

# PART 14: THE MILLENNIUM

## CHAPTER 20

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### MAIN IDEA

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Chapter 20 describes three main future events which follow the Tribulation chapters (6-19): a) the future 1000-year period, b) the binding of Satan, and c) the great white throne judgment.

### COMMENTS

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#### *The Thousand Years (20:1-6)*

The Millennium is a time of peace and harmony on the earth when Jesus and the saints will rule in righteousness. It is a time when all wrongs will be put right and all evils will be cleansed from the earth. Isaiah 65:20-25 contains a fuller description of the wonder and harmony that will characterize this time.

#### *Views of the Millennium*

Postmillennialism: The view that Christ will return to the earth after the millennium (hence post-). Postmillennialists adopt a nonliteral or figurative interpretation of prophecy which looks for a 1,000-year period of peace on earth ushered in by the church. At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan will be unleashed once more, but then Christ will return to defeat him and reign forever. Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> coming will not occur until after the 1,000-year period. Postmillennialism was very popular in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; but World War I, with its millions of casualties, destroyed the illusion that the world was improving. As a result, many postmillennialists switched to the amillennial view, which gave them more freedom in interpreting current history in light of prophecy.<sup>1</sup>

Amillennialism: A second view is called *amillennialism*,<sup>2</sup> meaning there will be no (hence a-) literal millennium. Like postmillennialism it also adopts a nonliteral or figurative interpretation of prophecy seeing the 1,000-year period to be an indefinite length of time, symbolic of the time between Christ's ascension and his return.

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<sup>1</sup> (Swindoll and Zuck 1351). In recent years, however, a new form of postmillennialism has arisen. Called "dominion theology" or "theonomy," this view is that the Millennium will be ushered in as believers "Christianize" various aspects of society.

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes also called "realized millennium" since it is effectively taking place now (Clouse 155).

Amillennialists see the millennium as being the reign of Christ in the hearts of believers and in his church; it is another way of referring to the church age and ends with the second coming of Christ. A variation of this view is “Inaugurated eschatology” holds the view that the end times were inaugurated in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and thus there are both “already” and “not yet” aspects to the Kingdom of God.<sup>3</sup>

**Premillennialism:** This view holds that Christ will return before the 1000-year period (hence pre-). It adopts a more literal (historical-grammatical) view<sup>4</sup> of the 1000-year

