

Lesson # 64...Revelation 20:1-10...Overview of the Millennial Kingdom

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Revelation 20: 1-10 (ESV)

¹Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. ²And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, ³and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while. ⁴Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years. ⁷And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, ¹⁰and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. ①

Introduction

Unless you do a lot of theological reading, or listen to a lot of lectures or sermons on eschatology, you may not be aware of the controversy surrounding Revelation 20:1-10. It is at worst, a theological battleground, and at best an in-house debate among believers. What is the issue? The problem is that not everyone takes the 1,000 years in this passage as a literal 1,000 years, so some decide that it must have already occurred or is now occurring, since the Ascension in Acts 1 (but it's a long period of time, not a literal 1,000 years); or it's merely a symbolic number; or it cannot possibly mean a future 1,000 years – maybe it's just the church age from Pentacost to whenever.

It is my belief that any open minded study of these 10 verses using a natural hermeneutic will inevitably lead one to the conclusion that this passage is referring to an actual, literal period of 1,000 years, which is yet future, which will follow the 7 year Tribulation, which will follow the return of Jesus Christ, and during which Jesus will reign as King over this worldwide Kingdom from Jerusalem on David's throne, and Satan will be incarcerated for the entire 1,000 years, and that this period of 1,000 years will end, at which point, Satan will be released to attempt to lead a final rebellion with some people on earth, but the rebellion will be squashed effortlessly by Jesus Christ. This will be followed by

the Great White Throne Judgment and the eternal state of both Heaven and Hell will begin.

As we go through this passage, we will be assessing numerous OT & NT passages as well as reviewing various systems of end times interpretation or “eschatology” to determine which system the Bible best supports. We will see how much of OT prophecy related to the end times, how much of that has to do with Israel & the promises given to her as a nation by God, what worship in the Millennium will look like, and we’ll see that only this passage out of all of the passages that talk about this time period we call the Millennium, only Revelation 20 describes how long it will be. That is one of the things that make people think it cannot be literal, because nowhere except here where we are told it is 1,000 years.

Prior to examining the text in detail, I think it is prudent to take a broad overview of the Millennial Kingdom in the bible, OT & NT so that once we actually get to look at Revelation 20, we will know the arguments from at least some of the angles, will understand the prophecies & how they relate, which will put us into a much better position to come to biblical conclusions about what this 1,000 year period is all about.

The immensity of this topic in God’s word makes it virtually impossible to cover it in as much detail as it deserves in the context of a Sunday School class, so I have attempted to distill it to its’ main points, and even then, we may be looking at this topic for quite awhile. ②

I. The Ages Old Debate

Post-Millennialism – A Preterist View of Revelation

This once very popular theory fell on hard times at the end of WW I and became nearly extinct by the end of WW II, but it has recently made a resurgence, especially among reformed believers (Calvinists). Here are the key components of post-millennialism:

- The Millennial period began during Christ’s first advent (some say at His ascension) and thus has continued for almost 2,000 years
- The church has replaced Israel as a result of Israel’s rejection of Christ
- The Millennial Kingdom is spiritual, not physical and Christ reigns mediatorially through His people from heaven
- Over time, a majority of people will convert to Christianity and society will be gradually transformed by the influence of the believers – the church – without Christ’s physical presence. One branch of this school of thought – Dominion Theology – is looking to set up a new theocracy.
- Once this majority is reached, a long period will begin wherein wars will cease and prosperity and safety will flourish

- At the end of this lengthy (but not 1,000 years) period of time, earth's history will end with the personal, visible return of Jesus Christ, followed by His judgment of mankind.ⁱ

You may well wonder where this position comes from since a cursory glance at history and the present offer us a much different picture from a pipe dream of utopia being formed as the world converts to Christ. This position is a direct result of a theological eschatological position that says that Revelation is history – a position we call Preterism. This view requires that John wrote Revelation before AD 70 (in the early 60's), and that the judgments recorded are depicting what took place in AD 70 when Jerusalem fell to the Roman General Titus and his army. They place a lot of stock in their interpretation of Matthew 24ff – The Olivet Discourse – which they believe was completely fulfilled in AD 70, and the Revelation depicts events that will occur “soon” (Rev. 1:1). We looked at that argument early on in our study of Revelation.

