

Systematic Theology: Part 7: The Doctrine of the Future

This document contains the teacher notes for four Sunday school lessons walking through the seventh part of Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*. There is a [complementary document](#) containing student handouts that can be shared with listeners to aid them with this material.

I claim no infallibility relative to the material presented here (the bulk is a condensation of Grudem's text). It is, as many have said before, beggars showing other beggars where to find bread. These teachings are provided free in the spirit of [Matthew 10:8b](#).

As errors are found, please let me know so I can correct. The theology expressed here should not be construed as representing the theology of Stuart Heights Baptist Church (especially when I am wrong or when I am being an idiot).

The formatting is as follows:

- **bold green text are quotes from outside sources (primarily Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology text)**
- **bold red text is the Scripture** (NKJV is used unless otherwise noted. Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.)
- **bold blue text are Bible references**
- **bold purple text are questions to consider asking while teaching this material**
- **highlighted, bold, and underlined text in the teacher notes are answers to blanks in the student handouts**
- plain black text are my comments

The audio recordings of many of these teachings themselves are available via our class [podcast](#). Many thanks to David Barber for his faithfulness in this area.

I hope these resources assist in enabling you to teach through a work like Grudem's *Systematic Theology*. Feel free to contact me at jim314@yahoo.com with questions or feedback.

Grace and peace,

Jim Fleming
Hixson, Tennessee
December 2016

Systematic Theology

Part 7: Doctrine of the Future

Chapter 54: The Return of Christ: When and How?

When and how will Christ return? Could he come back at any hour?

Introduction & Review

Note: The primary textbook for the structure of this series is Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*. The primary text for the substance of this series is the Bible.

Grudem: What is systematic theology? Many different definitions have been given, but for the purposes of this book the following definition will be used: *Systematic theology is any study that answers the question, "What does the whole Bible teach us today?" about any given topic.*

This definition indicates that systematic theology involves collecting and understanding all the relevant passages in the Bible on various topics and then summarizing their teachings clearly so that we know what to believe about each topic. Example: Lego sets vs Lego pieces

The Words

1. Systematic – carefully organized (all relevant passages organized into topics)
2. Theology – the study of religious truths

The Schedule

Part 1: The Doctrine of the Word of God (February – April, 2014)

- Chapter 1: Introduction to Systematic Theology: What is systematic theology? Why should Christians study it? How should we study it? Why Should We as a Class Study Systematic Theology? To fulfill the Great Commission, to confront sin in our lives, and **Grudem: To be able to make better decisions later on new questions of doctrine that may arise**
- Chapter 2: The Word of God: What are the different forms of the Word of God?
- Chapter 3: The Canon of Scripture: What belongs in the Bible and what does not belong?

- Chapter 4: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (1) Authority: How do we know that the Bible is God's Word?
- Chapter 5: The Inerrancy of Scripture: Are there any errors in the Bible?
- Chapter 6: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (2) Clarity: Can only Bible scholars understand the Bible rightly?
- Chapter 7: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (3) Necessity: For what purposes are the Bible necessary? How much can people know about God without the Bible?
- Chapter 8: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (4) Sufficiency: Is the Bible enough for knowing what God wants us to think or do?

Part 2: The Doctrine of God (September – November, 2014)

- Chapter 9: The Existence of God: How do we know that God exists?
- Chapter 10: The Knowability of God: Can we really know God? How much of God can we know?
- Chapter 11: The Character of God: "Incommunicable" Attributes: How is God different from us?
- Chapter 12: The Character of God: "Communicable" Attributes (Part 1): How is God like us in his being and in mental and moral attributes?
- Chapter 13: The Character of God: "Communicable" Attributes (Part 2): How is God like us in attributes of will and in attributes that summarize his excellence?
- Chapter 14: God in Three Persons: The Trinity: How can God be three persons, yet one God?
- Chapter 15: Creation: Why, how, and when did God create the universe?
- Chapter 16: God's Providence: If God controls all things, how can our actions have real meaning? What are the decrees of God?
- Chapter 17: Miracles: What are miracles? Can they happen today?
- Chapter 18: Prayer: Why does God want us to pray? How can we pray effectively?
- Chapter 19: Angels: What are angels? Why did God create them?
- Chapter 20: Satan and Demons: How should Christians think of Satan and demons today? Spiritual warfare.

Part 3: The Doctrine of Man (March 2015)

- Chapter 21: The Creation of Man: Why did God create us? How did God make us like himself? How can we please him in everyday living?
- Chapter 22: Man as Male and Female: Why did God create two sexes? Can men and women be equal and yet have different roles?
- Chapter 23: The Essential Nature of Man: What does Scripture mean by "soul" and "spirit"? Are they the same thing?

- Chapter 24: Sin: What is sin? Where did it come from? Do we inherit a sinful nature from Adam? Do we inherit guilt from Adam?
- Chapter 25: The Covenants between God and Man: What principles determine the way God relates to us?

Part 4: The Doctrines of Christ and the Holy Spirit (October – November, 2015)

- Chapter 26: The Person of Christ: How is Jesus fully God and fully man, yet one person?
- Chapter 27: The Atonement: Was it necessary for Christ to die? Did Christ's entire earthly life earn any saving benefits for us? The cause and nature of the atonement. Did Christ descend into hell?
- Chapter 28: Resurrection and Ascension: What was Christ's resurrection body like? What is its significance for us? What happened to Christ when he ascended into heaven? What is meant by the states of Jesus Christ?
- Chapter 29: The Offices of Christ: How is Christ prophet, priest, and king?
- Chapter 30: The Work of the Holy Spirit: What are the distinctive activities of the Holy Spirit throughout the history of the Bible?

Part 5: The Doctrine of the Application of Redemption (January – April, 2016)

- Chapter 31: Common Grace: What are the undeserved blessings that God gives to all people, both believers and unbelievers?
- Chapter 32: Election and Reprobation: When and why did God choose us? Are some not chosen?
- Chapter 33: The Gospel Call and Effective Calling: What is the gospel message? How does it become effective?
- Chapter 34: Regeneration: What does it mean to be born again?
- Chapter 35: Conversion (Faith and Repentance): What is true repentance? What is saving faith? Can people accept Jesus as Savior and not as Lord?
- Chapter 36: Justification (Right Legal Standing before God): How and when do we gain right legal standing before God?
- Chapter 37: Adoption (Membership in God's Family): What are benefits of being a member of God's family?
- Chapter 38: Sanctification (Growth in Likeness to Christ): How do we grow in Christian maturity? What are the blessings of Christian growth?
- Chapter 39: Baptism in and Filling with the Holy Spirit: Should we seek a "baptism in the Holy Spirit" after conversion? What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
- Chapter 40: The Perseverance of the Saints (Remaining a Christian): Can true Christians lose their salvation? How can we know if we are truly born again?

- Chapter 41: Death and the Intermediate State: What is the purpose of death in the Christian life? What happens to our bodies and souls when we die?
- Chapter 42: Glorification (Receiving a Resurrection Body): When will we receive resurrection bodies? What will they be like?
- Chapter 43: Union with Christ: What does it mean to be "in Christ" or "united with Christ"?

Part 6: The Doctrine of the Church (June – August, 2016)

- Chapter 44: The Church: Its Nature, Its Marks, and Its Purposes: What is necessary to make a church? How can we recognize a true church? The purposes of the church.
- Chapter 45: The Purity and Unity of the Church: What makes a church more or less pleasing to God? What kinds of churches should we cooperate with or join?
- Chapter 46: The Power of the Church: What kind of authority does the church have? How should church discipline function?
- Chapter 47: Church Government: How should a church be governed? How should church officers be chosen? Should women serve as pastors of churches?
- Chapter 48: Means of Grace within the Church: What are the different activities within the life of the church that God uses to bring blessing to us? What do we miss if we neglect involvement in a local church?
- Chapter 49: Baptism: Who should be baptized? How should it be done? What does it mean?
- Chapter 50: The Lord's Supper: What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper? How should it be observed?
- Chapter 51: Worship: How can our worship fulfill its great purpose in the New Testament age? What does it mean to worship "in spirit and in truth"?
- Chapter 52: Gifts of the Holy Spirit (1): General Questions: What are spiritual gifts? How many are there? Have some gifts ceased? Seeking and using spiritual gifts.
- Chapter 53: Gifts of the Holy Spirit (2): Specific Gifts: How should we understand and use specific spiritual gifts?

Part 7: The Doctrine of the Future (November – December 2016)

- Chapter 54: The Return of Christ: When and How? When and how will Christ return? Could he come back at any hour?
- Chapter 55: The Millennium: What is the Millennium? When does it occur? Will Christians go through the Great Tribulation?
- Chapter 56: The Final Judgment and Eternal Punishment: Who will be judged? What is hell?
- Chapter 57: The New Heavens and New Earth: What is heaven? Is it a place? How will the earth be renewed? What will it be like to live in the new heavens and new earth?

Introduction to this Major Doctrine (How to Approach Revelation)

Harvey Penick's *Little Red Book: Lessons and Teachings from a Lifetime in Golf*. I

remember someone asking to see the calluses on Sam Snead's palms. Sam said, "I don't have any calluses." Sam said he holds the club as if it is a live bird in his hands, with just enough pressure that the bird can't fly away but not so tightly that the bird can't breathe. Grip the club this way and you won't have calluses either.

Explanation and Scriptural Basis

Grudem: The study of future events is often called "*eschatology*." . . . The study of eschatology, then, is the study of "the **last** things."

Grudem: Unbelievers can make reasonable predictions about future events based on patterns of past occurrences, but in the nature of human experience it is clear that human beings of themselves cannot *know* the future. Therefore unbelievers can have no certain knowledge of any future event. But Christians who believe the Bible are in a different situation. Although we cannot know everything about the future, God knows everything about the future and he has in Scripture told us about the major events yet to come in the history of the universe. About these events occurring we can have absolute confidence because God is never wrong and never lies.

