

EZEKIEL'S TEMPLE & GEOGRAPHY . . . THE MILLENNIUM

Introduction

- A story goes that a person was once asked during an ordination exam, “*What view of the Millennium do you hold? Are you postmillennial, amillennial, or premillennial?*” The answer came back immediately, “*I'm none of those.*” The examination committee thought they had covered all the bases, so they asked the question “*Well then, what view do you hold?*” The ordination candidate answered, “*I'm a panmillennialist, because I believe it will all pan out in the end.*” This answer, which is rather tongue-in-cheek, contains a kernel of truth in it that we must all understand and grasp: Despite what we think, what we have learned, what we have heard about the end times and about the Millennium specifically, may be wrong and we need to let the Bible and the Spirit of God speak to our hearts as we think through God’s plan for the ages and what the Bible says and means. All the three positions that were presented by the ordination committee are held by Evangelical believers who have trusted in Jesus as their Savior. If someone has a view that is different than ours does not make them a liberal or heretic, but simply a believer seeking to understand God and His Word. My journey in this area has taken twists and turns over the years and what I believed about some of these positions has changed over time. It is with a humble attitude that we go through this lesson on the Millennium today.
- Two passages must be kept in mind: **Rom. 11:33** *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!*
- **Isa. 55:8-9** *For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,*” declares the Lord. *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.*
- God is infinite in His wisdom and knowledge. His ways are higher than our ways. We cannot understand everything about God and His reasons for what He does, but He asks us to trust in Him and to believe what He says. He does not always tell us why something happens or why He chose to do things a specific way, but we are not to be shaken in our faith of Him and His love, grace, mercy, and holiness. We can trust God and how He is working in our lives and in the lives of those around us, and throughout the whole world.
- **Lesson**
- Today’s outline is based upon answering a number of questions: (1) What is the Millennium? (2) What is the purpose of the Millennium? (3) Who is going to be alive during the Millennium? (4) Why is there a temple in the Millennium? (5) What are the characteristics of the Millennium?
- **Point 1:** What is the Millennium?
- **Rev. 20:1-8** *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time...When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations...*
- The recurring theme of these verses is the concept of “thousand years”. The term “millennium” means “one thousand years,” which is from Latin. The Greek word for a thousand years is “chilia” and a belief in a Millennium is sometimes referred to as Chiliasm.
- (a) Amillennialism

- A person who believes in amillennialism does not believe in a literal 1000-year period of time. Satan's influence over the nations has been greatly reduced so that the gospel can be proclaimed to the whole world. Christ's reign in the Millennium is not a physical reign on earth, but a heavenly spiritual reign instead.
- Let's go back to Daniel and present a summary of what the angel told him in **Dan. 9:24-27** *Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city...that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks...Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary...And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate...*
- From the announcement to rebuild the temple in **March 14, 445 BC** until Messiah is cut off is 63 weeks x 7 years/week = 483 years of 360 days/year, or **April 6, 32 AD**, the very day that Jesus entered Jerusalem and was accepted by the people as King and Messiah. One week later He was cut off, He was rejected by the people, and died on a cross for our sins. Since that time we are living in the Church Age. The remaining 7 years are the Tribulation that we will study in detail after the Christmas break when we go through the book of Revelation. The amillennial position can be illustrated by the following [\[CLICK\]](#). There is no Millennium in this belief. The Church Age will come to an end when Jesus returns, believers are resurrected, unbelievers are judged, a new heaven and earth will be created and then the Eternal State is entered. They see the expression "1000 years" as simply a figure of speech. In fact, most of the book of Revelation is not understood as literal but figurative and is just an indication what the Church Age is like.
- (b) Postmillennialism
- Postmillennialism is the belief that Jesus will return "after" the Millennium. This position believes in a literal Millennium, but the number of years is not 1000 years, in fact the number of years is indeterminable. This can be illustrated by the following [\[CLICK\]](#). They believe the Millennium is associated with the Church Age and that the progress and growth of the church will gradually increase, so that a larger and larger proportion of the world's population will be Christian. Society will get better and better as Christians influence the world and then Jesus returns.
- (c) Premillennialism
- Premillennialism is the belief that Jesus will come back before the Millennium. The Church Age started after the ascension to heaven by Jesus and continues as it states in **Acts 1:9-11** *And after Jesus had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.*
- Jesus will return as He left. There are two versions of premillennialism: Classic or Historic Premillennialism which believes in only one return of Jesus and is sometimes called Posttribulation Premillennialism and is illustrated by the following [\[CLICK\]](#). There is a Church Age, Tribulation, return of Jesus, Millennium, and finally the Eternal State.
- The second version is sometimes called Pretribulation Premillennialism and is illustrated by the following [\[CLICK\]](#). There is first the Church Age, Rapture (a secret return by Jesus for the church), Tribulation, return of Jesus, Millennium, and finally the Eternal State.
- When were these four views developed? George Ladd in his book **The Blessed Hope** presents a very detailed discussion of this. Here is his summary:

