

## A Comparison of the Four Common End Times Views

Question: With regard to the “millennium” (of Rev. 20), when will Christ return?

### **Historic Premillennialism:** *Christ returns BEFORE (pre) the millennium*

- 1- Church age/Present age (after resurrection, ascension, Pentecost) continues until we near the end.
- 2- Then there will be a **great apostasy and tribulation**.
- 3- After the tribulation, Jesus returns (second coming) to the earth to establish the millennial kingdom.
- 4- When He returns:
  - a. He will be physically present and reign on earth \*
  - b. Believers who died get their glorified bodies and reign with Jesus
  - c. Believers who were on the earth at the time will also receive their glorified bodies and reign with Jesus
  - d. Unbelievers who are still around on the earth, many of them will turn to Christ and be saved (but not all)
  - e. Satan is bound at Christ’s return and is let loose right before the end of the millennium
- 5- The millennium separates the first (believers) and second (unbelievers) resurrections (Riddlebarger, p. 36).
- 6- End of the Millennium—
  - a. **Satan loosed**, many unbelievers join forces with him to battle against Christ
  - b. They will all be defeated.
  - c. After that, Christ raises the unbelieving dead from throughout history and **final judgment** occurs.
  - d. Then God creates the new heavens and the new earth.

\* Some believe the new heavens and new earth will be created at this time; some think that happens at the end of the millennium.

### **Dispensational Premillennialism:** *Christ returns (sort of) BEFORE the Tribulation & again BEFORE the Millennium*

- 1- This is the view which popularized the “rapture” concept—historically very recent, 19<sup>th</sup> Century
- 2- **Dispensational Hermeneutic:** divides biblical history into seven distinct dispensations or periods. Argues for a literal interpretation of all OT prophecies, meaning specific literal fulfillment for the nation of Israel. **Distinctive:** Dispensationalism separates Israel and the Church.
  - a. God’s plan focuses on Israel but there is a provision made for Gentiles—*the Church Age*
  - b. Church Age= everything between Jesus offering the Messianic Kingdom to Israel (which they reject) and the rapture before the Great Tribulation (when the Church is taken up)

- 3- Church age [some considered the Church Age a parenthesis] continues until we near the end of history, then:
  - a. **Rapture:** “secret return” of Christ—He takes Christians out of this world.
  - b. Then Christ returns to heaven with the Christians He raptures.
  - c. Antichrist waits for the removal of the church then will begin his work against Israel and those who believe during tribulation (Riddlebarger)
  - d. Great Tribulation: for all those who are left—7 years (some variance in terms of when Christians are taken, perhaps in the middle of the 7 years)
    - i. Ingathering of Jewish people
    - ii. Lots of evangelism (Gospel reaching the nations)
- 4- Bodily return of Christ *after* the Tribulation
  - a. Those who come to Christ during the Tribulation will enter the millennium and repopulate the earth (Riddlebarger, p. 34)
  - b. “Glorified believers will rule with Christ during his reign over all the nations.” (Riddlebarger, 34)
  - c. So, it seems you will have glorified saints along with non-glorified saints and sinners during the millennium (in this view)
- 5- **Millennium:** Jesus returns with the believers/saints and reigns on the earth for a thousand years.
  - a. God fulfills covenant promises to Israel
  - b. Better than current age, not as great as eternity
  - c. Those born during this time still born without a relationship to Christ
  - d. Old Testament temple worship/animal sacrifices to “commemorate” the work of Christ
- 6- At the end of a thousand years, **Satan is loosed**, rebellion occurs, Satan is defeated, judgment etc.
  - a. Satan leads a rebellion
  - b. Nations revolt against Christ
  - c. Great White throne of judgment
  - d. Satan and all unbelievers cast into lake of fire
- 7- After judgment, new heavens and new earth, and eternal state

Important: Dispensationalism got a boost in 1948 when Israel took on statehood. Zionism has some connection theological to Dispensationalism.

**Progressive Dispensationalism**—more of a middle ground between classical dispensationalism and covenant theology (beyond the scope of our discussion tonight)

<b>Post-millennialism:</b> <i>Christ returns AFTER (post) the millennium</i>
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- 1- We will see a gradual increase of Christians in the world
- 2- Eventually Christianity will have a much more significant impact on the world and there will be a period of “peace and righteousness” on this earth.
- 3- Riddlebarger notes, post-millennialism speaks of the millennial age’s five essential characteristics:
  - a. The preaching of the Gospel empowered by the Spirit will lead to numerical growth and spiritual vitality;
  - b. Christian influence will grow and lead to peace and economic well-being;
  - c. “large numbers of ethnic Jews will come to faith in Jesus Christ;
  - d. The end of the millennium will see a short apostasy (falling away);
  - e. Christ will return leading to the resurrection and final judgment.
- 4- After that period of time (whether a literal thousand years or not), Christ will return; believers and unbelievers will be raised (resurrection) and judgment will occur. Then the eternal state.

**Preterism:** What Biblical and prophetic events (from Olivet Discourse) have already occurred?

**Historical view from Riddlebarger:** Postmillennialism was common American position prior to early 20<sup>th</sup> Century (WWI, Great Depression, WWII) and then it was replaced by Premillennial views (Postmill viewed as optimistic, premill sometimes as pessimistic)

**Also interesting to note:** there was a liberalism that was connected to a postmillennial position because of their view of the social Gospel, justice, etc.

### **Amillennialism:** *what millennium?*

- 1- Christ reigns in heaven during the “church age”—between His resurrection and return—in *a sense, this is the millennium* (though not a literal thousand years, simply a long period of time). The age between the advents of Christ.
- 2- At some point toward the end of history, there will be an increase in sin, etc.; the coming of the Anti-Christ; a great tribulation; a great apostasy; *as Satan is loosed once again*.
- 3- Then Jesus returns, the dead are raised, judgment occurs.
  - a. First resurrection—spiritual life/regeneration
  - b. Second resurrection—physical resurrection to life or death
- 4- The eternal state, new heavens and new earth, etc.

**Interesting info:** Language “amillennialism” not developed until 20<sup>th</sup> Century—prior to that, lumped in with postmillennial view because they believe the return of Christ is *after* the millennium.

#### **Hermeneutic:**

- The covenantal promises made to Abraham, Israel, and David are fulfilled in Christ and His church.
- The binding of Satan: Satan bound by Christ’s victory over death/the tomb, the preaching of the Gospel prevents Satan from deceiving the nations... But at the end, “Satan is released, a great apostasy breaks out, the general resurrection occurs, and Jesus Christ returns in final judgment for all people, and he establishes a new heaven and earth.” (Riddlebarger, p. 40)

Amillennialism has a lot of history on its side—Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, etc.

#### **Mount Ararat Bible Church**

All-Church Study

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