

## Amillennial View Defined

Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, 1930; *Biblical Theology*, 1948; Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, 1945; Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, ET 1962; Paul, *An Outline of His Theology*, ET 1975 (cf. premillennialist George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 1974); Jay Adams, *The Time Is at Hand*, 1966; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Interpreting Prophecy*, 1976; Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 1979

See above, ch. 2, section “Classic Amillennial System,” for the view of amillennialism regarding the relation of Israel and the church.

1) OT covenants and promises

The promises made in the OT to Israel do not find their fulfillment in a future 1000-year millennium. They fall into one of the following categories:

a) Conditional, thus not to be fulfilled

b) Already literally fulfilled, at least partially; e.g., Josh 23:14; 2 Chr 9:26; Neh 9:8

c) Fulfilled spiritually during the present age of the church. Fulfilled either in the church itself (John 3:3-6; Luke 17:20-21), or in the intermediate state during this time (Rev 20:4-6).

13.2

d) To be fulfilled in the future, but in the eternal state, after the general resurrection, not in a future 1000-year millennium.

While Amillennialists disagree among themselves in assigning the various promises to the various categories, they agree that none of them refers to a future literal kingdom on the earth prior to the resurrection of the unjust.

2) General resurrection

Amillennialism requires a single resurrection of both the just and the unjust, without any significant time delay between them. There are not two resurrections separated by a thousand years. In this aspect amillennialists agree with postmillennialists.

3) Definition of the millennium

The thousand years spoken of in Rev 20 (Lat. “millennium”) is already present; it will not be a separate, future time period. Thus the term “amillennial,” using the “alpha-privative”; cf. agnostic, amoral, etc. No-Literal Physical Millennial.

### ***NT interpretation of OT***

The NT interprets several OT “physical” prophecies in a spiritual sense, and applies them to the church age. These are the primary examples:

Luke 4:17-19. Jesus quoting Isa 61:1-2. Jesus quotes this messianic section, with its prophecies of glory, and says that this prophecy is fulfilled in his first coming, v. 21.

Acts 2:16-21. Peter quoting Joel 2:28-31. Peter quotes a prophetic section dealing with the last days, and applies it to the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Acts 15:15-18. James the brother of Jesus quoting Amos 9:11-12. James quotes a prophecy about the restoration of the Davidic monarchy, and applies it to church problems of his day, even changing the wording of the Hebrew (in line with the LXX) to make it more “spiritual.”

Rom 9:25-26. Paul quoting Hos 1:10 and 2:23. Paul uses passages concerning the restoration of Israel to describe the conversion of the Gentiles in the church.

Heb 8:8-12. The author of Hebrews quoting Jer 31:31-34. The author of Hebrews applies the eschatological promises of the new covenant to the church age, and says that the new covenant has already replaced the old covenant.

This particular argument has been granted even by many premillennialists; see the commentaries, and cf. Ladd in *The Meaning of the Millennium*, pp. 19-27.

## **Arguments used for Amillennialism**

### ***Spiritual vs. physical***

Spiritual realities are more important than physical realities, 2 Corinthians 4:18, etc. Compare the spiritual nature of the promised kingdom, Luke 17:20-21; John 18:36-37.

Luke 17:20-21, “Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, “Here it is,” or “There it is,” because the kingdom of God is within you.’”

John 18:36-37, “Jesus said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.’”

“‘You are a king, then!’ said Pilate.

“Jesus answered, ‘You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.’” 13.3

### ***The church as spiritual Israel***

OT promises to Israel are in the NT applied to the church, which is spiritual Israel. See Rom 9:6; 11:26 (cf. Gal 3:7-29); Gal 6:16. In the same way the temple, sacrifices, and Aaronic priesthood find their spiritual counterparts in the church (“temple”—1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21; “sacrifice”—Rom 12:1; Phil 2:17; 4:18; Heb 13:15-16; 1 Pet 2:5; “priesthood”—1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

### ***A general resurrection***

Scripture teaches a general resurrection, not two resurrections as the premillennialists believe.

Especially note Dan 12:2; Matt 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15. On the other hand, Rev 20 is highly figurative, and the word “lived” can refer to the intermediate state only. 13.4

### ***Literal Millennialism as unhealthy***

1) It exalts carnal pleasures over spiritual holiness; cf. the statement of Papias:

“The days will come in which vines shall grow, having each ten thousand branches, and in each branch ten thousand twigs, and in each true twig ten thousand shoots, and in every one of the shoots ten thousand clusters, and in every one of the clusters ten thousand grapes; and every grape when pressed will give twenty-five metretes (i.e., two hundred and twenty-five English gallons). And when any one of the saints shall lay bold of a cluster, another shall cry out, ‘I am a better cluster: take me. Bless the Lord through me.’ In like manner he said that a grain of wheat would produce ten thousand ears, and that every ear would have ten thousand grains, and every grain would yield ten pounds of clear, pure, fine flour; and that apples and seeds and grass would produce in similar proportions; and that all animals, feeding then only on the productions of the earth, would become peaceable and harmonious, and be in perfect subjection to man.” (quoted by Irenæus, *Against Heresies*, 5:33:3; this passage is also referred to by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, 3:39)

2) It mixes glorified saints with unglorified sinful people in a supposed glorious kingdom.

3) It exalts Judaism over universal Christianity; cf. Gal 3:28. In the flow of progress to universalism, the millennium would be a regress.

4) It leads to pessimism; Christ is seen as not now reigning and conquering his enemies.

5) It leads to dispensationalism and the fragmenting of Scripture, depriving the church and Christians of many blessed texts and promises.

6) It places emphasis more on the future and eschatology than on the present and holiness.

### ***Amillennial heritage***

Amillennialism has an honorable history of exegetes and theologians:

Origen

Augustine

The whole church after Augustine through the Middle Ages 13.5

Luther and the Lutherans

Calvin and most Reformed Churches (e.g., Abraham Kuyper).

Anthony Hoekema, etc.