Grudem: Regarding our own personal future as individuals, we have already discussed. . . . The study of these future events that will happen to individuals is sometimes called "*personal eschatology*." But the Bible also talks about certain major events that will affect the entire universe. Specifically, it tells us about the second coming of Christ, the millennium, the final judgment, eternal punishment for unbelievers and eternal reward for believers, and life with God in the new heaven and new earth. The study of these events is sometimes called "*general eschatology*." In this chapter we will study the question of the return of Christ, or his "second coming." Subsequent chapters will deal with the remaining topics in a study of the last things.

Grudem: There have been many debates—often heated ones—in the history of the church over questions regarding the future. In this chapter we will begin with aspects of Christ's second coming with which all evangelicals agree, and then at the end move to one matter of disagreement: whether Christ could return at any time. Then in the following chapter we will discuss the question of the millennium, a topic that has long been a source of disagreement among Christians.

A. Grudem: There will be a sudden, personal, visible, bodily return of Christ
Matthew 24:44; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Hebrews 9:28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:10; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 1:7; 22:20

Grudem: This theme, then, is frequently mentioned throughout the New Testament. It is the dominant hope of the New Testament church. These verses predict a sudden return of Christ that will be dramatic and visible. . . . His appearing will not be a mere spiritual coming to dwell within people's hearts, but will be a personal and bodily return.

B. Grudem: We should eagerly long for Christ's return
Revelation 22:20; Titus 2:12-13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Corinthians 16:22

Grudem: Do Christians in fact eagerly long for Christ's return? The more Christians are caught up in enjoying the good things of this life, and the more they neglect genuine Christian fellowship and their personal relationship with Christ, the less they will long for his return. On the other hand, many Christians who are experiencing suffering or persecution, or who are more elderly and infirm, and those whose daily walk with Christ is vital and deep, will have a more intense longing for his return.

Grudem: But does this mean that we should not undertake long-term projects? If a scientist who is a Christian eagerly longs for Christ's return, then should he or she begin a ten-year research project? Or should a Christian begin a three-year course in a theological seminary or a Bible college? What if Christ were to return the day before graduation from that institution, before there was any chance to give a significant amount of one's time to actual ministry? Note: by this logic, you would not eat because un-chewed food would be a waste of an investment.

Grudem: To "**be ready**" for Christ's return (Matthew 24:44) is to be faithfully obeying him in the present, actively engaged in whatever work he has called us to.

C. Grudem: We do not know when Christ will return
Matthew 24:44; 25:13; Mark 13:32-33; Luke 12:40

Grudem: Jesus is telling us that we *cannot* know when he is coming back. Since he will come at an unexpected time, we should be ready at all times for him to return.

Grudem: The practical result of this is that anyone who claims to know specifically when Jesus is coming back is automatically to be considered wrong.

D. Grudem: All evangelicals agree on the final results of Christ's return

Note: This is likely too broad of a statement (even defining evangelical is difficult)

Grudem: No matter what their differences on the details, all Christians who take the Bible as their final authority agree that the final and ultimate result of Christ's return will be the judgment of unbelievers and the final reward of believers, and that believers will live with Christ in a new heaven and a new earth for all eternity. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will reign and will be worshiped in a never-ending kingdom with no more sin or sorrow or suffering.

E. Grudem: There is disagreement over the **details** of future events

Note: remember Harvey Penick

Grudem: Nevertheless, Christians differ over specific details leading up to and immediately following Christ's return. Specifically, they differ over the nature of the millennium and the relationship of Christ's return to the millennium, the sequence of Christ's return and the great tribulation period that will come to the earth, and the question of the salvation of the Jewish people (and the relationship between Jews who are saved and the church).

Grudem: Before we examine some of those questions in more detail, it is important to affirm the genuine evangelical standing of those who have differing positions on these questions. Evangelicals who hold to these various positions all agree that Scripture is inerrant, and they have a commitment to believe *whatever* is taught by Scripture. Their differences concern the interpretation of various passages relating to these events, but their differences on these matters should be seen as matters of secondary importance, not as differences over primary doctrinal matters.

Grudem: Nevertheless, it is worth our time to study these questions in more detail, both because we may gain further insight into the nature of the events that God has planned and promised for us, and because there is still hope that greater unity will come about in the church when we agree to examine these issues again in more detail and to engage in discussion about them.

F. Grudem: Could Christ come back at **any** time?

Grudem: There are many passages encouraging us to be ready because Christ will return at an hour we do not expect. . . . There are several passages that speak of certain events that will happen before Christ returns. How can both of these be true?

1. **Grudem: Verses predicting a sudden and unexpected coming of Christ**

Matthew 24:42-44, 36-39, 50; 25:13; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 12:40; 1 Corinthians 16:22; Philippians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; Titus 2:12-13; Hebrews 10:25; James 5:7-9; 1 Peter 4:7; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 1:3; 22:7, 12, 20

Grudem: If there were no passages in the New Testament about signs that would precede Christ's return, we would probably conclude from the passages just quoted that Jesus could come at any moment. In this sense, we can say that Christ's return is *imminent*.

Grudem: Were Jesus and the New Testament authors wrong in their expectation that he would return soon? Did they not think and even teach that the second coming of Christ would be in just a few years? **No. Grudem: None of the texts just quoted require this interpretation. Remember our mountain peaks. **2 Peter 3:8-9****

2. **Grudem: Signs that precede Christ's return**

- a. **Grudem: The preaching of the gospel to all nations. Mark 13:10; Matthew 24:14**
- b. **Grudem: The great tribulation. Mark 13:7-8; Matthew 24:15-22; Luke 21:20-24; Mark 13:19-20**
- c. **Grudem: False prophets working signs and wonders. Mark 13:22; Matthew 24:23-24**
- d. **Grudem: Signs in the heavens. Mark 13:24-25; Matthew 24:29-30; Luke 21:25-27**
- e. **Grudem: The coming of the man of sin and the rebellion. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10**
- f. **Grudem: The salvation of Israel. Romans 11:12, 25-26**
- g. **Grudem: Conclusions from these signs that precede Christ's return. Grudem: Most of these events, or perhaps all of them, have not yet occurred. Or at least that is what appears to be the case on a first reading of these passages.**

Grudem's footnote: I have not listed "wars and rumors of wars" and "famines and earthquakes in various places" (Matthew 24:6-7) as signs that must precede Christ's return, because they have been present throughout history, and because they are not given by Jesus as signs that immediately precede his return, but as events that come before those signs, as "the beginning of the birth-pangs" (Matthew 24:8). Nevertheless, an intensification of these things may well indicate the beginning of the last days, with other signs soon to follow.

3. Grudem: Possible solutions

View 1

Grudem: One solution is to say that *Christ could not come at any time.*

Grudem: The difficulty with this view is twofold. First, it really seems to nullify the force of the warnings of Jesus that we should watch, be ready, and that he is returning at an hour we do not expect. . . . Second, this position seems to use these signs in a way quite opposite from the way Jesus intended them to be used. The signs are given so that, when we see them, they will intensify our expectation of Christ's return. Luke 21:28; Mark 13:5-6, 21. **Grudem:** The signs are given to keep Christians from being surprised by these remarkable events, to assure them that God knows them all in advance, and to keep them from following after alleged messiahs who do not come in the dramatic, visible, world-conquering way in which Jesus himself will come. *But the signs are never given to make us think, "Jesus couldn't come for a few years."*

View 2

Grudem: The other major solution to this problem is to say that *Christ indeed could come at any time* and to reconcile the two sets of passages in various ways.

Reconciliation view 1

Grudem: (1) *The New Testament talks about two distinct returns of Christ or two second comings of Christ, that is, a secret coming at which Christ takes Christians out of the world (a coming "for his saints" [the 'rapture']), and then, after seven years of tribulation have occurred on the earth, a visible, public triumphant coming (a coming "with his saints") in which Christ comes to reign over the earth. During the seven-year interval all the signs that have not yet been fulfilled (the great tribulation, the false prophets with signs and wonders, the antichrist, the salvation of Israel, and the signs in the heavens) will be fulfilled, so that there is no tension at all between waiting for a coming that could occur "at any moment" and realizing that a later coming will be preceded by many signs. . . . The problem with this solution is that it is hard to derive two separate comings of Christ from the passages that predict his return.*

Note: this is the predominant view taught at Stuart Heights.

Reconciliation view 2

Grudem: (2) *All the signs have been fulfilled, and therefore Christ in fact could return at any moment. On this view, one could look for possible fulfillments of these signs in the events of the early church, even in the first century.*

Note: very few people hold completely to this view. Which necessitates . . .

Reconciliation view 3 (this is Grudem's view)

Grudem: (3) *It is unlikely but possible that the signs have already been fulfilled and therefore we simply cannot know with certainty at any point in history whether all the signs have been fulfilled or not. This position is an attractive one because it takes seriously the primary purpose for the signs, the primary purpose for the warnings, and the fact that we are not to know when Christ will return. With regard to the signs, their primary purpose is to intensify our expectation of Christ's return. Therefore whenever we see indications of things that resemble these signs, our expectation of Christ's return will be aroused and intensified. With regard to the warnings to be ready, advocates of this position would say that Christ could return at any time (since we cannot be certain that the signs have not been fulfilled), and so we must be ready, even though it is unlikely that Christ will return at once (because it seems that there are several signs yet to be fulfilled). Finally, this position agrees that we cannot know when Christ will return, and that he is coming at an hour we do not expect.*

Grudem: *But is it possible that these signs have been fulfilled? We can examine them one at a time. In each case our conclusion will be that it is unlikely, but possible, that the sign has been fulfilled already.*

a. Grudem: The preaching of the gospel to all nations

View for prior fulfillment: **Colossians 1:5-6, 23.** **Grudem:** *In these verses he certainly does not mean that every creature alive has heard the proclamation of the gospel, but that the proclamation has gone forth to the whole world and that, in a representative sense at least, the gospel has been preached to the whole world or to all nations. Therefore, though, it is unlikely but possible that this sign was initially fulfilled in the first century and has been fulfilled in a greater sense many times since then.*

View against prior fulfillment: **Grudem:** *There are many language groups and tribes that have still never heard the gospel.*

b. Grudem: Great tribulation

View for prior fulfillment: Grudem: Many people . . . refer to the Roman siege of Jerusalem in the Jewish War of A.D. 66-70. The suffering during that war was indeed terrible, and could be what was described by Jesus in predicting this tribulation. . . . Since the first century, there have been many periods of violent and intense persecution of Christians, and even in our century much of it has occurred over large portions of the globe, with Christians being horribly persecuted in the former Soviet Union, in communist China, and in Muslim countries.

