennialism

This viewpoint suggests that Jesus will not come back until the church has evangelised the world, to the extent that believers rule the world of politics and will have changed the world's culture to predominantly believe in the gospel message. Then Jesus will come back and establish the New Earth and New Heaven as the final and eternal abode of all believers.

You will see the titles of these viewpoints seem to revolve around the word 'Millennium' meaning 1000 years. Some see this term as symbolic of a long period of time; and some see it as a literal period of exactly 1000 years. This is mainly mentioned in **Revelation 20**.

Revelation 20:1-3

'Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished.'

Another term you might often hear concerning the second coming of Jesus is '*the rapture*'. This is mainly mentioned in the following passage.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

*'For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up (raptured)** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.'*

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The word '*rapture*' refers to the '*catching away*' of all believers from the earth. There are different points of view regarding the rapture. Some agree that it will be a literal event but disagree when it might happen. Others consider it to have a symbolic meaning.

There is a 4th viewpoint to mention. This view suggests all the above viewpoints have within them clear points of uncertainty and so being categorical about one particular viewpoint which contains speculation is not good practice. However, there are two things upon which all viewpoints agree. Jesus is coming back and there will be a final New Earth and a New Heaven which will be the final dwelling place of all believers.

If you do further study on these end time positions then it is important for you to bear in mind that these end time positions are viewpoints. This means that there is no consensus about the sequence of events or about some of the events that are outlined. It means that each of the viewpoints will have weaknesses, with points that can be genuinely challenged. One of them may be right; they may all be wrong; and there may be something in each viewpoint that is valid. Perhaps the details of events prior to and after Jesus's coming will only be known in hindsight.

A further point to consider

There is another viewpoint that suggests that the sequence of events that bring this age to an end is deliberately unclear. Strength for this view is taken from the fact that the Jews alive in Jesus's day, who were expecting the coming of the Messiah, were not given detailed information from the books that we now call the Old Testament, about how and what Jesus would accomplish. For example, when Jesus told the disciples that he was going to Jerusalem to suffer and die, Peter objected to the whole idea. If it was clear to the disciples that this was going to happen then Peter wouldn't have objected; they would have agreed with Jesus because they had read it in the Old Testament books. But it wasn't clear to them as the following verse explains...

Mark 8:31-33

'And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him: But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

Many years after the events of the cross, Paul made the following statement... I have highlighted the significant part to emphasise an important point...

1 Corinthians 2:6-8

'However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, ⁸which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.'

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The rulers of this age could mean human rulers, or it could mean spiritual rulers similar to the ones Paul describes in this next passage.

Ephesians 6:12

*'For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the **rulers of the darkness of this age**, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.'*

If God deliberately kept hidden the strategy of the first coming of Jesus so that the evil spiritual rulers of this age would not understand and seek to resist it; then this could also be true for the second coming of Jesus. The 4 gospels clearly outline that the Devil and his demons knew who Jesus was; but it seems they were ignorant of how he was going to accomplish and finish his work of earth. If they had known about God's plan of salvation then they would not have put it into the heart of the religious and political rulers to crucify him. If indeed the sequence of events just prior and after the second coming of Jesus has deliberately been kept hidden from us, it would explain why despite numerous studies and debates there still remain differing views.