

MILLENNIAL ISSUES

INTRODUCTION

- Key Question: Will Christ return to rule for 1,000 years on earth?

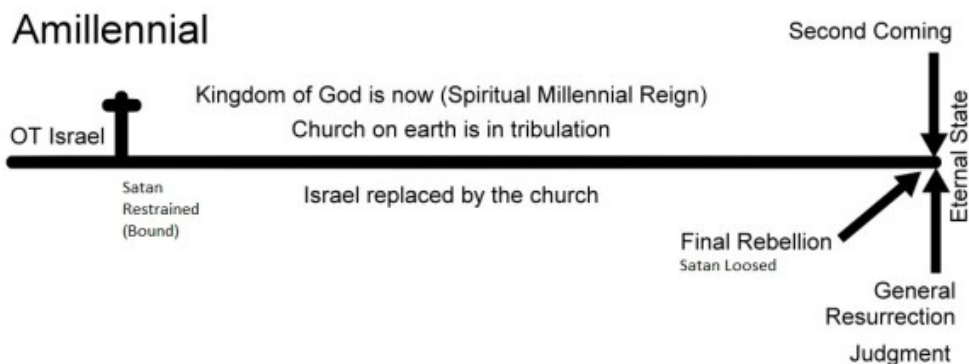
Overall Views Concerning the Millennium

	Amillennialism	Postmillennialism	Premillennialism
Second Coming of Christ	Single event; no distinction between rapture and second coming; Introduces eternal state.	Single event; no distinction between rapture and second coming; Christ returns after Millennium.	Christ returns prior to the Millennial Kingdom
Millennium	No literal Millennium on earth after second coming. Kingdom present in church age.	Present age blends into Millennium because of progress of gospel.	At second coming Christ inaugurates literal 1,000-year Millennium on earth.
Israel and the Church	Church is the new Israel. No distinction between Israel and church	Church is the new Israel. No distinction between Israel and church	Complete distinction between Israel and church. Distinct program for each.

- Why is this issue so important?
 - It shows how consistent we are in our principles of biblical interpretation
 - It is related to the faithfulness of God in keeping His covenants
 - It can affect the way we live and relate to the world around us

AMILLENNIALISM

- “a” = no; therefore Amillennial = no millennium
- This is not the best name because they do believe in a Millennium, albeit a spiritual one, not an earthly one
- This view denies a physical, literal reign of Christ on earth
- The roots of amillennialism were in Origen because he could not accept premillennialism; he was also the father of allegorical interpretation
- It was systematized by Augustine (350-400 AD)



- Explanation:
 1. Says that the Millennium began at the 1st coming of Christ and will continue to His 2nd coming
 - Says “thousand years” = long period not 1,000 years

- Says Revelation 20 refers to present not future
- Says Revelation 20 does not follow chronologically after Rev 19

Problem:

- The phrase “one thousand years” is repeated 6 times in Revelation 20
- If we spiritualize the 1,000 years, why not other numbers in Rev? (i.e. 144,000 Jews – 7:1-5, 7,000 killed in earthquake – 11:13; 42 months of Antichrist – 13:5)
- This view spiritualizes prophecy rather than taking it literally – a dual system of hermeneutics

2. Says Satan was bound at Christ’s first coming

- Says that his binding is only in the sense that he is unable to keep people from hearing the Gospel
- Says that the Abyss is a figurative description of the way in which Satan’s activities are curbed in Millennium

Problem:

- True Satan was defeated on cross, but he still roams the earth and is still very active

2 Corinthians 4:4 ~ in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God

Ephesians 2:1-2 ~ And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience

1 Timothy 4:1 ~ But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons

1 Peter 5:8 ~ Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

- Revelation 20 DOES fit chronologically after Rev 19 → Satan is bound after 2nd Coming
- The Abyss IS a specific place and should not be spiritualized away

Luke 8:31 ~ They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss

3. Two resurrections:

- Says 1st resurrection is a spiritual one; i.e. the new birth of the believer
- Says 2nd resurrection is a physical one; i.e. of all people at end of millennium

Problem:

- The same Greek word is used for both resurrections so they are probably the same kind of resurrection (i.e. physical)
- Those referred to in Revelation 20:4 were already believers before the resurrection - in fact were killed because they were believers

