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A Critique of Amillennialism and Postmillennialism

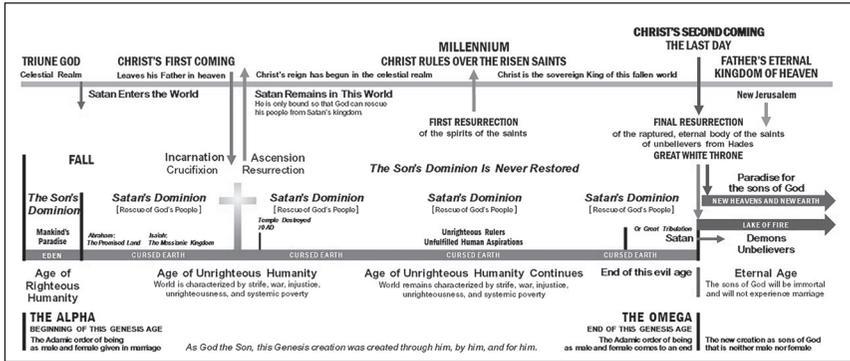
Note: This critique is best understood by watching a 45-minute video presentation online at www.godsendgame.net. The following charts are also available on the website to download and print.

Review

In the last chapter, I critiqued premillennialism by using the chart of God's plans for the future. Premillennialists have a noble objective. They are attempting to affirm the Son's messianic kingdom. Since Christ did not establish his earthly kingdom the first time he came to this earth, they believe he must return to this world once again at the beginning of the millennium to establish his kingdom. At the end of the Great Tribulation when Satan is completely removed from this world, Christ will physically return to this earth to govern the world. The first resurrection represents the saints in their raptured, eternal bodies so that they can inherit the restored natural earth during Christ's reign.

There is overwhelming biblical evidence, however, that Christ's second coming occurs *not* at the beginning of the millennium but on the very last day of this Genesis creation at the final resurrection on Judgment Day to usher in the eternal age to come. The saints will be raptured and transformed into their eternal bodies and will inherit the eternal new heavens and new earth, and unbelievers will be resurrected from hades and will inherit the eternal lake of fire.

Amillennialism



Amillennialists agree that Christ returns on the last day of this Genesis creation to usher in the eternal age to come. They ask premillennialists how Christ can return to this earth to rule over it for a thousand years if he destroys the earth when he returns. Amillennialists assert that there is never a millennial age of righteous humanity on this earth before the eternal kingdom. This present age remains an evil age until the last day.

In the Olivet Discourse we learn that Christ returns at the end of the Genesis age.

As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be [the temple’s destruction], and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (Matt. 24:3)

Christ returns at the end of this Genesis age to usher in the eternal age. Amillennialists combine this teaching with the following teaching: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from *the present evil age*” (Gal. 1:3–4). According to amillennialists, “the present evil age” ends when Christ comes again at “the end of the age.” Therefore, the world remains characterized by evil until Christ ushers in the eternal kingdom.

But in Galatians, Paul was simply describing the condition of the world at that time. His statement does not preclude a future age of

righteous humanity. Just as Christ can deliver us from our sins today, he is more than capable of delivering mankind from this evil age someday in the future. Nonetheless, amillennialists believe the world will remain evil until Christ comes again at the end of the age.

God was supposed to use Israel to bring the Messiah into the world as the son of David who would restore the nation of Israel and usher in an age of righteous humanity on this earth. But the Jews rejected their Messiah. Therefore, according to amillennialists, the promises of a Jewish-led messianic kingdom on this earth are no longer valid. The mission of Israel has now shifted to Christ as the new Israel.

The promise of a paradise on this earth has also shifted to a paradise on the eternal new earth. Christ, as the new Israel, is now responsible for ushering in this eternal kingdom on the last day. The Jews are welcome to repent and believe in their Messiah, but that only means they are destined for the eternal kingdom of heaven, like all Gentile believers.

