

## **Premillennial, Amillennial or Postmillennial and does it matter?**

There is always a lot of discussion around the different understandings of the Millennial reign of Christ and sometimes we can think that it really doesn't matter - that it is only important to believe in the Lord Jesus and His death and resurrection that brought about the possibility of our redemption and salvation.

However, much is at stake here and though the essentials of Christianity may not include our agreement on this issue, still what we believe about this 'millennial' reign has a great impact on our Christian life today.

For this reason I have attempted here to articulate the reasons that I adhere to the Premillennial understanding.

Both Amillennialism and Postmillennialism came into being from people who do not interpret prophecy literally and who do not take into account God's future plan for the nation of Israel. Both have a common belief that the millennial kingdom is this current age.

### **Amillennialism**

Amillennialism is the name given to the belief that there will not be a literal 1000-year reign of Christ. The people who hold to this belief are called amillennialists. The prefix "a-" in amillennialism means "no" or "not." Hence, "amillennialism" means "no millennium."

This differs from the view called Premillennialism which is the view that Christ's second coming will occur prior to His millennial kingdom and that the millennial kingdom is a literal 1000-year reign.

It differs too from the less-widely accepted view called Postmillennialism which is the view that Christ will return after Christians, not Christ Himself, have established the kingdom on this earth.

However, amillennialists, do not actually believe that there is no millennium at all, just that there is no *literal* millennium - no literal 1000-year reign of Christ on earth. Instead, they believe that Christ is already sitting on the throne of David and that this present church age is the kingdom over which He reigns.

In fact amillennialists believe that the church has existed since the account in Genesis 3:15 and that the church will continue on earth until heaven and earth are destroyed.

They believe in a principle of "continuity" – that nothing spiritually new occurs. Therefore:

a) They do not believe the church started at Pentecost, since that, of course, would be something new.

b) They believe the church has existed since the creation

c) They reject the idea of a rapture since that would mean the church would disappear with no one left to preach the gospel and that of course would be something new.

d) Consequently, they do not believe the church will disappear before or during a time called the Tribulation.

The Word of God is clear on the fact that Christ is now sitting on a throne - **Ephesians 1:20** but this does not mean that it is what the Bible refers to as the Throne of David.

Christ now rules, for He is God **Colossians 2:9; John 1:1** - yet this does not mean He is ruling over a millennial kingdom.

In order for God to keep His promises to Israel and His covenant with David **2 Sam. 7:8-16; 23:5; Psalm 89:3-4**, there must be a literal, physical kingdom on this earth; to doubt this is to call into question God's desire and/or His ability to keep His promises, and this opens up a host of other theological problems.

For example, if God would break His promises to Israel after proclaiming those promises to be "everlasting," how could we be sure of anything He promises, including the promises of salvation to believers in the Lord Jesus?

The only way that we can be sure of anything is, of course, to take God at His word and understand that His promises will be literally fulfilled. **2 Tim.3:16; Romans 11:29**

Clear Biblical indications that the kingdom will be a literal, earthly kingdom are:

1) Christ's feet will actually touch the Mount of Olives prior to the establishment of His kingdom **Zechariah 14:4,9**

2) During the kingdom, Christ will execute justice and judgment on the earth **Jeremiah 23:5-8**

3) The kingdom is described as being under heaven **Daniel 7:13-14, 27**

4) The prophets foretold of dramatic earthly changes during the kingdom **Acts 3:21; Isaiah 35:1-2; 11:6-9; 29:18; 65:20-22; Ezekiel 47:1-12; Amos 9:11-15**

5) The chronological order of events in Revelation indicates the existence of an earthly kingdom prior to the conclusion of world history **Revelation 20**.

When the amillennialist comes to the book of Revelation, he/she cannot interpret it literally since they reject the references to 42 months or 1,260 days or "time, times and half-time" - a 3.5 year period of the tribulation **Rev. 11:2; 12:6, 14; 13:5** spoken of in Daniel **Dan. 7:25; 9:27; 12:7**. Therefore they also reject a literal 1,000 year kingdom spoken of in **Rev. 20:2, 5**.

