

Get Ready, Get Set – What Next!  
Thinking Biblically about the End of This Age

**Focus #1**  
**Unscrambling the Egg: *Sorting Out the Issues at Stake***

Note: There are at least six interlocking issues that must be sorted out in order to come to grips with the issue at hand.

1. The Historical Development

Approximate Dates	Historical developments & characterizations	
Apostles - 300 Apostolic Christianity	Era of PERSECUTION; Christianity often outlawed; little centralization, but widespread commitment to believe & obey the Scriptures (including NT) Virtually universal CHILIASM in every corner of nascent Christianity <sup>1</sup> Great STRUGGLE b/w Athens (Greek thought, <i>sensus plenior</i> , neo-Platonism) & Jerusalem (Jewish thought [OT], literal hermeneutic) <sup>2</sup>	
300 – 500 Constantinian Christianity	The Roman emperor, CONSTANTINE, embraces Chy, grants Chy special status, formalizes, centralizes doctrinal discussions, imposes those decisions on "official" Church Augustine rejects chiliasm, <sup>3</sup> primarily for 2 reasons – strong anti-Jewish spirit of the day <sup>4</sup> ; monastic/ascetic impulse scandalized by physical delights of promised kingdom <sup>5</sup> –to that end, he embraces an allegorizing hermeneutic <sup>6</sup> ; embraces amillennialism; <sup>7</sup> this becomes official Roman Catholic doctrine. <sup>8</sup> Basic to RC doctrine is notion that the Kingdom = the [RC] Church	Dissenting tradition appears, grows  Consistently, anxiously, sacrificially looking for a literal Kingdom in which Jesus will reign in righteousness
500 – 1500 Middle Ages	Roman Church ever more AUTHORITATIVE; elevates <i>tradition</i> as authority equal to/superior to Scriptures A-MIL DOCTRINE central to RCC's claim to be the repository of grace & salvation; the claim – RCC has inherited (through Peter) the keys of the Kingdom <sup>9</sup> ; Much PERSECUTION of Dissenters (In broader culture) "modern" rationalistic spirit takes root; anti-church, ANTI-BIBLE SPIRIT begins to grow	
1300 – 1800 Renaissance & Reformation	European REFORMERS (Luther, Huss, Knox, Calvin, Zwingli, et al.) recover doctrine of salvation in Christ alone on the basis of grace alone by faith alone for God's glory alone (more later) as revealed in the Scriptures alone Reformers CLING to A-mil doctrine, <sup>10</sup> reject RCC = Kingdom in favor of "universal church" = kingdom, establish state churches over which <i>they</i> rule; Indebted to dissenters, but begin to persecute them COVENANT THEOLOGY develops <sup>11</sup> (many: in response to unworkable emphasis on God's "sovereignty" <sup>12</sup> )	One branch of dissenters, the Brethren, focus on study of end-times
1800 – today Modernism vs. Fundamentalism	Modernism/Rationalism/Enlightenment Spirit produces BROADSIDE ATTACK upon the possibility of supernaturalism; Bible believers respond across denominational lines FUNDAMENTALIST MOVEMENT – careful, scholarly defense of biblical doctrine, including 2 <sup>nd</sup> Coming DISPENSATIONALISM as a system develops in response to attacks upon doctrine of 2 <sup>nd</sup> coming <sup>13</sup> .	Bible believers of every group join forces in common front against Modernism

Some (fairly) undeniable conclusions:

- 1) In the earliest days of Christianity (i.e., the centuries immediately after the apostles), *chiliasm* (i.e., the persuasion that history would culminate with a 1000-yr literal reign of Jesus on the earth) *was virtually universal*.
- 2) The denial of chiliasm and the concomitant rise of amillennialism were closely related to the acceptance of Christianity in the Roman Empire as a result of the conversion of Constantine, and the subsequent rise of an official, authoritative, centralized church which had a vested interest in the notion of a present, spiritual kingdom.
- 3) Throughout the eras of church history, there have been various groups of *dissenting believers* who affirmed and cherished the hope of Christ's earthly, literal, end-time kingdom.
- 4) When the Reformers (primarily Luther and Calvin) confronted and corrected the *soteriological* heresies of the Roman Catholic Church, they did not ultimately challenge or abandon the *essential eschatology* of that Church.
- 5) Both Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism were *systematized* (i.e., the basic principles and insights were more thoroughly developed into a coherent body of ideas) rather late in the history of Christian thought. But it will not do in either case to say that the basic hermeneutical/theological construct was "invented" recently.