Amillennialists would interpret the chart of God's endgame as follows. God demonstrated his judgment and rejection of Israel by allowing the destruction of the temple by the Romans in AD 70. Many believe this was the predicted Great Tribulation. As such, there will be no future Great Tribulation. Christ is not waiting on the Father to establish his reign over this earth. And Christ will never rule this current fallen world as King of kings and Lord of lords. The Son's dominion over this Genesis creation will never be restored. The earth will never be restored to its Edenic condition. There will never be a restored human paradise on this earth for a thousand years. Unrighteous rulers will remain in power until the last day. Our human aspirations for an abundant life on the earth as men and women of God will never be fulfilled. There will never be an age of righteous humanity on this current earth. The curse on this earth will remain until the last day, when Christ returns and the Genesis earth is replaced with the eternal new heavens and new earth.

While on the cross, Jesus proclaimed that his death and resurrection would remove Satan: "Now is the judgment of this world; now will *the ruler of this world be cast out*" (John 12:31). Jesus also said, "How can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first *binds the strong man* [Satan]? Then indeed he may plunder his house" (Matt. 12:29). Amillennialists equate these

teachings to John's reference to Satan being bound at the beginning of Christ's millennial reign:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. (Rev. 20:1–2)

Since Satan is now bound and cast out, he is somehow removed from this world, and Christ's millennial reign over his people has already begun.

But amillennialists recognize that Satan continues to rule this fallen world. He is only bound so that God can rescue his people from Satan's kingdom. Once converted, Christians remain in a demonic world until Christ returns and sends Satan to the lake of fire.

Amillennialists believe the first resurrection is not of a physical body but is of the spirits of the saints when they are born again and their spirits are raised from spiritual death to newness of life. Their fallen spirits are rescued from Satan's dominion and brought into Christ's millennial kingdom. Or it is when their spirits are raised to be with the Lord when they physically die. The spirits of the departed saints are in heaven as a cloud of witnesses watching God's plan of redemption unfold on this earth. Amillennialists claim that Christ's millennial reign currently exists in the celestial realm of heaven, where he rules over the risen spirits of the saints (believers on earth and the departed spirits already in heaven).

Christ is the sovereign King of this fallen world, even though the world remains Satan's dominion until the last day. He allows unrighteous rulers to continue to govern the nations. But the Son's dominion is never truly restored. The world remains characterized by strife, war, injustice, unrighteousness, and systemic poverty until Christ returns on the last day and takes us to the Father's eternal kingdom. There is no messianic kingdom of peace, justice, righteousness, and prosperity on this earth as described by the prophets. Anthony Hoekema explains this view in his book *The Bible and the Future*:

Amillennialists interpret the millennium mentioned in Revelation 20:4–6 as describing the present reign of the souls of deceased believers with Christ in heaven. They understood the binding of Satan mentioned in the first three verses of this chapter as being in effect during the entire period between the first and second comings of Christ, though ending shortly before Christ's return. They teach that Christ will return after this heavenly millennial reign.¹⁰

Some amillennialists believe there could very well be a future Great Tribulation at the end of the world. This evil age could get much worse in the last days leading up to Christ's second coming. John's description of Satan's final deception of mankind involving Gog and Magog at the end of the millennium is a recapitulation of Christ's second coming on Judgment Day at the battle of Armageddon when Christ appears on his white horse. When Christ comes again on the last day, it will be to send Satan to the lake of fire and bring this evil age to an end. He will destroy this Genesis creation and take us to the Father's eternal kingdom of heaven.

Many amillennialists believe the Genesis earth is not destroyed on the last day but is only purified by a surface fire. The eternal kingdom is a restored Genesis earth. The New Jerusalem comes down to this earth. God the Father and Christ come down to the renewed earth to dwell with mankind. Therefore, the millennium is not necessary because the age of righteous humanity described by the prophets will be realized on the eternal new earth.

Yet, John teaches that the Genesis creation comes to an end on the last day: "From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them" (Rev. 20:11). After the termination of this planet and the universe, the Genesis creation ceases to have a presence before God. It will have "no place" in space and time.

Christ, as the Son of God, then creates the new heavens and earth as the eternal home for the sons of God.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and first earth had passed away [no longer had a presence before God],
 . . . And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of

10 Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 174.

heaven from God [to the new earth], . . . And he [Christ] who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new [the new eternal habitat for the sons of God].” (Rev. 21:1–5)

Notice that the New Jerusalem comes down to the new earth and *not* to the old earth, which had passed away. Therefore, the sons of God are destined for a totally new creation on the last day.

