

THE MILLENNIUM ISSUE

“Millennium” is a word made up of two others: “Mille” meaning “one thousand”, and “annum” meaning “year”. To Christians, “Millennium” means the one-thousand year reign of Jesus Christ on earth.

The views on the millennium issue listed below are to be understood with reference to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The key passage on this doctrine is Revelation 20:1-10.

THREE MAIN VIEWS

Post-millennium -- Jesus Christ will return AFTER the 1,000 years.

A-millennium -- There is no literal 1,000 years during which Jesus will reign on earth. It simply refers to a long period of time. Jesus will return after this period has passed. Eternity will begin after His Second Coming.

Pre-millennium – As the prefix indicates, Jesus will return BEFORE the literal 1,000 years begin. He will then rule on earth for 1,000 years.

Under the Pre-millennium view, there are two branches:

- a. The Dispensational Pre-millennial position;
- b. The Historic Pre-millennial position

The main difference between (a) and (b) is the Historic Pre-millennial position believes that the Church has replaced the nation of Israel, a view also held by A-millennialists. This means that now, the Church receives all the blessings and the promises which God had made in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, to Israel.

The issue at stake is interpretation, and it is not a minor one at that. There is a difference in the interpretation of some 4,200 verses between the pre-mill and a-mill positions. This totals about 10.2 % of the whole Bible, or 52.7 % of the whole New Testament, or more than all the New Testament books added together, if we exclude the four gospels. [Note: All the books of the NT, excluding the four gospels, number 4,190 verses.]

One B-P doctrinal distinctive is that we hold to the Dispensational Pre-millennial position.

UNDERSTANDING THE THREE VIEWS

POST -MILLENNIUM

1. The world gets better and better. The millennium is ushered in through the preaching of the believers. There will not be the absence of evil but it will be reduced to the barest minimum. This is achieved due to the moral and spiritual influence of the Christians, the influence of which is expected to increase in the last days. The millennial world is not too different from the world in which we live in today.
2. The start of the millennium is unknown because like the amillennialists, they, too, believe that the 1,000 years is figurative.
3. The millennium closes with the Second Coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the last judgement. The Rapture and the Second Coming are seen as one similar event. Then eternity begins.

A-MILLENNIUM

1. The world gets worse and worse. All, believers and unbelievers alike, will have to go through the Tribulation in the last days of human history. This will finally culminate in the Second Coming of Christ, and then eternity begins.
2. The beginning of the millennium is unknown because it is a spiritual one. Christ is said to be reigning on earth now in our hearts and in the Church. It is more of a spiritual reign than a literal one.

- The Rapture and Second Coming of Christ will be seen as one similar event. Eternity will begin with the new heaven and new earth.

PRE -MILENIUM [<http://www.dashhouse.com/sermons/1999/Classes/990124.htm>]

There are two major pre-millennial views:

- **Historic Pre-millennialism** Otherwise known as simple pre-mill, one-stage pre-mill, classic pre-mill, or post-tribulational pre-mill. This position teaches that Jesus Christ will return after a period called the Great Tribulation. This was the majority view of the early church (up to about 250 AD).
- **Dispensational Pre-millennialism** Otherwise known as dispensationalism; two-stage pre-mill; or pre-tribulational pre-mill. This position teaches that the church will be raptured before the Great Tribulation. This view has become popular since the 1830s, and is closely associated with American fundamentalism.

While it appears that the only difference between these two views is the timing of the Rapture, these two views differ greatly in their understanding of redemptive history. They are two very separate views; there must be no confusion here.

WHAT HISTORIC AND DISPENSATIONAL PRE -MILLENNIALISM HAVE IN COMMON

Both positions believe:

- There will be an earthly reign of Jesus Christ for 1,000 years. Some understand the 1,000 years to represent a substantial but indefinite period of time. This reign will be personal and bodily. Believers will reign with Christ for this period.
- Prior to the millennium, there will be a period of turmoil, persecution, and suffering called the Great Tribulation. The world will be at its worst.
- The millennium will not begin gradually. It will begin with a cataclysmic event.
- The millennium will be a time of world peace and harmony. Nature will be freed from its curse.
- There will be two literal physical resurrections.
- Israel will have some special significance in the millennium.

