

The Millennium

Millennium “A thousand years” appears in the Bible only three times: Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8; and Revelation 20:4. In the first two passages the phrase refers to God’s timelessness. But what does “a thousand years” mean in the latter verse? Should it be interpreted literally? The answer to that question determines how other Bible prophecies are interpreted.

There is an interpretation of Revelation 20:4 that agrees with other Bible passages, early Christian teaching, and Reformation theology: Amillennialism (a-millennial means no-millennium). In this view, Christ’s victory on the cross defeated and bound Satan. The “millennial” reign of Christ has already commenced—Christ reigns upon the earth through His church. Yet Christ’s victorious saints still fight against evil, including what John calls “the spirit of antichrist” (1 John 4:3). When God has accomplished His gracious purposes in Christ, Satan will be loosed. At that time the Antichrist will appear. Satan’s rebellion will be cut off by Christ’s glorious return. Then all the dead will rise for Judgment Day.

Amillennialism is much simpler than other theories concerning Revelation 20:4 and corresponds better with other Bible passages (particularly Jesus’ rejection of an earthly kingdom in John 18:36). It also agrees with the historic Christian creeds. Amillennialism is taught by most Christians, including the Lutheran church. Other interpretations of Revelation 20:4 include post-millennialism, premillennialism, and dispensational premillennialism. The latter is perhaps the most popular.

According to this view, Christ will return and rapture living adult believers, along with those who have not reached an “age of accountability,” into heaven. Immediately, a seven-year tribulation period will commence for those on earth. The Antichrist will appear. Christ will return and establish a literal earthly kingdom for 1,000 years. During this time Satan will be bound and certain martyred saints will be resurrected and reign with Christ. After 1,000 years, Satan will lead the nations against God’s people in the Battle of Armageddon. Christ will defeat the devil, raise the dead and pronounce final judgment. Millennial theories such as dispensational premillennialism are not supported by the Bible.

Amillennialism Outline:

- Christ’s Ascension to His 2nd Coming is the symbolic millennium where the Kingdom of God advances to the ends of the earth.
- Shortly before Christ returns Satan (who is the antichrist) is unleashed for a final assault against the Church Militant on earth.
- Christ returns and sends Satan and his demonic forces including the two beasts to the Lake of Fire for eternal damnation.
- Christ ushers in the universal resurrection, judges all flesh, and sends everyone to their eternal existence either in the Lake of Fire or the New Heaven and Earth.