Most important, the eternal kingdom cannot be a fulfillment of the prophecies of the messianic kingdom because Isaiah and the prophets described the Messiah’s earthly kingdom as a restored Adamic paradise. The messianic kingdom will be an age of righteous humanity with men and women experiencing marriage and procreation. The prophets are not describing the eternal home for the immortal sons of God, who will no longer experience marriage. Isaiah described this Adamic paradise:

I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. . . . They shall build houses and inhabit them [human habitats]; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit [agricultural fields]. . . . They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their descendants with them [marriage and reproduction]. (Isa. 65:19–23)

Isaiah is not describing the New Jerusalem on the eternal new earth; rather, he is describing the restored earthly Jerusalem on the restored Genesis earth. The eternal new earth will not be a joyful restoration of our humanity as described by Isaiah; otherwise, the immortal sons of God would experience marriage and reproduction in heaven. Therefore, the eternal kingdom cannot be a fulfillment of the messianic prophecies of a restored Genesis earth. Thus, without a millennial reign of Christ, amillennialists are simply missing the messianic kingdom altogether.

According to amillennialists, Christ returns after this present evil age comes to an end, which occurs on the last day of this cursed Genesis creation. Christ’s millennial reign over the resurrected spirits of his people exists only in the celestial realm of heaven. The first resurrection is of the spirits of the saints. Christ’s second coming occurs at

the final resurrection on Judgment Day. The saints are raptured into eternal bodies in order to inherit the eternal new heavens and new earth, while unbelievers are resurrected, judged, and sent to the lake of fire.

Amillennialism means no literal millennial reign of Christ. Some amillennialists object to this name because they claim that Christ's kingdom does exist, even if it is in the celestial realm. But the name *is* appropriate because they assert that there is no period in human history when Satan is completely removed from this world before the eternal kingdom is ushered in. The curse on this earth is never removed, and the earth is never restored to an Edenic paradise for a thousand years.

Amillennialists are correct when they assert that Christ returns at the end of this Genesis age to usher in the eternal age to come. But the amillennial version of God's endgame has some serious flaws. For example, amillennialists are inconsistent in their interpretation of the two resurrections identified in Revelation. On one hand, they believe the final resurrection represents a literal bodily resurrection of unbelievers and believers. Yet, they assert that the first resurrection represents only a resurrection of the spirits of the saints, even though John uses the same Greek word for bodily resurrection as he does for the final resurrection. Of the first resurrection, he wrote:

They came to life [the departed saints are bodily resurrected] and reigned with Christ for a thousand years [physically on the earth]. The rest of the dead [the departed spirits of unbelievers held in hades] did not come to life [are not bodily resurrected at that time] until the thousand years were ended [when they are resurrected at the final resurrection]. (Rev. 20:4–5)

John treats both resurrections as of a real body. Moreover, throughout Revelation, John is well aware that the martyred saints killed during the reign of the Antichrist have already experienced a resurrection of their spirits to the celestial realm of heaven. John refers to them as singing and worshiping in heaven after they are martyred (Rev. 7:9–14; 19:1–2). So if the first resurrection is only of the spirits of the saints, as claimed by amillennialists, and John already knows their spirits have been raised to heaven, then why would John teach that the spirits of the martyred saints needed to be resurrected again at the first resurrection

in order to inherit Christ's millennial kingdom? Do their spirits need to be resurrected twice in order to be with the Lord in heaven?

John is obviously referring to a bodily resurrection of the departed saints, which would enable them to reinhabit the earth during Christ's millennial reign. The book of Revelation is complex, but it is not illogical. John specifically states that the departed people of God whose spirits are in heaven will one day physically reside on the earth again:

By your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation [throughout history], and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and *they shall reign on the earth*. (Rev. 5:9–10)

The ransomed people will reign “on the earth”—not in the celestial realm of heaven. And to reside on the earth, God's people will need a real resurrected body. John's vision of the earthly kingdom of Christ is not some form of mysticism. He is describing a real kingdom on this earth.