View against prior fulfillment: Jesus' words indicate the likelihood of a yet greater persecution coming in the future. [think: simultaneous and worldwide]

c. **Grudem: False christs and false prophets**

View for prior fulfillment: Grudem: Any missionary who has worked among people where witchcraft and demonic activity are rampant will readily testify that seemingly miraculous "signs and wonders" have been worked frequently by demonic power in opposition to the spread of the gospel. Certainly demonic miracles and false signs have been done for centuries, at least since the time that the magicians in Pharaoh's court produced false signs in opposition to Moses' miracles ([Exodus 7:11; 8:7](#); cf. the activity of Simon the Sorcerer in [Acts 8:9-11](#)).

View against prior fulfillment: Jesus' words predict a far greater manifestation of this kind of activity in the time just prior to his return.

d. **Grudem: Powerful signs in the heavens**

View for prior fulfillment: Grudem: There have been eclipses of the sun and moon, and comets have appeared, since the world began.

View against prior fulfillment: Grudem: Jesus speaks of something far greater: [Matthew 24:29-30](#)

e. **Grudem: The appearance of the man of lawlessness**

View for prior fulfillment: Grudem: Historical figures who had great authority and brought havoc and devastation among people on the earth. The ancient Roman emperors Nero and Domitian, both of whom severely persecuted Christians, were thought by many to be the antichrist. . . . Adolf Hitler was commonly thought to be the antichrist, as was Joseph Stalin. On the other hand, many Protestants since the Reformation, especially those

who were persecuted by the Catholic Church, have thought that one or another of the popes was the antichrist.

View against prior fulfillment: Grudem: But all of these identifications have proved false, and it is likely that a yet worse “man of lawlessness” will arise on the world scene and bring unparalleled suffering and persecution, only to be destroyed by Jesus when he comes again.

f. **Grudem: The salvation of Israel**

View against prior fulfillment: Grudem: **Romans 9-11** seems to indicate that there will be a yet future massive ingathering of the Jewish people as they turn to accept Jesus as their Messiah.

View for prior fulfillment: But it is not certain that **Romans 9-11** predicts this, and many have argued that no further ingathering of the Jewish people will occur beyond the kind that we have already seen through the history of the church, since Paul gives himself as a primary example of this ingathering (**Romans 11:1-2**).

g. **Grudem: Conclusion**

Grudem: Except for the spectacular signs in the heavens, it is unlikely but possible that these signs have already been fulfilled. Moreover, the only sign that seems certainly not to have occurred, the darkening of the sun and moon and the falling of the stars, could occur within the space of a few minutes, and therefore it seems appropriate to say that Christ could now return at any hour of the day or night.

Grudem: But does this position do justice to the warnings that we should be ready and that Christ is coming at a time we do not expect? Is it possible to *be ready* for something that we think *unlikely* to happen in the near future? Certainly it is. Everyone who wears a seatbelt when driving, or purchases auto insurance, gets ready for an event he or she thinks to be unlikely.

Grudem: This position has positive spiritual benefits as we seek to live the Christian life in the midst of a rapidly changing world. In the ebb and flow of world history, we see from time to time events that *could be* the final fulfillment of some of these signs. They happen, and then they fade away. During the blackest days of World War II, it seemed very likely that Hitler was the antichrist. During times of persecution against the church, it can

seem more likely that Christians are in the middle of the great tribulation. When we hear of earthquakes and famines and wars, it makes us wonder if the coming of Christ might not be near. Then these events fade into the background and world leaders pass off the scene, and the tide of events leading to the end of the age seems to have receded for a time. Then once again a new wave of events will break on the world scene, and once again our expectation of Christ's return is increased. With each successive "wave" of events, *we do not know* which one will be the last. And this is good, because God does not intend us to know. He simply wants us to continue to long for Christ's return and to expect that it could occur at any time. It is spiritually unhealthy for us to say that we know that these signs *have not* occurred, and it seems to stretch the bounds of credible interpretation to say that we know that these signs have occurred. But it seems to fit exactly in the middle of the New Testament approach toward Christ's return to say that *we do not know* with certainty if these events have occurred. Responsible exegesis, an expectation of Christ's sudden return, and a measure of humility in our understanding, are all three preserved in this position.

Then if Christ does return suddenly, we will not be tempted to object, saying that one or another sign has not yet occurred. We will simply be ready to welcome him when he appears. [Luke 21:28](#)

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. Before reading this chapter, did you think that Christ could return at any hour? . . . If your viewpoint has changed, what effect do you think it will have on your own life?
2. Do you now eagerly long for Christ's return?
3. Are you ready for Christ to return today? If you knew he were going to return within 24 hours, what situations or relationships would you want to straighten out before he returned?

Scripture Memory Passage: [1 Thessalonians 4:15-18](#)

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. **16** 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. **17** Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Hymn: “Lo! He Comes, With Clouds Descending” (Charles Wesley, 1758 (stanzas 1, 2, 5) and John Cennick, 1752 (stanzas 3, 4))

**Lo! He comes, with clouds descending, once for favored sinners slain;
Thousand thousand saints attending swell the triumph of his train:
Alleluia! Alleluia! God appears on earth to reign.**

**Ev’ry eye shall now behold him, robed in dreadful majesty;
Those who set at naught and sold him, pierced, and nailed him to the tree,
Deeply wailing, deeply wailing, shall the true Messiah see.**

**Ev’ry island, sea, and mountain, heav’n and earth, shall flee away;
All who hate him must, confounded, hear the trump proclaim the Day;
Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come to judgment, come away!**

**Now redemption, long expected, see in solemn pomp appear!
All his saints, by man rejected, now shall meet him in the air:
Alleluia! Alleluia! See the Day of God appear!**

**Yea, amen! Let all adore thee, high on thine eternal throne;
Savior, take the pow’r and glory, claim the kingdom for thine own:
O come quickly; O come quickly; alleluia! Come, Lord, come.**

Systematic Theology

Part 7: Doctrine of the Future

Chapter 55: The Millennium

What is the millennium? When does it occur? Will Christians go through the Great Tribulation?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **1 Thessalonians 4:15-18**

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 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. 17 Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Introduction

In week one, we looked at the return of Christ and focused specifically on when Christ could return and how Christ will return. Today, we go back to the future as we look at different views on the millennium.

Explanation and Scriptural Basis

Grudem: The word *millennium* means “one thousand **years**” (from Lat. *millennium* “thousand years”). **Revelation 20:1-10**

Grudem: Throughout the history of the church there have been three major views on the time and nature of this “millennium.”

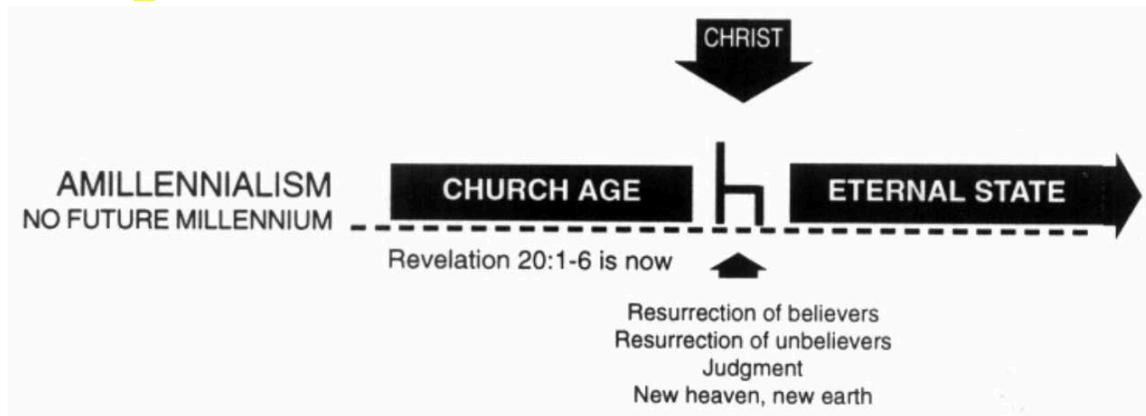
What are we talking about? Millennium (a noun) vs millennial (an adjective)

What are we not talking about? The Millennium Falcon and Millennials

These three different views are views of when Christ will return: before the millennial reign, after the millennial reign, or there is no “millennial reign.”

