

Bound Him A Thousand Years

The Major Interpretations of Revelation

There are four major interpretations of the book of Revelation. In my opinion, two of these views can be dismissed immediately, leaving just two interpretations to examine. The four views are:

Preterism: This view teaches that the book of Revelation was fulfilled in 70 AD, including the Second Coming of Jesus Christ¹. There are two variations of this view. Partial preterism says that some prophecies have not yet been fulfilled, while full preterism says that *all* prophecies have been fulfilled – including the resurrection of the dead. Even if you're willing to entertain the idea that the Second Coming and the resurrection of the dead have already happened (which is pretty difficult to believe), in order for this viewpoint to have any chance of being true the book of Revelation must have been written before 70 AD. However, the evidence is overwhelming that the book was written in the early 90s AD², which disqualifies the entire theory.

Historicism: This view says that the book of Revelation is an overview of all of history from the time of Christ to the Second Coming³. The problem is that this interpretation doesn't really work. If you put a lot of effort into it you can find parallels between the events of Revelation and

1 Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preterism>

2 Source: https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1074&context=pretrib_arch

3 Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicist_interpretations_of_the_Book_of_Revelation

things that have happened throughout history, but the book just isn't a good fit for the past 20 centuries of world history. It's an interesting theory but in practice it fails.

Amillennial: This view interprets Revelation as an allegory⁴. It's called “amillennialism” because it teaches that there will be no literal rapture, antichrist, tribulation, Mark of the Beast, or thousand-year reign of Christ on Earth. Instead the millennium is symbolic of the age that we're living in now.

Premillennial: This view says that the book of Revelation should be interpreted literally. This is the view that believes in a literal tribulation, antichrist, Mark of the Beast, and so forth. At the end of the tribulation the Lord Jesus Christ will return to Earth in person, set up a physical kingdom, and reign from Jerusalem as a king for a thousand years.

In my opinion the two views which have the best support are the amillennial view and the premillennial view. Preterism must be wrong because the book of Revelation was written long after 70 AD. Likewise, the historical view sounds great in theory but in practice it doesn't work.

Given these different viewpoints, how can you tell which one is correct? Is Revelation an allegory that describes the struggle between good and evil, or should it be interpreted literally? Is the millennium symbolic of the age we're living in now or is it a real thousand-year period to come?

The Dangers of “Pan-Millennialism”

A lot of people these days are “pan-millennial”. They believe that since “it will all pan out in the end” it doesn't matter

4 Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amillennialism>

one way or another. They're content to ignore the issue and go on about their lives. Although I understand why people do this, I want to emphasize that this is probably the worst stance you can possibly take on this issue. If your response to *any* major Biblical doctrine is “I don't really care; it's not worth the time it would take me to figure it out” then you have a serious problem.

You see, the New Testament commands us to watch and be ready. Jesus Himself repeated this several times:

Matthew 24:42: “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”

Matthew 25:13: “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.”

Revelation 3:3: “Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”

The apostles also taught us to watch:

1 Peter 4:7: “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”

1 Thessalonians 5:6: “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

Hebrews 10:25: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

Jesus didn't tell us to ignore the whole issue on the grounds that “it will all pan out in the end” and it doesn't really matter. Instead we are commanded to watch. That means we must know what the truth is so that we can know what we're supposed to be watching for. How can we see the day approaching if we have no idea what's going on? How can we know what signs to watch for⁵ if we don't have the correct view of the end times?

The author of the book of Hebrews actually considered this to be a foundational issue of the faith:

Hebrews 6:1-2: “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”

When will the dead be resurrected? What will happen next? When will the final judgment take place? The Bible doesn't consider these to be secondary doctrines, or teachings of little importance; instead they're foundational to everything else! This passage puts the doctrines surrounding the return of Christ on the same level as baptism, faith, and how salvation works. That's how important it is.

There's another reason why all of this matters: from time to time a false end-times beliefs arises that destroys the faith of many. For example, Harold Camping predicted that Jesus would return in 2011⁶ – and some people were so convinced he was right that they sold their possessions and quit their jobs. If you aren't solidly grounded in the truth then how can you refute these type of false claims? Telling people “your beliefs are obviously stupid”

5 I've written more about the signs surrounding the return of the Lord Jesus Christ here: <http://stories.cyragon.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/PredictingTheRapture.pdf>

6 Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Camping

isn't a Biblical response. If you don't know what the truth is then you will find it a challenge to refute anyone. In fact, if you don't know the truth then how are you going to protect *yourself* from being deceived?

Jesus warned His followers to beware of false Christs and said that they would deceive many:

Matthew 24:4-5: “And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.”

Jesus warned that *many* imposters would appear and claim to be Him. If you don't know the truth then how will you keep from being deceived? Harold Camping proved that many people can't tell the truth from a lie – and remember, Satan and his demons can appear as angels of light. “Pan-millennialism” is dangerous because it encourages ignorance, and ignorance has destroyed many lives. You need to know the truth because the truth is the only thing that can protect you.

