

Eschatology: Or “The End Times”

Part 5: Amillennialism

WHAT IS “AMILLENNIALISM?”

- Brief definition
 1. A – “no”; Millennium – “1000 years”
 2. The term “amillennialism” leaves the impression that no millennium exists. But this is not the case. Amillennialism believes that the millennium is NOW, just like Postmillennialism.
 3. It is probably termed “amillennialism” because it does not believe in a *future* millennial kingdom that will be established by Christ upon the earth in physical, literal Israel.
 4. Theologian Anthony Hoekema calls amillennialism “realized millennialism.”

AN OVERVIEW OF AMILLENNIALISM

- OT prophecy that concerns the Kingdom is understood as being fulfilled spiritually.
 1. Jeremiah 31:31-34 is fulfilled in Luke 22:20 and Hebrews 8:7-10.
 2. Amos 9:11-15 is fulfilled in Acts 15:14-17.
 3. 2 Samuel 7:11-16 is fulfilled in Acts 2:29-36.
 4. Isaiah 2:2-4 is fulfilled in Luke 24:44-48.
 5. Hosea 1:10-11; 2:23 is fulfilled in Rom. 9:23-26 and 1 Pet. 2:10.
- In regard to the Kingdom, Christ intended to set it up at his first coming, and he did exactly that.
 1. In Luke 4:43 Jesus stated that he must “preach the Kingdom of God.”
 2. In Matt. 4:17 Jesus says the “Kingdom is near.”
 3. The Kingdom is actually present NOW (Matt. 12:28; 21:1-9; John 1:49; 18:33-36) because the King Himself has come.
 4. Jesus spoke to his disciples that the Kingdom would come in power within their lifetime (Mark 9:1; Matt. 16:28; Luke 9:27). The NT says that this occurred at Pentecost (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4).
 5. Jesus specifically taught that the Kingdom is *not* of this world (John 18:36; Mark 10:14-15).
 6. It is at Jesus’ ascension into heaven when he reigns in his Kingdom, specifically over his church (see Luke 19:12ff; Matt. 26:64).
- The NT says that Christ began to reign as king at his ascension, just as the OT prophesied.
 1. Psalm 24:9-10 prophesies of a time when the Lord will reign, and Eph. 4:8-10 shows that Christ began to reign with power at his ascension.
 2. The NT teaches that Christ is now seated at the right hand of God reigning (prophesied in Psalm 110:1-2; fulfilled in Acts 2:33-36 and Heb. 8:1; 10:12-13).
 3. Christ’s throne is in the heavenly Jerusalem, not the earthly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26; see also Heb. 9:11-12).
- The result is that the major parts of OT prophecies about the Kingdom have already been fulfilled. The Kingdom of God exists now; it is the Church.
 1. In Matt. 16:18-19 the Kingdom is equated with the Church.

2. Christ began to rule from heaven over his Kingdom at his ascension. This is what it means when the Bible says Christ is “head” of the Church (Eph. 1:20-23; 5:23).
 3. The Kingdom is said to be presently existing (see Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:18-28).
 4. Christ reigns over those who have surrendered to him (Col. 3:1-2).
- Amillennialism understands Rev. 20:1-6 as referring to what occurred at the *first* coming of Christ, not what will occur at the second.
 1. The devil was bound at Jesus’ first coming: This was the purpose of Christ’s first coming, i.e., to destroy the works of Satan (1 John 3:8) and render him powerless (Heb. 2:14). Did Christ fail?
 2. Jesus began to bind Satan during his earthly ministry (Matt. 12:22-30; Luke 11:14-22).
 3. A major death blow against Satan came at the death and resurrection of Jesus (Gen. 3:15; John 12:31-33; 14:30; Col. 2:15).
 4. Through his death, Christ destroyed Satan’s power (Heb. 2:14).
 5. Through Christ’s resurrection, victory over Satan was completed (Heb. 2:14; Rom. 10:7; Eph. 4:8; Rev. 20:1-3 shows Christ’s present control of the key to the pit).
 - What’s the purpose of the binding of Satan? To bring peace and paradise on earth?
 1. Rev. 20:3 says, “So that he should not deceive the nations any longer.”
 2. Satan’s main work is deception (John 8:44; Rev. 12:9).
 3. Before Christ’s first coming, whole nations were deceived by Satan (Rom. 1:18ff).
 4. At Christ’s first coming, he defeated Satan and his lies and set nations free (Acts 26:18).
 5. The truth of the gospel binds Satan so he can no longer deceive whole nations (Matt. 28:19). Men are set free (John 8:32; Rom. 1:16).
 6. But this does not mean that Satan is not doing anything today (1 Pet. 5:8).
 - What is the “first resurrection” of Rev. 20:4-6?
 1. Some say (e.g., dispensationists) that it refers to two *bodily* resurrections: the saints before the millennium and the wicked after it. But it’s better to view the two resurrections as two *types* of resurrections, not two bodily ones.
 2. The two resurrections refer to a *spiritual* one and a *physical* one (see John 5:24-29; Rom. 8:10-11).
 3. The “first resurrection” of Rev. 20 refers to the spiritual one. This resurrection was made possible by Christ at his first coming. This is what the Bible also calls “born again” or “regenerated.”
 4. The Bible says that death affects a sinner in both body and spirit. The spirit is dead because of sin (Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13).
 5. At conversion a sinner is raised to spiritual life. This is the first resurrection (John 5:24; Rom. 6:3-4; Eph. 2:1, 5-6; Col. 2:12-13; 3:1; 1 John 3:14).
 6. This resurrection occurs at baptism (Rom. 6:4-4; Col. 2:12-13).
 7. Therefore, all Christians today have already partaken in the 1st resurrection. This is why they escape the “second death,” i.e., eternal separation from God.
 - Christians, therefore, reign *now* with Christ (Rev. 20:4).
 1. Christ is reigning now from his heavenly throne (Acts 2:32-36; Eph. 1:20-22).
 2. The Kingdom is a spiritual one: “The kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21).
 3. When one is raised from spiritual death, he reigns with Christ (see Eph. 2:5-6; Rev. 1:6; 5:10).