A. Grudem: Explanation of the three major views

1. Grudem: Amillennialism

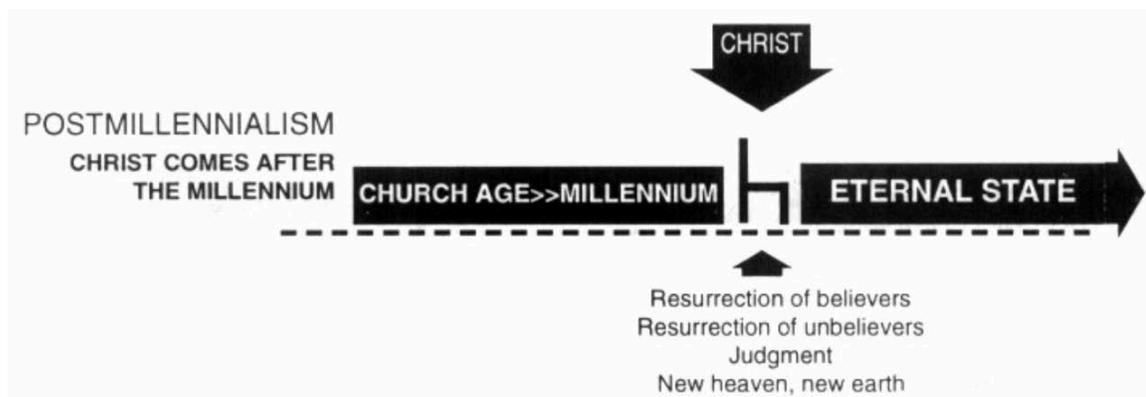


The prefix 'a' means not, which implies this view believes there is no future millennium, but a more accurate explanation of this view is that an amillennialist believes the millennium is currently ongoing. An amillennialist would use the term, 'realized millennialism,' instead.

Grudem: According to this position the passage in Revelation 20:1-10 describes the present church age. . . . This view is called "amillennial" because it maintains that there is no future millennium yet to come. . . . Revelation 20 is now being fulfilled in the church age, they hold that the "millennium" described there is currently happening. . . . The expression "thousand years" is simply a figure of speech for a long period of time. . . . All of the end time events happen at once, immediately after Christ's return.

2. Grudem: Postmillennialism

Grudem: According to this view, Christ will return after the millennium.



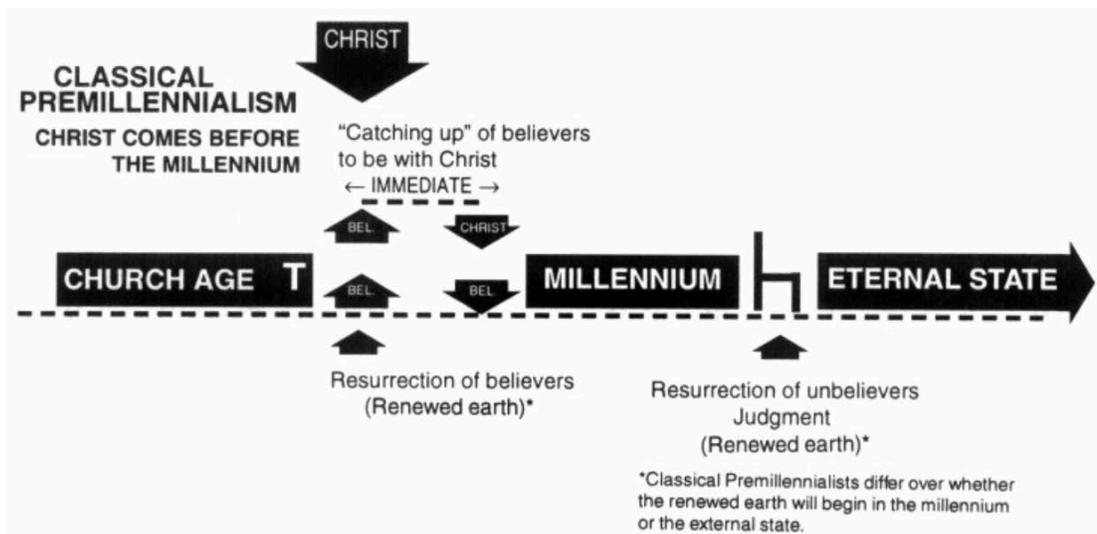
Grudem: According to this view, the progress of the gospel and the growth of the church will gradually increase, so that a larger and larger proportion of the world's population will be Christians. As a result, there will be significant Christian influences on society, society will more and more function according to God's standards, and gradually a "millennial age" of peace and righteousness will occur on the earth. . . . *At the end of this period, Christ will return to earth. . . .* Postmillennialism is . . . very optimistic about the power of the **gospel** to change lives and bring about much good in the world.

Grudem: At this point we must make a very significant distinction, however. The "millennium" that postmillennialists hold to is *very different* from the "millennium" the premillennialists talk about. In a sense, they are not even discussing the same topic. While *pre*millennialists talk about a renewed earth with Jesus Christ physically present and reigning as King, together with glorified believers in resurrection bodies, *post*millennialists are simply talking about an earth with many, many Christians influencing society. They do not envisage a millennium consisting of a renewed earth or glorified saints or Christ present in bodily form to reign (for they think that these things will only occur after Christ returns to inaugurate the eternal state).

3. Grudem: Premillennialism

a. Grudem: Classic or **historic premillennialism**

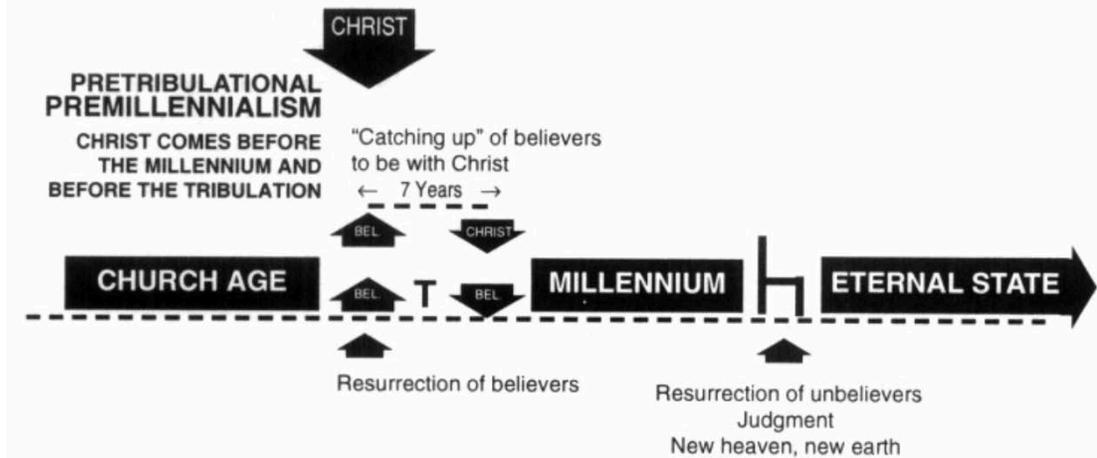
Grudem: The "premillennial" position says that Christ will come back **before** the millennium. This viewpoint has a long history from the earliest centuries onward.



Grudem: According to this viewpoint, the present church age will continue until, as it nears the end, a time of great tribulation and suffering comes on the earth. . . After that time of tribulation *at the end of the church age, Christ will return to earth to establish a millennial kingdom. When he comes back, believers who have died will be raised from the dead, their bodies will be reunited with their spirits, and these believers will reign with Christ on earth for one thousand years. . . .* During this time, Christ will be physically present on the earth in his resurrected body, and will reign as King over the entire earth. The believers who have been raised from the dead, and those who were on earth when Christ returns, will receive glorified resurrection bodies that will never die, and in these resurrection bodies they will live on the earth and reign with Christ. Of the unbelievers who remain on earth, many (but not all) will turn to Christ and be saved. Jesus will reign in perfect righteousness and there will be peace throughout the earth. Many premillennialists hold that the earth will be renewed and we will in fact see the new heavens and new earth at this time (but it is not essential to premillennialism to hold to this, for one could be a premillennialist and hold that the new heavens and new earth will not occur until after the final judgment). . . . At the end of the thousand years Satan will be loosed from the bottomless pit and will join forces with many unbelievers who have submitted outwardly to Christ's reign but have inwardly been seething in rebellion against him. Satan will gather these rebellious people for battle against Christ, but they will be decisively defeated. Christ will then raise from the dead all the unbelievers who have died throughout history, and they will stand before him for final judgment. After the final judgment has occurred, believers will enter into the eternal state.

b. Grudem: **Pretributational premillennialism** (or dispensational premillennialism)

Grudem: Another variety of premillennialism has gained widespread popularity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. . . . Christ will return not only before the millennium (Christ's return is *premillennial*), but also it will occur **before** the great tribulation (Christ's return is *pretributational*). This position is similar to the classical premillennial position mentioned above, but with one important difference: it will add another return of Christ before his return to reign on earth in the millennium. This return is thought to be a secret return of Christ to take believers out of the world. [Note: we would call this the rapture]



Grudem: According to this view, the church age will continue until, suddenly, unexpectedly, and secretly, Christ will return part way to earth, and then will call believers to himself. . . Christ will then return to heaven with the believers who have been removed from the earth. When that happens, there will be a great tribulation on the earth for a period of seven years. During this seven-year period of tribulation, many of the signs that were predicted to precede Christ's return will be fulfilled. . . . At the end of the tribulation, Christ will then come back with his saints to reign on the earth for one thousand years. After this millennial period there will be a rebellion, resulting in the final defeat of Satan and his forces, and then will come the resurrection of unbelievers, the last judgment, and the beginning of the eternal state.

Grudem: This view is found almost exclusively among dispensationalists who wish to maintain a clear distinction between the church and Israel. This pretribulational viewpoint allows the distinction to be maintained, since the church is taken out of the world before the widespread conversion of the Jewish people. These Jewish people therefore remain a distinct group from the church. Another characteristic of pretribulational premillennialism is its insistence on interpreting biblical prophecies "literally where possible."

KEY: **Grudem:** Before examining the arguments for these three (or four) positions, it is important to realize that the interpretation of the details of prophetic passages regarding future events is often a complex and difficult task involving many variable factors. Therefore the degree of certainty that attaches to our conclusions in this area will be less than with many other doctrines. Even though I will argue for one position (classical premillennialism), I also think it important for evangelicals to recognize that this area of study is complex and

to extend a large measure of grace to others who hold different views regarding the millennium and the tribulation period.

Grudem started out as an amillennialist, and is currently a premillennialist, but has never been a postmillennialist.