- (1) Historic/Classical Premillennialism. The early church and church fathers all believed in a literal return of Jesus, a literal Millennium, and a literal Tribulation. The church and Israel will both be persecuted by the Antichrist which culminates with the return of Jesus to the earth at the end of the Tribulation.
- (2) Amillennialism. Started by Origen (A.D. 185-254) and popularized by Augustine (A.D. 296-372) became the doctrine of the church until the reformation. The reformers reinterpreted the Scripture and held that the antichrist was the Pope, but otherwise they were still amillennialists.
- (3) Postmillennialism. Daniel Whitby in 1706, in rejection of the amillennialism of the reformers, desired a more literal interpretation of Revelation and developed what we now call postmillennialism which generally interpreted the 1260 days of the Tribulation to be 1260 years.
- (4) Pretribulational Millennialism. This was birthed within the Plymouth Brethren. Lady Powerscourt had meetings starting in 1827 and discussed the revival of prophetic truth. There were two positions discussed: (1) The return to Historic/Classical Premillennialism and (2) the Pretribulational Millennialism which believes a rapture of the Church before the Tribulation starts.
- I find the figurative interpretation of Revelation and prophecies in the Old Testament do not fit the historical, grammatical, and literary method of interpretation of the Bible as presented by amillennialism. For the same reason, I don't believe in the postmillennial interpretation that places the Tribulation during the time of the early church, the Millennium during the Church Age, which has been much longer than 1000 years. Because of this, the premillennial interpretation seems the best to me. I believe in a literal 1000-year Millennium that will occur after the seven year Tribulation and the return of Jesus.
- **Point 2:** What is the purpose of the Millennium?
 - This is a more difficult question for the purpose is not clearly defined in Scripture. I offer the following:
 - (1) It is part of God's sovereign plan.
 - **2 Sam. 7:12-13** *When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.*
 - It is part of God's plan that one of David's descendants, specifically Jesus, is going to rule His kingdom forever.
 - **Luke 1:31-33** *And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.*
 - This is a prophecy to Mary that her son Jesus will be given the throne of His father David and He will have an everlasting kingdom.
 - (2) It will be the time when Israel turns back to God.
 - **Rom. 11:25-26** *For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved.*
 - There is a future for Israel. After the time of the Gentiles has ended, all Israel will be saved. Israel had rejected their Messiah. During the time of the Millennium a large portion of Israel will be saved.
 - (3) It will show us the kingdoms of the world will be ruled by the Messiah.

- **1 Cor. 15:25** *For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.*
- The Bible tells us that Christ will have dominion over all people – believers and unbelievers and this is only shown specifically during the Millennium. The glory and power of Christ's reign will be shown to the whole world.
- (4) It will show that rebellion against God is not caused by an evil society or demonic influence.
- **Rev. 20:1,7-8** *And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years... When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations.*
- There are those that believe the only reason they do not turn to Jesus is their family, or country, or society, or even the old line from Flip Wilson “*The devil made me do it.*” The Millennium shows beyond a shadow of doubt that man makes his own choice not to follow God because he is a sinner. Even with universal peace, a perfect society, Jesus reigning Himself, and Satan locked in an abyss, people with their sin nature will still rebel against God.
- **Point 3:** Who is going to be alive during the Millennium?
- **Rev. 20:4-5** *And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.*
- (1) Jesus in His resurrected body
- **Rev. 19:11, 16** *And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war... And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”*
- (2) Those part of the first resurrection: It includes those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus, all those believers and Old Testament saints who had died, and those believers who were alive when Jesus returned. All of these will receive their spiritual resurrected body.
- **1 Th. 4:16-17** *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.*
- (3) The living unbelievers that were not killed during the Tribulation.
- Not all will be killed during the Tribulation. Over half the population of the earth will lose their lives, but some will remain until the end and they will populate the world. This includes both unbelieving Jews and Gentiles.
- (4) The unrighteous dead are NOT included
- As it says, the unrighteous dead are not resurrected until after the Millennium is over, only the righteous were part of the first resurrection.
- **Point 4:** Why is there going to be a temple in the Millennium?
- **Heb. 9: 28** *...so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.*
- **Heb. 10:10** *By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