## 2. The Theological Divide

Out of the historical development we cursorily considered above, there has arisen a significant theological divide in the world of Bible believers today. For a survey of that divide, see the theological matrix below.

	Covenantalism (Covenant Theology or Federal Theology)	Dispensationalism
Defining Construct	<i>Unfolding of the one COVENANT OF GRACE/redemption</i> (Note: posits 3 covenants: [grace], redemption, works; <sup>14</sup> these = BASIS OF ALL OF GOD'S DEALINGS with mankind)	<i>God's design to GLORIFY Himself</i> <i>in human history, culminating in the MESSIANIC KINGDOM</i>
Prevailing Perspective on Scripture	<i>Emphasizes (virtually demands) CONTINUITY</i> (Thus Israel = church, circumcision = baptism, believer still under the Mosaic law today, etc.)	<i>Room for (comfortable with) DISCONTINUITY</i>
Hermeneutical Orientation	<i>ECLECTIC</i> Historically: literal in most places, allegorical where system demands it More recently: the New Testament (re)interprets the Old Testament	<i>CONSISTENTLY LITERAL</i> More precisely: <i>normal interpretation / authorial intent / fixed meaning</i> The New Testament is to be interpreted as consistent with the Old Testament
Soteriological Orientation	<i>REFORMED/CALVINISTIC</i>	<i>NONE</i>
Eschatological Orientation  Attitude toward Israel	<i>AMILLENNIAL</i> (almost always, though not necessarily)  <i>REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY</i> (The Church = Israel) of some sort, to some degree	<i>PREMILLENNIAL</i> (certainly & necessarily)  <i>PROPHETIC FUTURE</i> <i>REMAINS FOR NATIONAL ISRAEL</i>
Interpretation of the book of Revelation	<i>HISTORICIST</i> (Rev 4-19 = 20 centuries of church history) <sup>15</sup> Or <i>PRETERIST</i> (Rev 4-19 = events of 1 <sup>st</sup> century culminating in AD 70) <sup>16</sup>	<i>FUTURIST</i> (Rev 4-19 are entirely future/eschatological)
Consequent Tendencies	<i>Political/Social Ramification: State Church/Parish</i> <i>Ecclesiastical Ramification: Infant Baptism</i>	<i>Political/Social Ramification: Dissenting tradition, Voluntarism</i> <i>Ecclesiastical Ramification: Believer's Baptism</i>

## 3. The Hermeneutical Impasse:

**THE POINT:** The issue at stake (pre- vs. amillennialism) is most fundamentally and seminally a *hermeneutical* issue.

That is, it is first of all a question of what method/school of interpretation one brings to the Scripture. Once that issue is settled, there is no real question as to where the interpreter will emerge with reference to eschatology. Consistent literalism will certainly issue in premillennialism; in order to embrace amillennialism, some form of allegorical or spiritualizing hermeneutic will have to be employed.

On the other hand, the prevailing hermeneutical rationale among amillennialists today is the formula that the New Testament must be acknowledged as the interpretive key to the Old Testament. This emphasis is distinct in some points to that which has prevailed in the past, but in its conclusions it is virtually one with the approach basic to the amillennial position throughout its history.

## 4. The Soteriological Confusion

**THE QUESTION:** Does Reformed (i.e., Calvinistic) *soteriology* presuppose or demand amillennial *eschatology*?

**THE POINT:** To affirm a dispensational hermeneutic *is not to affirm anything* concerning one's soteriology. By the same token, to affirm Reformed (or Calvinistic) soteriology (to whatever degree, however many "points") *is not to affirm anything* concerning eschatology. To the contrary, to affirm Covenantalism *is indeed* to affirm reformed soteriology.

