



Session 1

The Millennium

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Christ predicted His return to this earth over two-thousand years ago. Along with that prediction, He spoke of a time when He would return to rule the earth for 1,000 years. The prediction of the 1,000 year or millennial reign of Christ is most explicitly found in the book of Revelation chapter 20 verses 1 through 3. The question that faces interpreters of these predictions is: When and what is the millennial reign of Christ and how does it fit in with His return for His people?

The Millennium is the starting point for understanding end-time prophecy. Many people will claim to have a certain "millennial" position such as pre-millennial or post-millennial. These descriptions explain the relation between Christ's return to earth and the millennial reign as predicted in scripture.



The Millennium is the event predicted in scripture when Jesus Christ will rule this earth for 1,000 years. There are three theories about how these scriptural predictions are interpreted.

- A-millennial View
- Post Millennial View
- Pre-Millennial View

We will discuss each of these and what they mean, but it is important to note that none of these views is universal or definitive. If you find two people that claim to be "A-Millennialists," you will most likely find that they will still have significant differences in their interpretations. The descriptions that follow are typical descriptions of those that hold each of these views.

A-Millennial View

The first view is called the A-Millennial View. The "A" in the Greek language is a form of negation, so the name "A-Millennial" means "No Millennium." The view is probably one of the most prevalent views today, particularly in the scholarly realm. Because of the problems of interpreting all the prophecies surrounding the return of Christ, many have chosen, to view the millennium as figurative or symbolic. They also view most of the book of Revelation in the same way. Those who hold to this view see the millennium as prophetic of Heaven. They believe the world will get progressively worse until Christ returns.

Post-Millennial View

The Post Millennial view was much more prominent in previous generations than it is now. It is sometimes called the Preterist View. Those who interpret the millennium in this way see most of the book of Revelation as historical. They see the millennium as beginning at the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. They see the millennium as symbolic of the age we are living in right now. Christ does not rule in a physical sense, but in a spiritual sense. They see the world evolving in to a "new heaven and a new earth." Things will continually get better until Christ comes to reign personally. By the way, they typically see the millennium as a figurative amount of time and not as a literal 1,000 years.

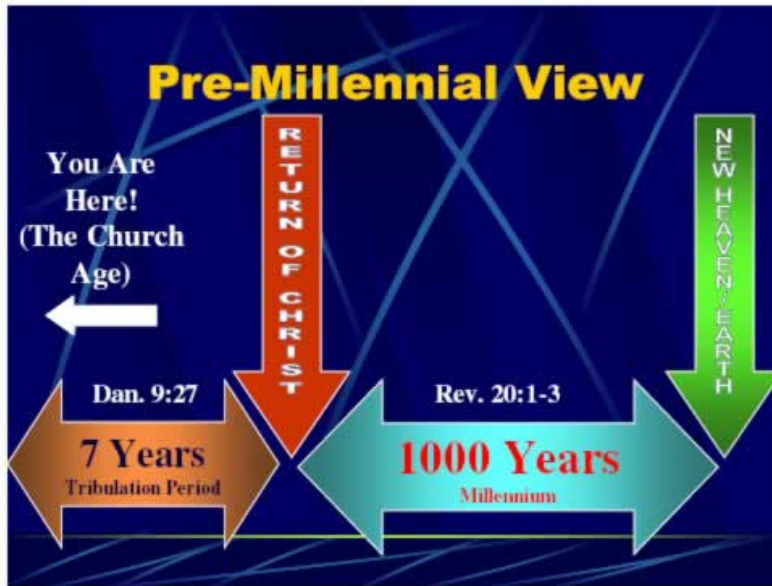


Pre-Millennial View

The third view is called the Pre-Millennial View and it is probably the most well-known and accepted among most people that have an opinion. It is the most literal interpretation of the scripture and views the millennium as a literal 1,000 years. It sees the millennium as a future event preceded by a seven year period commonly known as the Tribulation Period. It is during this seven year time when God will judge the world and set up His millennial kingdom.

The Pre-Millennial View is depicted by the illustration below. The Millennial reign of Christ will take place right after Christ returns to this earth. After the millennium it is prophesied that God will create a new heaven and a new earth. We are told in Revelation 21:1:

(NIV) **1** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. **2** I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. **4** He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." **5** He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."



