

Theological Equipping Class

Millennial Theories: Premillennialism | 10.20.19

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 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. 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 those 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. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. 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. And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison 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. 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, 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. (Revelation 20:1–10)

Essential questions to answer:

1. Is this a literal 1000 years or is it simply symbolic for a long period of time?
2. Is this a future occurrence or is it already taking place?
3. When does Christ come in relation to this period? Before or after?
4. Will Christ's return immediately initiate the eternal state or is there something between Christ's return and the eternal state?

Three main camps: premillennial | amillennial | postmillennial

Opening Remarks:

1. The 1000 years doesn't have to be literal.
 - Psalm 84, Psalm 50
 - *But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (2 Peter 3:8)*
2. What you believe about the millennium isn't essential.
 - What is essential when it comes to eschatology is that you confess the following:
 - Jesus will come again with glory to judge the living & the dead.
 - His kingdom will never end.
 - We look forward to the resurrection of the dead and to life in the world to come.

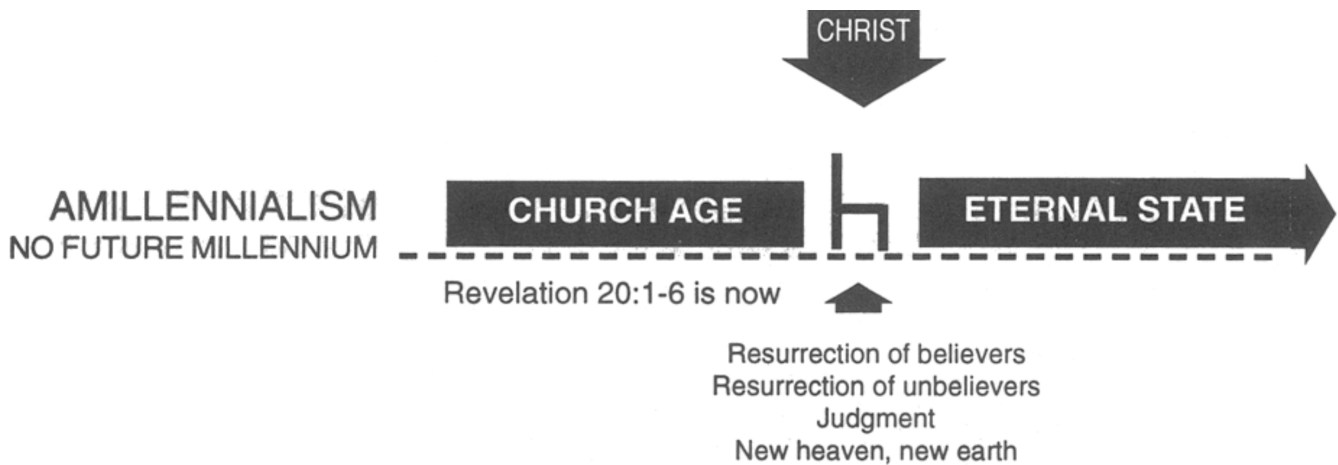
3. What you believe about the millennium isn't essential, but it is important.

Four reasons this is important.

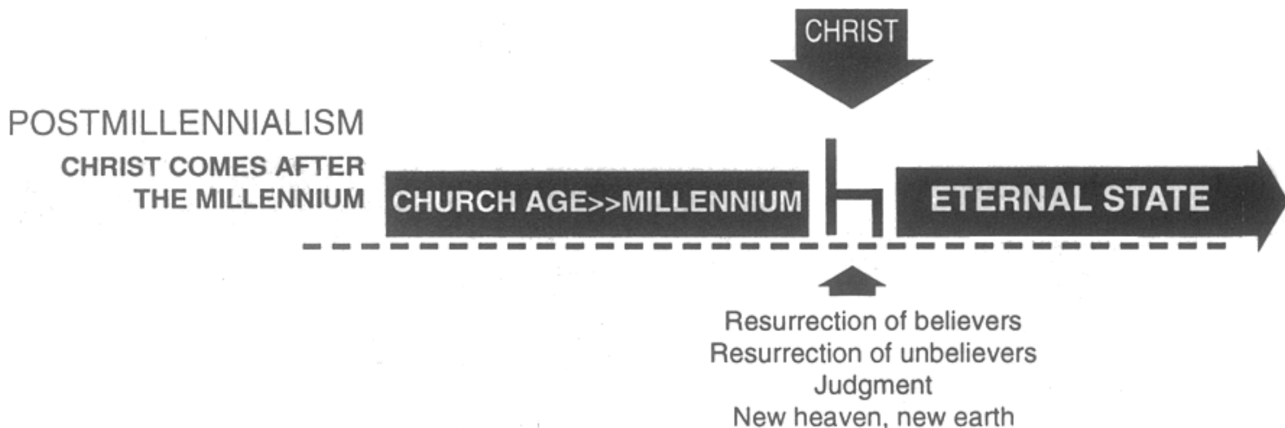
- Blessing: *Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.* (Revelation 1:3)
- Hope
- Culture and our responsibility to change the world
- Knowing God's word is never a useless exercise

Overview of the Three Views: [charts from Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology]

Amillennialism: The return of Christ happens after the thousand-year reign, a reign that is occurring now in heaven, in the intermediate state, and not upon the earth. Those who have died in faith and entered into the presence of Christ share his rule and reign during the current church age.