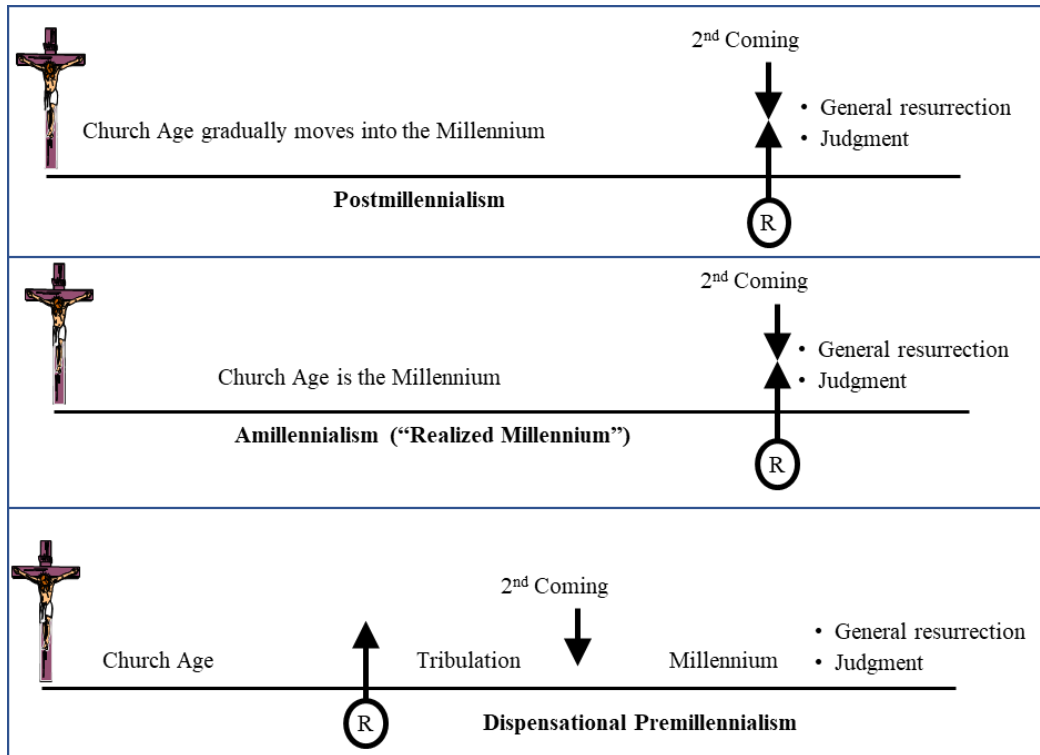


Figure 1 Three views of the millennium

period which is initiated at Christ’s second coming and that this reign occurs before the final removal of Satan.<sup>5</sup> The early church held this view.<sup>6</sup>

**The resurrection of martyred Christians (20:4-6).** In these verses there is a resurrection of those saints who had been martyred in the Tribulation, to be

<sup>3</sup> For more on this see S. Michael Houdman’s “What is Inaugurated Eschatology,” <<https://www.gotquestions.org/inaugurated-eschatology.html>>.

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent comparison of the non-literal (figurative, allegorical) method and the literal (historical-grammatical) method of interpreting prophecy please see J. Dwight Pentecost’s “Things to Come: A Study of Biblical Eschatology” (Pentecost 1-15).

<sup>5</sup> Some scholars hold to an historical premillennial view while others to a dispensation premillennial view. Readers can learn more about this in Robert G. Clouse’s “The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views” (Clouse).

<sup>6</sup> (Swindoll and Zuck 1350)

resurrected in order to reign with Christ for 1,000 years. Walvoord cites six other resurrections in the Bible.<sup>7</sup>

- The resurrection of Jesus Christ (Matt 28:1-7; Mark 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-8; John 20:1-10; Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:32; 10:40; 17:3; Romans 1:4; 4:25; 10:9; I Corinthians 15:4; Eph. 1:20; I Thessalonians 4:14, I Peter 3:18)
- The token resurrection of some saints at the time of Christ's death (Matt. 27:50-53).
- The resurrection at the rapture of church believers who had died (I Cor. 15:51-58; I Thess. 4:14-17).
- The resurrection of the two witnesses which occurs at the mid-point of the Tribulation (Rev. 11:3-13).
- The resurrection of the Old Testament saints which possibly occurs at the beginning of the Millennium<sup>8</sup> (Isa. 26:19-21; Ezek. 37:12-14; Daniel 12:1-3).
- The resurrection of the wicked dead who will stand before the Great White Throne at the end of the 1,000-year period (Rev. 20:11-15).

### ***Satan's Doom (20:7-10)***

At the end of the Tribulation, when Christ returns to the earth, Satan (the dragon) will be seized by a powerful angel who will bind him and throw him into the Abyss for 1,000 years. During this time, Satan will not be able to deceive the nations. At the end of the Millennium, Satan will be set free for a short period of time. Unfortunately, there will be many who are deceived by Satan and will rally with him in a battle against Christ. The battle will end quickly since God sends down fire from heaven and devours the enemy. Satan is then thrown into the lake of fire, forever!

John doesn't say why God once again sets Satan free, but it is part of God's plan for judging the world. Perhaps it is to expose those who rebel against God in their hearts and confirm those who are truly faithful to God. Whatever the reason, Satan's release results in the final destruction of evil.<sup>9</sup>

### ***The Great White Thrown Judgment (20:11-15)***

At the end of the Millennium, God will sit upon the great white throne and judge every unsaved creature, both living and dead. This judgment will be different from all previous judgements. The book of life (20:12), which has the names of all who are saved, will be opened to show that the wicked dead are not listed in it. Then the dead will be judged according to their works. The resurrection of the dead includes all the

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<sup>7</sup> (Walvoord, The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook 464). See also (Swindoll and Zuck 1332-1338).

<sup>8</sup> (Walvoord, The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook 105).

<sup>9</sup> (Life Application Bible 2330).

