

CHAPTER 13

MILLENNIAL SYSTEMS

For a helpful survey of several eschatological viewpoints, with rebuttals by each other, see Robert G. Clouse, ed., *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (Intervarsity Press, 1977).

Amillennial view defined

Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, 1930; *Biblical Theology*, 1948; Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, 1945; Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, ET 1962; *Paul, An Outline of His Theology*, ET 1975 (cf. premillennialist George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 1974); Jay Adams, *The Time Is at Hand*, 1966; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Interpreting Prophecy*, 1976; Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 1979

See above, ch. 2, section “Classic Amillennial System,” for the view of amillennialism regarding the relation of Israel and the church.

1) OT covenants and promises

The promises made in the OT to Israel do not find their fulfillment in a future 1000-year millennium. They fall into one of the following categories:

- a) Conditional, thus not to be fulfilled
- b) Already literally fulfilled, at least partially; e.g., Josh 23:14; 2 Chr 9:26; Neh 9:8
- c) Fulfilled spiritually during the present age of the church. Fulfilled either in the church itself (John 3:3-6; Luke 17:20-21), or in the intermediate state during this time (Rev 20:4-6).

- d) To be fulfilled in the future, but in the eternal state, after the general resurrection, not in a future 1000-year millennium.

While amillennialists disagree among themselves in assigning the various promises to the various categories, they agree that none of them refers to a future literal kingdom on the earth prior to the resurrection of the unjust.

2) General resurrection

Amillennialism requires a single resurrection of both the just and the unjust, without any significant time delay between them. There are not two resurrections separated by a thousand years. In this aspect amillennialists agree with postmillennialists.

3) Definition of the millennium

The thousand years spoken of in Rev 20 (Lat. “millennium”) is already present; it will not be a separate, future time period. Thus the term “amillennial,” using the “alpha-privative”; cf. agnostic, amoral, etc.

Arguments used for amillennialism

Spiritual vs. physical

Spiritual realities are more important than physical realities, 2 Cor 4:18, etc.
Compare the spiritual nature of the promised kingdom, Luke 17:20-21; John 18:36-37.

Luke 17:20-21, “Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, “Here it is,” or “There it is,” because the kingdom of God is within you.’”

John 18:36-37, “Jesus said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.’”

“‘You are a king, then!’ said Pilate.

“Jesus answered, ‘You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.’”

NT interpretation of OT

The NT interprets several OT “physical” prophecies in a spiritual sense, and applies them to the church age. These are the primary examples:

Luke 4:17-19. Jesus quoting Isa 61:1-2. Jesus quotes this messianic section, with its prophecies of glory, and says that this prophecy is fulfilled in his first coming, v. 21.

Acts 2:16-21. Peter quoting Joel 2:28-31. Peter quotes a prophetic section dealing with the last days, and applies it to the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Acts 15:15-18. James the brother of Jesus quoting Amos 9:11-12. James quotes a prophecy about the restoration of the Davidic monarchy, and applies it to church problems of his day, even changing the wording of the Hebrew (in line with the LXX) to make it more “spiritual.”

Rom 9:25-26. Paul quoting Hos 1:10 and 2:23. Paul uses passages concerning the restoration of Israel to describe the conversion of the Gentiles in the church.

Heb 8:8-12. The author of Hebrews quoting Jer 31:31-34. The author of Hebrews applies the eschatological promises of the new covenant to the church age, and says that the new covenant has already replaced the old covenant.

This particular argument has been granted even by many premillennialists; see the commentaries, and cf. Ladd in *The Meaning of the Millennium*, pp. 19-27.

The church as spiritual Israel

OT promises to Israel are in the NT applied to the church, which is spiritual Israel. See Rom 9:6; 11:26 (cf. Gal 3:7-29); Gal 6:16. In the same way the temple, sacrifices, and Aaronic priesthood find their spiritual counterparts in the church (“temple”—1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21; “sacrifice”—Rom 12:1; Phil 2:17; 4:18; Heb 13:15-16; 1 Pet 2:5; “priesthood”—1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

A general resurrection

Scripture teaches a general resurrection, not two resurrections as the premillennialists believe. Especially note Dan 12:2; Matt 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15. On the other hand, Rev 20 is highly figurative, and the word “lived” can refer to the intermediate state only.