Amillennialists are inconsistent in their interpretation of the first and final resurrections. If the eternal new earth is a real place accessed through a real resurrection of the raptured, immortal body, then John's vision of the millennium would be a real kingdom on this earth accessed through a resurrection of a real body.

Furthermore, as premillennialists point out, amillennialists have a Messiah with a missing messianic kingdom. A great deal of Old Testament prophecy about a restored earth during an age of righteous humanity will go unfulfilled. Isaiah described the messianic kingdom as a kingdom *on this earth*:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government [of Israel and the world] shall be upon his shoulder, . . . Of the increase of his government and of *peace* there will be no end, on the throne of David and *over his kingdom*, to establish it [on this earth] and to uphold it with *justice* and with *righteousness* from this time forth and forevermore. (Isa. 9:6–7)

According to Isaiah, one day this present evil age will indeed come to an end, and the Messiah will rule the world such that it will be characterized by peace, justice, and righteousness.

Even though Jesus did not establish his messianic kingdom while he was on this earth, he informed the disciples that after he ascended to the right hand of God, on a day set by the Father, Israel would surely experience the messianic kingdom:

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel [establish the messianic kingdom]?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.” (Acts 1:6–7)

Jesus knew exactly what the disciples were asking. They knew their Old Testament Scriptures and were rightly expecting the messianic kingdom. Jesus’ answer indicates that it is not a question of *if* there will be a restoration, but *when* it will occur. Jesus informed them that only the Father has the authority to determine when his kingdom will be established on this earth. Yet, amillennialists continue to insist that the nation of Israel has been cut off from God’s plan of redemption and that the Jews will never experience a restoration of their nation when their Messiah rules the world.

This reveals an even greater flaw with amillennialism. The Scriptures teach that as God the Son, this Genesis creation was created through him, by him, and for him. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of this creation. In the beginning, the world was the Son’s dominion. If Adam and Eve had not sinned, the world would have remained his dominion. This creation would have been the Son’s earthly kingdom, and he would have ruled over his kingdom from his throne in heaven. He would have delighted in his good creation as he watched man, as male and female, experience the union of marriage and reproduce godly children. Their children’s children would have subdued and filled the earth, developing the untamed earth into an Edenic paradise. The human experience on this earth would have brought him great joy. Most important, as this creation fulfilled its original purpose, it would have brought him great glory as the Creator of this wonderful creation!

But when Adam and Eve rebelled against God, mankind and this creation lost its glory. Satan was allowed into our world, negatively influencing all aspects of human thought and behavior. The world became his dominion, thereby robbing the Son of God of the joy of his rightful reign over his “good” creation. The Son lost the delight of his wonderful creation. He takes no pleasure in the evil that exists in this age of unrighteous humanity. Rather, this fallen world brings him grief and anger. It does not bring him the glory he deserves.

According to amillennialists, Satan is never completely removed from this world. There will never be an age of righteous humanity on a restored Edenic earth. The world will remain evil until the very last day of this Genesis age. The Son’s dominion over his own creation will never be restored. Christ may be sovereign, but he will never get his good Genesis creation back, free of demonic evil and human depravity. Satan will be destroyed in the end, but the world will remain Satan’s dominion throughout human history. Christ will return on the last day of this evil age to take us to heaven and will then turn his kingdom over to his Father.

In this version of God’s endgame, Christ loses his battle with Satan for he never truly removes Satan and becomes the absolute king of this world, reestablishing God’s will on earth as it was in the garden of Eden before the fall. This would not only be a tragedy for humanity, but it would also be a divine tragedy for the Son of God.

That is something God the Father will not allow, however, for he has promised his Son that one day he will restore his creation to him. Quoting from Psalm 110, Jesus said, “For David himself says in the Book of Psalms, ‘The Lord [the Father] said to my Lord [the Son], ‘Sit at my right hand [in heaven], until I make your enemies your footstool [human and demonic]’” (Luke 20:42–43). This is an *unconditional* covenant within the Trinity itself between the Father and his Son, who was always faithful, both as a man and certainly as the Son of God.

