

Premillennialism

By Pastor Nick Bibile

Millennium comes from the Latin word, *mille*, a thousand, and *annus*, a year. The Greek word for thousand is *chilioi chilioi khil'-ee-oy*. There is only one reference in the entire Bible to thousand years, which is found in Revelation chapter 20. But once is enough for us to take this seriously.

Your entire eschatological view depends on how you interpret the millennium. The Reformers focused more on Soteriology and doctrine more than eschatology as the immediate attention and priority was given to doctrine as people were blinded by the corrupted Roman Catholic doctrines packed with pagan tradition and worship. The Reformers and the puritans built a solid foundation of the soteriology.

Unlike Soteriology, it is very difficult to interpret the end times, future events. This is one subject where the Bible is not very clear especially when we come to the book of Revelation. How are we going to interpret the book of Revelation as some would say, most of it is symbolic and other others would say some most of it is literal, there others who would say, few symbolic and more literal. Due to this factor, the church is divided into four schools. The key for this division is Revelation Chapter 20.

1. Premillennialism.
2. Amillennialism.
3. Post Millillennialism.
4. Dispensational Premillennialism.

I will not take sides here except the Dispensational Premillennial position which is the new school and it falls apart when you study in context.

Premillennialism.

This school believes in the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory to inaugurate the millennial reign on earth before the last Judgment. They believe the thousand year period to be literal. This position believes in a chronological order of Revelation 18 to 20

Many of the early fathers (who were disciples of the apostles); including Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Tertullian believed in this position.

Irenaeus was the best to reflect this view and this was the belief of the early Christian Church. This was the classical and the most accepted position of the church. Irenaeus believed the present world would endure for 6000 years, corresponding to the six days of creation. At the end of this period, the church will undergo great sufferings and persecutions by the appearance of Antichrist. However, Christ in his return will destroy the Antichrist and triumph over his enemies. There will

be a physical resurrection of the saints. Satan will be bound for a thousand years in the bottomless pit. Christ will reign on this earth for a thousand years, which will correspond to the seventh day of creation, the day of rest with Christ. Jerusalem will be rebuilt; there will be peace and righteousness on earth. At the end of the millennial period, Satan will be loosed and there will be a massive rebellion (of "Gog and Magog"), immediately preceding the "second" resurrection and final judgment. After this, there will be the creation of a new Heaven and Earth. This was the typical eschatological view of the early Christian church, however when it came to detail issues, there were differences.

After the first centuries, the expectation of an Antichrist as an evil world ruler to appear just before the return of Christ gradually disappeared. Revelation came to be interpreted along spiritual lines, and after the time of *Augustine*, his "amillennial" view that the thousand years began with Christ's earthly life and would continue to the end of the church age became the predominant interpretation.

Matthew Henry, Charles Spurgeon and many others believed this position. This was the popular Reformed position of that day. Now Amillennialism is gaining more acceptance. I am not personally convinced of my own position when it comes to Revelation 20, I hold more to Premillennial and Amillennial position. But here I am speaking as a Premillennialist.

Matthew Henry said on Revelation 20.

This chapter is thought by some to be the darkest part of all this prophecy: it is very probable that the things contained in it are not yet accomplished; and therefore it is the wiser way to content ourselves with general observations, rather than to be positive and particular in our explications of it.

Charles Spurgeon

If I read the word aright, and it is honest to admit that there is much room for difference of opinion here, the day will come, when the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God.

Some think that this descent of the Lord will be postmillennial that is, after the thousand years of his reign. I cannot think so. I conceive that the advent will be pre-millennial that he will come first; and then will come the millennium as the result of his personal reign upon earth. But whether or no, this much is the fact, that Christ will suddenly come, come to reign, and come to judge the earth in righteousness." (from "Justification & Glory" MTP Vol 11, Year 1865, pg 249, Romans 8:30 (age 31).