Millennialism as unhealthy

- 1) It exalts carnal pleasures over spiritual holiness; cf. the statement of Papias:

“The days will come in which vines shall grow, having each ten thousand branches, and in each branch ten thousand twigs, and in each true twig ten thousand shoots, and in every one of the shoots ten thousand clusters, and in every one of the clusters ten thousand grapes; and every grape when pressed will give twenty-five metretes (i.e., two hundred and twenty-five English gallons). And when any one of the saints shall lay hold of a cluster, another shall cry out, ‘I am a better cluster: take me. Bless the Lord through me.’ In like manner he said that a grain of wheat would produce ten thousand ears, and that every ear would have ten thousand grains, and every grain would yield ten pounds of clear, pure, fine flour; and that apples and seeds and grass would produce in similar proportions; and that all animals, feeding then only on the productions of the earth, would become peaceable and harmonious, and he in perfect subjection to man.” (quoted by Irenæus, *Against Heresies*, 5:33:3; this passage is also referred to by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, 3:39)
- 2) It mixes glorified saints with unglorified sinful people in a supposed glorious kingdom.
- 3) It exalts Judaism over universal Christianity; cf. Gal 3:28. In the flow of progress to universalism, the millennium would be a regress.
- 4) It leads to pessimism; Christ is seen as not now reigning and conquering his enemies.
- 5) It leads to dispensationalism and the fragmenting of Scripture, depriving the church and Christians of many blessed texts and promises.
- 6) It places emphasis more on the future and eschatology than on the present and holiness.

Amillennial heritage

Amillennialism has an honorable history of exegetes and theologians:

Origen

Augustine

The whole church after Augustine through the Middle Ages

Luther and the Lutherans
Calvin and most Reformed churches (e.g., Abraham Kuyper)
Anthony Hoekema, etc.

Postmillennial view defined

David Brown, *Christ's Second Coming, Will It Be Premillennial?* 1876; Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium*, 1957; J. Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology of Victory*, 1974; David Chilton (various modern writings); Kenneth L. Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology*, 1997

1) Future millennium

There will be a glorious 1000-year kingdom on the earth, fulfilling many OT prophecies.

2) Spiritual emphasis in kingdom

This kingdom will be marked by “universal” salvation and righteousness. Many OT physical prophecies should be applied to this future age, but in a spiritual sense. This kingdom will be universal, without any special recognition of the Jews. “Pro-Jewish” prophecies are to be interpreted to refer to the church as a whole. However, there will be a future conversion of the Jewish people to Christ, along with the other nations.

3) Means of inauguration

This kingdom will be established by the power of God working through the church and the preaching of the gospel. Especially noteworthy will be the conversion of the Jewish people to Christ. The church is not to expect the coming of Christ before the world is converted.

4) Second coming after the millennium

During the millennium Christ will still be in heaven, ruling through his Spirit. At the end of the 1000 years, he will come to the earth, raise the dead in a general resurrection, judge all people, and initiate the eternal state. Thus the “postmillennial” return of Christ.

5) Classic vs. Reconstructionist postmillennialism

Classic postmillennialism (such as many Puritans, Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield) expected God to bring in the new order through the faithful service of the church and Christians, with the emphasis on God's regenerating more and more people and bringing them into the church. Reconstructionist postmillennialism (such as Rousas Rushdoony, David Chilton) expects Christians to take a more active and aggressive role in changing social structures.

Arguments used for postmillennialism

Biblical arguments

Parables of growth of the kingdom in this age (yeast, mustard seed), God's love for mankind, the conversion of the Jews.

Argument against amillennialism

Many prophecies which the amillennialists interpret spiritually and apply to the present age, are better interpreted as referring to a more glorious age, especially prophecies of universal righteousness, peace, and salvation.

Arguments against premillennialism

Premillennialism robs the church of much of its glory, by attributing many prophecies to the presently unbelieving Jews.