B. Grudem: A consideration of the arguments for amillennialism

Format:

#. Amillennialism argument

Retort

- 1. Grudem: *Only one passage (Revelation 20:1-6) appears to teach a future earthly millennial rule***

Grudem: The Bible only needs to say something once in order for it to be true and something that we must believe. . . . Many premillennialists argue that several other passages, especially in the Old Testament, require us to believe in a future period that is far greater than the present age but that still falls short of the eternal state (see Psalm 72:8-14; Isaiah 11:2-9; 65:20; Zechariah 14:6-21; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15).

- 2. Grudem: Scripture teaches only one resurrection. John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; Daniel 12:2**

Grudem: Those passages do not exclude the idea of two resurrections, but they simply do not specify whether or not the resurrection of believers and unbelievers will be separated in time.

- 3. Grudem: *The idea of glorified believers and sinners living on earth together is too difficult to accept***

Grudem: It is certainly not impossible for God to bring this about. . . . Jesus lived on the earth with a glorified body for forty days after his resurrection, and apparently there were many other Old Testament saints who lived with glorified bodies on earth during that time as well (Matthew 27:53).

- 4. Grudem: If Christ comes in glory to reign on the earth, then how could people still persist in sin?**

Grudem: Judas lived with Jesus on the closest terms for three years, and still betrayed him. Moreover, many of the Pharisees saw Jesus' miracles, and even saw him raising people from the dead, and still did not believe. In fact, even when the disciples were in the presence of the glorified Lord Jesus, we read that "some doubted" (Matthew 28:17). . . . Satan himself fell from an exalted position in the

presence of God in heaven. . . . “Massive proof” and “undeniable evidence” cannot compel genuine conversion.

5. **Grudem:** There seems to be no convincing purpose for such a millennium
Grudem: God may have several purposes in mind for a future millennium, not all of which may now be clear to us. But certainly such a millennium would show *the outworking of God’s good purposes in the structures of society especially the structures of the family and civil government. . . . The entire scope of the Bible reveals to us that it is God’s good pleasure to unfold his purposes and reveal more and more of his glory gradually over time. . . . Even in Jesus’ life the progressive revealing of his glory took thirty-three years, culminating in the last three years of his life. . . . The spread of the church throughout all nations has now occupied over 1,900 years, and we do not know how long it is to continue. . . . God’s way is not to bring to realization all of his good purposes at once, but to unfold them gradually over time. This is so even in the individual lives of Christians, who grow daily in grace and in fellowship with God and in likeness to Christ.*

6. **Grudem:** Scripture seems to indicate that *all the major events yet to come before the eternal state will occur at once.*
Grudem: Amillennialism . . . can propose no really satisfying explanation of Revelation 20.

C. Grudem: A consideration of the arguments for postmillennialism

Format:

- #. Postmillennialism argument
Retort

1. **Grudem:** The Great Commission leads us to expect that the gospel will go forth in power and eventually result in a largely Christian world. **Matthew 28:18-20**
Grudem: The Great Commission does indeed speak of the authority that is given into Christ’s hand, but that does not necessarily imply that Christ will use that authority to bring about the conversion of the majority of the population of the world.

2. **Grudem:** Parables of the gradual growth of the kingdom indicate that it eventually will fill the earth with its influence. **Matthew 13:31-32; 13:33**
Grudem: The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven do tell us that the kingdom of God will gradually grow from something very small to something very large, but they do not tell us the *extent* to which the kingdom will grow. For

example, the parable of the mustard seed does not tell us that the tree grew so that it spread throughout the whole earth. And the parable of the leaven simply talks about gradual growth that permeates society (as the church has already done), but it says nothing about the degree or effect that that influence has. . . . It is simply pressing the parable beyond its intended purpose to attempt to make it say more than that the kingdom will grow gradually and eventually have an influence on every society in which it is planted.

3. **Grudem: The world is becoming more Christian**
Grudem: The world is also becoming more evil.

Grudem: There are several New Testament passages that seem to give explicit denial to the postmillennial position. Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 18:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 12-13; 4:3-4; Matthew 24:15-31. Grudem: All of the passages indicating that Christ could return soon and that we must be ready for him to return at any time must be considered a significant argument against postmillennialism.

D. Grudem: A consideration of the arguments for premillennialism

Grudem: The arguments against the premillennial position have essentially been presented in the arguments for amillennialism and postmillennialism, and will therefore not be repeated again here in a separate section, but incidental objections to these arguments will be considered along the way.

Format:

#. Premillennialism argument

1. **Grudem: Several Old Testament passages seem to fit neither in the present age nor in the eternal state. These passages indicate some future stage in the history of redemption which is far greater than the present church age but which still does not see the removal of all sin and rebellion and death from the earth. Isaiah 65:20; 11:6-11; Psalm 72:8-14; Zechariah 14:5-17**
2. **Grudem: There are also New Testament passages other than Revelation 20 that suggest a future millennium. Revelation 2:26-27; 12:5-6; 19:15; 1 Corinthians 15:23-25**

3. **Grudem: Several statements [in Revelation 20] are best understood as referring to a future earthly reign of Christ prior to the future judgment.**
 - a. **Grudem: The binding and imprisonment of Satan in the bottomless pit (vv. 2-3) imply a far greater restriction of his activity than anything we know in this present age.**
 - b. **Grudem: The statement that those who were faithful “came to life” (v. 4) is best taken as referring to a bodily resurrection**
 - c. **Grudem: On a premillennial interpretation, the reigning with Christ (in Revelation 20:4) is something that is still future, not something that is occurring now (as amillennialists claim). This is consistent with the rest of the New Testament, where we are frequently told that believers will reign with Christ and be given authority by him to reign over the earth (see Luke 19:17, 19; 1 Corinthians 6:3; Revelation 2:26-27; 3:21). But nowhere does Scripture say that believers in the intermediate state (between their death and Christ’s return) are reigning with Christ or sharing in rule with him. In fact, Revelation earlier pictures saints in heaven before Christ’s return waiting under the altar and crying out to the Lord to begin to judge evildoers on the earth (Revelation 6:9-10). Nowhere is it said that Christians are already reigning with Christ.**

E. **Grudem: The time of the great tribulation**

Grudem: The expression “great tribulation” itself comes from Matthew 24:21.

Format:

#. **Argument**

Retort

1. **Grudem: The entire period of the tribulation will be a time of the outpouring of God’s wrath on all the earth. Therefore it would not be appropriate for Christians to be on the earth at that time.**
Grudem: It is inconsistent with the New Testament descriptions of the tribulation to say that all the suffering that occurs during that time is specifically the result of the wrath of God. . . . All Christians . . . will avoid the wrath of God at all times, but this does not mean they will avoid all suffering, even in times of intense hardship.
2. **Grudem: Revelation 3:10 . . . indicates that the church will be taken out of the world before that hour of trial comes.**
Grudem: The fact that Jesus tells faithful believers in the church in Philadelphia (Revelation 3:10) that he will keep them from the hour of trial that is coming on

the whole world is not strong enough evidence to say that the entire church will be taken out of the world before the tribulation. First, this statement is made to one specific church (Philadelphia) and should not be applied to the whole church at some future point in history.

3. **Grudem: If Christ returns after the tribulation and defeats all his enemies, then where will the unbelievers come from who are necessary to populate the millennial kingdom?**

Grudem: It is no argument for the pretribulation view to say that there must be some people in nonglorified bodies who will enter the millennium, because (on a posttribulation view) when Christ comes at the end of the tribulation he will defeat all the forces arrayed against him, but that does not mean he will kill or annihilate all of them. Many will simply surrender without trusting Christ, and will thus enter the millennium as unbelievers. And during the entire period of the millennium no doubt many will be converted to Christ and become believers as well.

4. **Grudem: This view makes it possible to believe that Christ could come at any moment (his coming before the tribulation) and yet that many signs must be fulfilled before he comes (his coming after the tribulation, when the signs will be fulfilled).**

Grudem: The pretribulation view is not the only one consistent with the ideas that Christ could come back at any time that there are signs that precede his return. . . .

Grudem's conclusion is that the church will go through the tribulation, but the Stuart Heights position (and the larger dispensational view in general) is the opposite.

Implications (discussed by Grudem in his Sunday school lessons on this topic)

1. Jesus is **coming** back
2. **History** will end
3. **Obedience** is worth it
4. Believers disagree on the **details**

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. **Before reading this chapter, did you have any conviction about whether Christ's return would be amillennial, postmillennial, or premillennial? And whether it would be posttribulation or pretribulation? If so, how has your view now changed, if at all?**

2. Explain how your present view of the millennium affects your Christian life today. Similarly, explain how your view of the tribulation affects your present Christian life.
3. What do you think it will feel like to be living on earth with a glorified body, and with Jesus Christ as King over the whole world? Can you describe in any detail some of the attitudes and emotional responses you will have toward various situations in such a kingdom? Do you really look forward to such a kingdom? (Your answers will differ somewhat depending on whether you expect a glorified body during the millennium or not until the eternal state.)
4. What might be both the positive and the negative results of a pretribulation rapture position in the everyday lives and attitudes of Christians? Similarly, what might be the positive and negative results of a posttribulation rapture position?

Scripture Memory Passage: Revelation 20:4-6

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. **5** But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. **6** Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Hymn: "Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun" (Isaac Watts, 1719)

Jesus shall reign wherever the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Til moons shall wax and wane no more.

For him shall endless prayer be made,
And praises throng to crown his head;
His name, like sweet perfume, shall rise
With every morning sacrifice.

People and realms of every tongue
Dwell on his love with sweetest song;

And infant voices shall proclaim
Their early blessings on his name.

Blessings abound where'er he reigns;
The pris'ner leaps to loose his chains,
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of want are blest.

Let every creature rise and bring
Peculiar honors to our King,
Angels descend with songs again,
And earth repeat the loud amen.