Postmillennialism: The return of Christ happens after (post-) the thousand-year reign, which corresponds to the Christian age, and the reign of Christ from heaven leads the church to triumph by and through the gospel to such an extent that the Great Commission will be successfully fulfilled, and the Christian faith will pervade all the cultures of all the nations of men. All Christ's enemies will be subdued in this way, with the exception of death, which he will destroy by his coming.



Premillennialism: The return of Christ happens before (pre-) the thousand-year reign of Christ, which is a reign of the risen Christ on the earth.

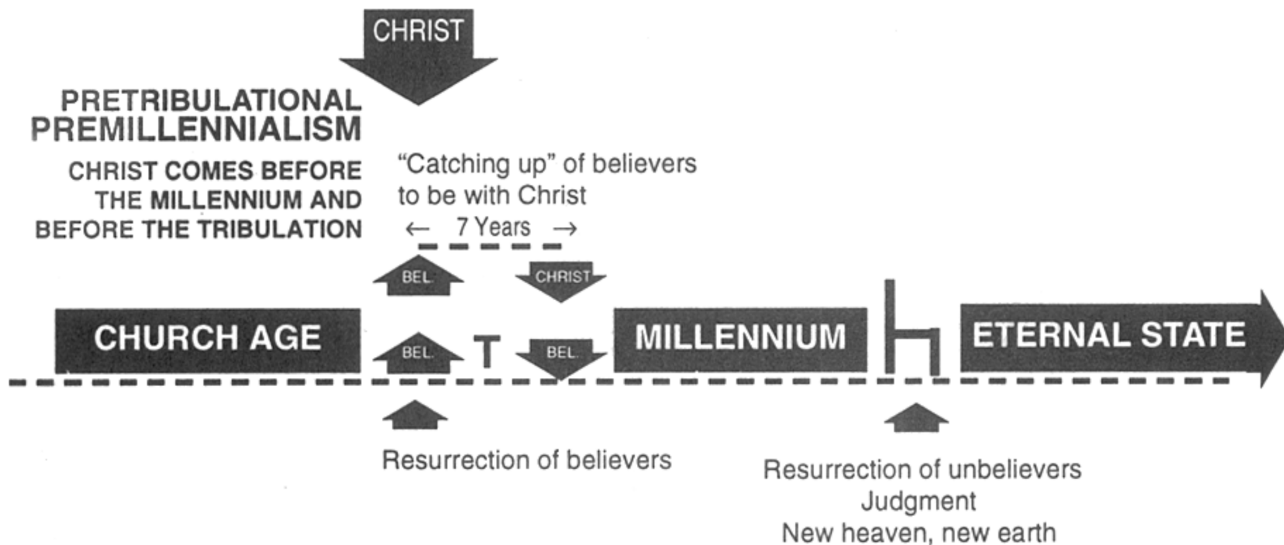
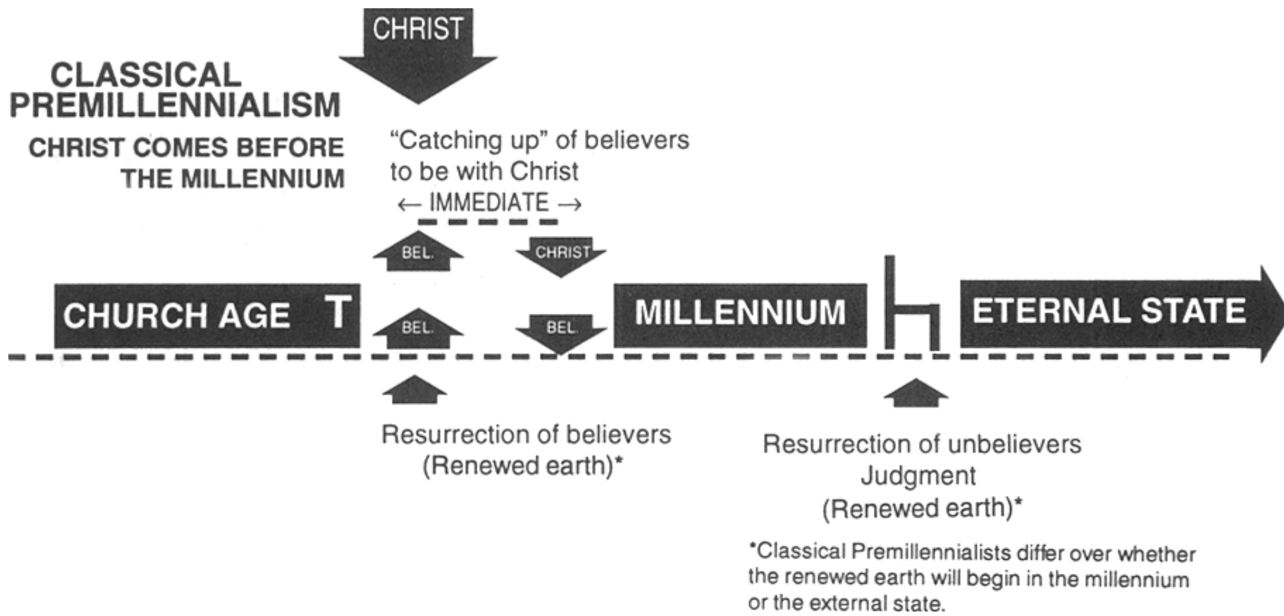
4 Things to Know about Premillennialism

