



HAVE NO FEAR, THE END IS NEAR

3.2.10




A Practical Discussion on the Book of Revelation



Revelation 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. ² And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, ³ and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while. ⁴ Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years. ⁷ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.




⁹ And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, ¹⁰ and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. ¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

The Millenium

- Most controversial chapter in the Bible?
- What all evangelicals agree on:
 - The Bible is the inspired Word of God.
 - Jesus came to earth a first time and will return again visibly, personally, and gloriously.
 - How you interpret this chapter is non-essential to salvation.
 - Your view of the chapter does greatly affect your view of the book as a whole.
- There are evangelicals represented in all 4 views of Revelation 20.

||| The Four Views in History

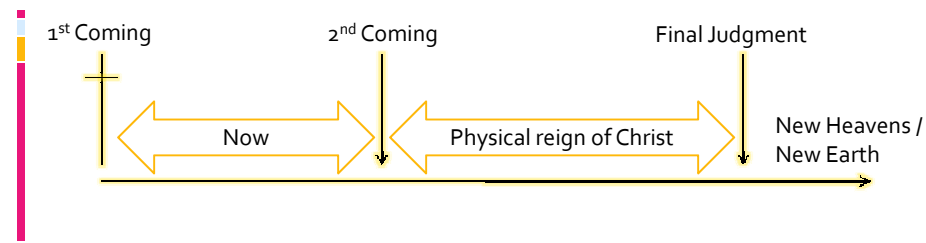
- Historic Premillennialism
 - Common view among early church theologians, prior to 350AD
 - Few, if any, Christians held this view between 350-1850AD
 - Some theologians have re-adopted this view in the last century (very few)
- Dispensational Premillennialism
 - View originated with John Darby in 1870s
 - Popularized by the Scofield study Bible in the mid-1900s and today by the *Left Behind* book series
 - Held as the default view by many evangelicals due to its current popularity, although it appeared in no church creeds before 1900.

||| The Four Views in History

- Postmillennialism
 - Originated in 3-400s AD with Jerome and Augustine
 - Popular with Reformers, including Calvin and Luther
 - Fairly popular within some Reformed groups
- Amillennialism
 - Subdivision of Post-mil view
 - Gained popularity among Reformed theologians in the last two centuries
 - Fairly popular among Reformed evangelicals today

Historic Premillennialism

- Jesus comes back before a literal 1,000 year reign on earth.
- At the end of that period comes the final judgment.

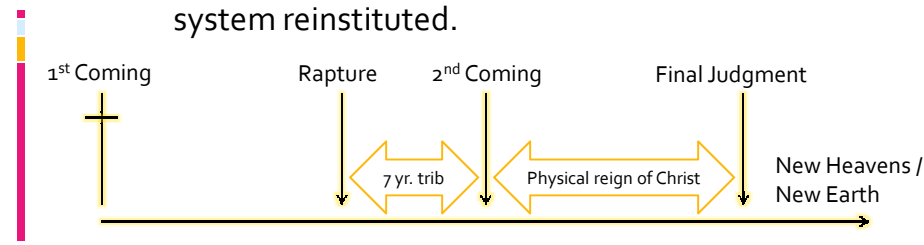


Historic Premillennialism

- The Argument:
 - ◻ Rule: Interpret literally unless absurd.
 - ◻ Rev. 20 follows Rev. 19 chronologically.
 - ◻ The two resurrections mentioned in verses 4-6 are both bodily.
 - ◻ The reign is a literal earthly reign of Christ, anticipated in both testaments.
- Common Criticisms
 - ◻ The only explicit reference to a millennial reign is in Rev. 20. (Jesus and Paul said a lot about end times, but never mentioned this.)
 - ◻ Passages on the kingdom do not seem to anticipate the kind of earthly kingdom Premillennialists expect.
 - ◻ Other views argue that both resurrections are not bodily and that Rev. 20 is not meant to follow Rev. 19 chronologically.

Dispensational Premillennialism

- Same as historical, with a few additions.
 - The church will be raptured prior to a 7-year tribulation. After that, Jesus will return and establish an earthly kingdom.
 - Strong emphasis on Israel as a nation – the millennium is a Jewish kingdom, with sacrificial system reinstated.



Dispensational Premillennialism

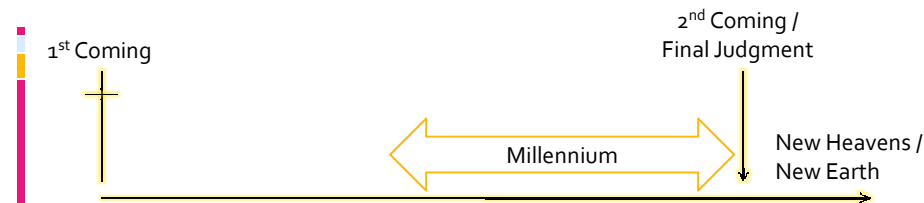
- The Argument
 - The millennium of Rev. 20 is part of a greater system of understanding the Bible (the 7th age). We now live in the "church age".
 - Strictly literal interpretation of the Bible in every verse
 - Same arguments regarding Rev. 20 as the historical version
 - Additional emphasis on OT prophecy seen as unfulfilled. Israel as a nation will experience renewal and prosperity during the millennium. The OT system will be restored in the old geographical nation.
 - Israel and the Church are two distinct groups.

