

CONTEMPORARY ESCHATOLOGY

General Notes

Premillennialism holds to a literal interpretation of the 1,000 years mentioned in Rev 20. Premillennialists believe that Jesus will return to earth and with his saints will rule directly in a 1,000 year period of worldwide peace and justice. This is sometimes referred to as the Messianic Kingdom. During this period Satan will be inactive.

Postmillennialism sees either the whole period between the first and second comings of Jesus as the "millennium" or in some cases simply a period leading up to the Second Coming (not necessarily a literal 1,000 years) during which the steady transformation of the world through the reign of Jesus in his church will be great enough to be regarded as Satan's imprisonment. The world will be essentially "christianised" after which Jesus will return.

Amillennialism interprets Rev 20 symbolically and the number 1,000 is seen only as a metaphorical or symbolic number. Amillennialists believe that the only visible coming of Jesus to this earth which the church is to expect will be for judgment followed by the final state. They believe that Satan is already bound in "the abyss" in that he is unable to prevent the church's extension of the gospel to all nations.

Within Premillennialism there is an argument about the actual "timing" of the Rapture. Until the early nineteenth century all Premillennialists accepted the belief that Jesus would come again after the Tribulation. However around 1830 a prophetic "utterance" was given in the Rev Edward Irving's Catholic Apostolic Church in Regent Square, London concerning a "secret rapture" of the church before the Tribulation and this became one of the "doctrines" of Irvingism. This belief was also taken up by a number of the newly formed group called "The Brethren" or "The Plymouth Brethren". This new doctrine which became known as **Pre-Tribulationism** was especially espoused by J N Darby who subsequently took the teaching to the United States where it was greatly popularised by the Bible Notes of C I Schofield.

The majority of Premillennial Pre-Tribulationists also hold to the doctrine of **Dispensationalism** which views the world as a household run by God in which he dispenses or administers its affairs both according to his will and by various stages of revelation. These stages mark the different "dispensations" or economies in the outworking of God's total purpose for mankind.