Basically, the error of Preterism and Post-Millennialism is that it misinterprets key eschatological passages and mistakes the church age for the Millennium. Among other arguments, it is rendered or proved wrong by the fact that Rev. 19 chronologically precedes Rev. 20, Christ returns, then the Millennium starts. There is no compelling reason to believe that Rev. 19 & 20 are not sequential events.

“This Generation”

Post-Millennial believers put a lot of stock in the phrase, “this generation”, used by Christ in **Matt. 24:34**; **Mk. 8:12** & **Matt. 23:36**. However, the context of each passage must be examined to ensure that the passages have an eschatological context, and if so, do they refer to the generation of people that Christ said it to or does the phrase have ramifications for a future generation not yet on the scene?

For example, notice **Matt. 24:32-36**. Who is the “This generation”? Is it those Jesus was speaking to then or is it the generation who would see these things (v. 33)? The Post-Mil position is that this must mean the generation Jesus was talking to then, so that He must have been referring to AD 70, the closest historical event that might be construed to be the fulfillment of the Revelation details & judgments. They further assume that every time this phrase is used, it has to refer to contemporaries.

And there seems to be some support for their position, in **Mark 8:11-13**, what does the context say about “this generation” here? Contemporary; and **Matt. 23:29-39** (key v. 36) – contemporary, but v. 39 is eschatological.

But let's go back to Matt. 24:34 & see what 1 commentatorⁱⁱ (Darrell Bock) says about this verse;

“What Jesus is saying is that the generation that sees the beginning of the end also sees it end. When the signs come, they will come quickly; they will not drag

on for many generations. It will happen within a generation....the tradition reflected in Revelation shows that the consummation comes very quickly once it comes....Nonetheless, in the discourse's prophetic context, the remark comes after making comments about the nearness of the end to certain signs. As such it is the issue of the signs that controls the passage's force, making this view likely. If this view is correct, Jesus says that when the signs of the beginning of the end come, then the end will come relatively quickly, within a generation." (ellipsis in original quote).

Post-Millennialism adherents' appeals to historic church interpretations of "the church fathers" is a weak argument in my estimation. The age of someone's interpretation has no bearing on how accurate it is, and simply assembling theologians who agree with you does not prove the veracity of the agreed on "facts". A strong anti-Jewish sentiment ran through the early church, right up until the 3rd century, and there is strong evidence of it right through the mid 1900's, and some factions of it still exist in some circles within Christianity even today. This type of underlying thinking tends to colour one's interpretation of passages that deal with future blessings for Israel, such as the Land, David's throne, spiritual restoration, etc. Even when it is clear that the passage deals with Israel, Post-Mil's tend to transfer these blessings to the church – a trend they share with most A-Mil believers, as we'll see.

This is true even in the face of seemingly insurmountable evidence against their position as this quote by Loraine Boettnerⁱⁱⁱ - a well known Post-Mil writer shows: *"It is generally agreed that if the prophecies are taken literally, they do foretell a restoration of the nation of Israel in the land of Palestine with the Jews having a prominent place in that kingdom and ruling over the other nations."* ④

So, if the Post-Millennialist sees a literal interpretation as proving exactly what Pre-Mils say about the Millennium, then they must resort to a spiritual interpretation in order to support their own theology, thus dismissing out of hand the plain meaning apparent in the text! As I mentioned above, one of the motivations for theologians to steer away from texts that appear to promise future blessings for Israel is a thread of anti-Semitism running through the church for centuries. I did not think this was a major factor until I read a fascinating book by Barry Horner – "Future Israel" – Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must be Challenged". Here are a couple of quotes from this well researched book;