The Father has promised his Son that one day he will remove all his enemies, including Satan, and give his Son’s Genesis kingdom back to him. Since this creation was created for the Son of God, he has a divine right to rule this world without the influence of Satan. And we have yet to see the regime change that would usher in his restored kingdom over a restored humanity. Christ has ascended to the right hand of God and may be the declared King of this world, with all power and author-

ity at his disposal, but it is obvious that he is not currently exercising that power and authority to establish his kingdom of righteousness on this earth. Hebrews proclaims this truth:

“You made him [the Son] for a little while lower than the angels [during his incarnation]; you have crowned him with glory and honor [after his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension], putting everything in subjection under his feet [he is Lord of this world].” Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. *At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him* [his enemies, demonic and human, continue to operate]. (Heb. 2:7–8)

The ascended Christ may be King-elect or Lord-elect of this world, having been elected by the Father as the absolute ruler of this world, but he has yet to take office and subject all his enemies to his will. In the meantime, Satan remains the god of this world, and unrighteous men and women under his influence continue to rule it. We are still waiting on the Father to say it is time for Christ to remove Satan and rule this world with absolute justice as the true God of this creation.

Despite this covenant between the Father and his Son, amillennialists boldly claim that the Son’s dominion is never restored to him. If that is true, then one would have to conclude that God the Father misled his Son when he promised him that his Genesis creation would one day be restored to him. But Christ has a divine right to rule this world without any demonic influence whatsoever because this is his creation! Notice how John described Christ’s reign over this earth as the reign of God Almighty:

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ,” . . . And the twenty-four elders . . . worshiped God, saying, “We give thanks to you, *Lord God Almighty*, who is and who was [a divine, eternal being], *for you have taken your great power* [his divine power] *and begun to reign* [over the world].” (Rev. 11:15–17)

John foresaw the day when Christ, as “Lord God Almighty,” will use his divine power and authority to rule over his creation. The world will become the kingdom of Christ with “everything in subjection to him”—just as the Father has promised his Son. These verses in Revelation plainly contradict the amillennial assertion that there is no period in human history when Christ, as Lord God Almighty, rules over his own creation.

The Promised Restoration in This Genesis Age

Amillennialists often point out that the only place in the Bible a millennial reign of Christ is even mentioned is in the obscure book of Revelation, which should not be taken too literally. In an often overlooked passage, however, Jesus himself promises that one day he will sit on his throne in heaven and will rule over a restored Genesis creation in this age *before* he comes again to usher in eternal life for the sons of God in the age to come. This promised restoration can easily be linked to the millennium described in Revelation, which further informs us that this reign and restoration will last for a thousand years and is accessed by the first resurrection.

Jesus made this promise when a rich man approached him, asking how he could inherit eternal life. Jesus recognized that the man’s wealth had become an idol, so he told the man to sell all that he had and then follow him and he would be rewarded with eternal life.

Sadly, the man refused to part with his wealth and follow Christ. The disciples then asked Christ what their reward would be for sacrificially following him. Mark recorded Christ’s answer:

“I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much *in this present age* (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) *and in the age to come, eternal life.*” (Mark 10:29–30 NIV; cf. Luke 18:29–30)

Notice that the hundredfold reward occurs “in this present age,” which means that it will occur on this Genesis earth before it comes to an end. And the reward of eternal life occurs “in the age to come,” or

in the eternal kingdom. Jesus taught that this occurs when he comes again on the last day of this Genesis age: “As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, . . . ‘what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age [the Genesis age]?’” (Matt. 24:3).

Matthew also recorded Jesus telling the disciples of their rewards:

Truly, I say to you, *in the new world* [the regenerated Genesis earth], *when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne*, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones [on the regenerated earth], judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold [“in this present age”] and [“in the age to come”] will inherit eternal life [eternal embodied life in the eternal kingdom of heaven]. (Matt. 19:28–29)

The Greek word for “the new world” is more accurately translated “in the regeneration” (ASV).¹¹ The curse on this earth will be removed, and the natural world will experience a radical regeneration, restoring it to its Edenic condition. Christ promised his disciples that when he rules the world, they will inherit this restored Edenic earth.

He also promised them that they would inherit eternal life. This will occur when Christ comes again on the last day to usher in the Father’s kingdom. The followers of Christ will experience the final resurrection when they are raptured and transformed into eternal bodies to inherit eternal life on the eternal new earth.

