

**Millennialism**  
**Series: Between a Rock and a Hard Place**  
**Revelation 20.1-10**

I. **Millennial Madness**

- A. Y2K
- B. Christian Millennial Madness
  - 1. Remarkable in how seriously some take it
    - a. Almost an essential article of faith
    - b. Denominational divisions
    - c. Accusations of disregarding scripture
    - d. Accusations of violating hermeneutical principles
  - 2. Remarkable because the explicit mention of a millennium is found only in one place
- C. **Revelation 20:1–10** (NASB95) —
  - 1. 1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.
  - 2. 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;
    - a. [thousand years = millennium]
    - b. [devil bound for that period]
  - 3. 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.
    - a. [devil prevented from deceiving nations for 1,000 years]
    - b. [following 1,000 years, released briefly, presumably to deceive]
  - 4. 4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.
    - a. [martyrs, those faithful, came to life at beginning of 1,000 years]
    - b. [reigned with Christ for 1,000 years]
  - 5. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.
    - a. [martyrs and faithful believers raised in 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection]
    - b. [those unbelieving dead not raised until end of 1,000 years]
  - 6. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.
    - a. [refers to martyrs and faithful believers]
    - b. [they are raised in the 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection at beginning of millennium]
    - c. [they are not subject to 2<sup>nd</sup> death]
    - d. [they will be priests and reign for 1,000 years]

7. 7 When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, 8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.
    - a. [Satan's release will lead to deception of nations]
    - b. [deception will lead to preparation for war]
    - c. [many will be involved]
  8. 9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.
    - a. [time for war; surrounded believers in presumably Jerusalem]
    - b. [battle never actually takes place; fire comes down and kills the enemy of the saints]
  9. 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.
    - a. [Devil thrown into lake of fire with beast and false prophet]
    - b. [everlasting torment]
  - D. Following the millennium comes the final judgment
  - E. **Revelation 20:11–15** (NASB95) —
    1. 11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.
      - a. [Jesus on the great white throne to judge]
    2. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.
      - a. [judgment according to works written in the books]
    3. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.
      - a. [judgment of dead unbelievers; those not raised in 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection]
    4. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.
      - a. [unbelievers thrown into the lake of fire]
      - b. [final judgment = 2<sup>nd</sup> death]
    5. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.
      - a. [only believers are in the book of life]
      - b. [everyone else thrown into lake of fire]
  - F. Only the first 10 verses speak of the millennium
    1. 11-15 speak of what happens at the conclusion of the millennium
- II. **What is the Millennium?**
- A. **1,000 years**
    1. Actual years?

2. Metaphorical years – long period of time?
- B. **Character of Millennium**
1. Because the devil is restrained, no longer able to deceive
  2. Because Christ reigns with His believing people
  3. Millennium is thought to be a **time of extraordinary peace, justice, righteousness**
  4. Made up of people
    - a. Those raised in the 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection – glorified believers
    - b. Those remaining – sinners
    - c. Their sin is restrained compared to today – no Satan to deceive, Christ reigning and ruling
    - d. Presumably, there are opportunities for some of those sinners to be saved
  5. Millennium mixture
    - a. **Glorified believers**
    - b. Unbelieving sinners
    - c. Believers not yet glorified who were not believers when the millennium began, or who were born after the millennium began
- C. Questions concerning the millennium
1. **What is the nature of the millennium?**
  2. **When does it happen in relation to the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ?**
  3. **When does it happen in relation to the great tribulation?**

### III. **Millennial Options**

- A. **Amillennialism [Amil graphic]**
1. Simplest
  2. Church age
  3. 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming
  4. Eternal state
  5. Everything else happens when Christ returns
    - a. Resurrection of believers
    - b. Resurrection of unbelievers
    - c. Judgment
    - d. New heavens and new earth
  6. Amillennialism = no millennium
    - a. Not the most accurate name
    - b. Really means no future millennium
    - c. Millennium is coextensive with the church age
    - d. Better name: realized millennialism
  7. Significance
    - a. Growth of the kingdom of Christ happens simultaneously with growth of evil
- B. **Postmillennialism [Postmil graphic]**
1. Post = after millennium
    - a. Christ returns following the millennium

2. Optimistic view of the church
    - a. Church age grows into the millennium
      - (1) Church is successful in growing the kingdom
      - (2) Christianity becomes more influential
      - (3) Yields an extensive period of peace, righteousness, justice
  3. Church age producing the millennium
  4. Return of Christ
  5. Eternal state
  6. Everything else happens at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming (like amillennialism)
    - a. Resurrection of believers
    - b. Resurrection of unbelievers
    - c. Judgment
    - d. New heaven and new earth
- C. **Premillennialism – Historic, Classical** [Classic Premil graphic]
1. Pre = before the millennium
    - a. Christ returns before the millennium
  2. Church age
    - a. Tribulation at the end of the church age
  3. 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ
    - a. Resurrection of believers
    - b. Rapture (catching up) of believers with Christ
    - c. Return to earth of believers with Christ
  4. Millennium
    - a. Renewed earth?
  5. Resurrection of unbelievers
  6. Judgment of unbelievers
  7. Eternal state
    - a. Renewed earth?
- D. **Premillennialism – Pretribulational, Dispensational** [Pretrib Premil graphic]
1. Church age
  2. Resurrection of believers
  3. Christ raptures the Church before the tribulation (no longer present on earth; 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming)
  4. Tribulation
  5. 2<sup>nd</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ with believers
  6. Millennium
  7. Resurrection of unbelievers
  8. Judgment of unbelievers
  9. New heaven and new earth
  10. Eternal state
  11. Assumed – strong distinction between church and Israel