"We have done once for all with the foolish ideas of certain of the early heretics that Christ's appearance upon earth was but a phantom. We know that he was really, personally, and physically here on earth. But it is not quite so clear to some persons that he is to come really, personally, and literally, the second time. I know there are some who are laboring to get rid of the fact of a personal reign, but as I take it, the coming and the reign are so connected together, that we must have a

spiritual coming if we are to have a spiritual reign. Now we believe and hold that Christ shall come a second time suddenly, to raise his saints at the first judgment, and they shall reign with him afterwards. The rest of the dead live not till after the thousand years are finished. Then shall they rise from their tombs at the sounding of the trumpet, and their judgment shall come and they shall receive the deeds which they have done in their bodies." (C.H Spurgeon)

Premillinnials gives the following scriptures to support their position.

Satan Bound

Re 20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, First, we must realize that the Abyss is not hell. Instead, it is a place where demons and others are kept.

We read about this Abyss also in Revelation 9:1 (Some of your Bibles may say, "Bottomless Pit"

Who is this dragon? There are four names given for him in Revelation 20:2. First, he is called dragon, a great wicked monster. This is Satan, Lucifer the great enemy of God.

Isa 14:13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. 15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

Re 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

During Christ's ministry and his work on the cross, Christ bound Satan so that the elect of God, the true believers who were bounded by enemy could be released into God's glorious salvation. Binding Satan did not make him inactive. Satan cannot do anything to the elect unless permitted by God. Satan still prowls around like a roaring lion to devour, if possible, God's people (1 Pet. 5:8). In 2 Corinthians 2:11 Paul says he is not ignorant of Satan's devices.

Satan who wanted to ascend in Isa 14, his high pride and wanted be like God is now made low as he was cast down to the bottomless pit. He is locked up, sealed and no longer active as Jesus is ruling as the King on this earth.

The devil sealed Christ's tomb to prevent the disciples from stealing his body. But the devil was defeated as Christ shattered the seals and rose gloriously on the third day. On the other hand, the devil, however, can never come out of the Abyss unless God determines to release him. In verse 3, we read that he will be set free for a short time, but before that, he will be in the Abyss for one thousand years.

After the millennium, Satan will be released for a brief time, and then thrown into his final destination, the lake of fire.

Mt 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

Also all those who are disobedient to Christ and who are not his will be thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 6:9-11, "When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice: 'How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?' Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed

Compare with Revelation 20:4-6 is a particularly crucial passage, because nowhere else in the Bible are we told about a one thousand year reign. Verse 4 says, "I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge." Some would say that here John is seeing two groups--those who are seated on thrones, and those who had been beheaded. Others see only one group--all believers with spiritual bodies--reasoning that the apostle John is making specific mention of the martyrs within that group for the encouragement of the church.

Verse 4 says, judgment was committed to them.

1Co 6:1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?

2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

Rev 20:4 the last part.. "and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

2Ti 2:11 It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, *we shall also live with him*: 12 If we suffer, *we shall also reign with him*: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

Premillennial advocate *Robert D. Culve*: "that the reign of Christ, and the reign of the saints are restricted to a 1,000-year period. Revelation 20:4 ("and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years") and 20:6 ("they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years") have been thought to teach that the reign of the saints and of Christ shall come to an end at the close of the Millennium. How foolish it is to cite these verses in proof of such an assertion is seen at once in a close look at verse 4. "Lived" and "reigned" are both in the same person, gender, number, and tense in the Greek. There is no punctuation mark of any kind between them. Clearly, then, the 1,000 years modifies both the living.

Premillennial advocates give the purpose of the thousand-year period. It will demonstrate the vindication within space and time of the cause of the Christ. It will also provide tangible and

convincing proof of the victory of righteousness over evil. Above all, the millennium will be the manifestation to the world of the rule of the King, Jesus Christ--a rule that will be in righteousness and in peace. We read about this rule in many places, including Isaiah 11; Isaiah 32; Daniel 7:9-13, 26, 27; 1 Corinthians 6:1-3; and 2 Timothy 2:12.