- Since Christ has made a perfect and final sacrifice, it seem unthinkable to have a temple and even sacrifices in the Millennium. I must confess this is a question that also bothers me, but God's Word is clear on this. Simply put, God has said there is going to be a temple. As we approach Ezekiel 40-48 two commentaries I referenced call this section of Scripture the hardest to understand. Yikes! There are a number of theories as to the meaning (1) Literal prophetic (the restored temple after the return from Babylon); (2) Symbolic Christian (representative of spiritual truths); (3) Apocalyptic (symbolic and fantastic images of a coming age connected with the pagan world of that day); (4) Dispensationalist (describes features of temple in the millennial age). I think the last option is the best method for interpreting these chapters.
- (1) It will be a magnificent large temple
- **Eze. 40:4-5** *The man said to me, "Son of man, see with your eyes, hear with your ears, and give attention to all that I am going to show you; for you have been brought here in order to show it to you. Declare to the house of Israel all that you see." And behold, there was a wall on the outside of the temple all around.*
- Ezekiel had a vision directly from God, a vision that he was to tell all Israel. In that vision Ezekiel was given extensive information on the exact construction of the temple. It was larger than previous temples, dwarfing them in size. Notice the temple has a north and south gate for exit and entry, and the eastern gate for the Messiah, but no western gate. It will contain chambers for the priests and the musicians. It will be a substantial building with real measurable dimensions (60 sq mile). How will it fit? Zech. 14:10 tells us the area will be changed to a plain.
- (2) It will be in the Millennium
- **Eze. 43:1-4** *Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing toward the east; and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory...And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate facing toward the east.*
- Jesus comes to dwell with His people after His return as told us in Rev. 19. He came from the east, the same direction the Spirit had left in Eze. 11:23. This was not a temple from the past or the near future, or even the temple in the Tribulation, but a temple in the Millennium. This temple will be different: (a) No mention of Pentecost, though the other feasts are mentioned; (b) No mention of a veil, because separation is no longer needed; (c) No mention of ark of the covenant, because His work is complete (d) No mention of a high priest for Jesus is the high priest; (d) No mention of a king for Jesus will be king; (e) No mention of silver or gold because they have no value in the Millennium.
- (3) It will be the dwelling place of the Messiah
- **Eze. 43:7** *He said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever. And the house of Israel will not again defile My holy name.*
- **Eze. 48:35** *...and the name of the city from that day shall be, 'The Lord is there.'*
- Jesus will rule in the Millennium from the temple and He will dwell among His people forever.
- (4) It will have sacrifices
- **Eze. 40:29** *In the porch of the gate were two tables on each side, on which to slaughter the burnt offering, the sin offering and the guilt offering.*
- **Zechariah 14:16-17** *Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths.*