Christ’s promises to his followers can be summarized as follows. On a day determined by his Father, the Son’s dominion will be restored. This present evil age will come to an end when Satan is removed from this world and the millennium begins. Christ will sit on his throne in heaven and rule the world. Through the first resurrection, his followers will inherit his kingdom on a regenerated earth during an age of righteous humanity. This occurs in this Genesis age when this creation is restored to its Edenic condition. Our human aspirations will be fulfilled a hundredfold during his reign. Revelation informs us that his

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reign will last for a thousand years. And when Christ comes again, we will inherit eternal life in the age to come, which occurs on the last day when Christ ushers in the eternal age.

These verses in Mark and Matthew provide critically important information about Christ's kingdom on this earth—information that is as important as the teachings on the millennium in Revelation 20. Whenever I have brought these verses to the attention of amillennial theologians, however, they have not been able to provide a logical interpretation of these teachings of Christ.

To circumvent these verses, amillennialists often claim that the hundredfold reward is a reference to Christ sending the Holy Spirit to the disciples. They experienced an abundant inner life of the Holy Spirit as they walked through this troubled world suffering persecution, imprisonment, and even martyrdom. But notice that Christ ties the hundredfold reward to a period of human history when the curse will be removed from this earth and the earth is regenerated and restored to its Edenic condition. That did not occur in the first century, and the curse has remained in place for the last two thousand years!

Other amillennialists claim that the reference to the regenerated earth is a reference to the eternal new earth, not to this present cursed earth. Christ makes it quite clear, however, that their hundredfold reward on a regenerated earth occurs in this present Genesis age, not in the eternal age to come. They will receive “a hundred times as much *in this present age.*”

Christ's promise is twofold. When Christ sits “on his glorious throne” and rules the world, the disciples will inherit a life on the regenerated earth during this Genesis age that is a hundred times better than the rich man's life. And in addition, when he comes again at the end of the age, they will inherit eternal life in the age to come. They will inherit God the Son's kingdom on this restored earth—as well as God the Father's eternal kingdom of heaven on the imperishable new earth.

Yet, amillennialists continue to insist that the Genesis age remains an evil age until the last day. Paradise was lost at the fall and will never be restored. There is no hope for a redemption of the Adamic order of being. The human experience on this earth has a tragic ending. The saints will experience only one resurrection—on the last day when Christ returns to take us to the eternal paradise in heaven.

Amillennialism may be correct in that Christ's second coming occurs on the last day. And amillennialists are correct to reject premillennialism. But when they assert that this Genesis age will remain an evil age until it comes to an end on the last day, they are making many serious biblical mistakes. Amillennialism contradicts the following biblical doctrines:

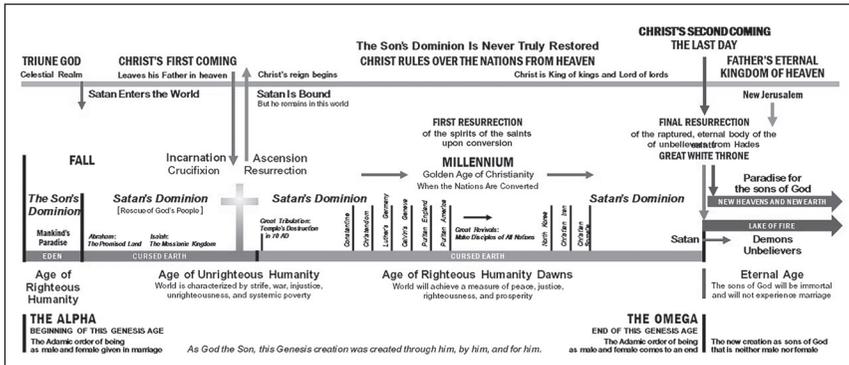
- The prophets' predictions of an age of righteous humanity when the Messiah, as God Almighty, rules the world.
- Jesus' promise to his followers that one day when he rules the world, they will inherit a restored humanity on the regenerated earth in this Genesis age.
- The Father's unconditional promise to his Son that one day he will remove his enemies and restore this creation to his Son.