"Not only did anti-Judaism become the established teaching of the Christian Empire (after Constantine), but an even more virulent strain was cultivated by means of four pillars of the church whose legacy remains with us today; Ambrose, Jerome, Chrysostom and Augustine, all contemporaries."^{iv}

Horner adds,

"Thus Daniel Goldhagen's definitive study of the Holocaust, especially in terms of focus on 'ordinary Germans', is painfully correct in its' conclusion: "John Chrysostom, a pivotal Church Father, whose theology and teachings had lasting import, preached about Jews in terms that would become the stock-in-trade of Christian anti-Jewish teachings and rhetoric, which would condemn the Jews to live in a Christian Europe

that despised and feared them...John, an influential theologian, is but an early example of the Christian world's essential relationship to Jews, which was to endure well into modernity...the very definition of what it meant to be a Christian entailed a thoroughgoing and visceral hostility to Jews, just as it did to evil, and to the devil. It is no surprise that medieval Christians came to see Jews as agents of both."^v Ellipsis is in the original quote.

Another weakness in the Post-Mil system is that they have no satisfactory explanation of why, if Satan is bound for the entire Millennial period – and that, according to them is now – why is the church warned about his attempts to accuse us before God, and to seek whom to devour? Their usual answer is that he is mostly ineffective but still has some influence. He is chained, yes, but it is a very long chain.

Another odd position is that, if Israel lost their promised salvation forever, because of the sin of rejecting Christ & the church replaced her; then how can the church, which in many ways is more wicked than Israel ever was, expect to retain assurance of their salvation in light of her own rampant disobedience? This is exactly the perceived problem Paul wrote about in Romans 9-11, which we will look at in a later lesson.

It is also pretty weird that, although the return of Christ begins the Millennium in Rev. 19 & 20, Post-Mils await His return at the end of the Millennium!

This is currently the least popular of the 3 major views of the Millennium and for good reason, although it is lately on the upswing. Although there are many intelligent living and dead Christian Theologians who are Post-Mil^{vi}, what is becoming evident in the culture of the world at large today does not lend itself to a growing Christianization of the world! In fact, there is a good argument to say that the very opposite is occurring and Islam, liberalism, Eastern religions and atheism seem to be on the move. ⑤

Amillennialism

Among reformed believers today, by far the most popular and entrenched view is Amillennialism. It is the position of most Calvinists, and has a large following especially among Presbyterians, but also among Reformed Baptists & some conservative Lutherans. It shares some similarities with Post-Millennialism but there are also major differences. It is distinctly different from Pre-Millennialism. Although I have great respect for most A-Mil theologians, who seem to write the most godly books on the subject of salvation and God's sovereignty, on the topic of eschatology, in my estimation they miss the mark by a wide margin.

Here are the major distinctions of A-Millennialism^{vii}:

- The Kingdom promises given to Israel in the OT are fulfilled spiritually rather than literally in the NT & are fulfilled in the church^{viii}.

- Christ will literally return but not to a 1,000 year reign on earth, because the Kingdom is present in the church age, so therefore it is not a literal 1,000 years (it is now approaching 2,000 years and counting.
- At the end of the church age, the 2nd Coming of Jesus will inaugurate the eternal state
- The Book of Revelation is a description of events that take place during the church age, not during the 7 year Tribulation
- Entrance into the Kingdom takes place at the new birth
- This is sometimes called “realized millennialism”, so it is not that there is no millennium (which the “A” indicates) but it is already here^{ix}
- A-Mils see no gap in Daniel’s 70th week and the destruction of Jerusalem & the Temple in AD 70 fulfilled the prophecies of Daniel

Although A-Mils claim not to be “replacement theologians” because of the historic anti-Semitic implications of that position, their belief that the church now receives the OT promises yet unfulfilled for Israel with regard to the Kingdom & the Land, effectively says that Israel does not have a future time (or dispensation) of blessing.