Dispensational Premillennialism

- Common Criticisms
 - Same as historical, plus the ones below:
 - It is difficult to remain strictly literal and chronological through the entire book of Revelation.
 - The final battle in 20:7-10 seems to be the same as the battle in 16:14, 16; 17:14; and 19:11-21.
 - If ALL of God's enemies are destroyed in 19:11-21, who is left for Satan to deceive in 20:3?
 - Many NT passages link the Church to Israel. (John 8:28-39, Romans 2:29, 4:11-12, 9,11; Galatians 3:28)
 - It is difficult to imagine the sacrificial system restored. (Hebrews 10:1-4)
 - Prophecies are not always literally fulfilled, according to the NT.
 - Elijah's coming was fulfilled in John the Baptist.
 - Peter argued that the promise to David that the resurrected Christ would sit on his throne was fulfilled in Christ's resurrection and ascension to heaven.
 - The church saw Peter and John's imprisonment as a fulfillment of Psalm 2 (kings and rulers opposing God's king).
 - Does the OT interpret the NT or does the NT interpret the OT? The NT speaks with authority concerning OT passages.
 - Jesus Himself is the true Israel of God and fulfillment of all promises. (Luke 24:25-27; 2 Corinthians 1:20, Galatians 3:16)

Postmillennialism

- Jesus comes back after some sort of 1,000 year reign, a period of prosperity for the church accomplished through the Great Commission.



Postmillennialism

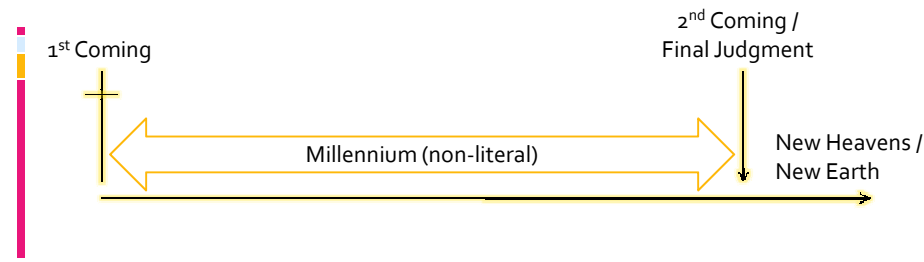
- Arguments
 - The kingdom is a present reality, – the rule of Christ in men’s hearts. Gradual growth expected.
 - All nations will be converted before the end. (most people – a Christian world)
 - The millennium is a current and/or future period of peace and prosperity in this Christian world. (may not be literal time)
 - A brief period of tribulation will occur just before the 2nd coming.
 - “The world is getting better – more Christian”.

Postmillennialism

- Common Criticisms
 - Too optimistic? Is the world really getting better overall?
 - Some passages seem to envision the world worsening in the end times. (Matt. 24:9-14)
 - There are wide disagreements within this view on how to interpret Revelation 20.

Amillennialism

- Misleading term – they do believe in a millennium, just not a literal earthly one.
- It refers to the entire period between Christ's 1st and 2nd coming.



Amillennialism

- Arguments
 - Rev. 20 is symbolic and does not follow Rev. 19 chronologically, but is a new cycle in the book.
 - First resurrection/First death & Second resurrection/Second death
 - First death = physical death, preliminary to the final judgment (the second death = hell)
 - First resurrection is also preliminary, the second leading to eternal life.
 - First/second, old/new are common ways of making a statement of quality in the Bible, not just quantity (Rev. 21:1,5; Heb. 10:9; Rom 5; 1 Cor. 15:45). Therefore, it is not necessary to assume that both resurrections in Rev. 20 must be bodily.
 - The Amill view is that the first resurrection means the souls of the redeemed going to be with Christ until His return.
 - Generally agrees with the postmill view on the nature of the kingdom, but not the timing and some disagree with the means by which it comes about. The kingdom has both a present and a future reality.
 - Israel was God's earthly kingdom in the OT, but with Christ's first coming that kingdom extended to all nations and peoples and continues to expand in a primarily spiritual sense.
 - Satan bound? Already through Christ's death and resurrection. (John 12:31; Matthew 12:29; Rev. 12:9)
 - Mean two things presently – Satan cannot prevent the spread of the Gospel and he cannot gather the nations against the Church.

Amillennialism

- Common Criticisms
 - The Amill reading of Rev. 20 is not the most natural reading.
 - Verse 5 seems to imply that those who participate in the first resurrection do not participate in the second (presumably, they are still alive).
 - The Amill view is often labeled as “pessimistic”, because it doesn’t usually include a golden age for the church prior to the final judgment. Instead, it sees a balance of progress and persecution continuing until the 2nd coming.
 - Dispensationalists argue that this view ignores prophecies concerning national Israel.

The Big Picture

- What did this mean to the early church? What does it mean for us?
 - The Church is safe. She will be vindicated and secured.
 - Evil will be conquered, once and for all.
- Whose side are you on?
 - You cannot serve two masters. We face eternal life or eternal death.
 - Whether we are in the millennium now, or if it is a future time period, our mission is the same in the present: the Great Commission.
 - “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” – Matt. 24:14