#### IV. **Arguments**

##### A. **Amillennialism**

1. **Only one text** – Revelation 20.1-6 – refers to millennium

- a. Binding of Satan took place during Jesus' earthly ministry
    - (1) **Matthew 12:29** (NASB95) — 29 “Or how can anyone enter the strong man’s house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.”
    - (2) **Matthew 12:28** (NASB95) — 28 “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”
    - (3) **Luke 10:18** (NASB95) — 18 And He said to them, “I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.”
  - b. Binding only refers to Satan’s ability to deceive the nations
    - (1) Missionary activity in expanding gospel into Gentile lands is the result
  - c. Revelation 20.4 – souls of those beheaded came to life
    - (1) Souls – not bodies
    - (2) Refers to being alive in presence of Christ
  - d. Revelation 20.5 – 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection – going to heaven to be with the Lord
2. **Scripture teaches only one resurrection**
- a. Believers and unbelievers raised, not two
    - (1) (premil has resurrection of believers at beginning of millennium, resurrection of unbelievers at end)
  - b. **John 5:28–29** (NASB95) — 28 “Do not marvel at this; for an **hour** is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, 29 and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.”
  - c. **Acts 24:15** (NASB95) — 15 having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. (Paul to Felix)
  - d. **Daniel 12:2** (NASB95) — 2 “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.”
3. If Christ comes in glory to reign on the earth, how could people still sin?
4. No purpose for the millennium
- a. What is the delay in the start of the eternal state about?
5. Summary
- a. All the major events take place at once
    - (1) Christ’s return
    - (2) Resurrection of believers and unbelievers
    - (3) Final judgment
    - (4) New heaven and new earth
    - (5) Eternal state
6. **Problems with Amillennialism**
- a. Bible only has to say something once

- (1) Example – Babel in Genesis 11.1-9
- b. Millennium does not seem obscure if one takes Revelation 20.1-6 in straightforward way
- c. Other passages confirm nature of the millennium – period of great peace and justice, yet short of the eternal state in which sin is eradicated
  - (1) **Isaiah 11:2–9** (NASB95) — 2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. 3 And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; 4 But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. 5 Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist. 6 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. 9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.
  - (2) **Psalm 72.8-14**
  - (3) **Isaiah 65.20**
  - (4) **Zech 14.6-21**
  - (5) **1 Cor 15.24**
  - (6) **Rev. 2.27**
  - (7) **Rev 12.5**
- d. Binding of Satan seems more significant than Amils would argue from Matthew 12.28-29 and Luke 10.18
  - (1) **1 Peter 5:8** (NASB95) — 8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
  - (2) **Acts 5:3** (NASB95) — 3 But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?”
  - (3) **1 Corinthians 10:20** (NASB95) — 20 No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.

- (4) **2 Corinthians 4:4** (NASB95) — 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.
  - (5) **1 John 4:3** (NASB95) — 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.
  - (6) **1 John 5:19** (NASB95) — 19 We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.
  - e. **“Came to life” (zao)** – never used elsewhere to “come into the presence of God”
    - (1) Most naturally – resurrection
  - f. How can there be only one resurrection when Rev.20.5-6 speaks of **1<sup>st</sup> resurrection** (and 2<sup>nd</sup> death) if there were only one
    - (1) Rev 20 clearly teaches a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> resurrection
    - (2) Other passages Amils use to speak of one resurrection do not deny two resurrections, only speaks of them together
  - g. Not impossible to imagine rebellious but compliant people living as sinners during the reign of Christ
    - (1) **Matthew 28:17** (NASB95) — 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful.
  - h. God may have purposes for the millennium we know nothing about
- B. **Postmillennialism**
- 1. **Great Commission** – expectation of power and authority and success
    - a. **Matthew 28:18–20** (NASB95) — 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
  - 2. **Parables of kingdom** indicate gradual growth, eventually filling the earth with influence
    - a. **Matthew 13:31–32** (NASB95) — 31 He presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; 32 and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES.”
    - b. **Matthew 13:33** (NASB95) — 33 He spoke another parable to them, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.”
  - 3. **World is becoming more Christian** – even in midst of persecution
    - a. Note: nature of the kingdom is different between postmils and premils

