

THEOLOGICAL TERMS (QUICK REFERENCE)

Agnosticism: The view that any ultimate reality (such as God) is unknown and probably unknowable. The word comes from the Greek word *agnoeō* (ἀγνοέω) meaning without knowledge.

Amillennialism: The belief that Jesus will not have a literal, thousand-year-long, physical reign on the earth. They regard the "thousand years" mentioned in *Revelation* 20 as a symbolic number, not as a literal description, and hold that the millennium has already begun and is identical with the current church age. While Christ's reign during the millennium is spiritual in nature, at the end of the church age, Christ will return in final judgment and establish a permanent reign in the new heaven and new Earth.

Annihilationism: The belief that those who are wicked will perish or cease to exist. It states that after the Final Judgment, all unsaved human beings, all fallen angels and Satan himself will be totally destroyed in the lake of fire ("this is the second death" Rev. 20:14) so as to not exist.

Apologetics: The religious discipline of defending religious doctrines through systematic argumentation and discourse (from Greek ἀπολογία, "speaking in defense").

Dispensationalism: A hermeneutic system for the Bible. It considers biblical history as divided by God into dispensations: defined periods or ages to which God has allotted distinctive administrative principles. The number of dispensations vary typically from three to eight.

Docetism: The belief that Jesus only seemed or appeared to have a human body and a human persona but was actually entirely only divine. This word comes from the Greek word *dokein* (δοkein) meaning "to seem" or "to appear," because docetists believed that Jesus only appeared to be human.

Ecclesiology: The study of the church as a biblical and theological subject. From the Greek word *ekklesia* (ἐκκλησία) meaning "those called out."

Eschatology: The study of the last things or the end times (e.g., the second coming of Christ, resurrection of the dead, the new heaven and earth, etc...). From the Greek word *eschatos* (ἔσχατος) meaning last. There are several eschatological views of interpretation including preterism, historicism, futurism, and idealism. Most interpretations of prophetic passages fit into one, or a combination, of these approaches.

Exegesis: Critical explanation or interpretation of the scriptures.

Fundamentalism: A movement in 20th century Protestantism emphasizing the strict, literal interpretation of scripture.

Futurism: A Christian eschatological view which holds that parallels may be drawn with historical events, but most eschatological prophecies are chiefly referring to events which have not yet been fulfilled, but will take place at the end of the age and the end of the world.

Gnosticism: A religion and philosophical movement active between 200 BCE and 400 CE. Based on the idea of Gnosis, the Greek word for knowledge, it focused on salvation through the discovery and fostering of secret, inner knowledge.

Hamartiology: The study of sin.

Hell: The word *hell* does not appear in the original languages (Hebrew & Greek) of the bible, instead it is translated from one of three Greek words in the New Testament (*Hades*, *Gehenna* or *Tartarus*), and from one Hebrew word (*Sheol*) in the Old Testament. Hades is very similar, if not synonymous, to the Hebrew term, Sheol as "the place of the dead" or

"grave." Gehenna (from the Hebrew, *Gehinnom*) refers to the "Valley of Hinnom," a valley of Jerusalem where some of the kings of Judah sacrificed their children by fire. Thereafter, it was deemed to be cursed (Jer. 7:30-34 & 19:2-8). Jesus refers to it as a place where both soul and body could be destroyed (Matt. 10:28) in "unquenchable fire" (Mark 9:43), which is an obvious reference to the "lake of fire" in *Revelation*. Tartarus occurs only once in the New Testament in II Peter 2:4 as the place of incarceration of the fallen angels (cf. the "abyss" & "bottomless pit" of Luke 8:31 and Revelation 9, 11, 17, & 20).

Hermeneutics: The theory and methodology of interpretation, especially of biblical texts, wisdom literature, and philosophical texts.

Historicism: A method of prophetic interpretation which holds that the fulfillment of biblical prophecy has occurred throughout history and continues to occur; as opposed to other methods which limit the time-frame of prophecy-fulfillment to the past or to the future.

Hypostatic union: The union of the divine and human natures in the single person of Christ.

Idealism: A Christian eschatological view which sees the images of *Revelation* as symbols representing larger themes and concepts, rather than actual people and events. It is distinct from Preterism, Futurism and Historicism in that it does not see any of the prophecies (except in some cases the Second Coming, and Final Judgment) as being fulfilled in a literal, physical, earthly sense either in the past, present or future (also called the spiritual approach, the allegorical approach, or the nonliteral approach).

Messiah: The Hebrew word for "anointed one." The Greek translation is *christós* (χριστός), anglicized as Christ.

Ontology: The branch of philosophy that studies concepts such as existence, being, becoming, and reality.

Pneumatology: The study of the Holy Spirit.

Postmillennialism: The belief that Christ's second coming will occur after a Golden Age in which Christianity will prosper (the "Millennium"). Some hold to a literal 1,000 years, while others see the thousand years more as a figurative term for a long period of time which has already begun. Many postmillennialists also adopt some form of preterism.

Premillennialism: Usually posits that Christ's second coming will inaugurate a literal thousand-year earthly kingdom (the millennium), during which Christ will reign and Satan will be imprisoned in the Abyss. Those who hold to this view usually fall into one of the following categories (please see our [Rapture or Resurrection?](#) study):

- **Pretribulationists** believe that the second coming will be in two stages separated by either a seven-year or three-½-year period of tribulation. At the beginning of the tribulation, Christ will return (covertly) to rapture true Christians to heaven. Then follows the tribulation in which the beast of *Revelation* will conquer the world and make war with the saints. At the end of this period, Christ returns (again) to defeat the beast and establish His millennial kingdom. There are also those who believe Christ will return midway through a seven-year tribulation to rapture believers (Midtribulationists).
- **Posttribulationists** hold that Christ will not return until the end of the tribulation (again, some hold to a 3-½-year or 7-year period). Christians, rather than being raptured at the beginning of the tribulation, or halfway through, will live through it. The beast will make war with the them and overcome them. A combined resurrection of dead believers and gathering of living believers (those who still remain) will join Christ at His second coming, at the end of this age, to usher in His millennial kingdom.

Preterism: A Christian eschatological view that interprets some (partial preterism) or all (full preterism) prophecies of the Bible as events which have already happened.

Septuagint: A Greek version of the Hebrew Bible (i.e., Old Testament), including the Apocrypha,

made for Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC and adopted by the early Christians.

Soteriology: The study of religious doctrines of salvation.

Systematic theology: A discipline of Christian theology that formulates an orderly, rational, and coherent account of the doctrines of Christianity.

Teleology: The study of evidences of design in nature; the use of design or purpose as an explanation of natural phenomena.

Textual criticism: A branch of textual scholarship, philology, and literary criticism that is concerned with the identification and removal of transcription errors in texts, both manuscripts and printed books. In biblical scholarship, textual criticism involves examination of the text itself and all associated biblical manuscripts with the aim of determining the original text.

Trichotomism: The view that humans are a composite of three distinct components: body, spirit, and soul.

Trinitarian theology: The part of theology that attempts to understand the central Christian mystery of one God in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Typology: A doctrine or theory concerning the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament. Events, persons, or statements in the Old Testament are seen as **types** prefiguring or superseded by **antitypes**, events or aspects of Christ or his revelation described in the New Testament. For example, Jonah may be seen as a *type* of Christ in that he emerged from the fish's belly and thus appeared to rise from death.

Vulgate: The principal Latin translation of the Bible, prepared mainly by St. Jerome in the late 4th century.



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