Systematic Theology

Part 7: Doctrine of the Future

Chapter 56: The Final Judgment and Eternal Punishment

Who will be judged? What is hell?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Revelation 20:4-6**

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Introduction

In week one, we looked at the return of Christ and focused specifically on when Christ could return and how Christ will return. In week two, we went back to the future as we looked at different views on the millennium (and a bit about the tribulation). Today, we focus on the final judgment(s) and eternal punishment. Today will likely be the most difficult of all 57 lessons to teach.

Explanation and Scriptural Basis

A. Grudem: The **fact** of final judgment

1. Grudem: Scriptural evidence for a final judgment

Grudem: Scripture frequently affirms the fact that there will be a great final judgment of believers and unbelievers. They will stand before the judgment seat of Christ in resurrected bodies and hear his proclamation of their eternal destiny.

Revelation 20:11-15; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 2:5; Matthew 10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36; 25:31-46; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Hebrews 6:2; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6

Grudem: This final judgment is the culmination of many precursors in which God rewarded righteousness or punished unrighteousness throughout history. Romans 1:18-32; Isaiah 13-23; 2 Peter 2:4, 9-10

2. **Grudem: Will there be more than one judgment?**

Grudem: According to a dispensational view, there is more than one judgment to come. For example, dispensationalists would not see the final judgment in Matthew 25:31-46. . . . From a dispensational perspective, this passage does not refer to final judgment (the “great white throne judgment” spoken of in Revelation 20:11-15), but rather to a judgment that comes after the tribulation and before the beginning of the millennium. They say that this will be a “judgment of the nations” in which the nations are judged according to how they have treated the Jewish people during the tribulation. Those who have treated the Jews well and are willing to submit to Christ will enter into the millennium, and those who have not will be refused entrance.

Thus, in a dispensationalist view there are different judgments: (a) a “judgment of the nations” (Matthew 25:31-46) to determine who enters the millennium; (b) a “judgment of believers’ works” (sometimes called the *bema* (G1037) judgment after the Greek word for “judgment seat” in 2 Corinthians 5:10) in which Christians will receive degrees of reward; and (c) a “great white throne judgment” at the end of the millennium (Revelation 20:11-15) to declare eternal punishments for unbelievers.

Grudem: The view taken in this book is that these three passages all speak of the same final judgment, not of three separate judgments. With regard to Matthew 25:31-46 in particular, it is unlikely that the dispensational view is correct: There is no mention of entering into the millennium in this passage. Moreover, the judgments pronounced speak not of entrance into the millennial kingdom on earth or exclusion from that kingdom but of eternal destinies of people: “Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. . . . Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels....And they will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life” (vv. 34, 41, 46). Finally, it would be inconsistent with God’s ways throughout Scripture to deal with people’s *eternal* destiny on the basis of what nation they belong to, for unbelieving nations have believers within them, and nations that exhibit more conformity to God’s revealed will still have many wicked within them. And “God

shows no partiality” (Romans 2:11). Though indeed **“all the nations”** are gathered before Christ’s throne in this scene (Matthew 25:32), the picture of judgment is one of judgment on individuals (sheep are separated from goats, and those individuals who treated Christ’s brothers kindly are welcomed into the kingdom while those who rejected them are rejected, vv. 35-40, 42-45).

B. Grudem: The **time** of final judgment

Grudem: The final judgment will occur after the millennium and the rebellion that occurs at the end of it. Note the order of events in **Revelation 20:1-11**.

C. Grudem: The **nature** of final judgment

1. **Grudem: Jesus Christ will be the judge. 2 Timothy 4:1; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Matthew 25:31-33; John 5:26-27**

2. **Grudem: Unbelievers will be judged**

Grudem: All unbelievers will stand before Christ for judgment. Revelation 20:12; Romans 2:5-7

Grudem: This judgment of unbelievers will include degrees of punishment.

Revelation 20:12-13; Luke 12:47-48; Matthew 11:22, 24; Luke 20:47

Grudem: In fact, every wrong deed done will be remembered and taken account of in the punishment that is meted out on that day. Matthew 12:36; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Romans 2:16; Luke 8:17; 12:2-3

3. **Grudem: Believers will be judged. Romans 14:10, 12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 2:6-11; Revelation 20:12, 15; Matthew 25:31-46**

Grudem: This judgment of believers will be a judgment to evaluate and bestow various degrees of reward . . . but the fact that they will face such a judgment should never cause believers to fear that they will be eternally condemned. John 5:24. Grudem: Here “judgment” must be understood in the sense of eternal condemnation and death, since it is contrasted with passing from death into life. At the day of final judgment more than at any other time, it is of utmost importance that “there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). Thus the day of judgment can be portrayed as one in which believers are rewarded and unbelievers are punished. Revelation 11:18.

Grudem: Scripture also teaches that there will be degrees of reward for believers. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Luke 19:17, 19

Grudem: But we must guard against misunderstanding here: Even though there will be degrees of reward in heaven, the joy of each person will be full and complete for eternity.

Grudem: It would be morally and spiritually beneficial for us to have a greater consciousness of this clear New Testament teaching on degrees of heavenly reward. Rather than making us competitive with one another, it would cause us to help and encourage one another that we all may increase our heavenly reward, for God has an infinite capacity to bring blessing to us all. . . . We would more eagerly heed the admonition of . . . **Hebrews 10:24-25**. Moreover, in our own lives a heartfelt seeking of future heavenly reward would motivate us to work wholeheartedly for the Lord at whatever task he calls us to, whether great or small, paid or unpaid. It would also make us long for his approval rather than for wealth or success. It would motivate us to work at building up the church on the one foundation, Jesus Christ (**1 Corinthians 3:10-15**).

4. **Grudem:** Angels will be judged. **2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; 1 Corinthians 6:3**

5. **Grudem:** We will help in the work of judgment. **1 Corinthians 6:2-3; Revelation 20:4; Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30**

Grudem: This accords with the fact that throughout the history of redemption God has from time to time given the right to exercise judgment into the hands of human authorities. **Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14**

D. Grudem: **Necessity** of final judgment

Grudem: Berkhof wisely points out that the final judgment is not for the purpose of letting God find out the condition of our hearts or the pattern of conduct of our lives, for he already knows that in every detail. Berkhof rather says of the final judgment: It will serve the purpose rather of displaying before all rational creatures the declarative glory of God in a formal, forensic act, which magnifies on the one hand His holiness and righteousness, and on the other hand, His grace and mercy.

E. Grudem: Justice of God in the final judgment

Grudem: Scripture clearly affirms that God will be entirely just in his judgment and no one will be able to complain against him on that day. **1 Peter 1:17; Romans 2:11; Colossians 3:25; Romans 3:19**

Grudem: One of the great blessings of the final judgment will be that saints and angels will see demonstrated in millions of lives the absolutely pure justice of God, and this will be a source of praise to him for all eternity. **Revelation 19:1-2**

F. Grudem: Moral application of the final judgment

1. Grudem: The doctrine of final judgment satisfies our **inward** sense of a need for justice in the world

Grudem: The fact that there will be a final judgment assures us that ultimately God's universe is *fair* for God is in control, and he keeps accurate records and renders just judgment. **Colossians 3:25; Revelation 20:12; Malachi 3:16**. Grudem: A permanent and accurate record of all our deeds has been kept by God, and ultimately all accounts will be settled and all will be made right.

2. Grudem: The doctrine of final judgment enables us to forgive others **freely**

Grudem: We realize that it is not up to us to take revenge on others who have wronged us, or even to want to do so, because God has reserved that right for himself. **Romans 12:19**. Grudem: In this way whenever we have been wronged, we can give into God's hands any desire to harm or pay back the person who has wronged us, knowing that every wrong in the universe will ultimately be paid for—either it will turn out to have been paid for by Christ when he died on the cross (if the wrongdoer becomes a Christian), or it will be paid for at the final judgment (for those who do not trust in Christ for salvation). . . . This thought should keep us from harboring bitterness or resentment in our hearts for injustices we have suffered that have not been made right: God is just, and we can leave these situations in his hands, knowing that he will someday right all wrongs and give absolutely fair rewards and punishments. In this way we are following in the example of Christ. **1 Peter 2:22-23; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60**

3. Grudem: The doctrine of the final judgment provides a motive for **righteous** living
Grudem: For believers, the final judgment is an incentive to faithfulness and good works, not as a means of earning forgiveness of sins, but as a means of gaining greater eternal reward. **Matthew 6:20**

Grudem: For unbelievers, the doctrine of final judgment still provides some moral restraint on their lives. If in a society there is a widespread general acknowledgment that all will someday give account to the Creator of the universe for their lives, some "fear of God" will characterize many people's lives. By contrast, those who have no deep consciousness of final judgment give themselves up to greater and greater evil. **Romans 3:18; 2 Peter 3:3-4; 1 Peter 4:4-5**

Grudem: An awareness of final judgment is both a comfort to believers and a warning to unbelievers not to continue in their evil ways.

4. Grudem: The doctrine of final judgment provides a great motive for **evangelism**.
Ezekiel 33:11; 2 Peter 3:9

G. Grudem: Hell

Grudem: Hell is a place of **eternal conscious punishment** for the wicked. Matthew 25:30, 41, 46; Mark 9:43, 48; Luke 16:22-24, 28; Revelation 14:9-11; 19:3; 20:10

Grudem: These verses should make us realize the immensity of the evil that is found in sin and rebellion against God, and the magnitude of the holiness and the justice of God that calls forth this kind of punishment.

Grudem: Those who deny eternal conscious punishment often advocate "*annihilationism*," a teaching that, after the wicked have suffered the penalty of God's wrath for a time, God will "annihilate" them so that they no longer exist. Many who believe in annihilationism also hold to the reality of final judgment and punishment for sin, but they argue that after sinners have suffered for a certain period of time, bearing the wrath of God against their sin, they will finally cease to exist. The punishment will therefore be "conscious" but it will not be "eternal." Arguments advanced in favor of annihilationism are: (1) the biblical references to the *destruction* of the wicked, which, some say, implies that they will no longer exist after they are destroyed (Philippians 3:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; 2 Peter 3:7; et al.); (2) the apparent inconsistency of eternal conscious punishment with the *love of God*; (3) the apparent injustice involved in the *disproportion* between sins committed in time and punishment that is eternal; and (4) the fact that the *continuing presence of evil creatures in God's universe will eternally mar the perfection of a universe that God created to reflect his glory*.