- b. Premils – kingdom is a renewed earth with Christ physically reigning
- c. Postmils – same kind of earth, but with substantial influence of Christianity

4. **Problems with Postmillennialism**

- a. Great Commission does not necessarily imply conversion of the majority of populations
- b. Parables of the kingdom do not indicate the extent to which the kingdom will grow
- c. World is becoming more Christian, but also more evil
- d. **NT passages seem to deny postmillennialism**
  - (1) **Matthew 7:13–14** (NASB95) — 13 “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. 14 “For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”
  - (2) **Luke 18:8** (NASB95) — 8 “I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”
  - (3) **2 Timothy 3:1–5** (NASB95) — 1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.
  - (4) **Matthew 24.15-31** – great tribulation (postmils tend to be preterists and believe all of Matthew 24 is fulfilled in destruction of Jerusalem)
  - (5) All the passages that teach that the return of Christ could come soon and we must be ready seem to deny presence of millennial kingdom

C. **Premillennialism**

- 1. **OT passages** describe times that are neither present age nor eternal state
  - a. **Isaiah 65:20** (NASB95) — 20 “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.”
  - b. **Isaiah 11:6–9** (NASB95) — 6 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. 9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.

c. **Isaiah 11:10-11** (NASB95) — 10 Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious. 11 Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant of His people, who will remain, From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, And from the islands of the sea.

d. **Psalm 72.8-14**

e. **Zech 14.5-17**

2. **NT passages** suggest future millennium

a. **Revelation 2:26-27** (NASB95) — 26 'He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; 27 AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father...'

b. **1 Corinthians 15:23-25** (NASB95) — 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, 24 then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

3. Rev 20 observations

a. **Binding and imprisonment** of Satan in bottomless pit indicate far greater restriction than implied in either amil or postmil

b. **"Came to life"** best taken to mean a bodily resurrection; ezesan (Gk) same word used in Revelation 2.8 where Jesus identifies himself as one "who died and came to life" referring to resurrection

c. Reigning with Christ is said to be future; consistent with Luke 19.17,19; 1 Corinthians 6.3; Revelation 2.26-27, 3.21

d. Nowhere does scripture say believers in intermediate state are reigning with Christ

D. **The Tribulation**

1. **Pretribulation rapture**

a. Tribulation will be a pouring out of **the wrath of God; not appropriate for Christians to experience it**

b. **Revelation 3:10** (NASB95) — 10 'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.' (Seems to indicate church will be

- taken out of the world before tribulation)
- c. If Christ returns after the tribulation and defeats all his enemies, where will the unbelievers come from who are necessary to populate the millennial kingdom? Pretrib has many Jewish believers who have become Christians during tribulation who will populate millennial kingdom in non-glorified bodies
  - d. Makes it possible that **Christ could come at any moment** (imminent) without other signs to occur first
2. **Problems with pretribulation rapture**
- a. NT doesn't necessarily indicate that all the suffering that Christians will experience is part of the wrath of God; wickedness is said to multiply toward the end
  - b. Letter to church in Philadelphia that they would be kept from the hour of trial is not enough evidence to say that the whole church would be removed
  - c. Christ's imminent return is not dependent on pretrib position
  - d. Pretrib position makes hard distinction between church and Israel; such a hard distinction is denied by Ephesians 2.11-22 and Romans 11 (one olive tree)
  - e. NT nowhere says church will be taken out of the world before the tribulation
  - f. NT passages that teach the return of Christ and the rapture indicate that it is a public event (**no secret rapture of the church**); **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** (NASB95) — 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.
  - g. Lord's return is linked with tribulation in Matthew 24
  - h. **1 Corinthians 15:51-52** (NASB95) — 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. (Trumpet just before the millennium)
  - i. Matthew 24 is addressing his disciples; an address only to Jews and not to the church
  - j. **No NT passage has two 2<sup>nd</sup> comings**
  - k. Dispensational premillennialism began in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century; hard to believe that no one in the church for nearly 2,000 understood the scriptures that way!
3. Other variations
- a. Mid-tribulation rapture
  - b. Tribulation divided into two 3 ½ year parts; wrath of man v. wrath of God

- c. Daniel indicates the 7 years are cut in half
- d. But there is not indication of removal of believers at the mid-point

V. Conclusion

A. **Grace**

- 1. Remember that many godly people have held all of these positions
- 2. Historic premillennialism – seems to have longevity in its favor, dating back to patristic period
- 3. Amillennialism – Augustine; many reformed including Calvin
- 4. Postmillennialism – Jonathan Edwards
- 5. Pretribulational premillennialism – majority report among British and American evangelicals in the last 150 years

B. **Careful about importing world experiences** into your eschatology

- 1. When things are going well – postmillennial (optimistic eschatology)
  - a. Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening
- 2. When things are going poorly – premillennial (pessimistic eschatology)
- 3. When things are a mixture – amillennial (realistic eschatology)

C. Better to root your eschatology in your understanding of scripture

- 1. Message of Revelation is: through the tribulation, God wins!