Kim Riddlebarger says;

“Amillennialists hold that the promises made to Israel, David, and Abraham in the OT are fulfilled by Jesus Christ & His church during this present age. The millennium is the period of time between the 2 advents of our Lord with the 1,000 years of Revelation 20 being symbolic of the entire interadvental age. At the first advent of Jesus Christ, Satan was bound by Christ’s victory over him at Calvary and the empty tomb. The effects of this victory continued because the presence of the kingdom of God via the preaching of the gospel and as evidenced by Jesus’ miracles. Through the spread of the gospel, Satan is no longer free to deceive the nations. Christ is presently reigning in heaven during the entire period between Christ’s first & second coming. At the end of the millennial age, Satan is released, a great apostasy breaks out, the general resurrection occurs, Jesus Christ returns in final judgment for all people and He establishes a new heaven and new earth.”^x

Barry Horner responds in criticism of the A-Mil position espoused by Riddlebarger and other A-Mils, but first quotes Riddlebarger: *“So Riddlebarger further claims, “First given systematic expression by Augustine in The City of God, Amillennialism developed a distinctive reformed emphasis...because Amillennialism has its roots deep in historic Christianity, when it comes to comparing Amillennialism with dispensationalism, clearly the burden of proof lies with dispensationalists to prove their case. Evangelicals often assume the opposite. It should also be noted that all major thinkers in Christian history have held something akin to the amillennial position) e.g. Calvin, Augustine, Luther & Aquinas). This does not mean that Amillennialism is true simply because it has support within Catholic Christianity and historic protestantism. Nevertheless, this is an impressive point, which is often not considered.” “Such claims call for a response that clearly exposes the shameful legacy of historic Amillennialism, which is really the eschatology of Roman Catholicism.”^{xi}*

Horner goes on to prove his point by quoting the RC Catechism, *“Modern Israel is not the true heir of the biblical Israel, but a secular state...therefore, the Holy Land and its’ sacred sites belong to Christianity, the true Israel.”^{xii}*

Kim Riddlebarger exegetes Daniel 9:24-27 (the prophecy of the 70 weeks) as an A-Mil commentator on pp. 149-156 of his book. Throughout that chapter he makes a mockery of the Dispensational viewpoint of these verses. In a passage that literally points to national Israel – cf. Dan. 9:24 – “70 weeks are determined for your people”, IOW, Daniel’s people, the Jews, Riddlebarger claims that Daniel was not speaking here of the national Israel but of Christ! If so, then words have no meaning, and sentences can be twisted to mean anything we want them to say except what they are saying!

He further sees not Antichrist as the one making a 7 year covenant of peace in **v. 27**, but again, Jesus Christ is ‘cutting’ a covenant by confirming it, and Riddlebarger then connects this to **Romans 5:8** as a fulfillment of **Dan. 9:27!**

He and his fellow A-Mils do not see the church as a mystery revealed in the NT as Paul does in Eph. 3, but as the predicted ushering in of the gentiles in the end times, during the church age millennium, where Christ reigns from heaven over a long period of time while His subjects, His church on earth suffer in humility but in ultimate triumph until Christ returns, even though conditions in the world will fluctuate, like the birth pains predicted by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse.^{xiii}

Thus, the key difference between A-Mils and Post-Mils is that the return of Christ is not to a mostly converted world, but to a worse one because Revelation is describing things happening throughout church history. There are 5 main differences between A-Mil & Pre-Mil beliefs: ⑦

- There is no 1,000 year millennial kingdom with Christ reigning from Jerusalem on David’s throne
- The church age is the millennium and the 1,000 years is symbolic, not literal
- Prophetic passages cannot be interpreted literally (usually) but must be spiritualized
- The church has replaced Israel
- If there is a Rapture, it is Post-Mil / there is no 7 Year Tribulation period & no personal Antichrist

Progressive Dispensationalism (a minor view)

This system and the next are minor viewpoints, so I will not do an in-depth look at them, but I will put down some points to give a cursory overview of what these people believe^{xiv}.

