

Millennium Debate

Introduction: Clearing away the caricatures: Three things that amillennialists *do not* believe:

1. Amillennialists do not believe that certain parts of the Bible are less important, inspired, or otherwise not relevant to the question of the end-times. Amillennialists believe the Bible, all of it; even the book of Revelation!
2. Amillennialists do not necessarily believe that there is no future for ethnic Israel. Some amillennialists would say that the church has “replaced” Israel, but others would hold to a future, national salvation for ethnic Israel.
3. Amillennialists do not believe that you can just “spiritualize” or interpret prophecy however you want. One common way of explaining amillennialism is to say that amillennialists spiritualize the OT prophecies and apply them to the church. Amillennialists do not believe that it is okay to reinterpret OT prophecy. Rather, they interpret prophecy in a way that looks for the main reality behind the earthly forms, types, and shadows.

Four Main Points:

- I. The NT shows us that many of the OT institutions (such as the temple, the kingdom, and the land) were picture-prophecies intended to direct our eyes to a greater reality.

Hebrews 9:6-12: ⁶ These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, ⁷ but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. ⁸ By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing ⁹ (which is symbolic¹ for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, ¹⁰ but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation. ¹¹ But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. (see also Col 2:16–17)

John 2:19, 21: ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ... ²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body.

1 Peter 2:9: But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Revelation 1:5b-6: To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶ and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

¹ The Greek word behind “symbolic” is the word from which we get our English word “parable.”

Hebrews 11:8-16: ⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

Thought experiment: will the eschatological battles be fought with sword and bow?

II. The kingdom is not exclusively future, but is presently manifested in the church.

Matthew 16:18-19: ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (see also 18:15–20)

Colossians 1:13: He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.

III. Outside of Revelation 20, no reference is made in the NT to a thousand-year period of time between the return of Christ and the eternal state.

2 Peter 3:11-13: ¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

1 Corinthians 15:22-24: ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

IV. Revelation 20 can be explained as a description of the inter-advent period.

Revelation 6 describes the entire inter-advent period, culminating in the Great White Throne Judgment (6:12–17, esp. vv. 16–17).

Revelation 16:12–21 again takes us up to Armageddon (v. 16) and even the dissolution of creation (v. 20), but then ch. 17 returns to an earlier part in earth's history and narrates certain key events.

Revelation 19:11–21 again takes up to the final judgment. Therefore, Revelation 20 must recapitulate the interadvent period and again take us to the final judgment.

Do notice this: Revelation 20 does not connect the millennium with the OT prophecies. That is a theological deduction arising from a faulty hermeneutic.