In the opinion of theologians Oscar Cullman, George Ladd and others, Paul himself probably intimated the millennial reign of Christ when he spoke about resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, beginning with verse 22. In verse 23 Paul wrote, "But each in his own turn" or order. The Greek word is *tagma*. Then we are told, "Christ, the first fruits," meaning Jesus Christ is the first to be raised from the dead. Then there is an adverb in Greek, *epeita*, meaning afterwards. This, then, is pointing to a certain interval between the resurrection of Christ and his second coming, at which time we will be transformed. But there is an interval of many years--over nineteen hundred years.

"But each in his own turn: Christ the first fruits; then when he comes, those who belong to him. Then (*eita*) the end will come." So there are people who will see a certain interval between the resurrection of Christ and his second coming, at which time we will be raised up, and then--*eita*, meaning afterward--an interval from the coming of Christ until the end takes place. That interval, to many people, is the millennium--an interval, according to this text, between the second coming of Christ and the end, similar to the interval between the resurrection of Jesus Christ and his second coming.

"Then the end will come." The end cannot come until all enemies are put down. Read verse 25: "For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet." The last enemy to be dealt with is death itself (v. 26). People will die even in the millennium. In this chapter, you see Christ dealing with death, the last enemy, after the millennium.

1 Cor 15: 24: "Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father." Having dealt completely and totally with every rebellion, including the consequence of sin, death, he will hand over the kingdom to God the Father. That, according to this chapter, takes place after the millennium.

Alexander Reese gives the following outline of the premillennialism

- (1) The approaching Advent of Christ to this world will be visible, personal, and glorious.
- (2) This Advent, though in itself a single crisis, will be accompanied and followed by a variety of phenomena bearing upon the history of the Church, of Israel, and the world. Believers who survive till the Advent will be transfigured and translated to meet the approaching Lord, together with the saints raised and changed at the first resurrection. Immediately following this Antichrist and his allies will be slain, and Israel, the covenant people, will repent and be saved, by looking upon Him whom they pierced.
- (3) Thereupon the Messianic Kingdom of prophecy, which, as the Apocalypse informs us, will last for a thousand years, will be established in power and great glory in a transfigured world. The nations will turn to God, war and oppression cease, and righteousness and peace cover the earth.

- (4) At the conclusion of the kingly rule of Christ and His saints, the rest of the dead will be raised, the Last Judgement ensue, and a new and eternal world be created.
- (5) No distinction was made between the *Coming* of our Lord, and His *Appearing, Revelation, and Day*, because these were all held to be synonymous, or at least related, terms, signifying always the one Advent in glory at the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom.
- (6) Whilst the Coming of Christ, no matter how long the present dispensation may last, is the true and proper hope of the Church in every generation, it is nevertheless conditioned by the prior fulfillment of certain signs or events in the history of the Kingdom of God: the Gospel has first to be preached to all nations; the Apostasy and the Man of Sin be revealed, and the Great Tribulation come to pass. Then shall the Lord come.
- (7) The Church of Christ will not be removed from the earth until the Advent of Christ at the very end of the present Age: the Rapture and the Appearing take place at the same crisis; hence Christians of that generation will be exposed to the final affliction under Antichrist.

Such is a fair statement of the fundamentals of Premillennialism as it has obtained since the close of the Apostolic Age. There have been differences of opinion on details and subsidiary points, but the main outline is as I have given it.

P. G. Mathew who believes in premill position says the following.

What benefit does the knowledge of eschatology have for us now? The millennium is a continuation of the present rule of Jesus Christ in heaven. But the location is shifted from heaven to this earth to manifest Christ's power and glory before the world. We know Jesus Christ is reigning now in heaven at the right hand of God, but this kingdom of God will continue on earth with the saints as a manifestation of his glory to the world.

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