
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **What is premillennialism?**

Defining "Premillennialism"

The word "*premillennialism*" is a compound word constructed from a prefix added to a root word.

- The prefix "*pre*" means "before."
- The root word "*millennial*" means "*a thousand years*."

Premillennialism is the belief that Jesus returns before the beginning of a thousand year reign. This reign of the Lord will supposedly be on the earth and centered in the city of Jerusalem. There, in Jerusalem, the Lord will sit on the literal throne of King David and reign for a literal thousand years.

Revelation 20

All of this is based on a single passage of scripture found in Revelation 20.

- In **Revelation 20:1-3** Satan is bound with a chain and cast into a bottomless pit for a thousand years.

Many people conclude that, if Satan is bound, then he is unable to perform any evil acts. Since evil exists in the world, this must be proof that Satan has not been bound yet.

Interestingly, this is the same argument offered by atheists. They argue that, if there was a Creator-God who is all-powerful and all-good, then there would not be any evil in the world. But since there is evil, this must be proof that there is no Creator-God who is all-powerful and all-good. My point is: The same reasoning used by atheists is being used by premillennialists.

- Next, **Revelation 20:4-6** states that the souls of those "*beheaded for their witness to Jesus*" will live and reign with Jesus for a thousand years.

It is believed that the Lord is here returning to the earth before the thousand year reign and that He reigns on the earth with these martyred saints—hence the word "*pre*-millennialism," which means the Lord returns *before* the millennial reign.

An earthly reign of the Lord is assumed, but the text itself says nothing about the earth here.

The return of the Lord is also assumed, although the text says nothing about the Lord's return.

- Finally, **Revelation 20:7-10** states that "*when the thousand years expire*," Satan will be "*released from his prison*" in the bottomless pit. He will deceive the nations of the earth into persecuting the Lord's people and fire from God comes down out of heaven to destroy the devil and his helpers.

It is believed that when the thousand year reign ends, the Lord leaves the earth and goes back to heaven. Satan and all the deceived nations of the earth persecute God's people, and the Lord returns for a third time to destroy all these enemies.

Problems

The premillennial view is riddled with several problems.

1) The first major problem is the effort to interpret Revelation 20 literally.

If the thousand years means a literal thousand years, we have to ask the questions:

- Is Satan bound with a literal chain? In Mark 5:3-4, a demon-possessed man was bound with chains, but the chains could not hold him. Why do we think literal chains could hold the devil himself if chains could not hold a demon-possessed man?
- Is the bottomless pit literal? Where on earth could such a pit be?
- If the thousand years are literal, what about other time periods mentioned in the Book of Revelation? Revelation 17:12 says ten kings "*receive authority for one hour as kings,*" yet no one thinks this means literally one hour consisting of sixty literal minutes. Everyone understands "*one hour*" to symbolize simply a very short time.

Premillennialism is built upon selective-literalism. What I mean by this is: When the reader wants the thousand years to be literal, then it's literal, but when it's inconvenient for something to be

literal, then it's symbolic. This is an unfair way to interpret Bible text.

2) Premillennialism is built upon too many assumptions.

As noted earlier, it is assumed that Jesus *returns* to reign for a thousand years—but the text says nothing about the Lord's *return*.

Again, it is assumed the Lord's reign is *on the earth*—but the text says nothing about the Lord being *on the earth* to reign.

It is simply amazing that so many assumptions are being made and repeated when, in reality, there is no such statement made in the text for these assumptions.

Postmillennialism

The alternative to premillennialism is called "*post-millennialism*." As you might guess, the word "*post*" means "*after*." This belief correctly teaches that Jesus returns only *once again* and only *after* His reign as king.

- To read about the Lord only coming once again, read **Hebrews 9:28**—"*[Jesus] will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.*" He only comes once—a "second time."
- To read about the Lord reigning right now on the throne of David, read **Acts 2:29-35** where the apostle Peter stated that Jesus began reigning on the throne of David when He resurrected and ascended back into heaven.

The entire gospel age, from the ascension of Jesus into heaven, until He returns again the second time, is the Lord's reign. The words, "*a thousand years*," is a figurative expression which means simply, "*a long time*." Just like "*reigning for an hour*" in Revelation 17:12 symbolizes reigning for a "*a short time*," when Jesus is said to reign for "*a thousand years*" (Revelation 20:4-6), this symbolizes reigning for "*a long time*."

Rather than teaching premillennialism, the Bible teaches postmillennialism. Look for further studies on this topic in the future.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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