

Historic (Posttribulation) Premillennialism

- A. Historical development of the view
 1. Historic (or classic) premillennialism is appropriately named because it is the oldest of the four positions
 2. It is attested in Irenaeus, Papias, & Justin Martry in early 2nd C)
 3. It remained the majority view until the mid 4th C and the work of Augustine.
 4. Its history afterwards is varied.
 - a. There are those who held to an historic view rooted in Scripture.
 - b. There are those who turned it into a materialistic view, desiring the physical blessings of the millennial kingdom (this was part of what Augustine argued against)
 - c. In the Medieval period, it was part of what sparked the Crusades as many Crusaders felt they must eradicate Islam before the millennial kingdom would come.
 - d. A millennial view was maintained in the Reformation period in two traditions:
 - i. A non-biblical expression of it was a part of the Munster Revolt in 1534-35 in which John Leyden attempted to reinstitute a version of the Israelite theocracy (complete with polygamy) to usher in the New Jerusalem
 - ii. A more historic, biblical version was held by many of the Anabaptists
 5. Interestingly, historic premillennialism made a comeback because of the new details added by Henry Drummond, details which were very much the forerunner of dispensational premillennialism
 6. Thus, the church has never really been without the historic premillennial view, but it was only the majority view in the first 300 years of the church.
- B. Details of view
 1. There will arise a great tribulation which believers will endure
 2. Matt 24:29-30 says the return of Christ will be immediately after the tribulation
 3. He will bind, but not destroy, the devil, preventing him from deceiving the nations for 1000 years (20:1-3)
 4. The saints will be raised to their resurrected bodies (Rev 20:4)
 5. During 1000 years the saints will reign with Christ in their resurrected or transformed bodies (1 Thess 4:13-18; Rev 20:4)
 6. Believers in the millennial kingdom will still be infected by sin and sorrow but relieved to a significant degree from sin's societal and physical consequences (Psa 72:8-14; Isa 11:2-9)
 7. Though death is not eliminated until New Heavens, they will live to extraordinary ages (Isa 65:20-25)
 8. When the 1000 years are over, there will be a rebellion, and at that time he will defeat and destroy the beast and false prophet in battle at Armageddon (16:14-16; 19:11-21)
 9. At the end of 1000 years, a second worldwide rebellion against Jesus' reign will provoke another war in which the dragon (the devil) will be finally defeated and destroyed

10. Wicked will be raised to judgment and eternal wrath (20:6, 11-14)
- C. Assessment (strengths/weaknesses)
1. Strengths
 - a. Several OT passages seem to fit neither the present age nor in the eternal state (Psa 72:8-14; Isa 11:2-9; Isa 65:20; Zech 14:6-21)
 - b. There are NT passages, other than Rev 20, that hint at a future millennium
 - i. Rev 2:26-27 speaks of a time when believers will rule with a rod of iron over rebellious people, a statement that makes best sense in a millennial kingdom
 - ii. 1 Cor 15:23-25 may suggest that just as there is a time gap between Jesus' resurrection and our own, there is also a time gap between our resurrection and the end.
 - c. Reading of Revelation 20
 - i. Binding and imprisonment of Satan in the bottomless pit imply a far greater restriction than we currently experience
 - ii. "Came to life" in v. 4 is best taken as a bodily resurrection for two reasons. 1) the next verse calls it the first resurrection, a word used everywhere else of bodily resurrection; 2) came to life is used in Rev 2:8 where Jesus identifies himself as the one who died and came to life, obviously referencing his bodily resurrection
 - iii. The reigning with Christ (Rev 20:4) is future, not present (as amillennialists argue), and this fits better with the rest of the NT passages that speak of how we will reign with him (Luke 19:17, 19; 1 Cor 6:3; Rev 2:26-27; 3:21)
 - iv. Those who had come to life and reign with Christ in Rev 20 include those who did not worship the beast. But if the beast of Rev 13 has not yet come, then the scene in Rev 20 has not yet come either, and must refer to a future event.
 - d. NT evidence of posttribulation "rapture"
 - i. 1 Thess 4:17 is not a secret rapture of church but a public raking up of the church to be with Christ just a few moments prior to his coming to earth with them to reign during the millennial kingdom
 - ii. Tribulation is linked with return in several passages
 1. Loud trumpet in Matt 24:31
 2. Sound of trumpet of God in 1 Thess 4:16
 3. Last trumpet at which our bodies are changed in 1 Cor 15:51-52
 - e. This position is attested very early and throughout church history
 2. Proposed Weaknesses
 - a. The idea of glorified believers and sinners living on earth together is difficult to accept.
 - b. If Christ comes in glory to reign on the earth, then how could people still persist in sin?
 - c. No convincing purpose for a millennium. Why delay eternal state?

- d. Scripture teaches only one resurrection, when both believers and unbelievers will be raised, not two (believers at millennium and unbelievers after)
 - i. John 5:28-29
 - ii. Acts 24:15
 - iii. Dan 12:2

Notable supporters of this view: Church Fathers (e.g. Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, etc.), George Eldon Ladd, Douglas Moo