Premillennialism holds to two future resurrections, while the Scriptures teach a single, general resurrection, which is followed immediately by the judgment.

Postmillennial optimism

Amillennialism and premillennialism are pessimistic about the future of the church and Christianity in this age. Only postmillennialism is optimistic, as it expects Christ to conquer all his enemies through the church's ministering the gospel in this age. Postmillennialists are optimistic about the future conversion of Israel (as is amillennialist John Murray, *Collected Works*, 2:409-410).

Postmillennial heritage

Postmillennialism has an honorable history of exegetes and theologians:

(Cf. bibliography in Shedd *Theology*, p. 1014)

Many Puritans

Jonathan Edwards, *Work of Redemption*

Charles Hodge

A. A. Hodge, *Outline* 568-69

B. B. Warfield, *Short Works*, ch. 39, "The Gospel and the Second Coming," 348-55; but in "The Millennium and the Apocalypse" equates Rev 20 to the intermediate state; cf. *Works* 2:643 (*PTR* 2 [1904])

A. H. Strong, *Theology* 1008-15

William Shedd

R. L. Dabney

J. H. Thornwell

Modern Reconstructionists (e.g., Rousas John Rushdoony, Gary North, Greg Bahnsen, David Chilton, Gary DeMar, Kenneth Gentry)

Premillennial view defined

Nondispensational

(Also called "historic premillennialism" or "covenant premillennialism")

George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, 1884 (especially vol. 1); J. Barton Paine, *The Theology of the Older Testament*, 1962; *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, 1973

Dispensational

W. E. Blackstone (W.E.B.), *Jesus Is Coming*, 1898; C. C. Ryrie, *The Basis of Premillennial Faith*, 1953; Robert D. Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days* (first part), 1954; J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 1958

1) Future messianic kingdom

There will be a glorious future kingdom on the earth for 1000 years, which kingdom will continue in future ages. It will be both political and spiritual, with Jesus Christ and his saints ruling over the nations by force, as well as by moral leadership.

2) A “Jewish” kingdom

Dispensationalists believe that the physical Jewish nation will be preeminent, with the reinstatement of all the Jewish ceremonial law and sacrifices. The church, a separate body, will not be involved on that level.

Nondispensationalists believe that the Jewish nation will be preeminent, but this Jewish nation will now include Gentiles, with the NT church having been grafted into Israel and thus being equal in position. Since the Jewish ceremonial law is now obsolete, it need not be restored in the millennium.

3) Two resurrections

The resurrection of the dead will be divided into two main phases: the just at Jesus’ coming, and the rest after the 1000 years are completed. Dispensational premillennialists teach three main phases: NT church believers before the tribulation, OT and tribulation saints after the tribulation, and the rest after the millennium.

4) Second coming before the millennium

This kingdom will follow the visible, personal return of Christ to the earth. For the promises to be fulfilled, the Lord Jesus and the resurrected saints must first be alive and living on the earth. Thus, the “premillennial” return of Christ.

Arguments used for premillennialism

Biblical covenants

The biblical covenants promise such an eternal, earthly kingdom; esp. the Abrahamic, Davidic, and new covenants. They require the direct rule of the Messiah over Israel and the world, with a prior resurrection and the personal participation of OT and NT saints. (see esp. Peters, vol. I, props. 48-52; Jesus’ argument was this in Matt 22:31-32)

OT prophecy

Prophecies of the OT, taken in their most natural sense, predict such a kingdom. E.g., Isa 11, 60; Dan 2, 7; Isa 27:2-9 and 59:18-21 as quoted in Rom 11:26-27.

Cf. the collection of passages in William Edward Biederwolf, *The Millennium Bible* [1924], recently reprinted with the title *The Second Coming Bible*.