- A reforming movement that began in the late 1980’s among traditional dispensationalists
- Progressive Dispensationalists attempt to resolve the tension between promises made to Israel fulfilled in the Millennium with spiritual promises made to Christians and realized in heaven.
- They developed a system where God’s redemptive program avoids earth-heaven dualism

- They understand the distinction between Israel & the church as “successive arrangements in the progressive revelation & accomplishment of redemption”
- They see God’s covenant promises to Abraham fulfilled in the church & the Davidic Covenant fulfilled in Christ, not in a future literal kingdom
- They are closer to covenant theology & historic Premillennialism

Historic Premillennialism (a minor view)

Again, this is a minor view, so here is a point form review^{xv}:

- Often thought to be identical to dispensational Premillennialism, but with a different timing of the rapture but it has more differences than that
- The coming of Jesus Christ is the beginning of a new age and fulfills OT prophetic expectations
- The kingdom of God is made known through Jesus’ public ministry, but is not yet consummated
- At Jesus’ ascension & Pentacost, the kingdom remains present through the Holy Spirit & advances till the end of the age, marked by the return of Christ to earth in judgment
- Great apostasy and tribulation occur immediately prior to Christ’s return
- At Christ’s return a period of 1,000 years will separate the first resurrection from the second
- Satan will be bound & the kingdom will be consummated
- At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan will be loosed & will lead a rebellion led by Gog & Magog immediately preceding the second resurrection or final judgment ⑧
- After this, God will create a new heaven and earth
- Some famous proponents of this system are: George Eldon Ladd, John W. Montgomery, Henry Alford, & James Montgomery Boice.

Dispensational Premillennialism

This is the position I have taken as we have studied through Revelation for the past 3 1/2 years. It is my belief that it best honours Scripture, the prophecies and fulfillments. As a Calvinist I am not the least bit concerned that most Calvinistic believers follow A-Mil or Post-Mil interpretations of eschatology. That did concern me a few years ago, and was a major factor in my decision to go through Revelation again after having done it about 10 years ago. I wanted to confirm my own beliefs & see afresh what Scripture supported as an end times system, not just follow along with what some of my favourite theology writers believed. I am more convinced than ever that this is the correct way to look at the end times.

There are 3 basic tenets of dispensational premillennialism we will look at herein, which set the tone for how we understand the Millennial Kingdom.^{xvi}

1.) Differentiating between Israel and the church.
2.) The normal, literal hermeneutic principle

3.) The underlying purpose of God in history as His glory, not primarily the salvation of men (Rom. 11:36)

Overall, this is probably the most popular position on a per capita basis, mainly because most adherents are Arminian in their theology & actually more as a result of default than actual bible knowledge of those who adhere to it. Most people who believe in a pre-mil rapture, a millennium & pre-millennium return of Christ do so because they have heard so much about it from movies, fiction books like the “Left Behind” series, etc. However, just because a majority of people who believe this way could never support why, is no reason to see the system as deficient. This is one reason the A-Mil & Post-Mil people tend to look down of Dispensationalists – there appears to be a lack of scholarship in the movement. However, there are just as many scholars in this camp as there are in the other positions.

Here are some of the key points of the Premillennial viewpoint:

- Israel & the church are separate entities
- Israel will have a position of blessing in the future when they’ll be restored to the Land, will again be God’s people & a generation of them will be saved en masse.
- They will inhabit the Millennial Kingdom
- Christ will return to earth before the Millennium, in fact, His return is the impetus for the Millennium
- Jesus will reign for 1,000 literal years from Jerusalem, seated on David’s throne 9
- Satan will be incarcerated in the Abyss for 1,000 years & will be released at the end of the Millennium when he will lead a final rebellion of men, and this rebellion will be defeated by Christ before it can advance
- A Pre-Tribulational Rapture will remove the true church before the 7 year Tribulation period predicted by Daniel and other prophets
- There will be a literal personal Antichrist & False Prophet
- The Tribulation will be a literal 7 years, divided in ½ by the Blasphemy of the Antichrist in the Temple known as “the Abomination that Causes Desolation
- Revelation is a book about the future
- The Sheep & Goats judgment in Matt. 25 is a Post-Trib & Pre-Mil judgment
- The Great White Throne Judgment follows the 1,000 year Millennium
- It is followed by the eternal state
- Scripture is to be interpreted literally unless there are sufficient contextual reasons to interpret it some other way