## 5. The Eschatological Consequence:

**THE QUESTION:** Does either Covenantalism or Dispensationalism determine one's eschatological position?

**THE POINT:** Covenant theology *predisposes* a person to amillennialism; dispensationalism *preordains* a person to premillennialism.

## 6. The Doxological Issue:

**THE QUESTION:** What lies at the heart of God's purposes in creating man and ordering human history? (That is, is human/sacred history anthropocentric or theocentric?)

**THE POINT:** Although covenant theology has historically emphasized and celebrated the centrality of God's glory in human history, there is intrinsic to that system an anthropocentric focus (the redemption of men) that tends to be given an inappropriate measure of emphasis.

Further, the dynamic of a crowning and culminating kingdom on earth, in which every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus is Lord, *to the glory of God* (Phil 2:6) – a concept profoundly central to Scripture – is entirely abandoned in favor of the notion that God's glory is thus displayed only in a world to come. At this very strategic point, amillennialism's vision of God's purposes in history is significantly deficient as to its doxological dynamic.

## GET READY, GET SET - WHAT NEXT! Thinking Biblically about the End of This Age

### Focus #2

### Bowing the Knee: *Calibrating my soul/spirit to the ultimate priority*

#### A Primary Proposition:

The grand goal and design of all that God has done, is doing and will do in human history is His own glory!

#### A Preliminary Issue: the definition of the biblical concept of glory/glorify, as used in relation to God –

1. The root word: *chabod* (כבוד)
  - literally: “heavy, weighty, possessed of gravitas”
  - therefore, the significance: “properly *weight*, but figuratively in a good sense: *splendor, honor, dignity*”
2. The implication: to the Hebrew mind, *glory* is –

The Biblical Testimony: By reason first of all of *who He is*, and again by reason of *that which He has done*, God and God alone is worthy of being honored, worshiped, magnified and obeyed – i.e., of being *glorified* – by rational creatures of His making.

#### SCRIPTURE:

**Isa 42:8** I am Jehovah, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise unto graven images.

**Isa 44:24-28** Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb; I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself: <sup>25</sup>That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; <sup>26</sup>That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof. <sup>27</sup>That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: <sup>28</sup>That saith of CYRUS, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built: and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

**Psa 104:1, 24** Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. <sup>24</sup>O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

**Rom 11:33-36** O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! <sup>34</sup>For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? <sup>35</sup>Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? <sup>36</sup>For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

**Phi 1:20** According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

**1Ti 6:14-16** That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: <sup>15</sup>Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; <sup>16</sup>Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

**Rev 4:8-11** And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. <sup>9</sup>And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, <sup>10</sup>The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, <sup>11</sup>Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

**Rev 5:11-14** And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; <sup>12</sup>Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. <sup>13</sup>And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. <sup>14</sup>And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

#### The Issue at Stake

The question that will occupy our minds today: how does the Bible's instruction regarding the end-times relate to the issue of God's determination to glorify Himself?

**GET READY, GET SET - WHAT NEXT!**  
**Thinking Biblically about the End of This Age**

Focus #3

**Wise as a Serpent/Harmless as a Dove:**

*Discerning God's Strategy in the Narrative of Scripture*

A Second Proposition:

By tracing the way God has accomplished His purposes and demonstrated His majesty in the past (i.e., in His "mighty acts" as recorded in the narrative of Scripture), we will be instructed concerning the means by which He will accomplish His end-time purposes, and by which He will most dramatically glorify Himself in that culminating drama.

Three remarkable and instructive episodes in God's dealings with His people in the Old Testament:

EPISODE #1: God rescues His people from slavery – the story of Moses and Pharaoh

THE LESSON: God knows how to use the hardness of men to demonstrate His glory.

EPISODE #2: God rescues His name from dis-reverence – the story of Daniel & Nebuchadnezzar

THE LESSON: God knows how to use the most awful tragedy & despair to demonstrate His glory.

