

Our Blessed Hope: A Study of Biblical Eschatology

Lesson 11: Why I Hold an *Amillennial* View

The briefest of recaps ...

A few presuppositions:

I. The Historic Protestant _____

- A. The NEW Testament should interpret and explain the _____ Testament.

The historic Protestant hermeneutic holds that the New Testament is the final arbiter of the Old Testament. We should place all prophecy in its redemptive historical context if we are to interpret it correctly.

The goal of any student of eschatology is to discern how prophecies made in the Old Testament are treated and applied by writers of the New Testament.

- B. Critical eschatological themes presented in the Old Testament, such as the nation of Israel, the Temple, and the Davidic throne are reinterpreted in the New Testament, where we see them as TYPES and SHADOWS of the glorious realities that are fulfilled in Jesus.

- 1) Jesus is the true _____.
- 2) Jesus is the true _____.
- 3) Jesus is the true _____.
- 4) Jesus fulfills the _____.
- 5) Jesus is our _____ rest.
- 6) Jesus is the _____ _____.

- C. The “_____ of _____”

Because all Scripture is inspired by God who cannot contradict Himself, Scripture is harmonious. And because Scripture is harmonious, Scripture should be interpreted by Scripture. We can be certain that the intended meaning of any difficult passage of Scripture will never be in contradiction to more direct passages of Scripture.

II. The Fulfillment of the NEW COVENANT in Christ

Amils believe that in the Old Testament prophecies the Holy Spirit was pleased to use images drawn from the physical life of *ethnic* Israel under the Old Covenant to speak typologically and figuratively about spiritual (and physical) life of spiritual Israel under the New Covenant. Thus, the true culmination of fulfillment of O.T. prophecies is not a future *earthly* millennium, but the two-staged *spiritual* reign of God and Christ, a reign that is created by the New Covenant, and that is experienced by the one true family and nation of God, comprised of the believing Jews and Gentiles of all time.

Eg: Daniel 9

(Summary: In the person and work of Jesus God will act to bring about the final jubilee of redemptive history. The 10-jubilee framework (i.e., the 490 years or 70 weeks) is symbolic of the divine work of redemption, at the conclusion of which the eternal and perfected jubilee will appear: the New Heavens and the New Earth.)

For those interested, see: Meredith Kline's "The Covenant of the Seventieth Week"

III. This view best encapsulates and summarizes the entire biblical _____ and story of _____.

It gives us the *one true timeline* of Salvation History: Creation, Probation, Fall, the OT Era of Promise and Preparation, and the two-staged NT Era of Fulfillment, comprised of the temporary spiritual Kingdom of the Son, the Consummation at Christ's return, and the eternal earthly Kingdom of the Father (and the Son) in the World to Come.

It gives us the *heart* of Salvation History: the Eternal Covenant in Christ, planned before the founding of the world; similarly, it also gives us the *body* of Salvation History: the various administrations of the Covenant, from creation to consummation.

Finally, it gives us the capstone of biblical cosmology, which, to be complete, must include not only the origin, purpose, and structure of the universe, but also its final destiny: the Consummation of all things. All of us have a God-given desire to behold "the Big Picture" of the universe, life, and man; all of us desire to discover and embrace the one true worldview. This view does that.

IV. Literal but not "Literalistic".

Example: Acts 15

V. The Historic _____ of the Reformers

"It is the amillennial position that has been the predominant eschatological view of Christianity since the days of Augustine. It is the position held by the vast majority of Reformed and Lutheran theologians, set forth in all the Reformed and Lutheran Confessions." - Kim Riddlebarger

"Because amillennialism was adopted by the Reformers, it achieved a quality of orthodoxy to which its modern adherents can point with pride. They can rightly claim many worthy scholars in the succession from the Reformation to modern times, such as Calvin, Luther, Melancthon, and in modern times, Warfield, Vos, Kuyper, Machen, and Berkoff. If one follows traditional Reformed theology in many other respects, it is natural to accept its amillennialism. The weight of organized Christianity has largely been on the side of amillennialism." - John Walvoord

What I believe:

Regarding the **present** (realized or “inaugurated” eschatology) ...

1. Christ has ALREADY WON the decisive victory over sin, death and Satan.

Because of the victory of Christ, the ultimate issues of history have already been decided. It is now only a question of time until that victory is brought to its final _____.

2. The kingdom of God is both _____ and _____.

The fact that the kingdom of God is present in one sense and future in another implies that we who are the subjects of that kingdom live in a kind of tension between the “already” and the “not yet.” We are already in the kingdom, and yet we look forward to the full manifestation of that kingdom.