It is an interesting exercise to compare the lists of events predicted in the prophets about Israel in the last days. For example, the following list of future events is found in many prophetic portions of the OT:

- Israel judged, scattered, desolate
- Israel restored to her land
- Enemies seeking to destroy Israel, esp. Jerusalem
- Supernatural defeat of enemies
- Messiah comes to earth
- Holy Spirit poured out on Israel; repentance, faith
- Glorious messianic kingdom established

The passages supporting this schedule of events include the following:

Isa 32:10, 13-18
Isa 44:1-5
Isa 59:18-21
Ezek 36:24-29
Ezek 37:11-14
Ezek 39:25-29
Hos 1-3
Zech 12:2, 8-10
Zech 14

Other passages from the OT could be added to this list, but the various events and their order would remain the same.

NT promises same as OT

The NT teaches that the church will receive the same promises with Israel. The Jews' unbelief opened the way for the Gentiles to receive this kingdom.

Rom 11
Heb 7:6; 10:36; 11:9-10, 13-14, 16, 39-40; 12:22, 28; 13:14

Rev 21:1-3, 10, 12, 14

This argument would not be used by dispensationalists, but is effective for covenant theology. The unity of OT and NT saints in the future kingdom is illustrated by Jesus' remarks in Matt 22:32 and Luke 13:28-29.

Matt 22:32, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

Luke 13:28-29, “There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

Covenant premillennialists point out that while the subjects of the prophesied kingdom have changed, the nature of that kingdom and the terms used to describe it have remained the same.

Resurrection before the kingdom

In order for the patriarchs and other OT saints to receive the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant, Jesus said a resurrection was necessary (Matt 22:32). The intermediate state is viewed not as an end of prophecy, but as a temporary condition which is not satisfied until body and soul are united. On the other hand, the prophesied kingdom is viewed as the end of prophecy, when the saints are satisfied and reigning in glory.

Premillennialists believe that Scripture teaches the reality of two resurrections—one at the coming of Christ, and the other after the millennial period. Cf. above, ch. 11, “Scriptural Support for Two Resurrections”; especially 1 Cor 15:23-24, and John 5:28-29 compared with Rev 20:4-6, 11-14.

Expectation of pious Jews, Jesus, apostles

It is generally recognized that the Jews of the first century expected such a kingdom.

See for systematic treatment of Jewish Messianism the authoritative work Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, rev. by Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black (1979) 2:514-47. The events outlined in Schürer are these:

- The final ordeal and confusion
- Elijah as precursor

- The coming of the Messiah
- The last assault of the hostile powers
- Destruction of hostile powers
- The renewal of Jerusalem
- The kingdom of glory in the Holy Land (preceded by resurrection of just, the earlier Jewish idea, pp. 543-44)
- The renewal of the world
- A general resurrection
- The last judgment; eternal bliss and damnation

The fact that this future kingdom was expected by the pious Jews in Jesus' day can be illustrated by the songs of Simeon and Mary in Luke 1. It is apparent that the teaching of John the Baptist, Jesus himself, and the apostles did not conflict with this idea. Rather, the NT indicates that early Christian preaching confirmed these expectations:

- Matt 10:7, "As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'"
- Acts 1:3, 6, "After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. . . . So when they met together, they asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'"
- Acts 3:19-21, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets."

(On Acts 1:6 see John A. McLean, "Did Jesus Correct the Disciples' View of the Kingdom?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151 [April-June, 1994] 215-27; see comments of F. F. Bruce at Acts 2:40 and 3:20 in his commentary on the Greek text, and compare with p. 70 on Acts 1:6)

A thorough discussion is in George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, Vol. 1, Propositions 38-45 and 69-75.

Significance of present dispensation

While we receive many benefits that are to accompany the kingdom, the kingdom itself is not yet established. The present dispensation is preparatory and anticipatory of the kingdom. The kingdom will be brought to the earth by the return and direct implementation of the king, Jesus Christ.

It should be noted that many of the blessings promised in the new covenant are now possessed by believers, including the law of God written in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Yet this blessing was given also to OT saints (cf. Ps 119). The primary blessing noted in Heb 8 is that now we are free from the ceremonial sacrificial system, since Christ has now manifested himself visibly and sacrificed himself as the great Antitype. The new covenant will be fulfilled when Christ returns and grants repentance to all Israel.