EPISODE #3: God rescues His house from ruin – the story of the return from Exile in Babylon

THE LESSON: God knows how to work providentially – through secondary causes, or "behind the scenes" – to demonstrate His glory.

**GET READY, GET SET - WHAT NEXT!**  
**Thinking Biblically about the End of This Age**

**Focus #4**

**Raising an Ebenezer: *Seeing Tomorrow in the Bright Light of Yesterday***

Introduction: What does it mean to "raise an Ebenezer"?

The Lessons Learned:

LESSON#1: God knows how to use the hardness of men to demonstrate His glory.

The eschatological application: Romans 9:14-29

LESSON #2: God knows how to use the most awful tragedy & despair to demonstrate His glory.

The eschatological application: Deut 32:36; Lev 26:37; Zech 13:7-9; 14:1-9

LESSON #3: God knows how to work providentially – through secondary causes, or “behind the scenes” – to demonstrate His glory.

The eschatological application: Romans 11: 17-36

By Way of Contrast:

That which is squandered by AMMILLENNIALISM	That which is celebrated by PREMILLENNIALISM
The Scripture is robbed of its authority	The authority of Scripture is honored and acknowledged in all of its parts.
The believer is robbed of his assurance	The believer is assured of the reality that “the gifts and callings of God are without repentance” (Rom 11:29).
God is robbed of (the culminating and universal demonstration of) His glory	In spite of the wickedness and machinations of fallen men, God in His wisdom and for His purposes, without compromising the moral accountability of men, moves human history inexorably toward that day when “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Hab 2:14), when “the kingdoms of this world [shall] become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ” (Rev 11:15), and when “every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:10).

<sup>1</sup>Ebrard, in Herzog's *Real Encyc.*, 10:579-- "The apostolic tradition (so say Hase and others correctly) was so decided, that Chiliasm was the ruling belief in the first three centuries of the church" (cited in Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, 1:449). Peters (1:449) states, "[T]he statements of the Fathers, the concessions of Neander, Mosheim and a host of others, and, in brief, all that we have on record of that period, conclusively proves that the doctrine held, both in Jewish and Gentile regions, was at first (during the First, Second and greater part of the Third, Century) that which we have defended [i.e., chiliasm].... The early Church in its entire range was *Chiliasmic*, and eagerly looked, longed, and prayed for the *expected Kingdom still future*. Enemies and friends, historians and theologians, frankly acknowledge this *distinguishing characteristic* of that period" (italics his). Horatio Bonar, in his *Prophetic Landmarks* (1847), insists that "the conclusion to which all inquirers upon this subject have come, in reference to the early history of the doctrine, is that *during the first three centuries it prevailed universally*, its only opponents being the Gnostics. This is now an acknowledged historical fact..." (found at [http://sgbcva.org/docs/bonar-premi\\_preface.pdf](http://sgbcva.org/docs/bonar-premi_preface.pdf), p 5; on 2/22/07). O. T. Allis, strong opponent of premillennialism and apologist for amillennialism, acknowledges: "[Premillennialism] was extensively held in the Early Church, how extensively is not definitely known. But the stress which many of its advocates placed on earthly rewards and carnal delights aroused widespread opposition to it; it was largely replaced by the 'spiritual' view of Augustine" (*Prophecy and the Church*, 238). Whitby, usually regarded as the originator of postmillennialism, says, "The doctrine of the Millennium, or the reign of saints on earth for a thousand years, is now rejected by all Roman Catholics and by the greatest part of Protestants; and yet it passed among the best Christians, for two hundred and fifty years, for a tradition apostolical; and as such, is delivered by many fathers of the second and third century, who speak of it as the tradition of our Lord and His apostles, and of all the ancients who lived before them; who tell us the very words in which it was delivered, the Scriptures which were then so interpreted; and say that it was held by all Christians that were exactly orthodox" (cited in Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, 7). Church historian Philip Schaff: "The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment. It was indeed not the doctrine of the church embodied in any creed or form of devotion, but a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers" (2:614). Peters insists that "on the other side, not a single writer can be presented, not even a single name can be mentioned of any one cited, who opposed chiliasm in [the 2<sup>nd</sup>] century . . . here are two centuries in which positively no direct opposition whatever arises" (1:495). To be sure, many deny the significance of this, arguing that the "chiliasm" of the early church was far from the "premillennialism" of modern Dispensationalism. But the fact that the eschatology of the ante-Nicene church was ill developed does not mitigate the force of this reality -- that those closest to the Lord and His apostles believed, on the basis of their teaching, that history would culminate with a thousand year kingdom in which Jesus would reign on earth with His saints.