Although most A-Mil & Post-Mil writers argue that Premillennialism is a newcomer as a viewpoint (1800’s) and therefore unlikely true, support for this view can be found in earlier writing as well, and in fact it may be the oldest view. It was set aside however when Post-Mil & A-Mil positions were presented by more well known theologians, such as Augustine.

Early Church Fathers, such as Clement of Rome (40-100 AD), Ignatius of Antioch (50-115 AD), & Hippolytus (160-240) all were Premillennial in their understanding of the end times^{xvii}.

There are a couple of components of Dispensational Premillennialism that detract from it. One is that the main proponents of it seem to be most often Arminian in their soteriology (as stated above), and thus are summarily dismissed as theological lightweights by Calvinistic scholars and their valid arguments in the field of eschatology are thus not respected.

Another unfortunate problem arises from a reference note in the original Scofield Bible which seemed to state that OT salvation was achieved by works rather than by grace through faith. This has been brought up as an argument against Dispensationalism ever since, even though subsequent editions of that Bible have changed that reference note in response to the realization that it was in error and did lead to a wrong conclusion.

Probably the strongest aspect of Premillennialism is that it interprets Scripture in the way Scripture reads naturally. Many use the word, “literal”, but S. Lewis Johnson makes an excellent point about using the words ‘natural’, plain sense’ or ‘normal’ hermeneutic^{xviii}. His reasoning is that ‘literal’ seems to imply that even when we encounter obviously symbolic, poetic, apocalyptic, metaphoric, or idiomatic sections of Scripture, we refuse to see those literary differences and interpret literally anyway. Instead, interpreting plainly means looking at the context and genre we are reading, recognizing symbols, idioms, etc. and interpreting accordingly. For example, when Christ says He is “the door” in John 10, we know He is not saying he is a large piece of wood with hinges and a handle, but is speaking metaphorically to show He is the access to safety for His sheep who enter the sheep fold – and the sheep & sheep fold are also metaphoric. He protects the sheep from predators and allows access to those of His fold. ⑩

When it comes to prophecy, and let’s face it, Millennialism is about prophecy, only Pre-Mils are ready to accept that since virtually all prophecies are fulfilled literally, then the prophecies about Israel, the Land, the Kingdom, the Messiah & the throne of David are to be seen as literal as well. Here are some examples of this:

Micah 5:2. ² But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
 who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
 from you shall come forth for me
 one who is to be ruler in Israel,
 whose coming forth is from of old,
 from ancient days.

This is a 4 part prophecy. First, it identifies the place the Messiah would be born as Bethlehem Ephratha and both Matt. 2:1,6 & John 7:40-43 confirm that this is literally fulfilled.

Secondly, Judah is identified as the clan or tribe within Israel out of which this Messiah would come. Again, this is literally fulfilled – Matt. 1:1-17; LK 3:23-38 & Rev. 5:5.

Third, this One who will come forth is to be ruler in Israel. Was this fulfilled literally? Not yet. He was cut off before He could be made literal King of Israel. Now, A-Mils & Post-Mils would argue that He is King, and He is ruling today from heaven over His Church, the spiritual Israel. That doesn't cut it – you've got the place literally fulfilled; you've got the tribe literally fulfilled, you've got the 4th part – He is God / eternal, literally fulfilled (cf. JN 1:1 etc.); so the 3rd part, His being a ruler is spiritually fulfilled?! I don't think so.

