

Class #7 The Amillennial View of the Return of Christ

Introductory remarks

Is choosing a millennial view like choosing a baseball team of which to be a fan? Not really... Do you know the meaning of the word 'adiaphora'? It means things that are not provable as definitely right nor wrong in their essence; they are morally or doctrinally indifferent...

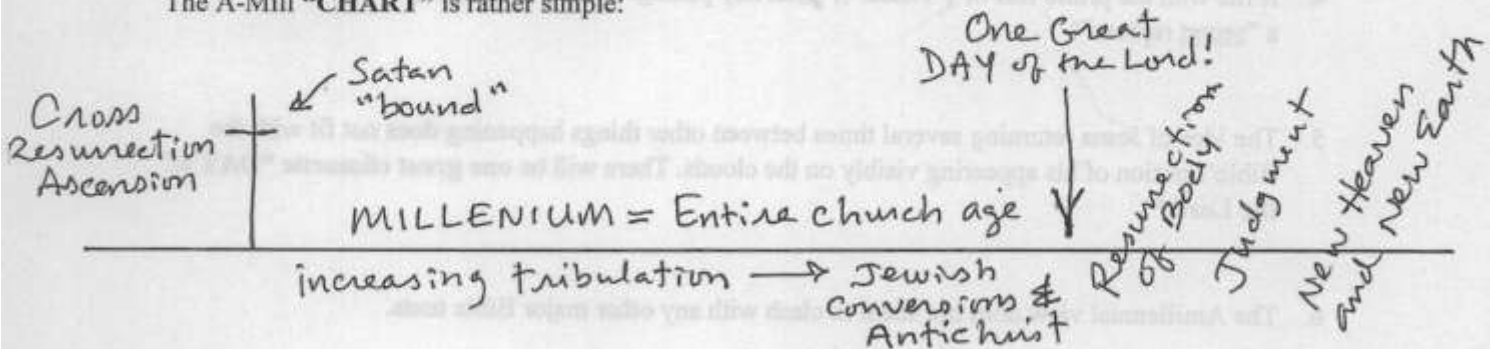
Is your millennial view a matter of being orthodox or heretical? NO—absolutely not!

Does the Presbyterian Church in America have one "approved" millennial view? No. All views are represented among us and respected. But the majority of PCA ministers call themselves Amillennial.

Terminology: "Amillennial" means 'no millennium.' That is: no clearly identified historic period of exactly 1,000 years in which Christ reigns on the earth. Instead the millennium (which is mentioned only in Revelation 20) is understood symbolically, as being the **entire period of the church age**, from the death and resurrection of Christ to his one great and glorious return. Jesus reigns in heaven today!

Similarity to Postmillennialism: very similar except the Post-mil has optimism for a visible conversion of (nearly all?) people on earth before Christ does return; it looks for a golden age of conversions. Thus for the Post-mil it would seem Christ could not return today, because we have not seen this happen yet?

The A-Mill "CHART" is rather simple:



History of this view: The name Amillennial is of more recent origin, yet the view seems to be what most ancient scholars in the early church centuries held. Augustine made it clear. Most Reformers held it.

The Millennium is happening Now! Could we think of saying "NOW-millennialism"?

Biggest Difficulty for some: **How does this square with Revelation 20?** Answer: it only causes a problem if you are using wooden literalism in the interpretation of Revelation, a way of understanding it that neither John nor the Lord who inspired his Word intended should be applied! The right understanding of interpreting the Bible "literally" is to interpret it according to the intent of its author. Much prophetic literature is symbolic! (See Ezekiel and Daniel...) The book of Revelation is not a wooden timeline of sequential events that are all still to come in the future. We find in it a series of **symbolic pictures of the entire church age** until the 'end' of Jesus appearing. There seems to be **seven cycles** depicted in Revelation, each one extending from present day to the very end of time, then

recapitulating again. We have taught Revelation from this viewpoint here in classes at Westminster. Best guide for those who want to investigate further is William Hendrikson, *More Than Conquerors*.

Conclusion — Why Amillennialism gives the most satisfactory summary of Christ's Return:

1. It offers the simplest comprehensive picture and in Bible interpretation it is a firm principle that the simplest understanding of a text is usually the best. And the most clear text should interpret the more obscure one. Dispensationalism is incredibly complicated and even its adherents do not agree on all aspects of it.
2. A-Mill. seems to be the most ancient view from church history. The fact of Augustine and the Reformers like Luther and Calvin supporting it is significant.
3. It is consistent with a correct understanding of Revelation 20. Nearly all numbers in Revelation have symbolic, not literal, meanings. Therefore 1000 years need not be literal years of history—but can be understood as symbolic of a long age of time.
4. It fits with the prime text of 1 Thess. 4. That key passage cannot be properly construed to contain a “secret rapture”!
5. The idea of Jesus returning several times between other things happening does not fit with the Bible's notion of his appearing visibly on the clouds. There will be **one great climactic “DAY of the Lord.”**
6. The Amillennial view does not seem to clash with any other major Bible texts.
7. It allows for Jew and Gentile to be gathered into one Church of God from all ages, yet it allows for a heightened number of Jewish conversions happening near to Christ's appearing. Many Bible prophecies for “Israel” are realized in the universal Church which is the Israel of God.
8. Jesus very strongly stressed “no man knows the day or the hour” and “Behold I come quickly;” and that we are to “Watch and pray...” The A-Mill view proposes no unfulfilled historic event that stands in the way of Jesus returning in glory imminently, **THIS VERY DAY!**
9. A subjective observation: I have heard of many Bible students like myself who after closely studying various viewpoints for years, have changed from Premillennial Dispensational to adopt Amillennialism. But I have almost never heard of someone having studied these things carefully, then moving in the opposite direction, to take up Dispensationalism.