<sup>2</sup>The greatest struggle within the post-apostolic Christian community was the issue of literal/normal hermeneutics vs. the allegorizing method. This latter approach was learned from the Greeks (thus the famous question of Christian apologist, Tertullian [155-230], "What hath Athens to do with Jerusalem?"), and it was championed in the Christian world primarily by thinkers arising from the very Greek North African city, Alexandria. In the writings of Clement of Alexandria (to be distinguished from Clement of Rome, who lived a century earlier) who briefly led the Alexandrian school at the turn of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century (200-02), "the influence of Greek philosophy is prominent... He seeks to synthesize Christianity and Greek philosophy..." (Howard Vos, *Highlights of Church History*, 18, 19). He is described as "combining the best of ancient philosophy with the Gospel" (Barker, *Who's Who in Church History*, 72). Far more influential was Clement's successor Origen, who led the Alexandrian school from 202 - 232. Vos states: "He brought to scientific formulation the allegorical interpretation of Scripture. The germs of this approach may be seen in Philo of Alexandria, a [Jewish] contemporary of Christ who sought to find a reconciliation between Greek Philosophy and Jewish thought by searching for hidden meanings in the Old Testament. Christian writers after him had employed the Allegorical method, but Origen receives the credit for the full development of the approach. Simply described, it holds that the literal meaning of Scripture conceals a deeper meaning available only to the mature believer. The hidden meaning which he found sometimes bore little or no relationship to the literal. This concealing of truth by God under the guise of commonly understood words was designed to prevent pearls from being cast before swine" (18). Origen was heretical in many particulars (pre-existence of the human soul; the ransom of the cross was paid to Satan; ultimate universal salvation for all humans and spirits), but he was a prolific author (the books he authored -- almost of them highly allegorical -- numbered in the thousands), and primarily for that reason his influence upon the nascent Christian world was enormous. "A superb teacher, he had a profound influence upon his students. From them and through his writings issued currents which were to help mould Christian thought for generations... Believing the Scriptures to be the word of God, he held that nothing in them was to be believed which is unworthy of God. He saw in the Scriptures three levels of meaning: first, the common or historical sense which is on the surface for even the simple-minded; second, the soul of the Scriptures which edifies those who perceive it; and third, for the perfect, a meaning hidden under what superficially is repugnant to the conscience of the intellect but which, discerned, can be expressed by allegory. The allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures was by no means new, but Origen gave it a fresh impetus" (Kenneth Scott Latourette, *History of Christianity*, 149). Charles Feinberg (*Premillennialism or Amillennialism*, 51): "...it can be shown that the reason the early Church was premillennial was traceable to its interpretation of the Word in a literal manner, whereas the cause of the departure from this view in later centuries of the history of the Church is directly attributable to a change in method of interpretation beginning with Origen in particular."

Note: a hermeneutic that in some way abandons consistent literalism is necessary to come to an Amillennial conclusion. Regarding the promises of the OT, amillennialist apologist O. T. Allis admits, "The Old Testament prophecies if literally interpreted cannot be regarded as having been yet fulfilled or as being capable of fulfillment in this present age" (*Prophecy and the Church*, 238). Amillennialist Floyd Hamilton (*The Basis of Millennial Faith*, 38, 39): "Now we must frankly admit that a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies gives us just such a picture of an earthly reign of the Messiah as the premillennialists picture."