1. Premillennialism is also known as chiliasm or millennarianism.

2. Premillennialism has a rich theological history.
 - Held by influential fathers such as Papias, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, & Tertullian.

3. What are the basic features of premillennialism?
 - Christ returns before millennium.
 - Believers who have died and those who are alive at Christ's return will receive resurrected bodies at beginning of millennium and will reign with Him.
 - Satan will be bound such that he can no longer deceive the nations.
 - Thus some, maybe many or even most unbelievers will trust Christ during the millennium.
 - Satan will eventually be released and there will be final battle of Armageddon.
 - Therefore, there is a necessary delay between return of Christ & consummation of the eternal state.

4. There are two forms of premillennialism: historic & dispensational premillennialism.
 - What are the differences between historic & dispensational premillennialism? The basic difference consists in the latter maintaining a distinction between the nation of Israel & the Church. According to dispensationalism, the millennium will be the period of history in which God reverts back to fulfilling OT promises made to ethnic Israel, after the parenthetical "Church Age" in which we live is concluded. Hence, the millennium will be a state of Jewish ascendancy over all the world, complete with a renewed Jewish temple & priesthood. Christians who reign with Christ will all have eternal, glorified bodies, & will reign spiritually, while the Jews will own the world physically, & will live, marry, & die (although evincing incredible longevity), just as people have throughout the history of the world. It is only after this thousand-year period, in which God fulfills his promises to ethnic Israel, that Christ will put down a final rebellion & usher in the eternal state, with its New Heavens & New Earth. Historic Premillennialism requires none of this strict dichotomy between God's spiritual people the Church, & a physical people, ethnic Israel; it merely looks ahead to a time when Christ will reign visibly on the earth, before he brings in the eternal state.



Problems with Dispensationalism

1. Dispensationalism emphasizes disunity between Jew and Gentile.
2. Dispensationalism views the church as a parenthesis in God's plan with Israel.
3. Dispensationalism teaches a secret rapture of the church.
4. Dispensationalism often seems to read the Bible through a wooden literalistic lens rather than allowing for the use of figurative language.
5. Dispensationalism can tend to read the New Testament through the lens of the Old rather than interpreting the Old Testament through the lens of the New!

Arguments for Historic Premillennialism

1. Premillennialism seems to be prevailing view of the early church fathers for first 3 centuries.
2. Several OT passages seem to fit neither in the present age nor eternal state.
 - *No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.* (Isaiah 65:20)
 - *For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.* (Isaiah 65:17)
3. Other pieces of Jewish literature predict an earthly reign and an interim messianic kingdom before the final end (1 Enoch 91:1-10; 93:12-17; 4 Ezra 7:26-44; 12:31-34; 2 Baruch 29:3-30:1; 40:1-4; 72:2-74:3).
4. Certain passages seem to suggest believers ruling over unbelievers at some point.
 - *The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.* (Revelation 2:26–27)
5. Makes sense of the original cultural mandate.
 - *And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”* (Genesis 1:28)
 - “Since the Edenic covenants of blessing and the law were given in the context of this earth, they must be fulfilled on this earth before its entrance into the eternal and transformed state of the new heavens and earth.” (Sung Wook Chung)

6. The literal surface reading of Revelation 20 seems to prefer it.

The binding of Satan.

- *But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. (Matthew 12:28–29)*
- *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. (1 John 5:19)*
- *the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience... (Ephesians 2:2)*

The saints coming to life in the first resurrection

- *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 those 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. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. 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. (Revelation 20:4–6)*

Summary:

1. The millennium refers to the 1000 year period explicitly mentioned only in Revelation 20.
2. There are 4 main views on the topic: historic premill, dispensational premill, amill, postmill.
3. None of these views are heretical. Each are represented by godly, Bible-loving, Christians.
4. Though this isn't essential for our salvation, it is nonetheless important and can have implications for the way that we view our hope and responsibility in this present age.