

POSTMILLENNIALISM AND AMILLENNIALISM

I have often been puzzled by hearing men say that they knew they were against premillennialism but did not know whether they held the postmillennial view or the amillennial view. Actually these two are at opposite extremes. The postmillennial view holds that there will be a millennium on this earth. The amillennialist denies it. The amillennialist holds that the coming of Christ will be at an unexpected time and might be rather soon. The postmillennialist holds that there must be a long period of universal acceptance of the Gospel before the Lord returns.

Thus postmillennialism and amillennialism are at opposite extremes, with premillennialism halfway between. It accepts the biblical teaching of a period of universal peace and justice on this earth; and also the New Testament teaching that the Lord will come at a time that no one knows, and that we should always be looking forward to His coming with anticipation and should be prepared for it whenever it might come.

Essentially the term amillennialism represents not a view but a denial. It means "no millennium." Those who apply this term to themselves hold a great variety of views. There are even a few who call themselves amillennialists who, though rejecting the literal interpretation of Revelation 20, recognize the essential features of the eschatological teaching of other parts of Scripture, and say that their view differs from premillennialism in that they believe the earthly kingdom will not end after a thousand years. Actually premillennialism does not hold that the kingdom ends after a thousand years -- simply that it proves indestructible when the final assault fails, and that there is some kind of change of administration at that time.

Some postmillennialists object to premillennialism on the ground that we should not think the Holy Spirit so weak as to be unable to convert the world. This objection denies the sovereignty of God. He can do what He chooses, but we have no right to assume that it is His will that the entire world be converted by the preaching of the Gospel unless we find this definitely taught in Scripture.

I have often heard premillennialism attacked with the accusation that it would require that people in resurrection bodies and others in natural bodies be on earth at the same time. Regardless of whether premillennialism requires such a coexistence or not,