HISTORIC PRE -MILLENNIALISM

Great Tribulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Period of great apostasy and rebellion
Second Coming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapture • The resurrection and judgment of believers • Satan bound
Millennium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earthly reign of Christ for substantial period of time (possibly a literal 1,000years) • The resurrection and judgment of unbelievers
Eternal State	

WHAT HISTORIC PRE - MILLENNIALISM TEACHES

- The present church age will continue until a time of Great Tribulation comes on the earth.
- After the Tribulation, Christ will return to earth to establish a millennial kingdom. When he comes back, believers will be raised from the dead. Their bodies will be reunited with their spirits. Believers who are alive will receive their resurrection bodies.

- Christ will be physically present on earth during the millennium, and will reign as King over the entire earth, along with the glorified believers. This reign will take place for 1,000 years.
- Many, but not all, unbelievers will be saved. There will be peace on the earth, as Satan will be bound during the millennium.
- Israel will find its place within the Church. Large numbers from Israel will be converted.
- At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan will be loosed and will join forces with many unbelievers who will appear to believe, but remain inwardly hostile to Christ. Satan and these unbelievers will rise against Christ, but will be decisively defeated.
- At this point, unbelievers who have died throughout history will be raised and judged.
- After the final judgment, believers will enter into the eternal state.

DISPENSATIONAL PRE -MILLENNIALISM

Rapture	• Rapture before tribulation
Great Tribulation	• Period of great apostasy and rebellion • Widespread Jewish salvation
Second Coming	• The resurrection of saints who died in the Tribulation
Millennium	• Satan bound • Resurrection of the lost; Judgment
Eternal State	

WHAT DISPENSATIONAL PRE -MILLENNIALISM TEACHES

- The present church age will continue until, suddenly, Christ returns to the earth to take believers out of the world to heaven.
- After Christ returns to heaven with the believers, a seven-year Tribulation will begin. Many signs that will precede Christ's Second Coming will take place. Many Jews will return to Christ.
- At the end of the Great Tribulation, Christ will return to earth with his saints to reign on the earth for 1,000 years.
- At the end of this millennial period, Satan will be loosed and will lead a rebellion. Satan will be finally defeated; unbelievers will be resurrected and judged; the eternal state will begin.
- There is a clear distinction between the Church and Israel. The Jewish people remain distinct from the Church. All of God's promises to Israel remain in force and are not transferred to the Church.
- Biblical prophecies are to be interpreted literally where possible.

[<http://www.dasbhouse.com/sermons/1999/Classes/990124.htm>]

EXPLANATION OF DISPENSATIONAL PRE -MILLENNIALISM FROM THE B-P PERSPECTIVE

1. The world gets worse and worse and Christ will return. The world will usher in the reign of the Antichrist (1 Jn 2:18) who will reign on earth for seven years (Dan 9:25-27; 2 Thess 2; Rev 13). He takes over the world through peaceful means (Rev 6). In the middle of the seven years, he will break his covenant with Israel and will install the abomination of desolation into the Temple of God (which will be rebuilt before the seven years

begin). This will be a time of great turmoil. The earth will be severely devastated by the wrath of God. (Rev 6, 7, 8, 9, 11). At the end of the seven-year period, the Antichrist and his mighty armies will gather at the Valley of Megiddo to fight against the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ will ride on a white horse, and with a myriad of His raptured saints, will descend from heaven and defeat all His enemies with His spoken Word which is the sword of His Spirit.

2. Satan, The Antichrist and the False Prophet will be punished. After the Battle of Armageddon, the Antichrist and False Prophet will be cast into the Lake of Fire alive. Satan will be cast into the bottomless pit where he will remain for 1,000 years.
3. The millennium begins immediately after 75 days of recreation and cleansing of the Temple. See Daniel 12:11-13. The world has been so badly devastated that re-creation is most necessary. Firstly, there will be the cleansing of the Temple, and the millennium Temple will descend from heaven onto the earth. Then, the Dead Sea will split and join with the Mediterranean Sea. Secondly, there will be the separation of the sheep and the goats (Matt 25:31-34). The sheep, ie. the earthly Christians who will come to believe during the Great Tribulation, will enter the millennium with the earthly body which still allows them to marry and be given in marriage. This is finally followed by the re-creation of the heavens and the earth where occupants who die at the age of 100 will be considered as young children.
4. The millennium is a time of peace on earth where Jesus Christ will reign for 1,000 years. (See Isa 65:17-25; Rev 5:10; 20:1-7). During this time, the Antichrist and the False Prophet would have been cast into the Lake of Fire. Satan has been thrown into the bottomless pit where he will remain throughout the millennium. At the end of the millennium, Satan will be released and will gather the rebellious people throughout the four corners of the earth, and then the Great White Throne Judgment begins. Although only the sheep (believers with earthly bodies) enter the millennium, their children will be the ones whom Satan will gather at the end of the millennium.