NT interpretation of OT prophecies

The NT does not spiritualize the OT kingdom prophecies. It is generally admitted that the vast majority of NT citations of the OT employ the grammatical-historical hermeneutic. Those passages which are said to use a spiritualizing hermeneutic (see above, “Arguments Used for Amillennialism”) need not be interpreted in that way. In fact, careful study will reveal that even in these passages the NT writer quotes the OT with attention to the OT meaning and context. Note the examples quoted earlier:

Luke 4:17-19, quoting Isa 61:1-2 (LXX; LXX has “blind” instead of “prisoners” in Isa 61:1). Jesus in his first coming began to fulfill the work of the Messiah. But he did not institute the kingdom as such, which follows the “day of vengeance of our God” in Isaiah 61:2—a phrase not quoted by Jesus in Luke 4.

Acts 2:16-21, quoting Joel 2:28-31. These signs accompanied the offer of the kingdom, which was then still available to the Jews, which offer the unrepentant nation rejected (Acts 3:19-21, cf. 28:25-31). Joel 2 will yet be fulfilled. This fact is shown also by the cessation of these gifts by Paul’s first Roman imprisonment.

Acts 15:15-18, quoting Amos 9:11-12. The NT does not change the wording of Amos, but follows the LXX, which in turn apparently preserves the original Hebrew used in James’s time. Note that the Hebrew-speaking Pharisees did not oppose his reading. It seems likely that the Masoretic text later changed “man” to “Edom,” a change involving only one vowel letter (אִדָּם *’ḏm* to אִדּוֹם *’ḏôm*); and “shall seek” to “shall possess,” a change of a dalet to a yodh (יִדְרְשׁוּ *yḏršû* to יִיֶרְשׁוּ *yîršû*). This change is all the more explicable, since the book of Obadiah is a prophecy against Edom, and it follows immediately after Amos 9.

Further, James quotes the passage not to show that the “tent of David” is now being built, but that when the Lord does return to rebuild it, two groups of people will await him, Jews and Gentiles. Thus, Gentiles should not be required to become Jews. Note the words of introduction: “The words of the

prophets are in agreement with this.” On this particular passage see the excellent article by A. A. MacRae, “The Scientific Approach to the Old Testament,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 110:440 (Oct., 1953), 313-16.

Rom 9:25-26, quoting Hos 2:23 and 1:10. In this chapter Paul primarily is speaking of the manner in which national Israel will be saved. The mention of Gentiles in verse 24 is almost parenthetical, looking forward to ch. 11 (esp. verses 11-17, 25, 30). Paul’s argument shows that there is to be a time of widespread unbelief and judgment on Israel before their final salvation. The “objects of mercy” in verse 23 appear to be the Israelites, and the “objects of wrath” in verse 22 appear to be their enemies. In all the OT passages Paul uses, the Assyrians are the particular enemies which bring judgment on Israel (cf. Hos 1:6-11; 2:9-23; 3:4-5; Isa. 1:5-9; 5:20-30; 7:17-20; 8:4; 10:5-27). The verses from Isaiah are quoted in Rom 9:27-29.

There is no need to say that Paul changes Hosea’s clear meaning by making passages which refer to the restoration of Israel describe the conversion of the Gentiles in the present age. For more detailed treatment, see John Battle, “Paul’s Use of the OT in Romans 9:25-26,” *Grace Theological Journal*, 2:1 (Spring, 1981), 115-29; this article has been criticized from the perspective of “typological prophecy” by W. Edward Glenny, “The People of God in Romans 9:25-26,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 152:605 (January-March, 1995), 42-59, esp. 52 n.39.

Heb 8:8-12, quoting Jer 31:31-34. The author of Hebrews does not state that all of the promises in Jer 31 are now fulfilled. Rather, he quotes the passage to show that Christ is higher than Aaron, in that he mediates a better covenant. The new covenant is shown to be better than the Mosaic covenant, which has been made obsolete by the death and resurrection of Christ. We as Christians are now under the spiritual rule of the new covenant, which is in many ways equivalent to the Abrahamic covenant. But the promised pouring out of these blessings to the whole nation of Israel, along with the other promised blessings, has not yet taken place (cf. Jer 31:38-40). The covenant is new in the sense that the ceremonial laws of the Mosaic covenant no longer rule us.

