



Distinctions between the Rapture & the 2d Advent; A-, Post-, & Premillennialism; Radmacher: To Date All Prophecies Have Been Fulfilled Literally

Credibility of the Basic Principle

NOTE: Before beginning this section we need to define the three interpretations of Revelation 20. This chapter describes the aftermath of the Second Advent which occurs in Revelation 19. The key verse is:

Revelation 20:6 - Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection [**resurrections at the Rapture and Second Advent**]; over these the second death [**incarceration in the lake of fire**] has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years [χίλιος ἔτος, **chilios etos: the basis for Millenarianism: the belief that there will be a 1,000-year period during which Christ will reign over a perfect world order in a perfect environment**].

Distinctions between the Rapture & the Second Advent

	<u>RAPTURE</u>	<u>SECOND ADVENT</u>
1.	Private (Acts 1:11)	Public (Rev. 11:7)
2.	In the air (1 Thess. 4:17)	On earth (Zech. 14:4)
3.	Judgment of believers' works. (2 Cor. 5:10)	Baptism of Fire (Matt. 25:31-46)
4.	Church goes to heaven (John 14:3)	Church returns with Christ (1 Thess. 3:13)
5.	Holy Spirit is removed (2 Thess. 2:6)	Satan is removed (Rev. 20:1-3)
6.	Change in believer's body (Phil. 3:21)	Earth is changed (Zech 14:9; Rom. 8:19-22)
7.	Christ appears as the Groom	He appears as the Messiah
8.	End of the Church Age	End of the Jewish Age
9.	Israel under the fifth cycle of discipline	Termination of the fifth cycle of discipline
10.	Believers taken from the earth (1 Thess. 4:16-18)	Unbelievers taken from the earth (Matt. 24:37-43)
11.	A time of comfort (1 Thess. 4:18)	A time of terror (Rev. 6:15-17)

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Douglas, *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 36:

AMILLENNIALISM. The amillennialist denies a thousand-year reign of Christ. He stresses that the Apocalypse (the book of Revelation) normally treats numbers symbolically. Some amillennialists hold the expression to refer to the Church's rest from spiritual conflict beyond death. Most apply it, however, to her present victory over Satan in Christ crucified and exalted. Many Reformed and Lutheran theologians hold this view, and elements of it can be traced in Augustine.



POSTMILLENNIALISM. An optimistic type of theology which predicts a “golden age,” a Christianized millennium of predominantly human achievement before the Second Advent and the subsequent eternal realm. The prophetic form of it is devout, the liberal form purely humanistic.

PREMILLENNIALISM. The view that asserts that Christ will come a second time before the 1,000 years of His millennial rule and places the rapture of saints, the tribulation, and Second Advent before the Millennium in prophetic time sequence, with the brief release of bound Satan and the Last Judgment afterward. This view was held by early Church Fathers until Origen and Augustine modified it, and it has been revived in the modern era by J. N. Darby and C. I. Scofield, among others.

IMPLICATIONS:

AMILLENNIALISM. To believe there is no millennial kingdom of Christ forces the theologian to perform repeated surgery on Scripture. He customarily ignores the distinction between Israel and the Church by spiritualizing all passages which promise future blessings to true Jews. To do this requires him to deny the literal fulfillment of the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, and new covenants to Israel although the Scripture specifically teaches that these promises will be literally brought to pass.

Amillennialism must therefore reject a personal return of Jesus Christ to set up His kingdom reign even though the Word expressly prophesies such a return.

The “Sermon on the Mount,” must be taught as applicable for the present day although in context Christ was teaching His disciples about His platform for the millennial kingdom which they were to offer to the Jews. The Jews rejected the offer so the Lord later switched over to Plan A and the mystery dispensation of the Church. Following His resurrection the kingdom was postponed being delayed by the course of the Church Age.