Even though Christ has a divine right to reclaim his Genesis creation and rule this world, amillennialists contend that the Son's dominion over his creation is never restored. The world will remain Satan's dominion until this Genesis creation comes to an end. The Son of God will never get to enjoy his creation free from the demonic influence of Satan and the corruption of sinful mankind.

Reformed theologians often say the chief purpose of mankind is to bring glory to Christ. Yet, without the Son's thousand-year restoration of this Genesis creation, they are missing one of the most important ways the ransomed people of God will bring glory to the Son of God. Amillennialists omit the Son's millennial kingdom altogether.

Most amillennialists probably do not realize how deficient their view of God's endgame is. But as the amillennial chart graphically demonstrates, the elimination of the Son's restored Genesis earth is quite shocking. This view of God's endgame dismisses major components of God's plan of redemption. We will inherit the kingdom of heaven, but we will never experience a rich and abundant life on this earth as restored human beings. Most important, the Son of God, as the creator of this world, will never receive the glory he would have received had this creation been restored to its Edenic condition under his Lordship. Amillennialism is flawed because it does not correspond to the biblical data.

Postmillennialism



Postmillennialism is like amillennialism in that it also asserts that Christ returns on the last day to usher in the eternal kingdom. But postmillennialists believe that before Christ returns to usher in the eternal kingdom, there will be a golden age of Christianity on this earth.

Satan is now bound so that we can complete the Great Commission to disciple all nations. They claim that if we are faithful in evangelism, the Holy Spirit will Christianize the nations and usher in an age of righteous humanity. Instead of the millennium being in the celestial realm of heaven, as amillennialists assert, postmillennialists believe it will be experienced on this earth when the nations are converted. But the millennium will not necessarily last for a literal thousand years.

They claim that Christ's reign as the Messiah began after his ascension and that he presently rules over the nations from his throne in heaven. He does not need to return to this earth to establish his earthly kingdom. Christ is already King of kings and Lord of lords. Once the nations have become Christianized, an age of righteous humanity will dawn. The world will achieve a measure of peace, justice, righteousness, and prosperity. With advances in technology and human civilization, much of the misery we experience on this earth will be greatly reduced. We can experience a better life on this earth before we go to heaven.

But they acknowledge that Satan remains in this world until the very last day of this Genesis creation, and the curse on this earth remains in place. The millennium will essentially be the world we know today, but Christianized. Once this golden age on this cursed earth

comes to an end, Christ will return on the last day to take us to heaven. Thus, the name *postmillennialism*.

This Christianization began in Europe when Emperor Constantine converted from paganism to Christianity in AD 312 and began the process of transforming pagan Rome into a theocratic Christian nation. Israel had rejected their Messiah, but with the conversion of the Gentile kings and nations, the reign of Christ was gradually being implemented.

This view was later popularized by Saint Augustine and became the predominate view of the Catholic Church. This form of theocracy became known as Christendom in Europe. Civil rulers, in cooperation with Catholic religious rulers, had a God-ordained duty to sit on powerful thrones and reign over Christ's kingdom on his behalf. Those deemed to be heretics were punished or killed.

Martin Luther helped usher in a Protestant version of Christendom in Germany in the early 1500s. And John Calvin set up a Christian theocracy in Geneva as a model for other cities and nations. Then the Puritan movement took place in England, Scotland, and America, spearheaded by the Protestant Reformers. These great revivals were fulfilling the Great Commission by making disciples of all nations. Today, however, many evil nations remain in this world. Countries such as North Korea, Iran, and Somalia have a long way to go in becoming Christian nations. And many former Christian nations have digressed and will have to be Christianized again.

Postmillennialism can be summarized as follows. Satan is partially bound, and Christ will establish his millennial reign when the nations are converted to Christianity. But the Son's dominion is never truly restored, for the world will remain Satan's dominion until the last day. The Genesis earth is never restored to its Edenic condition. The first resurrection is of the spirits of the saints upon conversion. Christ's second coming will occur at the final resurrection on Judgment Day, when the saints are raptured into eternal bodies to inherit the eternal new heavens and new earth and unbelievers are resurrected, judged, and sent to the lake of fire.