- Ezekiel's temple will bring to remembrance and memorialize God's gracious work for Israel that looked forward to the perfect work of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The sacrifices will function as reminders of the complete and sufficient death of Christ. The book of Hebrews tells us that the Old Testament sacrifices were not effective for the cleansing of sin (Heb.10:11). Finally they can celebrate a memorial for Jesus' redeeming work, since they rejected Him during His life.
- (5) It will have water flowing out
- **Eze. 47:1-2** *Then he brought me back to the door of the house; and behold, water was flowing from under the threshold of the house toward the east, for the house faced east. And the water was flowing down from under, from the right side of the house, from south of the altar.*
- **Eze. 47:12** *By the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither and their fruit will not fail. They will bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing."*
- **Zech. 14:8** *And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.* (Flowing both ways!)
- There will be water flowing from the temple that gets wider and deeper before it enters the sea. All kinds of trees and fruits grow along its sides. Doesn't this sound similar to what will flow from the new Jerusalem in the Eternal state?
- **Rev. 22:1-2** *Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month.*
- (6) The tribes of Israel will have an inheritance around the Temple
- **Eze. 47:21** *So you shall divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel.*
- Every tribe will have a portion. Every tribe will have an inheritance.
- **Point 5:** What are the characteristics of the Millennium?
- (1) Jesus will be reigning physically from the earth.
- **Heb. 1:3** *And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*
- Jesus' reign started when He sat down at the right hand of the Father after His ascension into heaven. He is ruling from heaven today, and this represents the invisible or mystery form of the Kingdom of God.
- **Zech. 14:9** *And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one.*
- The nature of the Millennium is primarily a kingdom with Jesus ruling all nations on the earth. It is a transition between the Tribulation and the Eternal State. He comes from heaven and begins ruling physically from the earth. We know from the previous section that Christ will reign on earth in Jerusalem and specifically from the Temple.
- (2) Jesus' rule will be with a rod of iron.
- **Psa. 2:7-9** *I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of*

the earth as Your possession. ‘You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.’

- Jesus will be the ultimate sovereign upon the earth. His reign is characterized with a rod of iron. When that phrase is used in the bible it indicates that the Messiah is ruling. His rule and authority will be supreme.
- (3) Nations will submit to Jesus’ rule.
- **Psa. 72:8-11** *May he also rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth....And let all kings bow down before him, all nations serve him.*
- All nations will bow down before Him and acknowledge that the Messiah is ruling them.
- (4) Jesus will help those in need.
- **Psa. 72:12-14** *For he will deliver the needy when he cries for help, the afflicted also, and him who has no helper. He will have compassion on the poor and needy, and the lives of the needy he will save. He will rescue their life from oppression and violence, and their blood will be precious in his sight.*
- Jesus’ rule will be benevolent and merciful. He will help and rescue those in need.
- (5) Jesus will teach God’s way.
- **Isa 2:3** *And many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths.” For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*
- Jesus will continue to teach others about Himself and God and this will lead to their conversion.
- (6) There will be peace in the world.
- **Isa. 2:4** *And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war.*
- Weapons of war will be removed. There will be peace between peoples and nations.
- (7) There will be long life.
- **Isa. 65:20** *No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be thought accursed.*
- While there will be death, life will be much longer during the Millennium.
- (8) There will be no harmful beasts.
- **Eze. 34:25-26** *I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land...*
- **Isa. 11:6-9** *And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together, And the lion will eat straw like the ox.*
- The earth will be a place of safety, not only among people, but also among the animal kingdom.
- (9) Israel will be saved.

- **Jer. 23:5-6** “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch...In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely”
- **Eze. 34:30-31** Then they will know that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people,” declares the Lord God. “As for you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God,” declares the Lord God.
- In the Millennium there will be a large number of Jews turning to Jesus for their salvation. They are once again called God’s people and the sheep of His pasture.
- (10) Believers will judge unbelievers and angels.
- **1 Cor. 6:2-3** *Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we will judge angels?*
- Believers will act as judge for unbelievers and even the angels and reign with Christ.

Application

- What impact does the doctrine of the Millennium have on us? Three applications come to mind...
- (1) We must remain faithful to our Lord.
- **Matt. 25:21** *His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’*
- God calls us to be faithful to Him, letting Him lead us, trusting in Him, and letting Him transform us.
- (2) We must remain alert, ready, sober, with our hope fixed on the return of Jesus Christ.
- **1 Pet 1:13** *Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*
- **Matt. 24:43-44** *But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.*
- We are to look forward to the return of Jesus. We are not to grow lazy or forgetful, but we are to fix our eyes and hope on our Savior who will return to rescue us.
- (3) We must not lose heart even when we are enduring tribulation.
- **1 Pet. 4:12-13** *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.*
- Life is tough and not everything is easy. We are to endure what is placed before us. Jesus when He came was willing to die for our sins. We should also be willing to do likewise.