

What Does Premillennial Mean?

by Tony Warren

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hat does Premillennial mean? The term identifies Christians who believe that the thousand year reign spoken of in Revelation chapter 20 is a reign of Christ that takes place physically upon the earth. The word millennium is from two Latin words. [*mille*], which means thousand, and [*annum*], which means years. The word pre means "before," thus Premillennial literally means "before the millennium" or before the thousand years.

It can be briefly described as the belief that Christ returns bodily pre or before the thousand years that is spoken of in Revelation chapter 20, and that He will reign in a physical kingdom on earth established in the nation of Israel. It is generally believed that He will set up His rule from the holy city Jerusalem. Those who hold to this eschatology believe that Christ will return and lift the curse in order to bring in righteousness.

Generally (*though not always*), Premillennialists believe in two separate and usually unequal salvation programs. One for the Jewish people of Israel, and one for everyone else (*Gentiles*). They hold that a redeemed nation of Israel will be the center of government and of the spreading of the gospel to the nations of the world. This doctrine teaches that all nations will ultimately come to worship at Mount Zion, and as evidence they point to Scriptures such as are found in Zechariah:

Zechariah 14:16-17

- "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.
- And it shall be that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, even upon them shall be no rain."

Premillennialists believe that at the end of this reign of Christ on earth, an imprisoned Satan will be loosed to lead a worldwide rebellion before the ultimate victory by Christ and His saints. The weakness in this position is that it undermines the work of the church for 2000 years, devalues the Jews who are saved prior to this period, and

negates God's word that there is neither Jew nor Gentile as all are one in Christ.

There are many variations of this doctrine, such as pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation and post-tribulation rapturists. There are also the Chiliasts or so-called Historical Premillennialists and Dispensational Premillennialists. Dispensational Premillennialism is relatively new, and they place the rapture not at the second coming but at the beginning of the seven-year tribulation.

There is a general consensus among Premillennialists that they are "uniquely" those who take Scripture literally, while the others' tend to spiritualize. However, this is actually not true as all Christians spiritualize passages. The only real difference between the eschatologies is in "where" and upon what basis Christians spiritualize. The use of the Scriptures in the Old Testament that speak of literal kings and earthly reigns are often used in support of Premillennialism as illustrating that Christ must also reign literally or physically as an earthly king from the land of Jerusalem. There are some forms of Premillennialism that make a distinction between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of heaven.

The primary difference between Amillennialist, Postmillennialist and Preterist on one hand, and the Premillennarian on the other, is that Premillennarians believe that the reign of Christ is in His literally coming back to earth to reign physically in the middle east, while the other eschatologies believe Christ already established His kingdom Spiritually, and is set down at the right hand of the father, reigning from heaven.

Peace,

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