Revelation 20:11-15 speak of the second resurrection which involves only unbelievers, and Hell will be emptied of all the dead. They will be judged according to their works which results in only one conclusion – condemnation and eternal death, which is the second death! They will join the Antichrist and False Prophet and Satan to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. With the new heaven and new earth, eternity will begin immediately. This is when all believers will possess glorified bodies, and sin will exist no more. Since there is no more sin, then death is not needed. And if death is nonexistent, then Hell will also not be needed. Death and Hell are said to be cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:14).

5. Occupants of the millennium will only be Christians. The first group will be those who have already been raptured BEFORE the Great Tribulation. They will enter the millennium in their glorified bodies. After Christ returns with His raptured saints to battle the Antichrist at the Battle of Armageddon, there will be the separation of the sheep and the goats. The goats will be cast into Hell whereas the sheep will enter the

millennium, also called the new heaven and new earth. The sheep are the believers who will still possess the earthly bodies. They will enter the millennium with this earthly body. This means there will be two types of Christians who will enter the millennium – those with glorified bodies (never to sin or experience death); and those with the earthly bodies who can still sin. Believers with earthly bodies will be able to procreate and will still possess the sinful nature. Their children are the ones who will fill the earth during the millennium, and some of them will be unbelievers.

6. At the end of the millennium, Satan will be released from the bottomless pit to deceive the world one last time. Satan will gather his followers to fight against God and will be soundly destroyed and cast into the Lake of Fire to join the Antichrist and the False Prophet. Those who have been deceived will be the sons and daughters born in the millennium. They will still have the sinful nature. There will be no Satan and his demons to blame when sinful man sins against God in the millennium.
7. Pre-Trib and Mid-Trib rapture are the only two possible positions held by those who subscribe to the dispensational understanding of the millennial doctrine. The reason is that the ones who enter in the millennium must not only be believers, but also believers with this earthly mortal body. If the rapture takes place at the end of the Great Tribulation, then all who enter the millennium will possess the glorified body, and hence cannot procreate and have the children who will, at the end of the 1,000 years, join Satan for one final confrontation with Jesus Christ. Furthermore, believers will return with Jesus Christ to fight at the Battle of Armageddon. How can they come (Jude 14; 2 Thess 1:7-10; Matt 25:31-32) if they had not gone (been raptured) yet? It makes little or no sense to go up and then come down again within the blink of an eye!

CONCLUSION

1. The hope of believers is the Rapture, when we will be spared the wrath of God because of what Jesus Christ has done for us (Rev 3:10; 1 Thess 1:10). The wrath of God is reserved for unbelievers only (Col 3:6; Eph 5:6; Rev 14:10,19; 15:1,7; 16:1).
2. Dispensational Pre-millennialism repudiates those who claim that it is the sin and immoral environment we live in that makes us sinful. In the millennium, the earth will be perfect, as it was before the global Flood, but man will remain just as wicked and sinful. It is not the environment but the sinful nature in man that makes us what we are. We cannot blame anyone but must examine ourselves, and grow and mature by the blood of Christ and His Word on a daily basis.
3. Trust in God's Word is emphasized. All of God's promises to Israel will be fulfilled in the millennium. The Jews looked forward to that blessed day when they will reign on earth with their Messiah. The problem is that they mistook the First Coming of Christ for His Second. Nonetheless, they understood the promises of God to mean the reign of Israel on earth by the Greater Son of David, Jesus Christ. If we cannot trust God to fulfil His promises to Israel and the covenant He made with them, how can we also trust God to fulfil His promises and His covenant which He has made with us in Jesus Christ?

4. The unity and distinctive of the B-P Church are at stake. We concede there are many details regarding the millennium which we cannot explain, for we are mere mortals. Yet, differences between our view and the a-mill, historic pre-mill and post-mill views are not a minor issue. It is minor if we use salvation as the basis of our gauge. But this is not the only measure of truth and fellowship. The unity of the brethren in every church is dependent upon the understanding of all the doctrines of God, of which the millennial issue is one of them.