Spiritual and physical nature of the kingdom

Premillennialism recognizes the physical-spiritual nature of man and of God’s creation, and gives due weight for both spiritual and physical blessings on man and on the world. Some of the arguing against premillennialism seems to stem from relics of the asceticism of the Middle Ages.

Question of millennial temple and sacrifices

Of special concern is the question of the resumption of animal sacrifices in the millennium. Many premillennialists believe that these will be re-instituted, perhaps with altered significance

[For example, see John C. Whitcomb, “Christ’s Atonement and Animal Sacrifices in Israel,” *Grace Theological Journal* 6:2 [Fall, 1985], 201-217; online: <http://pdf.tutorial6.com/c/christs-atonement-and-animal-sacrifices-in-israel-w3570.html>]

On the other hand, others doubt that these sacrifices will be re-instituted. The temple and ritual described in Ezek 40-48, parts of which are mentioned in other prophets (Whitcomb gives several examples), can well be understood as a conditional promise within the Mosaic dispensation, made to the captives who returned from Babylon. It does not need to be a part of the future millennium. Note the conditional emphasis in Ezek 43:9-11.

Ezek 43:9-11, “Now let them put away from me their prostitution and the lifeless idols of their kings, and I will live among them forever.

“Son of man, describe the temple to the people of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their sins. Let them consider the plan, and if they are ashamed of all they have done, make known to them the design of the temple—its arrangement, its exits and entrances—its whole design and all its regulations and laws. Write these down before them so that they may be faithful to its design and follow all its regulations.”

Further, if the new heavens and new earth of Isa 65 and 66 is to be identified with the new heavens and new earth of Rev 21-22, as representing the messianic kingdom, then there is explicit denial of a temple (Rev 21:22). Cf. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, Vol. 3, Prop. 172.

Rev 21:22, “I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.”

Also cf. Jer 3:16, “‘In those days, when your numbers have increased greatly in the land,’ declares the LORD, ‘men will no longer say, “The ark of the covenant of the LORD.” It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made.’”

The book of Hebrews clearly teaches that the temple, the Aaronic priesthood, and the sacrifices are now fulfilled and surpassed by the atonement of Christ. They now are obsolete, and to return to them is to turn away from the greater sacrifice of God’s Son (e.g., Heb 8:13, “By calling this covenant ‘new,’ he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear”).

Premillennial heritage

In addition to having a wide variety of adherents since the time of the Reformation, this view is the only one to be the predominant view of eschatology in the early church.

For helpful summary of patristic data, see Ryrie, *The Basis of Premillennial Faith*, pp. 19-26. For a more thorough history of premillennialism in the early church, see Peters, vol. 1, props. 74-77. See also Nathaniel West, "History of the Pre-Millennial Doctrine," in *Premillennial Essays* (New York City Prophetic Conference of 1878), pp. 313-404; J. J. Van Oosterzee *Christian Dogmatics* 2:786, 798-801.

Ryrie notes statements from church historians Adolph Harnack and Philip Schaff (*History of the Christian Church* 2:613-20, esp. 614-15), who assert that premillennialism (or chiliasm) was the earliest Christian eschatology. For additional statements, note Harnack, *Outlines of the History of Dogma*, pp. 24-25, 46; and Reinhold Seeberg, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines*, vol. 1, p. 81. Also see the article by Eric Frank in the *WRS Journal* 2:1 (Winter, 1995), 7, 11-17.

Some examples from early Christian writers:

Didache (A.D. 70-160).—Section 16:6-7 (*ANF* 7:382). "And then shall appear the signs of the truth; first, the sign of an outspreading in heaven; then the sign of the sound of the trumpet; and the third, the resurrection of the dead; yet not of all, but as it is said: The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him. Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven."

Papias (A.D. 60-140).—disciple of John, companion of Polycarp (according to Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5:33:4 [*ANF* 1:563]). Fragments 4-5 (*ANF* 1:153-54). Well-known quotation about grapes during the millennium. Likewise, in Irenaeus's quote, Papias favors premillennialism, with the resurrection of the just and the literal interpretation of Isa 11.