4. The Second Coming is a single event

- The Rapture and the 2nd Coming are the same event

5. The Tribulation is present currently as believers always face tribulation

6. At the 2nd Coming, there is one general resurrection and one general judgment

7. The eternal state will be brought in after the 2nd Coming

Other Key Tenets of Amillennialism:

- OT prophecies about Israel can and should be interpreted figuratively
- Revelation 20:4 refers to “the present reign of the souls of deceased believers with Christ in heaven”
- Christ is now sitting on the throne of David, ruling and reigning
- There is no separation between Israel and the church in God's redemptive program
- There is no future for Israel as a nation because the church has replaced Israel in God's plan

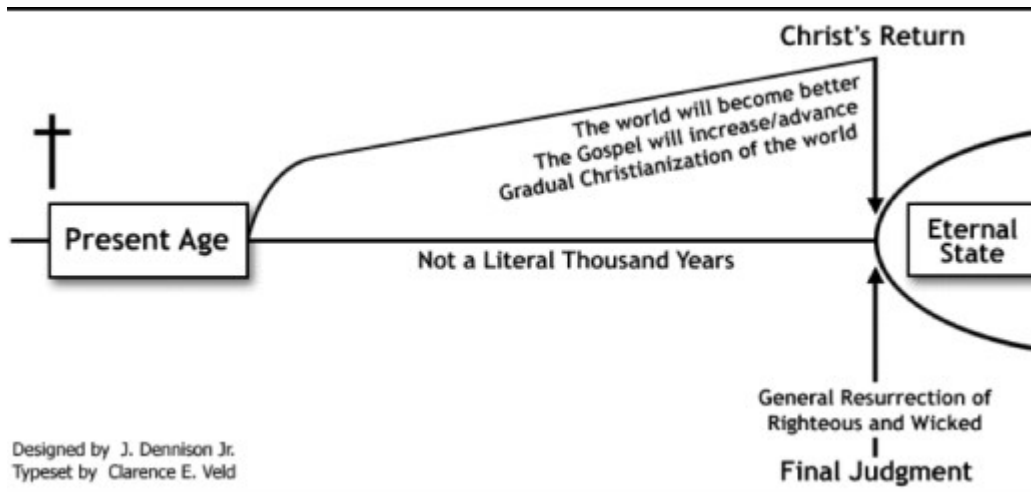
Matthew 21:43 ~ Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it

- The Old Covenant vanished away

Hebrews 8:7-13

- Apostasy canceled Israel's future blessing; God's promise was conditional
- All of God’s promises to Israel were either fulfilled or have been forfeited through disobedience
- Christ’s Second Coming will be at the end of the world when he judges all things and sets up the eternal state

POSTMILLENNIALISM



Explanation:

- Says that Christ’s return will occur “post” or “after the Millennium” in which the Millennium is not a literal thousand years
- This view states that the preaching of the Gospel will usher in an age of peace, the golden age, or the Millennium; Christ will return after that
- This was a popular view until WWI and WWII

1. The thousand years in Revelation 20 are not literal

- It is a long period of time
- Some think it is the whole time between advents (like amillennialism)
- Others think it is only the age of peace ushered in prior to the return of Christ

2. The Kingdom is spiritual not literal; i.e. the rule of Christ in the hearts of believers
3. The world gets better through spread of the Gospel
4. It view the two resurrections differently: first spiritual, second physical
5. An explosion of evil will occur at the end of the Millennium
6. It employs a figurative interpretation of prophecy
7. All resurrections and judgments are after the millennium

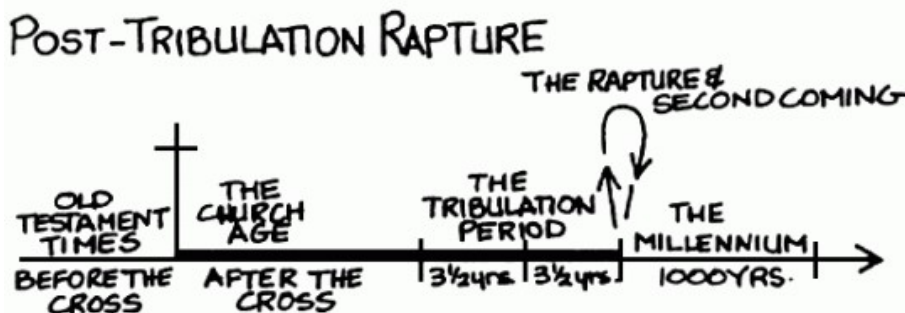
Other Key Tenets of Postmillennialism:

