

Fundamentals of Our Faith from the Beginning

Frameworks and the Future

Historic Premillennialism

1. An overview of the system:

- a. Historic premillennialism has a long history and was a common viewpoint of the early church until Augustine (354-430). Current proponents: Al Mohler, D.A. Carson, Wayne Grudem.
- b. Historic premillennialism is generally associated with some form of covenant theology, whether that is Westminster theology, 1689 Reformed Baptist theology, or Wesleyan covenant theology.
 - i. This significantly differentiates this position from dispensational premillennialism.
 - ii. This difference largely deals with the relationship between Israel and the Church: HPMs understand different administrations of only one people of God.
 - iii. Though there are many common features, HPM and DPM are fundamentally two different systems.
 - iv. HPM is often confused with DPM and, therefore, often greatly misunderstood.¹
- c. HPM shares much in common with Postmillennialism and Amillennialism, especially the continuity of the Old Testament with the New and the 1st Advent through the Ascension.
- d. HPM understands this present age or the Church age to be a “present evil age” (cf. Gal. 1:4) marked by persecution, suffering, and satanic opposition (as do Amillennialists).
- e. HPMs are divided as to whether the company of the elect is a vast number that expands over the church age or is a narrow “few” based on passages like Matthew 7:13.
- f. HPMs have no concept of a Secret Rapture and are often mistaken as “post-tribulational” premillennialists because they *do* believe in a Great Tribulation after which Christ returns.
- g. Most HPM believe in a literal Antichrist and a period of great tribulation but do not generally view this as a seven-year period and do not derive it from Daniel’s 70th week.
- h. Revelation 20 is a key text for HPM, and most acknowledge that this is the only text in the NT that teaches an earthly millennium (though they believe the OT prophesied it in many places, e.g. Isaiah 2; 65, etc.). Most do not believe it is a literal thousand years.
- i. According to Revelation 20:1-3, Satan is bound at the beginning of this millennial period, and this prevents him from disrupting this glorious age.
- j. Most believe the millennial kingdom will be populated by the glorified saints who return with Christ, the survivors of the Tribulation, and the progeny of those survivors. Most believe there will be a mass conversion of the Jews at Christ’s visible return.
[A minority believes that only glorified saints will inhabit the kingdom and that the last rebellion is due to a final resurrection of unbelievers (e.g. John Gill).]
- k. Christ physically reigns on earth in His glorified body and ushers in an extended period of unprecedented righteousness, peace, and prosperity in which there is earthly renewal and long life for the non-glorified members.
- l. Temple worship, sacrifice, and rituals are reinstated as memorials of Christ’s sacrifice.
- m. Satan will be loosed at the end of the millennium and will lead a rebellion of multitudes against Christ but will be destroyed with fire from heaven.

¹ Dispensationalists will sometimes cite historic premillennialist church fathers as evidence of an early dispensationalism, but this is a misunderstanding of the position. HPMs have sought to differentiate themselves from dispensationalism (see George Ladd).

- n. God will resurrect all the unbelieving dead and will execute final judgment at His Great White Throne and will cast them into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15).
- o. The New Heavens and New Earth will be created (renewed) and will usher in the eternal state.
- p. HPMs do not necessarily understand Revelation in the futurist sense but many understand it to be a description of church age events.

2. What are common questions and difficulties for dispensational premillennialism?

- a. Revelation 19:17-21 describe *the war* in which it seems ***all*** the unbelieving are killed (v 18, 21). What people exist to populate the earth? What nations exist for Satan to deceive (cf. 20:3)?
- b. “The war” in Rev. 19:19 is also found in 16:14 and 20:8. How is this not the same war since the very same terms are used? Are there three “the wars”? When are these three wars? [Note correspondence with Ezekiel 38-39 where same terminology is used, especially in Greek.]
- c. In this program there seem to be three resurrections: at Christ’s return, at the end of the millennium, and during the millennium to deal with believers who die.
- d. In this program glorified, sinless saints will live next to and among fleshly (presumably sinful) peoples, some of whom will not believe in Christ.
- e. These fleshly peoples must still be born under Adam’s curse: born into sin, in need of regeneration since they still die (Rom. 5:12-14). How does this comport with passages like Romans 8:18-25?
- f. Since Christ will be visibly and bodily reigning, what role (if any) will Scripture play in this period, and how will this affect gospel proclamation for those born into this kingdom?
- g. How does this millennial kingdom comport with the concept of federal headship?
 - i. Under the New Covenant, all those who are “in Christ” belong to His kingdom.
 - ii. Since NC believers will have been glorified, under what covenant or administration will millennial believers fall?
 - iii. Is Christ the federal head of all those in this kingdom or not, and how is it that many in this kingdom will not believe (i.e. will not be “in Christ”) yet are in His kingdom?
 - iv. Why is there a delay in Christ’s restoration of Eden as the last Adam (cf. Rev. 22)?
- h. PMs seem to insert an extended period of time in between Christ’s coming and “the end” in 1 Corinthians 15:22-24.
 - i. The “end” and Christ’s coming seem to correspond, and this is when Christ hands the kingdom over to the Father. What merits this insertion of 1,000 years?
 - ii. It seems that death is abolished when Christ returns (this is strengthened when considering v 50-57); since there is still death in the millennium, what merits this delay?
 - iii. How do flesh and blood inherit this kingdom (cf. 15:50)?
- i. Since Christ will be reigning bodily, what is the role of the Holy Spirit since He was sent as the Helper in Christ’s absence?
- j. How is it that there is a global, pervasive rebellion against Christ when He is present and ruling in His glory?