

Last Things: The Church's Hope and God's Final Victory

Amillennialism

- The view that Christ reigns now in heaven over his Kingdom on earth. The church age is the millennial kingdom. We are in the millennium right now.

Proponents

- Gerhardus Vos, Ridderbos, Anthony Hoekema, Meredith Kline, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin.

The Millennial Kingdom

1. The Millennium is present and spiritual.
 - The thousand years of Revelation 20:1-6 is not a future literal earthly reign, but a symbolic depiction of Christ's present reign in heaven.
 - The number 1000 symbolizes completeness.
 - The kingdom is a present reality and a future hope (Luke 17:20-21; Matt. 25)
 - The blessings of the millennium refer to the intermediate state or the triumphs of church.
2. Christ is reigning now.
 - Christ has won a decisive victory over sin, death, and the devil.
 - The resurrection and ascension of Christ marked the beginning of the *last days* (Heb. 1:1-2; 1 John 2:18; 2 Tim. 3:1), although we are still waiting for the *last day* (John 6:39-40; 11:26; 12:48).
 - After his ascension, Jesus was enthroned as the Davidic King, seated above all authority (Acts 2:29-36; Eph. 1:20-22).
3. Satan is bound during this present age.
 - Though Satan is still active, he cannot deceive the nations by stopping the spread of the gospel.
 - Binding of Satan makes missions possible (Rev. 20:1-3; Matt. 12:28; John 12:31).
4. The first resurrection is spiritual.
 - This resurrection is understood as either the believer's regeneration (new birth) or entrance into heaven upon death (Rev. 20:4).
 - Souls of believers who have died are now living / reigning with Christ in heaven, while they wait the resurrection of the body.
5. One general resurrection of the dead and final judgment.
 - There is no separate thousand-year earthly reign between resurrections.
 - There will be one future, visible, bodily, and literal return of Christ.
 - This will be followed by the general resurrection of the righteous and the wicked (John 5:28-29); the final judgment (Heb. 9:27); and the eternal state.

6. The church is the fulfillment of Israel.

- Amillennialism sees the church as the fulfillment of the Old Testament (Gal. 3:28-29; Eph. 2:14).
- O.T. promises to Israel are fulfilled in Christ and his people, not in a future kingdom.
- O.T. promises related to the land are fulfilled in the new heavens and the new earth (Heb. 4).
- O.T. promises related to Zion are fulfilled in the spiritual condition of the church (Heb. 12).

7. What will happen in the millennial period?

- Realistic amillennialists believe in a parallel development of good and evil. The world is not going to be converted. The gospel will reach the ends of the earth, but the majority will not be converted. Increasing level of lawlessness with limited gospel success.
- Optimistic amillennialists believe the gospel will achieve great success in the world. Perhaps even a majority of the world will be saved, including a mass conversion of the Jews (Rom. 11:26).

8. Signs of the times have both a present and future relevance.

- Preaching of the gospel to the nations
- Apostasy, persecution, tribulation, and anti-Christ's will characterize the church age.
- Signs will intensify as we get closer to Christ's return.

Strengths

- Emphasizes the present kingship of Christ and his reign over the earth.
- Maintains that there is one people of God
- Single covenant of grace that unites redemptive history.
- Simplicity: order of events: Christ's return, resurrection, judgment, heaven/hell.
- Realistic view of the church age: persecution, apostasy, worldwide evangelism.
- Consistent with apocalyptic literature: symbolic reading of Revelation's imagery.

Weaknesses

- The binding of Satan: why is there so much evil/deception in the world?
- The first resurrection in Rev. 20:4 is interpreted as spiritual (not a bodily resurrection).
- Seems to run contrary to a literal/chronological reading of Revelation 20.
- Tends to read the OT promises to Israel spiritually or typologically.
- Inconsistent hermeneutic (interprets the Bible too spiritually).