**Amillennialism: Theology, Hermeneutics and History**

**INTRO/RECAP**

* Why is it important that we pause our verse-by-verse series through the book of Revelation to take a look at all these strange words, terms and perspectives regarding the end times and the interpretation of Revelation?
* It is important, because within the scope of Biblical truth and orthodoxy there are those who approach the book of Revelation with fundamentally different presuppositions. Leading to fundamentally different ways of understanding and interpreting the book of Revelation. Even within our church, there are those who strongly disagree on the right way to approach Revelation and Bible prophecy in general.
* It is important to understand that the vast majority of those who hold to these different Eschatological views are our brothers and sisters in Christ. These views, although important, are not matters pertaining to salvation.
* If these views and this discussion is not *salvation-level-important*, why are we even having this discussion and engaging in these debates?
* **I WANT TO GIVE YOU THREE REASONS WHY THIS DISCUSSION IS IMPORTANT:**
  + **REASON 1:** It is important to study and understand prophetic books, because God gave them to us for a reason: **2 Tim 3:16: All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God[a] may be complete, equipped for every good work.**
    - This includes these books that we disagree on.
    - We have books like Revelation so that we can use them in ministry.
  + **REASON 2:** These books are a blessing: **Revelation 1:3: Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.**
    - If you want to be happy, engage in this conversation.
    - If Revelation scares you, you are missing out on a blessing.
    - I would suggest to you, that if these conversations scare you or make you confrontational, there are more pressing spiritual matters that you must be concerned with, maybe even gospel matters.
    - This is true for anyone in our church. Do not be offended or antagonizing when someone disagrees with you. One of the ways I judge maturity in Christians is to see how they interact in conversations with people who disagree with them. **Show maturity by showing grace and love.**
    - I am a Premillenialist, but I’ve never had a conversation with an Amillennialists about this topic that has not edified and enriched me. I’ve always benefitted greatly by engaging with my Amillennialists family.
  + **REASON 3:** The way you approach Revelation, and the way you interpret the **Millennium** has massive-massive implications on how you interpret other sections of the Bible.
    - It has often been said by Amillennialists about Premillennialists that they approach the Bible with an **Israel-First** hermeneutic.
    - And is has often been stated by Premillennialists about Amillennialists that they deny the hermeneutic principle of **Authorial Intent**.
    - And although I firmly believe that both those accusations are strawmen-arguments to some extent, those accusations do prove how wide the hermeneutical gap is between the two groups.

**THEOLOGY**

* It is at this point that I want to say that the term **“Amillennial”**, is a bit misleading. The term literally means **no-millennium**, but that is not exactly what Amillennialists believe. They believe that there is a millennium. That we are currently living it. That the Millennium as described in Revelation 20 where Christ reigns is the current era in which we live, and that the only thing left for Christ to do is to come back again to judge the living and the dead.
* Like all views on the Millennium, Amillennialism is built on a specific set of presupposition.
  + Presupposition: Something that is assumed beforehand.
  + Amillennialists believe largely in what is called **Covenant Theology**
    - That God interacts with humans through different covenants throughout history.
      * Covenant of works, grace, redemption, Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Davidic, New. With some Covenantalists differing on a few areas.
      * **Definition of Covenant Theology:** Covenant theology is an approach to biblical interpretation that appreciates the importance of the covenants for understanding the divine-human relationship and the unfolding of redemptive history in Scripture. Blending insights from systematic and biblical theology, covenant theology explains the economic Trinity, communion with God, the person and work of Christ, the sacraments, justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, the role of obedience in the Christian life, the believer’s assurance of salvation, the unity and progress of redemptive history, and more, in light of the Bible’s teaching on the divine covenants.
  + In short and extremely simplified, Amillennialists believe that all the promises made to Israel through the various covenants were all fulfilled in Christ and in the Church.
  + Therefore, Amillennialists would deny any accusation of unfulfilled promises for Israel. Since Christ is the ultimate fulfilment of them all.
  + Since all the promises that have been made to Israel has now been fulfilled in the coming of Christ, there is now no future for ethnic or national Israel. The Church is the continuation, although some would say replacement of Israel, but most modern day Amillennialists I think would agree with the concept of continuation instead of replacement.
  + Since ethic Israel no longer has a role in the future plan of God all reference to Israel in the New Testament in the context of faith or obedience must be interpreted as being part of the church and not distinct from it. This means that when Israel is mentioned in Revelation, either the passage is speaking of history or Israel is symbolic for believers and the church.
  + This is why there is no need for a literal millennial kingdom and along with other passage as justification, such as mentioned last time 2 Thessalonians 1, the Millennium cannot be interpreted as another or extra phase in the history of the world yet to come. It is simply a symbolic or figurative gesture to the already established kingdom of Christ or coming future renewal of the heavens and earth.
* Amillennialists agree with Reformed Premillennialists all the essential doctrines and truths:
  + Sola-Scriptura – The sufficiency and authority of the Bible.
  + We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone to the glory of God alone.
  + The doctrines of grace, otherwise called Calvinism.
* Amillennialists and Premillennialists even agree on our Hermeneutical principles. Where we disagree is the extend to which certain hermeneutical principles should be applied.
* Premillennialists accuse Amillennialists that they are inconstant with their interpretive methods and that they play lose and vast with the literal common-sense interpretation of certain passages of the Bible.
  + It is here where the Amillennialists would simply state that not even the Bible applies a consistent Literal hermeneutic to itself.