Numerous other prophecies dovetail here to confirm the facts of literal fulfillment. He will reign from Jerusalem on earth^{xxix}; on the throne of David^{xx}; He'll rule over the nations with a rod of iron^{xxi}; He'll dwell among His people, Israel on earth^{xxii}; and nations will stream to His throne to worship Him in His Temple^{xxiii}; etc. You cannot spiritualize prophecies like this away. It is not as if there are only 1 or 2 verses pointing to these things. There are hundreds of Millennial verses in far too much detail to ignore that detail or transfer the promises from those who have been given the promises to another group or person, like the church or Christ without doing great damage to the unity of Scripture. It is too easy to say that Israel still gets all the curses because of her sin, but the church now gets all the blessings. That does not satisfy the tenor of the prophecies which were for Israel.

How about Isaiah 11 – one of the most well known Millennial passages? Note vv. 6-9. Has this ever occurred in history outside of pre-fall Eden? Obviously not, so we have to presume that, since prophecies are virtually all fulfilled literally, this one will be as well. What do A-Mils and Post-Mils say about this passage? Well, it's a dream or vision of Isaiah's, not really a prophecy, just something Isaiah dreamed about and recorded; or it's a symbol of a golden age optimism where Christianity is growing stronger and stronger. 11

There is an old rule of hermeneutics recounted by S. Lewis Johnson^{xxiv}; *“if the plain sense of a passage makes sense, seek no other sense, but take each word, every word at it's primary, ordinary usual literal sense, unless the facts of the context studied in the light of other passages and related axiomatic truths indicate clearly otherwise.”*

Notice also **Zech. 9:9-10**. Was v. 9 fulfilled literally or is it just an example of Jesus' humility? Of course it occurred literally and no less than all 4 gospel writers recorded the fulfillment – Matt. 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-44 & John 12:12-19. So, if this was fulfilled literally, then shouldn't we expect that v. 10 would be fulfilled literally as well? *“...The bow of war will be removed, and He will proclaim peace to the nations, His dominion will extend from sea to sea, from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth.”* (HCSB) Verse 9 is about Christ's first advent, and v. 10 is about His second.

Example after example could be paraded across the pages of our notes to prove this point, that prophecies are fulfilled literally time after time. So why do A-Mils insist on spiritual interpretation and a denial of the plain sense of these passages when they literally interpret passages on soteriology, etc.?

Combine the weight of the OT prophecies and how the Israelites would have perceived the Kingdom, with a few NT passages that tell us the NT writers expected the same thing – a restoration of Israel as God’s people in their Promised Land.

Compare **Matt. 24:29-31**. Here Jesus returns to earth, and then note **Matt. 25:31-34**. Following His return, He sets up His Kingdom on earth, the one prepared for His people before the foundation of the world. He will rule on His throne, and see **Luke 1:30-33**, and **Luke 22:29-30** (cf. **Rev. 20:4**), and how about the very instructive **Acts 1:1-7**. In Acts 1:3, He instructed them over a period of 40 days, speaking about “the Kingdom of God”! When the disciples ask their question after all this teaching in **v. 6**, an A-mil believer should expect this answer, “Are you guys nuts!? Israel is not getting this Kingdom now, they just had Me murdered!” or “The Kingdom starts as soon as I ascend to heaven and take My place on My throne.” But His answer is that the Kingdom is delayed – it is yet future, and only the Father knows when that is. The disciples do not need to know the time, just that it is coming.

In Revelation 19 & 20, the chronological flow is tough to argue against. John uses the word “then” in these chapters to indicate time progress, first the return of Christ, then the Kingdom is set up. In Romans 11, one of the strongest arguments for a future for Israel is put forth by Paul – see **vv. 1,25,26,27,29**. This entire chapter leaves no doubt of this unless you spiritualize it – ie.) like saying that Israel is being saved only as a remnant in the church. We will look at Romans 9-11 in a later lesson in more detail. 12

Post - Mils and A -Mils make a big deal over the fact that only Revelation 20, out of all the Millennial passages in the bible talks about 1,000 years. Is that to be taken literally or figuratively? A good indicator to me is the fact that the number is repeated 6 times, which emphasizes the number, which does not make sense if it is a symbolic number.