- The millennial kingdom is a golden age of spiritual prosperity during the present dispensation, the Church Age
- It is an indefinitely long period of time
- Evil in all its many forms eventually will be reduced to negligible proportions and "Christ will return to a truly Christianized world"
- Christian principles of life and conduct will become the accepted standards in public and private life
- There will be a universal proclamation of the gospel and the ultimate conversion of a large majority of men in all nations during this age
- During the millennium the church will continue to be the outward visible manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth
- Everything is getting better...the people of the whole world have the Christian message available to them and all of the false religions are dying
- There will be times of greater unrighteousness but continuing progress

Evaluation:

1. The world is not getting better
2. There is no distinction between Israel and the church in this view
3. Theonomy (the conviction that the civil law God gave to Israel in the Old Testament ought to be the law of the land in all nations everywhere) says Mosaic Law is in effect today

HISTORIC/COVENANT PREMILLENNIALISM



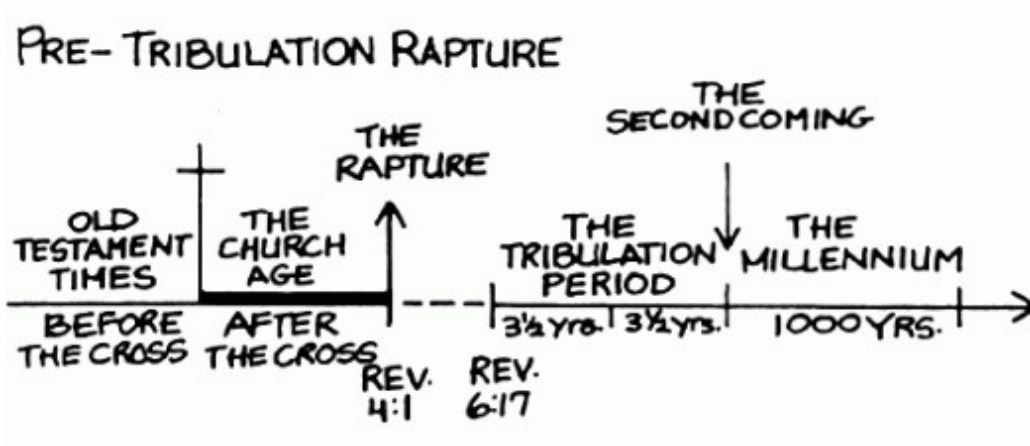
Explanation:

- It is called Historic Premillennialism because the argument is that this was the view that was held by church fathers
- Most believe the millennium will be 1000 years but some believe that it will simply be a long time
- Includes a post-tribulational rapture
- Bases their view of the millennium almost entirely on Revelation 20:1-6
- Does not go at all to the OT to support the idea of a millennial kingdom – thus it does not accept a millennial kingdom in which Israel has the primary focus
- Does not make a clear distinction between church and Israel – in this sense, this position is similar to amillennialism

Evaluation

- It fails to treat with integrity the meanings of OT passages in their own context – it spiritualizes prophecies of the OT about Israel believing that they are fulfilled in the church
- It fails to give the nation of Israel its proper place in the program of God
- It fails to affirm that the OT prophecies must be understood on their own merit...i.e. the New Testament meaning must not be read into the meaning of the OT prophecies

DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM



Explanation:

- Christ raptures the church away from earth before the Tribulation
- Christ returns to earth after the Tribulation and before the Millennium to establish the Millennial kingdom
- There is no present reign of Christ
- The Millennial kingdom is entirely future
- There are two physical resurrections:
 - First – believers – before the Millennium
 - Second – unbelievers – after the Millennium

Support for the Dispensational Premillennial Position

It Will Be Preceded by a Time of Great Tribulation

Matthew 24:6-12~ wars and rumors of wars... Nation will rise against nation... lawlessness is increased...