The impact of amillennial theology has resulted in everyone from preachers to presidents trying either to recreate the Garden of Eden on the one hand or legislate a man-made millennium on the other. Their prodigious undertaking has resulted in such diabolic schemes as government bureaucracies, world-peace movements, unreasonable environmental protections, Fabian socialism, and the substitution of equality for freedom.

POSTMILLENNIALISM. The premise of this stance is so unreasonable that even the most naive neophyte would be hard pressed to lend it credence. Recorded history cannot document a thousand days of world peace, yet the postmillennialist speaks of a thousand years without war. This is a pipe dream in light of the Lord’s answer to his disciples’ question in Matthew 24:2, “What will be the sign of Your coming and the end of the age?”

Matthew 24:6 - “You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end [**Second Advent**].

v. 7 - “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom
...

PREMILLENNIALISM. Theologians of this persuasion believe that the dispensation of the Church will come to an end by the sudden removal of the final Pivot, that is, the Rapture of the church taught in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.

The premillennialist recognizes the total depravity of man and the cosmic policy of good and evil. He further understands that Satan is the ruler of this world and the sinful nature is the ruler of life.

The premillennialist realizes that man’s attempts to whitewash the Devil’s world are fruitless and can only end in frustration. He knows that this evil world system can only be conquered by the sovereign and personal reintervention of Jesus Christ into human history.

The proponent of premillennialism is cognizant of the fact that perfect environment, world peace, universal prosperity, and diseaseless societies are products of a millennium yet future.



As a result of his orientation to reality the premillennialist appreciates the need for national authority orientation in order to keep sinful natures in check, internally through a system of laws and jurisprudence and externally through strong military preparedness.

The next excerpt from Dr. Radmacher quotes the observations of a postmillennialist about the literal interpretation of prophecy:

Credibility of the Basic Principle

At this point a question needs to be raised: "When one applies this principle of literal interpretation consistently to prophecy, what is the result?" A postmillennialist, Loraine Boettner \bet' ner\, responds:

It is generally agreed that if the prophecies are taken literally, they do foretell a restoration of the nation of Israel in the land of Palestine with the Jews having a prominent place in that kingdom [Loraine Boettner, "A Postmillennial Response," *The Meaning of the Millennium*, p. 95.]

An amillennialist, Floyd Hamilton concurred:

Now we must frankly admit that a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies gives us just such a picture of an earthly reign of the Messiah as the premillennialist pictures." [Floyd E. Hamilton. *The Basis of the Millennial Faith*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), p. 38.]

But does such a consistently literal approach to prophecy have any strong support in Scripture? The late professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary, Martin J. Wyngaarden, in his study of the scope of "Spiritualization" in Scripture, begins his first chapter with the "Wonders of Jehovah's Prophecy". He asks the question, "Were any Old Testament prophecies fulfilled literally?" and then proceeds:

Few things can so stimulate one's faith in the revelation of God as the fulfillments of prophecy. Here we have, first of all, those fulfilled in Christ's ministry, in his sacrifice and resurrection. But there are also many others fulfilled in the history of great cities and mighty nations, in a most remarkable manner. The fulfillments are so precise, unmistakable, important, and far-reaching as to recall the words of Isaiah, addressed to those inclined to reject Jehovah's predictions in:

Isaiah 41:21 - "Present your case," the Lord says. "Bring forward your strong arguments," the King of Jacob says.

v. 22 - Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place; as for the former events, declare what they were, that we may consider them, and know their outcome.

... and then we find many literal fulfillments of prophecy, in connection with Israel as the theocratic nation, and in connection with the surrounding nations referred to by the prophets serving under the theocracy—the Old Testament kingdom of Jehovah. *Now the very remarkable thing is that those fulfillments are so exceedingly literal.*

[Martin J. Wyngaarden. *The Future of the Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment: A Study of the Scope of the "Spiritualization" in Scripture*. (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955), pp. 13-14.]



(One might mention in passing that something cannot be "exceedingly" literal. It is either literal or not literal depending on whether it is the meaning of the author.)