<sup>3</sup>"Augustine, who had himself formerly entertained chiliasmic hopes, framed the new theory [i.e., amillennialism] which reflected the social change [i.e., acceptance & endorsement of Christianity by Roman government], and was generally accepted. The apocalyptic millennium he understood to be the present reign of Christ in the Catholic Church, and the first resurrection, the translation of the martyrs and saints to heaven, where they participate in Christ's reign..." (Schaff, *History*, 2:484). "From the time of Constantine and Augustine chiliasm took its place among the heresies, and was rejected subsequently even by the Protestant reformers as a Jewish dream" (Schaff, *History*, 2:484). "[Augustine] can be credited with the final shattering of the premillennial system of the ante-Nicene church, and his views on eschatology became the accepted view until the Reformation, and in some respects even after that great event" (Earle Cairns, *BibSac*, Apr 1958, 142).

<sup>4</sup>Origen re: the Jews: "And we say with confidence that they will never be restored to their former condition. For they committed a crime of the most unhallowed kind, in conspiring against the Savior of the human race in that city where they offered up to God a worship containing the symbols of mighty mysteries. It accordingly behoved that city where Jesus underwent these sufferings to perish utterly, and the Jewish nation to be overthrown, and the invitation to happiness offered them by God to pass to others -- the Christians..." (*De Principiis*, 4:22). "From the time of Constantine and Augustine chiliasm took its place among the heresies, and was rejected subsequently even by the Protestant reformers as a Jewish dream" (Schaff, *History*, 2:484). Compare from a later era, Luther's Augsburg Confession (1530): "They condemn also others who are now spreading certain Jewish opinions, that before the resurrection of the dead the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world, the ungodly being everywhere suppressed" (Art XVII).

<sup>5</sup>Augustine, in explaining why he abandoned chiliasm, says of Rev 20:1-6: "Those who, because of this passage in this book, have suspected that the first resurrection is future and bodily [as opposed to the new birth, which is how most amillennialists take the first resurrection of Rev 20:4-6], have been influenced, especially, among other things, by the number of a thousand years, to suppose that it were fitting that among the saints there should be during that time a kind of sabbatism, a holy vacation as it were after the labors of the six thousand years since man was created. .... This opinion would be somewhat tolerable, if the delights of that Sabbath to be enjoyed by the saints were through the presence of the Lord, of a spiritual kind. For we too were at one time of this opinion" (*City of God*, 20:7). He goes on, "But, as they assert that those who then rise again shall enjoy the leisure of immoderate carnal banquets, furnished with an amount of meat and drink such as not only to shock the feeling of the temperate, but even to surpass the measure of credulity itself, such assertions can be believed only by the carnal. They who do believe them are called by the spiritual Chiliasm, which we may literally reproduce by the name Millenarians" (*City of God*, 20:7).

<sup>6</sup>George Eldon Ladd [*Crucial Questions About The Kingdom of God*, p.24] says of Augustine: "Another type of interpretation was introduced by Augustine. This great theologian at first espoused the natural interpretation of Revelation 20 concerning the Kingdom of God as a future literal reign of Christ with His saints on earth (De Principiis, II, xi, pp.2-3). However, Augustine reacted against the gross sensual interpretation of contemporary Chiliasm, and in the course of working out his concept of the City of God, he came to identify the Church and the Kingdom of God and to explain the Millennium in Revelation 20 as representing Christian experience when Christ raises the believing soul from a state of spiritual death to share His spiritual life and so to reign with Him. Augustine, not John was the father of Amillennialism." Allis [*Prophecy and the Church*, 2, 3]: Augustine "taught that the Millennium is to be interpreted spiritually as fulfilled in the Christian Church. He held that the binding of Satan took place during the earthly ministry of our Lord (Luke 10:18); that the first resurrection is the new birth of the believer (John 5:25), and that the Millennium must correspond, therefore, to the interadvental period or church age. This involved the interpreting of Rev. 20:1-6 as a 'recapitulation' of the preceding chapters..."