1 Timothy 4:1~ But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith

2 Timothy 3:1-5~ But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come...

Satan Bound

Revelation 20:1-3 ~ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he threw him into the abyss, and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time

- If we're in the millennium now, why does Satan still have access to people?

It is a Literal Kingdom

Ezekiel 36:24, 28-30 ~ For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land... You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. 29 Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you. 30 I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations.

Isaiah 11:6-8 ~ And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. 7 Also the cow and the bear will graze, Their young will lie down together, And the lion will eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den

Isaiah 65:20-22 ~ No longer will there be in it an infant *who lives but a few days*, Or an old man who does not live out his days; For the youth will die at the age of one hundred And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred Will be *thought* accursed. 21 They will build houses and inhabit *them*; They will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 22 They will not build and another inhabit, They will not plant and another eat

Revelation 20....the repetition of "1,000 years," the binding of Satan, the resurrection

- Christ will be the supreme ruler over all the earth and all of His enemies are removed
- Christ's reign is characterized by peace and righteousness
- It is also literal in that premillennialism is the result of a consistent literal hermeneutic
- One cannot arrive at amillennialism through a literal hermeneutic

Israel is Primary

Jeremiah 31:31~ Behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

Jeremiah 33:15 ~ In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth.

- The purpose of the millennial kingdom is to fulfill the covenant promises made to Abraham and his descendants

It is a Universal Kingdom

Daniel 7:13-14 ~ “I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. 14 “And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations, and *men of every* language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.

- Christ will be given universal reign over all the world and all the nations
- Daniel 2 and 7 make it clear that this takes place only AFTER human kingdoms have come to an end
 - Order of events in Daniel 2 and 7 make this clear (2:44; 7:11-14, 17-18, 27)
 - 4 kingdoms exist before the establishing of God’s kingdom (4th kingdom = Rome/Antichrist)
 - God will completely and totally destroy those kingdoms
 - This destruction comes suddenly, not gradually
 - Only when there is NOTHING left of mankind’s kingdoms will God set up His kingdom
 - No coexistence is allowed between God’s kingdom and man’s kingdoms
 - There is no gradual, peaceful takeover by the kingdom of God

Implications:

- The Millennial kingdom was NOT established at Christ’s first coming
- The Church is not the Millennial kingdom because the church does coexist with human kingdoms
- The Church did not completely bring to an end human kingdoms

It is a Spiritual (As well as political) Kingdom

Ezekiel 36:25-27 ~ Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances

Jeremiah 31:33-34 ~ But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

The Church and Israel are Distinct

Different Promises (Earthly vs. heavenly)
 Different Seed (Physical vs. Spiritual)
 Different Births (Sinai vs. Pentecost)
 Different Nationality (Jewish vs. Heavenly)
 Different Temple (Physical vs. Spiritual)
 Different Relationship w/ Christ

Objections to this Position

1. Only Revelation 20 supports an earthly Millennium
 - Response: There are 3 sections in Scripture that teach the Millennial Kingdom:
 1. The Biblical Covenants

2. The OT Prophets
3. Revelation 20

2. The Literal Interpretation is too Rigid

- Response: Prophecy should be interpreted with the same hermeneutic as any other section of Scripture

3. There is an excessive emphasis on Israel

- Response: True, redeemed Israel has a prominent place, but church does also...married to Christ in Revelation 19

Difficult Passages

Matthew 16:28~ Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.

- “kingdom” can also be translated as “royal splendor”
- The reference is to the Transfiguration which some of the disciples witnessed just 6 days later

Matthew 24:34 ~ Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

- This cannot refer to the generation living at that time of Christ, because they did not experience all the things that Christ mentioned in Matthew 24 such as the abomination of desolation (vs. 15), the persecutions and judgments (vs. 17–22), the false prophets (vv. 23–26), the signs in the heavens (vs. 27–29), Christ’s final return (vs. 30), and the gathering of the elect (vs. 31)
- It seems best to interpret Christ’s words as a reference to the generation alive at the time when those final hard labor pains begin

The Character of God is at Stake

Romans 11:29 ~ for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Jeremiah 31:35-37~ Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day, And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: 36 “If this fixed order departs From before Me,” declares the LORD, “Then the offspring of Israel also shall cease From being a nation before Me forever.” 37 Thus says the LORD, “If the heavens above can be measured, And the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel For all that they have done,” declares the LORD.