After such a statement it is perplexing indeed to discover that Wyngaarden concluded that much of the prophecy which is yet to be fulfilled must be fulfilled in another way other than literally. As he looked to certain unfulfilled prophecies he was convinced that there are those that must be spiritualized:

Even if we should say that prophecies are fulfilled literally as a rule we find a series of exceptions to this rule, in the future state of Israel, in the eschatology of the theocracy, in the spiritualization of the kingdom of priests—the holy nation. [Wyngaarden, *Future of the Kingdom*, p. 28.]

For these reasons, he concluded:

The problem thus raised is one of great interest, with a view toward attempting to discover the sphere in which the spiritualization of prophecy takes place. [Wyngaarden, *Future of the Kingdom*, p. 14.]

It would seem that, without theological predispositions, one would conclude that the prophecies which have been fulfilled are to form the pattern in the interpretation of prophecy that has not yet been fulfilled. If we have seen that so long as we have the history of the Jews to compare with the prophecies concerning them—that is, up to this time—a certain mode of interpreting those prophecies is rendered indispensable, then why not simply continue that same mode of interpretation, when we have prophecy alone not yet illustrated by history? If prophecies concerning the Jews, delivered two or three thousand years ago, be proved, by the history of the interim up to our own days, to have been fulfilled in the literal sense, and, therefore, to demand a literal interpretation, upon what principle can it be alleged that other prophecies, delivered in similar language by the same prophets, are not to be similarly interpreted after our days?

Allow me to paraphrase this last paragraph for you: If the pattern of prophetic fulfillment has been literal so far why would the fulfillment of those that remain not also be literal?

The logic resulting from a study of the history of fulfillment is obvious. Why then would anyone depart from it? Albertus Pieters states:

No one defends or employs the allegorizing method of exegesis. Calvin and the other great Bible students of the Reformation saw clearly that the method was wrong and taught a now generally accepted "grammatical-historical" interpretation, so far as the Scriptures in general are concerned. That they retain the spiritualizing [notice the word game] method in expounding many of the prophecies was because they found themselves forced to do so in order to be faithful to the New Testament. [Albertus Pieters, "Darbyism vs. The Historic Christian Faith," *Calvin Forum* 2 (May1936), pp. 225-8.]

One might question here whether it is faithfulness to the New Testament which forces this deductive principle of spiritualization (i.e., allegorization), or whether it might more correctly be stated that it is faithfulness to a particular theological interpretation of the New Testament. If the latter is the case, then one might certainly question the wisdom of overthrowing the literal interpretation which is a proven biblical principle, for the unproven deductive principle of spiritualization.



At any rate the use of a dual hermeneutic which applies the literal hermeneutic to the great majority of Scripture and the spiritualizing hermeneutic to a *portion* of prophecy, namely, that portion which is future only and not even all of that, has its dangers. It is easy to see how such a method of interpretation could easily get out of hand. For example, while the evangelical believes that the prophecy of the second coming of Christ will have a future literal fulfillment, the liberal theologian applying the spiritualizing principle erases any hope of a literal return of the Lord to the earth for his saints.

Because of this possibility, therefore, the evangelical who posits a dual hermeneutic protects its excessive use by certain regulative principles in addition to his deductive spiritualizing principle. Hamilton states:

But if we reject the literal method of interpretation as the universal rule of the interpretation of all prophecies, how are we to interpret them? Well, of course, there are many passages in prophecy that were meant to be taken literally.

In fact a good working rule to follow is that the literal interpretation of the prophecy is to be accepted unless (a) the passages contain obviously figurative language, or (b) unless the New Testament gives authority for interpreting them in other than the literal sense, or (c) unless a literal interpretation would produce a contradiction with truths, principles, or factual statements contained in the non-symbolic books of the New Testament. [Hamilton, *Basis*, pp. 53-4.]

If one examines each of these suggested regulative principles carefully, he will discern that none of them is necessitated by a proper understanding of literal interpretation.