Justin Martyr (A.D. 110-165).—in *Dialogue with Trypho* 80-81 (*ANF* 1:239-240). "But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and other declare.

"(Then follow Justin's proofs from various biblical texts, especially from Isaiah) . . . And further, there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand

years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place.”

Irenaeus (A.D. 120-202).—in *Against Heresies* Book 5, ch. 30-36 (*ANF* 1:558-67).

Important father, as in direct line: John ⇒ Polycarp ⇒ Irenaeus. Seven lengthy chapters outlining doctrine of last things. A definite premillennialist, with prior resurrection, earthly rule of Christ, etc. Some excerpts:

Ch. 30:4, “But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that ‘many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’”

Ch. 32:2, “If, then, God promised him [Abraham] the inheritance of the land, yet he did not receive it during all the time of his sojourn there, it must be, that together with his seed, that is, those who fear God and believe in Him, he shall receive it at the resurrection of the just. For his seed is the Church, which receives the adoption to God through the Lord, as John the Baptist said: ‘For God is able from the stones to raise up children to Abraham.’ . . . Now God made promise of the earth to Abraham and his seed; yet neither Abraham nor his seed, that is, those who are justified by faith, do now receive any inheritance in it; but they shall receive it at the resurrection of the just; and on this account He said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

Examples continue, with supporting scriptural arguments. The footnote in *ANF* 1:561 indicates that because of the strong “millenarian notions, which had been long extinct in the Church,” scribes of the middle ages had omitted five of these chapters. They were only restored to the text of Irenaeus by later scholars.

Tertullian (A.D. 160-225).—in *Against Marcion*, Book 3, ch. 25 (*ANF* 3:342-43). In this chapter he argues against the docetic idea that heavenly reward is all that is important, asserting that the earthly kingdom of the millennium is also important, as a stage to the heavenly kingdom to follow. E.g., “But we do confess that a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth, although before heaven, only in another state of existence; inasmuch as it will be after the resurrection for a thousand years in the divinely-built city of Jerusalem. . . . We say that this city has been provided by God for receiving the saints on their resurrection. . . . After its thousand years are over, within which period is completed the resurrection of the saints, who rise sooner or later according to

their deserts, there will ensue the destruction of the world and the conflagration of all things at the judgment; we shall then be changed in a moment into the substance of angels.” Along with the classic lines of Tertullian’s argument, we note his own peculiar “twists.” However, in spite of his peculiar opinions about the details, his position overall is clearly premillennial.

Cyprian (d. A.D. 258).—in *On Mortality*, ch. 18 (*ANF* 5:473). Cyprian understands the messianic kingdom as future: “Why, then, do we pray and ask that the kingdom of heaven may come, if the captivity of earth delights us? Why with frequently repeated prayers do we entreat and beg that the day of His kingdom may hasten, if our greater desires and stronger wishes are to obey the devil here, rather than to reign with Christ?”

In “Exhortation to Martyrdom” addressed to Fortunatus, sect. 12 (*ANF* 5:506), Cyprian equates the meaning of Rev 20:4-5 with that of Luke 18:29-30, and asserts that in the age to come all who are faithful to Christ will be rewarded along with the martyrs.

Lactantius (ca. A.D. 250-325).—in his *Divine Institutes*, Book 7, ch. 14-26 (*ANF* 7:211-22). Strong premillennialist, with future reign of saints 1000 years, devil bound, etc. Interesting comparisons of Christian belief with pagan poets and prophecies.

Some later premillennialists:

Daniel Whitby, Johann Albrecht Bengel, Increase and Cotton Mather, Charles Spurgeon, G. N. H. Peters, George Eldon Ladd, Allan A. MacRae, J. Oliver Buswell, Jr.

Dispensational theologians (John Nelson Darby, C. I. Scofield, Lewis Sperry Chafer, Dwight Pentecost, John Walvoord, John F. MacArthur, Charles Ryrie, Craig Blaising, Darrell Bock)