Grudem's retorts to annihilationism:

Destruction of the wicked: Grudem: Passages which speak of *destruction* . . . do not necessarily imply the cessation of existence. Their meaning is closer to that of, 'no longer able to be used for the original intended purpose.'

Inconsistent with the love of God: Grudem: If (as Scripture abundantly testifies) it is consistent for God to punish the wicked for a certain length of time after the last judgment, then there seems to be no necessary reason why it would be inconsistent of God to inflict the same punishment for an unending period of time.

Disproportion between sin and punishment: Grudem: The argument . . . wrongly assumes that we know the extent of the evil done when sinners rebel against God. David Kingdon . . . "Who would have the temerity to suggest to God what the

punishment...should be?" . . . Grudem: At this point, moreover, an argument based on God's justice may be brought against annihilationism. Does the short time of punishment envisaged by the annihilationist actually *pay* for all of the unbeliever's sin and satisfy God's justice? If it does not, then God's justice has not been satisfied and the unbeliever should not be annihilated. But if it does, then the unbeliever should be allowed to go to heaven, and he or she should not be annihilated. In either case, annihilationism is not necessary or right.

Evil mars God's universe: Grudem: When God *punishes* evil and *triumphs* over it, the glory of his justice, righteousness, and power to triumph over all opposition will be seen (see [Romans 9:17, 22-24](#)). The depth of the riches of God's mercy will also then be revealed, for all redeemed sinners will recognize that they too deserve such punishment from God and have avoided it only by God's grace through Jesus Christ (cf. [Romans 9:23-24](#)).

Grudem: What are we to think of this doctrine? [Romans 9:2](#); [Ezekiel 33:11](#); [Matthew 23:37-38](#); [Luke 19:41-42](#). Grudem: God has put in our hearts a portion of his own love for people created in his image, even his love for sinners who rebel against him. . . . Whatever God in his wisdom has ordained and taught in Scripture is **right**. Therefore we must be careful that we do not hate this doctrine or rebel against it, but rather we should seek, insofar as we are able, to come to the point where we acknowledge that eternal punishment is good and right, because in God there is no unrighteousness at all.

Grudem: It may help us to realize that if God were not to execute eternal punishment, then, apparently, his justice would not be satisfied and his glory would not be furthered in the way he deems wise. And it will perhaps also help us to realize that from the perspective of the world to come there is a much greater recognition of the necessity and rightness of eternal punishment. [Revelation 6:10](#); [19:1-4](#)

Grudem: We must believe that eternal punishment is true and just, yet we should also long that even those people who most severely persecute the church should come to faith in Christ and thus escape eternal condemnation.

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. How does the awareness of the fact that we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ affect your life today? . . . Is there an element of fear as you contemplate that day? If so, meditate on [1 John 4:16-18](#).

2. **Have you previously thought very much about laying up treasures in heaven, or about earning greater heavenly reward?**
3. **How do you think it will feel to participate with Christ in the judging of angels, and indeed in the judging of the whole world (see [1 Corinthians 6:2-3](#))?**
4. **Does the contemplation of this future judgment affect the way you think of your fellowship with each other as brothers and sisters in Christ today?**
5. **Are you glad that there will be a final judgment of both believers and unbelievers? Does it make you feel a sense of God's justice?**
6. **Are you convinced that Scripture teaches that there will be eternal conscious punishment of the wicked?**
7. **Is there anyone who has wronged you in the past, and whom you have had difficulty forgiving? Does the doctrine of final judgment help you to be more able to forgive that person?**

Scripture Memory Passage: [Revelation 20:11-13](#)

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

Hymn: "O Quickly Come, Dread Judge of All" (Lawrence Tuttiett, 1854)

**O quickly come, dread judge of all; for, awful though thine advent be,
All shadows from the truth will fall, and falsehood die, in sight of thee:
O quickly come; for doubt and fear like clouds dissolve when thou art near.**

**O quickly come, great king of all; reign all around us, and within;
Let sin no more our souls enthrall, let pain and sorrow die with sin:
O quickly come; for thou alone canst make thy scattered people one.**

**O quickly come, true life of all; for death is mighty all around;
On ev'ry home his shadows fall, on ev'ry heart his mark is found:
O quickly come; for grief and pain can never cloud thy glorious reign.**

**O quickly come, sure light of all; for gloomy night broods o'er our way;
And weakly souls begin to fall with weary watching for the day:
O quickly come; for round thy throne no eye is blind, no night is known.**

Systematic Theology

Part 7: Doctrine of the Future

Chapter 57: The New Heavens and New Earth

What is heaven? Is it a place? How will the earth be renewed? What will it be like to live in the new heavens and new earth?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Revelation 20:11-13**

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

Introduction

In week one, we looked at the return of Christ and focused specifically on when Christ could return and how Christ will return. In week two, we went back to the future as we looked at different views on the millennium (and a bit about the tribulation). In week three, we focused on the final judgment(s) and eternal punishment. Today, we look at the new heavens and the new earth.

Explanation and Scriptural Basis

A. Grudem: We will live eternally with God in new heavens **and a new earth**

Grudem: After the final judgment, believers will enter into the full enjoyment of life in the presence of God forever. **Matthew 25:34; Revelation 22:3**

Grudem: When referring to this place, Christians often talk about living with God “in heaven” forever. But in fact the biblical teaching is richer than that: it tells us that

there will be new heavens *and a new earth*—an entirely renewed creation—and we will live with God there. **Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-3**

Grudem: There will be a **joining** of heaven and earth in this new creation, and there we will live in the presence of God.

1. Grudem: What is heaven?

Grudem: The place where God dwells is frequently called “**heaven**” in Scripture. **Isaiah 66:1; Matthew 6:9; 1 Peter 3:22**. Grudem: *Heaven is the place where God most fully makes known his presence to bless. . . . The greatest manifestation of God’s presence to bless is seen in heaven, where he makes his glory known, and where angels, other heavenly creatures, and redeemed saints all worship him.*

2. Grudem: Heaven is a **place**, not just a state of mind

Grudem: The New Testament teaches the idea of a location for heaven in several different ways, and quite clearly. When Jesus ascended into heaven, the fact that he went to a *place* seems to be the entire point of the narrative, and the point that Jesus intended his disciples to understand by the way in which he gradually ascended even while speaking to them. **Acts 1:9; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:11; 7:55-56; John 14:2-3**

Grudem: Heaven is even now a place—though one whose location is now unknown to us and whose existence is now unable to be perceived by our natural senses. It is this place of God’s dwelling that will be somehow made new at the time of the final judgment and will be joined to a renewed earth.

3. Grudem: The physical creation will be **renewed** and we will continue to exist and act in it

2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1. Grudem: The physical creation will be renewed in a significant way. **Romans 8:19-21**

Grudem: Will earth simply be renewed, or will it be completely destroyed and replaced by another earth, newly created by God? Passages for a new creation: **Hebrews 1:11-12; 12:26-27; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 20:11; 21:1**. Grudem gently argues against an entirely new creation because Grudem: **It is difficult to think that God would entirely annihilate his original creation, thereby seeming to give the devil the last word and scrapping the creation that was originally “very good” (Genesis 1:31).** The passages above that speak of shaking and removing the earth and of the first earth passing away may simply refer to its existence in its present form, not its very existence itself, and even **2 Peter 3:10**, which speaks of the elements dissolving and the earth and the works on it being burned up, may not be

speaking of the earth as a planet but rather the surface things on the earth (that is, much of the ground and the things on the ground). We will keep an open hand on this answer.

4. Grudem: Our resurrection **bodies** will be part of the renewed creation

Grudem: In the new heavens and new earth, there will be a place and activities for our resurrection bodies, which will never grow old or become weak or ill. A strong consideration in favor of this viewpoint is the fact that God made the original physical creation “**very good**” (Genesis 1:31). There is therefore nothing inherently sinful or evil or “unspiritual” about the physical world that God made or the creatures that he put in it, or about the physical bodies that he gave us at creation. . . . We can expect that in the new heavens and new earth there will be a fully perfect earth that is once again “**very good.**” Hebrews 2:8; Matthew 5:5

Grudem: Some of the descriptions of life in heaven include features that are very much part of the physical or material creation that God has made. Revelation 19:9; Luke 22:18; Revelation 22:1-2; 21:21-26

Grudem: Music certainly is prominent in the descriptions of heaven in Revelation, and we might imagine that both musical and artistic activities would be done to the glory of God. . . . We may expect that for all eternity we will be able to go on learning more about God and about his relationship to his creation. In this way we will continue the process of learning that was begun in this life, in which a life “**fully pleasing to him**” is one that includes continually “**increasing in the knowledge of God**” (Colossians 1:10).

5. Grudem: The new creation will not be “timeless” but will include an unending succession of moments

Grudem: Although a popular hymn speaks of the time “when the trumpet of the Lord shall sound and time shall be no more,” Scripture does not give support to that idea. . . . All the pictures of heavenly worship in the book of Revelation include words that are spoken one after another in coherent sentences, and actions (such as falling down before God’s throne and casting crowns before his throne) that involve a sequence of events. Revelation 21:24-26; 22:2

Grudem: Since we are finite creatures, we might also expect that we will always live in a succession of moments. Just as we will never attain to God’s omniscience or omnipresence, so we shall never attain to God’s eternity in the sense of seeing all time equally vividly and not living in a succession of moments or being limited by time.