Now the millennial reign will be preceded by a seven year period prophesied in Daniel 9:27. This time has most commonly been called the "Tribulation Period." It is a name derived from scripture because the Bible does indicate that during this time there will be an intense period of trouble or tribulation. Now there is some question about how the return of Christ will fit against this seven years, but we'll address that later.

Now this seven year period we said was most commonly called the Tribulation Period, but a more accurate, scriptural name would be Daniel's 70th Week. Daniel chapter 9 records future events about a ruler who is to come – whom we know as the Antichrist. In verse 27, we are told...

Daniel 9:27 (NIV) He will confirm a covenant with many for one `seven.' In the middle of the `seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.

We will get deeper into this later. For now we see that this seven year period will precede the millennium. According to the Pre-Millennial View of things, all of these events are still in the future. We are still in a period commonly called the "church age."

In Revelation 20:1-10, we have quite a detailed description of this thousand year period. This is why many hold to a more literal interpretation of the millennium, and this is the position of this study.

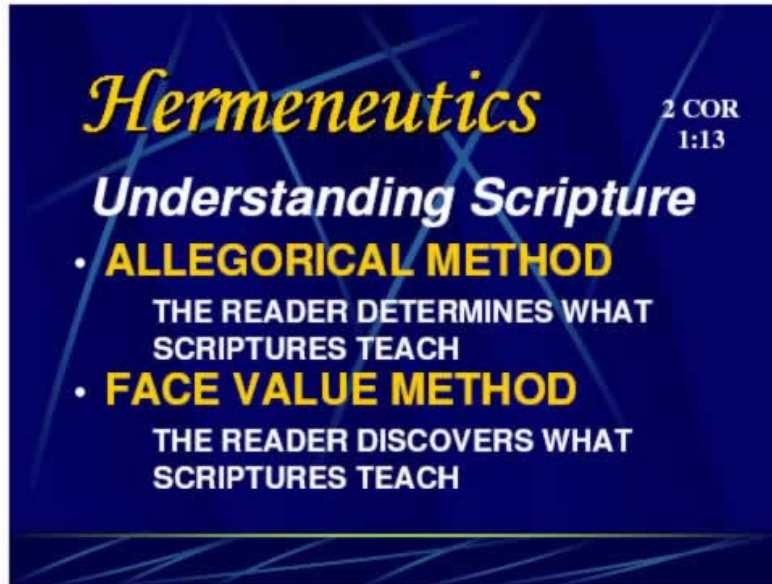
Rev 20:1-10 (NIV) And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. {2} He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a **thousand years**. {3} He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the **thousand years** were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. {4} I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a **thousand years**. {6} Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a **thousand years**. {7} When the **thousand years** are over, Satan will be released from his prison {8} and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. {9} They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. {10} And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. *(emphasis added)*

An important point to note is that these three views of the millennium not only represent a difference in viewpoint of end-time prophesy, but more importantly they reflect a difference in interpreting scripture.

There is a fancy word that means the science of interpreting scripture. It is the word “Hermeneutics” (Her-man-new-tics). It simply means “understanding scripture.” The Apostle Paul wrote...

2 Cor 1:13 (NIV) For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand...

God gave us His word so that we might understand His purposes. But how do we interpret scripture? These different views of the millennium reveal that there are two basic ways to interpret the Bible.



The first is the allegorical method. The allegorical method sees everything as a symbol of something else. Both the A-Millennial and Post-Millennial views are allegorical interpretations. They see most prophecies as symbolic. The problem with an allegorical interpretation is that ultimately the reader determines what the scripture teaches because he has to decide what each symbol means.

Opposed to the allegorical method is the “Face Value Method.” This method takes scripture at its most literal, customary meaning. Even a “face value method” recognizes that sometimes the scripture obviously is meant to be taken symbolically – especially in prophesy. But in those instances it is still a face value method in that a symbolic interpretation is clearly taught and often explained. The result is that rather than the reader making a determination of what is being taught, the reader simply discovers what the scripture teaches as it is taken in its most literal sense.