4. Christians, therefore, already share Christ's power over sin and death:
 - a. Satan's power over a Christian is limited: Acts 26:18; 1 John 4:4; 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Pet. 2:9.
 - b. The Christian is to fear death no longer: Heb. 2:14-15; Rom. 8:1; 1 Cor. 15:55-57.
5. Christians have power over Satan—this is what it means to reign with Christ. Thus, the Millennium is now.
- At the end of the Millennium, Satan is "loosed" for a "short time" (Rev. 20:3, 7).
 1. The text does not say why Satan is released, but it does briefly describe what he does:
 - a. He will deceive nations again (Rev. 20:8).
 - b. He attacks the church (Rev. 20:9).
 2. Satan does not actually attack; God destroys him before it occurs.
- When Satan is loosed, the antichrist arises.
 1. Many amillennialists refer to 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3 and 2 John 7 to support this view of an arising antichrist. Cottrell esp. sees 1 Jn. 2:18 as indicating an antichrist figure—it is "a last-hour kind of time."
 2. This is also combined with 2 Thess. 2:1-12 to support the idea of an arising antichrist figure. It is seen to be parallel to Rev. 20:7-9.
- The loosing of Satan and the arising antichrist wage a spiritual war, not a physical combat war. This is Armageddon (Rev. 16:12-16) and the battle of "Gog and Magog" (Rev. 20:8).
- Christ then returns as Satan and antichrist are about to destroy the Church.
 1. Christ destroys His enemies (Rev. 20:10f).
 2. A single resurrection occurs (the second resurrection of Rev. 20), and Christ judges all. Eternal states begin.

AN ANALYSIS OF AMILLENNIALISM

1. I believe this to be the most biblical view of the end times.
 - a. It is simple.
 - b. The view of OT prophecy concerning the first coming appears correct.
 - c. Its understanding of the church and Israel is correct. The church is the spiritual Israel, or the "true Israel." The church age is the Millennium.
 - d. Its view of the binding of Satan seems correct (in contrast to Postmillennialism's "continuous binding").
 - e. There's no "secret rapture theory."
 - f. Its view of the resurrection occurring at once seems sound.
2. A few problems and questions
 - a. Its view of the antichrist is highly questionable.
 - (1) The only place where this term is used is in 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7. This "antichrist" is about one who denies Christ as coming in the flesh and that he is God's Messiah (1 Jn. 2:22; 4:2).
 - (2) Also, John says there are *many* antichrists (1 Jn. 2:18).
 - (3) To equate the "man of lawlessness" (2 Thess. 2) with antichrist is not entirely convincing. It is difficult to ascertain who the "man of lawlessness" is.
 - (4) This "man" is described as "son of destruction," "opposes and exalts himself" above God, sits in the temple, and performs miraculous signs. Antichrist in 1 & 2 John is not

described in such terms.

- (5) To equate the “man of lawlessness” of 2 Thess. 2 with the “antichrist” of 1 & 2 John appears unjustified contextually.
- b. The understanding of “first resurrection” in Rev. 20:4-5 as “spiritual resurrection” leaves some pressing questions, even though it is appealing and may in fact be correct.
- (1) If “first resurrection” is in fact a reference to “spiritual resurrection,” then the text is made to say those who are already Christians (those mentioned in v.4a) will become Christians, i.e., spiritually resurrected, to reign with Christ for 1000 years. This doesn’t make any sense.
 - (2) In addition, as one goes from v.4 to v.5, we see that the idea of “coming to life” must be the same kind of life (whatever it is). If it is spiritual life, then why do they become Christians at the end of the 1000 years? This contradicts amillennial’s view that the Millennium is now.
 - (3) The only way to make sense of this passage from an amillennial perspective is to make v.5a as a parenthetical statement. Then, “the first resurrection” of 5b must be understood as referring back to v.4. Finally, the “come to life” of 5a must be a different kind of resurrection as understood by v.14.
 - (4) On the other hand, premillennialism of either stripe (historic or dispensational) has more difficulty with making sense of the phrase “first resurrection” because, in fact (according to their view), TWO resurrections are mentioned. So, the text is made to say that only those who were already dead in v.4 actually escape the second death while those who come alive at the end of the 1000 years don’t escape. This doesn’t make any sense because this makes Christians going to hell.
 - (5) The amillennial interpretation of Rev. 20:4-5 seems to be the most reasonable.