B. Grudem: The doctrine of the new creation provides a great motivation for storing up treasures in heaven rather than on earth

Grudem: This present creation is a temporary one and that our life in the new creation will last for eternity. 2 Peter 3:11-13; Matthew 6:19-21

C. Grudem: The new creation will be a place of great beauty and abundance and joy in the presence of God. Revelation 21:2, 4, 6, 11, 18-21, 27; 22:5

Grudem: It is a city of immense size, whether the measurements be understood as literal or symbolic. Revelation 21:16 says the length and breadth and height are 12,000 furlongs. A furlong is 1/8 of a Roman mile. A Roman mile was 5000 feet. Doing the math yields a length-breadth-height of 1,420 miles (from here to Billings, Montana). This volume = 2.866 billion cubic miles.

Grudem: But more important than all the physical beauty of the heavenly city, more important than the fellowship we will enjoy eternally with all God's people from all nations and all periods in history, more important than our freedom from pain and sorrow and physical suffering, and more important than reigning over God's kingdom—more important by far than any of these will be the fact that we will be in the presence of God and enjoying unhindered fellowship with him. Revelation 21:3-4, 23; 22:3-4; Psalm 16:11; 27:4; 73:25-26; 4:8; Revelation 21-22

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. **In what ways has this chapter made you more excited about entering the heavenly city? What positive effects on your Christian life do you think would come about because of a stronger longing for the life to come?**
2. **What are some ways in which you already have stored up treasure in heaven rather than on earth? Are there more ways you could do that in your own life now?**
3. **Sometimes people have thought that they would be bored in the life to come. Do you feel that way yourself? What is a good answer to the objection that the eternal state will be boring?**
4. **Can you describe at all what you think you will feel like when you finally stand in the presence of God and see him face-to-face?**

Scripture Memory Passage: Revelation 21:3-4

3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall

be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Hymn: "The Sands of Time Are Sinking" (Anne R. Cousin, 1857)

**The sands of time are sinking, the dawn of heaven breaks,
The summer morn I've sighed for, the fair sweet morn awakes;
Dark, dark hath been the midnight, but dayspring is at hand,
And glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land.**

**The king there in his beauty without a veil is seen;
It were a well-spent journey though sev'n deaths lay between:
The Lamb with his fair army doth on Mount Zion stand,
And glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land.**

**O Christ, he is the fountain, the deep sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I've tasted, more deep I'll drink above:
There to an ocean fullness his mercy doth expand,
And glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land.**

**The bride eyes not her garment, but her dear bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory, but on my King of grace;
Not at the crown he giveth, but on his pierced hand:
The lamb is all the glory of Emmanuel's land.**

Systematic Theology:

A Brief Review of What We Learned

Why did we do this? Where did we go? What did we learn?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Revelation 21:3-4**

3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

A. Review of the beginning

Today, we look back at 57 chapters of Systematic Theology and review, reminisce, and rejoice at what God taught us through this process.

1. Where did we start? **Week 1: An introduction to systematic theology (February 16, 2014)**

Grudem: Systematic theology is any study that answers the question, "What does the whole Bible teach us today?" about any given topic. . . . This definition indicates that systematic theology involves collecting and understanding all the relevant passages in the Bible on various topics and then summarizing their teachings clearly so that we know what to believe about each topic.

I use Legos to talk about systematic theology, but let's [watch Dr. Wayne Grudem talk about systematic theology](#). While the video is coming up, let me tell you a bit about Dr. Grudem:

- 68 years old and married to his wife Margaret for over 40 years with three adult children
- Received his undergraduate degree in economics from Harvard, a Master's of Divinity from Westminster Seminary, and a PhD from Cambridge
- He was the president of the Evangelical Theological Seminary
- Taught at Trinity Seminary in Chicago for 20 years
- General Editor for the ESV Study Bible (2008)
- His wife suffered from chronic pain and found that the climate was an issue

- Moved to Scottsdale, AZ, in 2001 for his wife and got a job at Phoenix Seminary
- Written over 20 books, including Systematic Theology (over 500,000 copies in English with over 18 other languages either in print or in process; first edition 1994, revised in 2000)
- Almost a year ago revealed he currently suffers from Parkinson's Disease

2. Why did we, as a class, study systematic theology?

- To fulfill the Great Commission (**Matthew 28:19-20**): We cannot effectively and efficiently teach new disciples without understanding Scripture (and systematic theology helps us understand Scripture)
- To confront **sin** in our lives: **Grudem: It is helpful for us to be confronted with the total weight of the teaching of Scripture on [a] subject**
- **Grudem: To be able to make better decisions later on new questions of doctrine that may arise.** If man invents new things, there will be new opportunities to both obey and disobey God. Let's prepare now to obey Him.

3. Why did we pick this systematic theology book?

It is based on the Bible. It is clearly written. It has a lot of **application** to life. **Grudem: Application to life is a necessary part of the proper pursuit of systematic theology . . . Nowhere in Scripture do we find doctrine studied for its own sake or in isolation from life.**

Grudem: It is inevitable that someone studying a systematic theology text or taking a course in systematic theology for the first time will have many of his or her own personal beliefs challenged or modified, refined or enriched. This, to me, was a big help from studying this textbook.

B. What did we as a class learn?

1. Part 1: The doctrine of the Word of God

We had to start at the doctrine of the Word of God because we had to have a foundational level for everything to follow.

We looked at the different types of the word of God, the canon (list of books) of Scripture, the inerrancy of Scripture, and several characteristics of Scripture (it's authority, clarity, necessity, and sufficiency). Key text: **2 Timothy 3:16**

Takeaway: the Bible is our basis for understanding God. Stay **close** to the text!

2. Part 2: The doctrine of God

After looking at God's Word, we studied God Himself.

We looked at the existence of God, whether God can be known, God's character (His attributes—how He's different from us and how God is like us); we looked at the Trinity, creation, God's providence, miracles, prayer, angels, and God's enemies: Satan and demons. Key text: **Revelation 5:11-12**

Takeaway: do not make analogies for the Trinity—nothing in the universe is like them. **Stop** it!

3. Part 3: The doctrine of man

We looked at the creation of man, the genders God made, the nature of man, sin, and the covenants between God and man. Key text: **Genesis 1:26-27**

Takeaway: open-handed and closed-fisted issues exist. **Know** them and behave accordingly!

4. Part 4: The doctrines of Christ & the Holy Spirit

Next, we turned our focus to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to look at some special concepts.

We looked at the person of Jesus Christ (God + man), the atonement, the resurrection and ascension, the offices of Christ (how he is prophet, priest, and king), and the work of the Holy Spirit. Key text: **1 Corinthians 15:20-23**

Takeaway: imitate the work and active nature of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. **Copy** them!

5. Part 5: The doctrine of the application of redemption

After examining God's Word, the Godhead, and man, we examined how these come together for salvation.

We looked at common grace, election and reprobation, the Gospel call and effective calling, regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification, baptism in/filling with the Holy Spirit, the perseverance of the saints, death and the intermediate state, glorification, and union with Christ. Key text: **Galatians 2:20**

Takeaway: the Trinity works together for man's salvation—and God desires me. Praise **Him!**

6. Part 6: The doctrine of the church

After looking at salvation, we looked at the group of people who are saved—the church.

We looked at the nature, marks, and purposes of the church, the purity and unity of the church, the power of the church, church government, means of grace within the church, baptism, the Lord's supper, worship, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Key text: **Ephesians 4:11-13**

Takeaway: the church is a complex organism devised and sustained by God. Treat her **gently!**

7. Part 7: The doctrine of the future

Finally, we ended our study of systematic theology with a glimpse into the future.

We looked at the return of Christ, the millennium, the final judgment and eternal punishment, and the new heavens and the new earth. Key text: **Revelation 21:3-4**

Takeaway: God will demonstrate His goodness through ending this age. Look **forward!**

C. What did Jim learn?

Side note: on average, each one of the 57 lessons took me between 10-15 hours of study to complete. That means I spent somewhere north of 700 hours to teach through Grudem's text. I invested what will likely be ~2.5% of my life's teaching time to this study. **So, what did I learn?**

A lot. Mostly that I am not as smart as you think I am. And that I still have much to learn.

1. The deepness of God and His Word

I was reminded time and time again of the title of Grudem's book: *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*. We spent 57 weeks and looked at an introduction to systematic theology. How great is our God! **How much more is there to learn?** An infinite amount. **Romans 11:33**

2. And > or

So many times, when presented with seemingly contradicting Bible verses, we are tempted to accept some verses and reject other verses. Don't do that! Accept both. All of Scripture is true—not just the parts we can explain and/or understand. Take a, 'yes,' approach to Scripture and not a, 'no,' approach. **1 Corinthians 12:12**

3. Theology helps me live right now

The more I know about God's Word, God, man, salvation, the church, and the future, the more I can live rightly now. Every day we live out our theology. Our lives reflect our beliefs. Therefore, I need to be grounded in what is true, so I can live in a manner reflecting truth. **Psalms 119:105**

4. God is **so** active

He has worked in so many ways to make Himself known—surely we can put forth some effort to pick up what He’s putting down. **Genesis 1:2; Revelation 21:23**

5. I was reminded

I was reminded how much I love to teach the Bible. This was a hard series. It was a long series. I taught all these lessons.

I was reminded how much I love breaks. Several of you provided me with the opportunity to take deep breaths as we went through this material and I am extraordinarily grateful. You are my **Nehemiah 8:5-8**.

I was reminded how much I love you all. Hundreds of times as I was going through this series I would think, “Oh, so-and-so would love this idea!” You all are scattered throughout the pages of this series and I am so grateful for you and for your commitment to the study of the Bible.

6. The priority of desiring **God** over desiring information **about** God

Story: Traveling to Phoenix, visiting Scottsdale Bible Church, looking for Grudem, finding Phil Wickham, finding the M-I-L-L-E-N-N-I-A-L guy, hearing Micah Tyler sing *Wretch No More*, being convicted, and finally picking up my signed copy of *Systematic Theology*. **Psalm 37:4**