This view of God's endgame is also flawed. As long as sinful men and women are ruling this world, Christian theocracies often lead to the loss of religious liberty and civil liberties. These imperfect rulers can still be easily influenced by Satan. This has led to a great deal of

religious tyranny and persecution of those who disagreed with the religious authorities in power. Catholic rulers persecuted Protestant Reformers, and Protestant rulers persecuted Catholics. This battle between Catholic and Protestant versions of a Christian theocracy on this earth also led to long and brutal religious wars. Today, many Christians believe the church best fulfills the Great Commission when there is religious liberty, even if this allows false religions and heresies to coexist within the church.

While Satan is operational in this world, it is highly unlikely that we will be able to Christianize the nations and set up the messianic kingdom on this earth. Satan's influence is the reason the world continues to be characterized by strife, war, injustice, unrighteousness, and systemic poverty. The modern world has made great progress, and the spread of Christianity has truly had a tremendous civilizing effect on many nations. But there is as much evil in the world today as there was in Christ's day, if not more. Peace and prosperity have proven to be elusive goals, even with the best efforts of missionaries. Poverty remains entrenched throughout the world. After two world wars and brutal communist revolutions in Russia and China, postmillennialism became largely discredited. As a result, it is not popular today.

Moreover, the earth remains under a curse until the end of the world. So even if we do evangelize and Christianize the nations, people will continue to experience short lives with a great deal of sickness and misery on a degenerate earth.

And without the first resurrection, the departed saints will never experience this golden age of Christianity. Peter and the disciples have all died. According to the postmillennial view, the disciples will never inherit the hundredfold reward on a restored earth as promised by Christ *before* he comes again to take them to heaven. They will only inherit eternal life when Christ returns to rapture their bodies into eternal bodies.

The Son of God will never get to enjoy a restored humanity free of Satan and the curse, even though the Father has promised his Son that one day he will remove his enemies and restore this Genesis creation to him. Despite what the name implies, postmillennialists do not really believe in a literal millennium. Paradise will only be partially restored, because Christ's kingdom remains on a degenerate earth. We will only inherit the Father's eternal kingdom when Christ comes again and

turns his kingdom over to the Father. When compared to God's plans for the future, it is evident that postmillennialism does not correspond to the biblical data.

Summary

Each of the three current views of God's endgame—premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism—are remarkably different. And as the critique of each view has demonstrated, not one accurately corresponds to all the biblical data.

Premillennialists make a good case that there must be a messianic kingdom on this earth before the eternal kingdom. Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, has a divine right to restore this earth, remove Satan, and reclaim his creation. But they have Christ's second coming in the wrong place. They claim that Christ returns to this earth at the beginning of the millennium to establish his kingdom. The Scriptures reveal, however, that when he comes again, he will destroy this Genesis creation and usher in the eternal age to come—not another one thousand years of the earth's existence. Furthermore, it makes no sense for the raptured, glorified saints to return to this earth to live alongside natural human beings who survive the Great Tribulation. The prophets describe the messianic kingdom as an Adamic paradise for restored human beings—not for the immortal sons of God, who belong in heaven.

Amillennialists claim that there is no millennium. They have Christ's second coming in the right place, but they have a Messiah without his messianic kingdom. The world remains an evil age until the last day, even though Christ teaches that there will be an age of righteous humanity on a restored Edenic earth *before* the saints inherit eternal life on the new earth.

Postmillennialists have the second coming in the right place, but they have a watered-down messianic kingdom, which is of no value to any of the departed saints. Peter and the disciples will only inherit the eternal kingdom of heaven at the final resurrection, even though Jesus promised them that they would inherit the regenerated earth and an Edenic paradise in this age *before* he comes again to take them to heaven.

Each camp rightly accuses the other of major scriptural contradictions by pointing out how some Scriptures are misinterpreted,

mishandled, misapplied, distorted, and even ignored. None of them organize the biblical data into a rational and coherent theology of the future. This may explain why the current state of eschatology is full of so much confusion.

Maybe it is time to revisit the Bible and allow the Holy Spirit to guide us into a better understanding of God's plans for the future, one that theologians have yet to consider. In the next chapter, I will make the biblical case for postrestorationism.