A-Mils recognize that the prophetic passages, taken literally support the Premillennial position best, so it is not rare to read from their pens of men like Oswald T. Allis, one of the most respected A-Mil writers, *“The OT prophecies, if literally interpreted cannot be regarded as having been fulfilled or being capable of being fulfilled in this age.”*^{xxv} IOW, they can’t be fulfilled in the church. In order to protect his theological position, he cannot allow this fact to colour his thinking or interpretation.

Well, we’ve really only briefly sketched some comparisons between the 3 major eschatological positions, but as we move forward, we’ll examine the key elements of the Pre-Mil position from a number of viewpoints as we look at the nature of

the Millennial Kingdom. The main differences between Post-Mil, A-Mil & Pre-Mil positions are defined by the relationship that the 2nd advent of Christ has to the Kingdom of God on earth.

Next lesson – Lesson # 65 – The Four Unconditional Covenants

ⁱ Kenneth L. Gentry; from a website accessed 3/4/11 – www.raptureready.com; which quotes his book, “He Shall Have Dominion: A Post-Millennial Eschatology” – pp. 169-173

ⁱⁱ Darrell Bock; Luke 9:51-24:53 – regarding the parallel passage in Luke 21:32 – www.raptureready.com website

ⁱⁱⁱ Loraine Boettner; “The Meaning of the Millennium; Robert G. Clouse, editor, IVP; 1977; p. 95

^{iv} Barry Horner; Future Israel; B & H Academic; 2010; p. 20

^v IBID, pp 21-22, quoting Daniel Goldhagen from his book, “Hitler’s Willing Executioners” – pp. 50-51

^{vi} Loraine Boettner, Kenneth Gentry, Gary DeMars, Charles & AA Hodge, WGT Shedd, Robert L. Dabney, Augustus Strong, BB Warfield, Augustine of Hippo, Gary North, David Chilton, James R. White

^{vii} Jason Robertson, A Quick Look at Amillennialism – accessed on “challengingthinking” website 3/4/11

^{viii} Mal Couch, editor, Dictionary of Premillennial Theology, p. 37ff

^{ix} Kim Riddlebarger, A Case for Amillennialism; Baker Books, 2003, p. 31

^x IBID, p. 31-32

^{xi} Horner, OP CIT, p. 148

^{xii} IBID, p. 149

^{xiii} Riddlebarger, p. 129

^{xiv} IBID, p. 27

^{xv} IBID, pp.27-28

^{xvi} Charles Feinberg, Millennialism, BMH Books, p. 79

^{xvii} Mal Couch, general editor, Dictionary of Premillennial Theology, Kregel, 1996, p. 310

^{xviii} S. Lewis Johnson, from an MP3 lecture accessed online entitled “The Premillennial System”.

^{xix} Joel 3:16-21; Micah 4:1,7; 5:26; Zech. 2:10-11; 8:3,8; 14:8,9,16; Isa. 2:1-4; Rev. 20:4

^{xx} 2 Sam. 7:9-17; I Chron. 17:10-15; Isa. 9:6-7; 16:5; Jer. 33:17; Ezek. 37:23-25

^{xxi} Psalm 2:8-9; Rev. 2:27; Micah 4:3; Isa. 2:4; 11:1-5; Dan. 2:40,44,45

^{xxii} Isa. 65:19ff; Jer. 31:31-33; Ezek. 37:23,27; 43:7; Zeph. 3:16-19; Zech. 2:11

^{xxiii} Micah 4:1-2; Zech. 8:23; 35:8-10; Isa. 60; 66:18-20

^{xxiv} Ibid

^{xxv} Ibid