

EXCURSION 1: DIFFERING VIEWS OF THINGS TO COME

- View 1: millennialism
 - Postmillennialism — Christians will eventually bring about the conditions in the earth that the world will keep getting better and better eventually becoming “the millennium”, or golden age, or something like that. Then, after the world has become more Christianized, Christ will return and establish the new heavens and new earth. Those with this over-arching view may be liberal, think “social gospel”. They may be conservative, or even ultra-conservative. Theonomy, reconstructionism, “Christian nationalism”. NAR and dominionism is also in this view. Ultimately the goal is to fix the world so that Christ will come. Sometimes, Christ returning is not even ultimately in view, and the idea becomes a kingdom without Christ. Also, there are those within this umbrella who believe that the spread of the gospel will ultimately “Christianize” the world bringing about the kingdom conditions. That is the traditional Protestant idea that falls into this category.
 - Premillennialism — Christ will return (Revelation 19) before the Millennium (Revelation 20)
 - Historic premillennialism — the events of the book of Revelation are mostly symbolic of the “church-age” and we can find their fulfillment at various points in history as we wait until Christ returns.
 - Futurist premillennialism — The events of the book of the Revelation are still future. These are subdivided by their view of when the rapture event of 1 Thessalonians 4 will take place.
 - Pretribulation premillennialism — Christians will be raptured before the tribulation
 - Post-tribulation premillennialism — Christians will go through the tribulation
- View 2: amillennialism — there is no real millennium going to happen. The following is a summary of amillennialism from a Lutheran amil pastor, who in many ways is theologically sound. I have the this quoted so that I could represent this idea from one with that idea in his own words, in an effort to not make a straw-man argument.

Q: What is Amillennialism?

A: Amillennialism is a view of the End Times that does not teach a literal thousand-year earthly reign of Christ. Instead, it understands the “thousand years” mentioned in Revelation 20 as a symbolic expression for the entire New Testament period.

Q: When did the 1000 Years of Christ’s reign begin?

A: It began with his resurrection and ascension into heaven. At that point, Christ sat down at the right hand of the Father and began to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Q: Is the “thousand years” in Revelation 20 a literal timeframe?

A: No. As with other numbers in Revelation, and apocalyptic literature in general, the “thousand years” are symbolic of a complete time period (10 x 10 x 10). It refers to the entire New Testament era—from Christ’s first coming until his second coming. The exact duration is not literal but represents the fullness of Christ’s reign from heaven.

Q: What is the “first resurrection” mentioned in Revelation 20?

A: The first resurrection refers to spiritual resurrection—that is, those who come to life through faith in Christ. Believers experience new life in him now, during this present reign.

Q: What about Satan being “bound”?

A: During this New Testament period, Satan is bound—his power is severely limited by Christ. He can no longer deceive the nations in the way he once did. However, near the end of this era, he will be released for a short time, leading to increased opposition and persecution.

Q: What happens after this millennial reign?

A: At the end of this symbolic millennium, Christ will return, defeat all evil, and bring about the second resurrection—the bodily resurrection of the dead. Believers will be raised to eternal life with Christ.

Q: Has amillennialism been the dominant view throughout church history?

A: Yes. A non-literal understanding of the 1000 years has been the prevailing eschatological view for most of church history worldwide. Though other views have gained popularity in modern times, especially in some evangelical circles, amillennialism remains the historic and global majority position in Christian theology.

- View 3: preterism — All or most of the prophetic events in the Bible have already happened and were ultimately fulfilled by 70 AD when the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem. Could be lumped with postmillennialism or amillennialism, but in a lot of ways it has a character all its own. There is partial preterism (most events fulfilled), and full preterism (all events fulfilled). In full preterism, we are now in the new heavens and new earth.

The first 10 verses of Revelation chapter 20:

Revelation 20:1–10 — “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.***

*"And when **the thousand years** are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."*

Questions to consider:

1. Which of these is your view? Why?
2. Which of these is the view of our church?
3. Which in this group are the “date-setters”?
4. Is there sometimes overlap, where those of one position take the position (knowingly or unknowingly) of another position?
5. What is the ultimate authority?
6. Which group thinks that we are now in the tribulation?
7. Which group or groups think that we are now in the millennium (kingdom)?
8. Does it seem odd that there is argument about whether we are in the tribulation or the millennium?
9. Does all of this matter in your daily walk with the Lord?
10. Is your worldview consistent with your view of the world to come?
11. Which view or sub-view is most closely associated with “Zionism”? Which view is most like Zionism?
12. Is Zionism consistent with the Bible?
13. Which view(s) are consistent with eternal security?