<sup>7</sup>Five basic tenets of amillennialism as developed in Reformed thought: 1) the kingdom is in existence now between Christ's two advents. Since Christ is ruling now from heaven, He will not reign on the earth for 1,000 years. Whatever millennium there will be is occurring now. 2) The kingdom is either the church on earth (the view of Augustine and others) or the saints in heaven (the view of Benjamin Warfield and others). There will be no future reign of Christ on the earth, and 1,000 is a symbolic number designating a long period of time. 3) The promises to Israel about a land, a nation, and a throne are being fulfilled now in a spiritual way among believers in the church. 4) God's promises to Israel were conditional and have been transferred to the church because the nation did not meet the condition of obedience to God.

5) Christ is ruling now in heaven where He is seated on the throne of David, Satan is now bound between Christ's two advents. [Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 231]

<sup>8</sup>From a Catholic apologist web-site ([www.catholic.com/library/Rapture.asp](http://www.catholic.com/library/Rapture.asp)): "As far as the millennium goes, we tend to agree with Augustine and, derivatively, with the amillennialists. The Catholic position has thus historically been 'amillennial' (as has been the majority Christian position in general, including that of the Protestant Reformers), though Catholics do not typically use this term. The Church has rejected the premillennial position, sometimes called 'millenarianism'. In the 1940s the Holy Office judged that premillennialism 'cannot safely be taught,' though the Church has not dogmatically defined this issue." *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 676:

"The Antichrist's deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realize within history that messianic hope which can only be realized beyond history through the eschatological judgment. The Church has rejected even modified forms of this falsification of the kingdom to come under the name of millenarianism" (emphasis added).

<sup>9</sup>This traditional persuasion of the Roman Catholic Church was modified somewhat by Vatican II (1962 - 65), as a result of which "the traditional identification of the kingdom of God with the church, into which everyone must therefore be brought or salvation will elude them, is replaced by an understanding of the church as the sign and instrument by which God calls and moves the world toward his kingdom" (<http://mb-soft.com/believers/catholic.html>).

<sup>10</sup>Kim Riddlebarger, "A Present or Future Millennium?" ([http://www.the-highway.com/millennium\\_Riddlebarger.html](http://www.the-highway.com/millennium_Riddlebarger.html)) states that "all of the Protestant Reformers and the entire Reformed and Lutheran traditions are amillennial." Michael Vlach (<http://www.theologicalstudies.citymax.com/amillennialism.html>): Augustine abandoned Premillennialism because of what he considered to be the excesses and carnalities of this view. . . Augustine's Amillennialism quickly became the accepted view of the church. It became so accepted that the Council of Ephesus (431) condemned the premillennial view as superstitious. Amillennialism soon became the prevailing doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church and was later adopted by most of the Protestant Reformers including Martin Luther and John Calvin (some Anabaptists held to Premillennialism)."

<sup>11</sup>Cornelius Van Til (covenant theologian): "the idea of covenant theology has only in modern times been broadly conceived" ("Covenant Theology," in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Encyclopedia, 1:306). Louis Berkhof (covenant theologian): "in the early Church Fathers the covenant idea is not found at all" (*Systematic Theology*, 1941, 211). Charles Ryrie (dispensationalist, critic of covenant theology): "[Covenant theology] was not the expressed doctrine of the early church. It was never taught by church leaders in the Middle Ages. It was not even mentioned by the primary leaders of the Reformation. Indeed, covenant theology as a system is only a little older than dispensationalism. That does not mean it is not biblical, but it does dispel the notion that covenant theology has been throughout all church history the ancient guardian of the truth that is only recently being sniped at by dispensationalism. Covenant theology does not appear in the writings of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, or Melancthon ... There were no references to covenant theology in any of the great confessions of faith until the Westminster Confession in 1647, and even then covenant theology was not as fully developed as it was later by Reformed theologians. The covenant (or federal) theory arose sporadically and apparently independently late in the sixteenth century" (*Dispensationalism*, Revised and Expanded, 1995, 185).