Premillennialism accepts Scripture literally. Amillennialists might claim that they read and understand Scripture literally, too, but they also admit that this

understanding is filtered by the principle of “continuity” – that nothing new happens.

The amillennial view comes from using one method of interpretation for unfulfilled prophecy and another method for non-prophetic Scripture and fulfilled prophecy.

Non-prophetic Scripture and fulfilled prophecy are interpreted literally or normally. But, according to the amillennialist, unfulfilled prophecy is to be interpreted spiritually, or non-literally.

To make this system work, they must treat most prophetic portions of Scripture symbolically. So they find difficulty in understanding Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Matthew 24-25, or Revelation literally and believe that a “spiritual” reading of unfulfilled prophecy is the normal reading of the texts.

This is called using a *dual hermeneutic*. (Hermeneutics is the study of the principles of interpretation.)

The amillennialist assumes that most, or all, unfulfilled prophecy is written in symbolic, figurative, spiritual language. Therefore, the amillennialist will assign different meanings to those parts of Scripture instead of the normal, contextual meanings of those words.

The problem with interpreting unfulfilled prophecy in this manner is that this allows for a wide range of meanings - unless you interpret Scripture in the normal sense, there will not be one meaning.

Yet God, the ultimate author of all of Scripture, did have one specific meaning in mind when He inspired the human authors to write. Though there may be many life applications in a passage of Scripture, there is only one meaning, and that meaning is what God intended it to mean.

Finally of course, the fact that fulfilled prophecy *was* fulfilled literally is the best reason of all for assuming that unfulfilled prophecy will also be literally fulfilled.

### Postmillennialism

Postmillennialism is an interpretation of Revelation chapter 20 which sees Christ's second coming as occurring after the “millennium,” a golden age or era of Christian prosperity and dominance. The term includes several similar views of the end times, and it stands in contrast to premillennialism (the view that Christ's second coming will occur prior to His millennial kingdom and that the millennial kingdom is a literal 1000-year reign) and, to a lesser extent, amillennialism (no literal millennium).

Postmillennialism is the belief that Christ returns after a period of time, but not necessarily a literal 1000 years. Those who hold this view do not interpret unfulfilled prophecy using a normal, literal method.

They believe that **Revelation 20:4-6** should not be taken literally. They believe that “1000 years” simply means “a long period of time.” Furthermore, the prefix “Post-” in “Postmillennialism” denotes the view that Christ will return after Christians (not Christ Himself) have established the kingdom on this earth.

Those who hold to Postmillennialism believe that this world will become better and better with the entire world eventually becoming “Christianised.” After this happens, Christ will return.

However, this is not the view of the world in the end times that Scripture presents. From the book of Revelation, it is easy to see that the world will be a terrible place during that future time. Also, in **2 Timothy 3:1-7** Paul describes the last days as “terrible times.”

Those who hold to Postmillennialism use a non-literal method of interpreting unfulfilled prophecy, assigning their own meanings to words. The problem with this is that when someone starts assigning meanings to words other than their normal meaning, a person can decide that a word, phrase, or sentence means anything he wants it to mean. All objectivity concerning the meaning of words is lost. When words lose their meaning, communication ceases.

A normal, literal interpretation of Scripture rejects Postmillennialism and holds to a normal interpretation of all Scripture, including unfulfilled prophecy.

To sum up then:

Premillennialism is the only Scriptural teaching because:

1. It is consistent with a literal interpretation of Scripture - in particular prophecy.
2. It holds to the unconditional nature of the Covenants.
3. It holds to the Abrahamic Covenant
4. It teaches an earthly kingdom
5. The covenants continue unchanged into the New Testament
6. Christ taught the coming of an earthly kingdom
7. There are multiple resurrections taught in Scripture
8. A normal reading of Revelation 20 supports it.
9. The early church was completely premillennial
10. Premillennialism harmonises the entire Bible