3. Though the last _____ is still future, we are living in the last _____ now.

I understand the expression “the last days” not merely as referring to the time just before Christ’s return, but as a description of the entire era between Christ’s _____ and _____ comings.

4. As far as the thousand years of Revelation 20 are concerned, we are in the millennium _____.

The 1000 years SYMBOLIZE the inter-advent era: the time between Christ’s first coming and his last. During this era (now some 2000 years long) the Holy Trinity applies the redemption accomplished by Christ, and so completes the ingathering of the Church. During this era the High King of heaven rules *directly* over the Church, and *providentially* over the whole world. During this era, He empowers the Church to preach the gospel to all creation. And during this era grants her good success, for because of his work on earth Christ has bound Satan so that *he cannot deceive the nations*. That is, he cannot prevent God from shining the light of the truth of the Gospel into the hearts of his elect people, nor can he (until the very end) use his deceptive powers to assemble the nations for the Last Battle against the Church.

Regarding the **future**:

1. The “_____ of the _____” have both present and future relevance.

The Return of Christ will be preceded by certain signs: the preaching of the gospel to all the nations, the conversion of the fullness of Israel, the great apostasy, the great tribulation and the coming of the Antichrist. These signs, however, must not be thought of as referring exclusively to the time just preceding Christ’s return. They have been present in some sense from the very beginning of the Christian era and are present now.

These “signs of the times” will have a climactic _____ fulfillment just before Christ returns. This fulfillment will not take the form of phenomena which are totally new but will rather be an intensification of signs which have been present all along.

2. The _____ Coming of Christ will be a _____ event.

I believe in the _____ of the Second Coming which marks the _____ of the Kingdom.

I believe there is but one Parousia of Christ, when he returns in glory with all the holy angels to rescue his Bride from the Last Battle, raise the dead, transform the living, judge the world in righteousness in the skies above the earth, consign evil men and angels to eternal punishment, and

create new heavens and a new earth: the eternal home of the triune God, all the saints, and all the angels.

3. At the time of Christ's return, there will be a _____ resurrection, both of believers and unbelievers.
4. After the resurrection, believers who are then still alive shall suddenly be _____ and glorified.

The basis for this teaching is what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52: "Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed."

5. The " _____ " of all believers now takes place.

I see no scriptural evidence for a seven-year period or for a transference of the church from earth to heaven during that period. Risen and glorified bodies of believers do not belong in heaven but on the earth. The word translated "to meet" in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (*apantesis*) is a technical term used in the days of the New Testament to describe a public welcome given by a city to a visiting dignitary.

People would ordinarily leave the city to meet the distinguished visitor and then go back with him into the city. On the basis of the analogy conveyed by this word, all Paul is saying here is that raised and transformed believers are caught up in the clouds to meet the descending Lord, implying that after this meeting they will go back with him to the earth.

6. Now follows the _____ .

I see scriptural evidence for only one Day of Judgment which will occur at the time of Christ's return. All men must then appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

7. After the judgment the _____ is ushered in.

Unbelievers and all those who have rejected Christ shall spend eternity in hell, whereas believers will enter into everlasting glory on the new earth.

8. The final state for believers is not in "heaven" per se, but in a new and restored _____ .

When the book of Revelation tells us that the holy city, the new Jerusalem, will come down from heaven to the new earth (21:2), that God will now have his dwelling with men (21:3) and that the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the new Jerusalem (22:3), it is teaching us in *figurative* language that in the life to come heaven and earth will no longer be separated but will have _____. In the final state, therefore, glorified believers will be both in heaven and on the new earth, since the two shall then be one.

9. In the light of biblical teaching about the new earth, many Old Testament prophecies about the land of _____ and about the future of the people of God fall into place.

10. There is therefore no _____ intermediate 1000 year millennial reign.

Revelation 20 cannot be speaking of a literal 1000 years where the righteous and the unrighteous live together in peace under the rule of Christ. It is not possible because there is no room for 1000 years after the Second Coming of Christ. The Bible makes it clear that the world ends at the very moment Christ returns. Once Christ comes again, there is no more hope for salvation, no more time for the wicked to live on the earth, and no more time for the wicked to live alongside the righteous.

This is what the theological term *amillennial* means.

Implications:

I think it amplifies sound biblical _____.

I think all of scripture becomes clearer and more _____.

It pushes us toward engagement and not _____ from this world.

It motivates faithful ministry and _____.

I think it makes our gospel presentations clearer and more _____.

I think it is _____ and _____.

I think it best equips us for the specter of future hardship and _____.

It reminds us of certain victory in _____.

For a future study:

Daniel 9

Revelation 20

Romans 11

Next week: Your Eschatology Matters – What We Must Agree On