On top of that, the Bible tells us that we should earnestly desire the return of Jesus Christ:

2 Timothy 4:8: “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

One of the last verses in the Bible is a prayer that the Lord would return:

Revelation 22:20: “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

If Jesus is the great love of our life and the great passion of our heart then we will naturally long for Him to return – *and we will also be interested in the events surrounding His coming!* It makes no sense to say that although we love Jesus, we aren't particularly interested in when He's returning. That's the *opposite* of passion! If you love somebody you will long to see them. If you have no interest in hearing what they have to say about their next visit, that indicates you probably don't care that much about them. I realize the doctrines surrounding the return of Jesus can be complicated, but do we love Jesus with all of our heart or not?

The Problems With Amillennialism

So how can we decide between premillennialism and amillennialism? It's a tough question but I believe there's an answer. The passage that convinced me to choose premillennialism is this one:

Revelation 20:1-6: “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and

reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

We are told that one day an angel will come down from Heaven, bind Satan with a chain, and then imprison him in a pit for a thousand years so he can no longer deceive the nations. During that time the people who were martyred for their faith in Jesus will be raised from the dead and reign with Christ for a thousand year period (which is known as the "millennium"). Premillennialism teaches that this should be taken literally while amillennialism says that it should be taken symbolically. Which one is true?

Here's what bothered me. The amillennial view says that this thousand-year period is symbolic of the age we're living in right now. When Christ died on the cross He bound Satan and rendered him powerless, and therefore the church is reigning triumphant. The claim is that this passage is a symbolic look at our current time in history. (The position which teaches that the binding of Satan and the millennium will happen at some point in the future is premillennialism.)

I find it very difficult to accept any of that. How many people believe that in our era of history Satan has been bound and rendered powerless? Who believes that Satan and his forces of darkness have been neutralized and can no longer deceive anyone or trouble the nations? The apostle Peter sure didn't! Years after Jesus was resurrected, Peter warned the church that Satan was a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour:

1 Peter 5:8-9: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion,

walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:
Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that
the same afflictions are accomplished in your
brethren that are in the world.”

He didn't believe that Satan had been bound. Likewise, the apostle Paul warned us that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the forces of darkness:

Ephesians 6:11-13: “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Paul clearly didn't believe that the devil had been bound! In fact, as far as I can see, no one in the entire New Testament thought that this was true of the church age. The apostles keep warning us that the devil is highly dangerous and will destroy us if we're not careful, which is the opposite of him being bound and rendered harmless. That tells me something is wrong with amillennialism. If the devil hasn't been bound yet then amillennialism can't possibly be true.

There's also the issue that the details of Revelation 20 don't match what happened on the cross. Amillennialism teaches that when Christ died on the cross He bound Satan. However, in Revelation 20 we see that Satan isn't bound by Christ; instead he's bound by an unnamed angel. Although Christ is mentioned in this passage (because the martyrs reign with Christ), *Christ isn't the one who binds Satan!* The passage also doesn't say that Satan was bound by the death of the Lamb; instead it says that Satan was

bound with a chain⁷. If this passage represented Jesus binding Satan at the cross then He should have been the one doing the binding, and the binding should have been accomplished by His death and His blood. But we don't see *any* of that here.

There's yet another problem. Verse 6 speaks of a resurrection that happens *before* the time of reigning begins. It says that people who were martyred for their faith *in Christ* will be raised from the dead and reign with Him over the world. In fact, it is *the martyrs* who are doing the reigning, and they start their reign right after Satan is bound! Revelation 20 teaches us that Satan is bound, the martyrs are raised from the dead, and the martyrs reign with Christ. This timeline presents a serious problem for amillennialism because *no one was martyred for their faith in Christ before Christ died*. It's true there were martyrs in the Old Testament, but they didn't believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ because *it hadn't happened yet and people didn't know about it yet*⁸.

Even if you claim that it's a symbolic reference to the Old Testament saints, that still presents a problem. How many Old Testament saints have been raised from the dead and are now reigning on the Earth? It won't do any good to claim that they're reigning from Heaven because *that's not the same thing as being resurrected*. Besides, Revelation 5:10 makes it clear that the reigning happens *on Earth*:

Revelation 5:10: “And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

7 Some people may struggle with the idea that a fallen angel can be bound with a chain. There are actually two other passages in the Bible that teach the same thing: 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 1:6. That makes three separate passages where the Bible says that fallen angels can be bound in chains and imprisoned to await their judgment!

8 We can see this from Peter, who told Jesus there was no way He was going to die (Matthew 16:21-23). The disciples didn't understand the gospel until after the resurrection.

Is the church reigning over the Earth during this period of history? Not exactly. For most of the past two thousand years the church has been oppressed, persecuted, and slaughtered. Years after Jesus was resurrected Paul wrote that we and the whole creation are groaning, awaiting our adoption:

Romans 8:22-23: “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

It's true that God is saving countless people, but it's a difficult process that's full of pain. Christ said that in this world we would have tribulation (John 16:33), not “in this world you will reign as kings”. This current age doesn't seem to be the time when Satan is bound and the church reigns.