<sup>12</sup>Miller and Johnson (*Puritans*, 1963, 1:58): to the Puritan "Covenant Theology" describes how "after the fall of man, God voluntarily condescended...to draw up a covenant or contract with His creature in which He laid down the terms and conditions of salvation, and pledged Himself to abide by them."

<sup>13</sup>Ryrie traces the basic ideas of Dispensationalism to early Christianity, but acknowledges that "there is no question that the Plymouth Brethren, of which John Nelson Darby was a leader, had much to do with the systematizing and promoting of dispensationalism" (*Dispensationalism Today*, 74).

<sup>14</sup>Ryrie's definition/characterization: "Covenant theology is a system of theology based on the two covenants of works and grace as governing categories for the understanding of the entire Bible. In covenant theology the covenant of works is said to be an agreement between God and Adam promising life to Adam for perfect obedience and including death as the penalty for failure. But Adam sinned and thus mankind failed to meet the requirements of the covenant of works. Therefore, a second covenant, the covenant of grace, was brought into operation. Louis Berkhof defines it as 'that gracious agreement between the offended God and the offending but elect sinner, in which God promises salvation through faith in Christ, and the sinner accepts this believingly, promising a life of faith and obedience.' Some Reformed theologians have introduced a third covenant, the covenant of redemption. It was made in eternity past and became the basis for the covenant of grace, just described, between God and the elect. This covenant of redemption is supposed to be 'the agreement between the Father, giving the Son as Head and Redeemer of the elect, and the Son, voluntarily taking the place of those whom the Father had given him.' These two or three covenants become the core and bases of operation for covenant theology in its interpretation of the Scriptures" (*Dispensationalism*, 1995, 183-84). Chas. Hodge acknowledged that these covenants are only inferred in the Scripture; he said of the "Edenic" covenant (i.e., covenant of works) that it "does not rest upon any express declaration of the Scriptures. . . Although the word covenant is not used in Genesis [i.e., Gen 2 & 3], and does not elsewhere, in any clear passage, occur in reference to the transaction thereof recorded, yet inasmuch as the plan of salvation is constantly represented as a New Covenant, new, not merely in antithesis to that made at Sinai, but new in reference to all legal covenants whatever, it is plain that the Bible does represent the arrangement made with Adam as a truly federal transaction" (*Theology*, 2:115).

<sup>15</sup>For instance, A. Hoekema ["Amillennialism" in *The Meaning of the Millennium*, 156-57], following Augustine's concept of "recapitulations" in Revelation, sees seven recapitulations: Rev 1-3 Principles, commendations, and warnings that have value for the Church of all time; Rev. 4-7 The Church suffering trial and persecution against the background of the victory of Christ; Rev. 8-11 The Church avenged, protected, and victorious; Rev. 12-14 The continued opposition of the dragon, Satan, to the Church; Rev. 15-16 The final visitation of God's wrath on those who remain impenitent; Rev. 17-19 The fall of Babylon, which stands for the forces of secularism and godlessness which are in opposition to the Church; Rev. 20-22 The doom of the dragon and the complete overthrow of the Church's enemies.

<sup>16</sup>This method of interpretation regards the book of Revelation as applying specifically to the problems and persecutions of the early church existing at the time of its writing. The symbolic expressions in the book represent devices to encourage the church through its suffering under the Roman Empire, and to prevent the book from being understood by those who are not believers. Nero for example is seen as Antichrist. The Preterist views Revelation's date of writing prior to A.D. 70, when the Jewish Temple was destroyed. The abomination of desolation and the destruction of Jerusalem referred to by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse, Matthew 24:15 are mostly fulfilled in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. Preterism views the Church as the "New Israel" and thereby fulfilling verses applied to Israel in scripture. Moderate Preterists need to be distinguished from Hyper-Preterist. Hyper-Preterists believe The Second Coming and the Rapture were fulfilled by A.D. 70. This view, considered heretical even by Preterists, denies the physical return of Christ. (Found at [www.truthnet.org/Christianity/revelation/Introduction](http://www.truthnet.org/Christianity/revelation/Introduction).)

A Biblical History of Time  
All on one page!