Revelation 20 describes a time when Satan has been neutralized, the martyrs have been resurrected, and the righteous are triumphantly reigning over the Earth. That simply doesn't describe the age we're living in now! This current age isn't the millennium.

If the millennium is a real thing that's going to happen one day, and if it hasn't happened yet, then it must happen at some point in the future. If it happens in the future then the premillennial view and amillennialism is false. At some point in the future there must be a time when Satan will be bound, the dead will be raised, and the martyrs will triumphantly reign with Christ over a peaceful Earth.

From that point it's not hard to work out the rest. Although Revelation does contain symbolic language, the symbols it uses are defined elsewhere in the Bible. It's possible to look them up in the rest of the Bible and see what it's talking about. The rest, like the millennium, is literal.

Is Premillennialism A New Teaching?

Some people have claimed that premillennialism must be wrong because that interpretation is only about a hundred years old. This is incorrect. Although it's true that the Catholic Church has taught amillennialism since the 5th century, in the days before that the church was actually premillennial⁹. At the time of the Protestant Reformation there was a mass movement away from the Catholic Church and its teachings. This has included both its teachings of salvation and its teachings about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. After the Reformation (and before Darby and the 19th century) people began writing about premillennialism again¹⁰.

You could just as accurately say that the idea that Christ is the head of the church is a recent view. That view only became prevalent *after* the Reformation. Before the Reformation the Catholic Church taught that the Pope was the head of the church (which they still teach today). Many Biblical doctrines appear to be recent discoveries because the Catholic Church forced their heretical view on the world for a long time. After the Reformation people began going back to the Bible and rediscovering what it said all along.

The reason I'm premillennial is because I see it taught in the Bible. It's the only viewpoint that consistently makes sense and matches what Revelation 20 has to say. Amillennialism sounds good but when you look at the details it falls apart.

9 Source: https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1021&context=pretrib_arch

10 Source: https://www.wayoflife.org/reports/when_was_the_pre_tribulation_rapture_taught.html

The Millennium Is Found Throughout The Old Testament

As amazing as it sounds, there really will come a day when Christ is going to establish an actual, physical kingdom on Earth, centered in Jerusalem. Revelation isn't the only book that speaks of this glorious time. Nearly every one of the prophetic books of the Old Testament mentions it.

The book of Isaiah speaks of it:

Isaiah 65:17-22: “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.”

At what point in history will people still die, and sinners will still exist, and yet those who die at the age of 100 will be considered a child? The millennium.

The book of Micah speaks of it:

Micah 4:1-4: “But in the last days it shall come

to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.”

When will there be worldwide peace? During the millennium.

The book of Habakkuk speaks of it:

Habakkuk 2:14: “For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

When will the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord? In the millennium, when the devil is bound in the bottomless pit and unable to deceive the nations any further.

The book of Ezekiel speaks of it:

Ezekiel 47:8-12: “Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall

be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from Engedi even unto Eneglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. But the miry places thereof and the marishes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt. And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.”

When will the whole world be healed? During the millennium.

The book of Daniel speaks of it:

Daniel 12:1-3: “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they

that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”

The book of Hosea speaks of it:

Hosea 1:10: “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.”

When will all of Israel be saved (as Paul spoke of in Romans 11:26)? In the millennium.

The book of Joel speaks of it:

Joel 3:16: “The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth out of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall dwell for ever, and

Jerusalem from generation to generation. For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the Lord dwelleth in Zion.”

When will Jerusalem be a holy city? When will the Lord dwell in Zion? In the millennium.

The book of Amos speaks of it:

Amos 9:11-15: “In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.”

When will the earth be so bountiful and productive that the plowman will overtake the reaper? In the millennium.

The book of Obadiah speaks of it:

Obadiah 1:19-21: “And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and

Benjamin shall possess Gilead. And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south. And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's."

When will the Jews possess the land of their enemies? In the millennium.

The book of Nahum mentions it:

Nahum 1:15: "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off."

When will wicked people no more pass through Judah? In the millennium.

The book of Zephaniah speaks of it:

Zephaniah 3:17-20: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a

praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord.”

When will the Lord rejoice over the Jews with singing and make them a praise among all the people of the earth? In the millennium.

The book of Haggai speaks of it:

Haggai 2:21-23: “Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts.”

When will the Lord overthrow the kingdoms of this world and replace them with His own everlasting kingdom (as He promised to do in Daniel 2:44)? In the millennium.

The book of Zechariah speaks of it:

Zechariah 14:8-11: “And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one. All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of

Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses. And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited."

When will the Lord be king over all the earth? In the millennium.

The book of Malachi speaks of it:

Malachi 4:1: "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts."

There's *much* more to say about the millennium, but that's a subject for another time.