**HERMENEUTICS**

* Amillennialists would argue that **Authorial Intent** is important, but it should not be the ultimate factor when it comes to interpreting the Bible.
  + What is Authorial Intent: **In literary theory and aesthetics, authorial intent refers to an author's intent as it is encoded in their work. Authorial intentionalism is the view, according to which an author's intentions should constrain the ways in which a text is properly interpreted.**
  + Premillennialists would argue that we should read and interpret to Bible in the way that the original authors meant for it to be understood and the way the original audience would have interpreted and understand it.
    - This is a good principle, Amillennialists would say, and an essential one at that. But they will continue to say that it cannot be applied to the fullest extend on matters of prophecy and even some Old Testament events and narratives.
    - The Amillennialists would point you to Exodus 17:6. Here the nation of Israel was in the wilderness. They followed the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night and drank water from the rock that Moses had to strike. Yet if we go to 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 we see a completely different interpretation for that Biblical narrative. One that cannot be derived from the principle of Authorial Intent. **1 Corinthians 10:1-4 :** **For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.**
    - The Amillennialists will further attempt to prove their point by going to passages such as **1 Peter 1:10-12: As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.** 
      * If the prophets then did not understand exactly their own writings, doesn’t that put a dent into the weight the principle of Authorial Intent should carry?
  + It is at this point were some of you probably expect me to correct our Amillennial brethren on some of these points. I’m not going to be doing that. Not in this session at least. My goal, as stated tonight is simply to do my best to fairly represent Amillennialism Theology, Hermeneutics and History in an extremely brief and summarized way.
  + It is because of passages such as 1 Corinthians 10 that Amillennialists justify their hermeneutical approach to allegorize some passages, specifically prophecies and interpret other sections figuratively.
* Even Amillennialists would agree that approaching Scripture with a hermeneutic that allows for figurative interpretation is dangerous. That is why Amillennialists are so strong proponents of the principle of letting scripture interpret scripture. If you are not grounded in a strong Theological conviction, you will end of in all sorts of heresies. Which true anyway, for any Eschatological view.
* So lets close by taking a look at the history of Amillennialism.

**HISTORY**

* Amillennialism is old. Extremely old. Almost as old as Premillennialism, or as the early church called it back then, **Chiliasm**.
* Many of the early church fathers held to an Amillennialist view. The earliest church fathers were majority Premillennialist, but very quickly as history progressed, Covenant Theology and Amillennialism became the dominant line of thinking in the church.
  + So, like today, even back then, in the early church, Premillennialists and Amillennialists were living and serving side by side.
* The first mainstream or big Amillennialists we find in history is Saint Augustine. He’s the first one to really systematize Amillennialism to some degree in his book, City of God. *Which you can download for free* if you simple Google and which I highly recommend along with his other book, *Confessions*, which some literary historians consider to be the first published Autobiography in history.
* It is true that the early beginnings of Amillennialism had Gnostic influences. The Gnostics believed that all matter is evil and only spirit is good. Therefore, the Gnostics denied the humanity of Christ and we see the apostle John and the early church fight against this heresy for a long time. So, because their presupposition was that matter is evil, there cannot be physical and literal thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth, because that would taint God and Christ with evil matter.
  + Now despite that Gnostic influence, all our respect church fathers including Saint Augustine denied the heresy of Gnosticism and fought against it, even those church fathers that held to an Amillennialist view, like Saint Augustine.
* Throughout church history, the vast majority of believers held to an Amillennialist view. Almost all theologians in the Middle Ages, the super majority of Puritans and as far as I know, all the early Reformers like Luther, Zwingly and Calvin held to an Amillennialist viewpoint.
  + There are some notable exceptions, but mentioning them here would benefit our discussion.
* Today, Amillennialism is the majority view among Reformed Evangelicals, despite Premillennial Dispensationalism having a comeback in popularity during the 20th Century.

**CONCLUSION**

* It is my hope that I fairly represented the Amillennial camp during this session. All these topics and trains-of-thought each deserve their own multipart series, and maybe in the future we dive a bit deeper into these fascinating theological divides.
* But the purpose of our last 5-sessions was simply to prepare us for what is coming in the book of Revelation.
* I have always firmly believed that the average church member should participate in the high -end theological discussions. I firmly believe that these discussions and terms are relevant to the life and health of a local church and that the average church member has the mental capability to participate in theological discourses.
* Please note, that by listening to tonight’s session and the previous sessions on Premillennialism by no means makes you an expert. I would highly encourage you to read the classic theological books and authors on these topics and to always be humble in your expressing your opinion and engaging with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.
* None of us want to be confronted by the Lord Himself for showing disrespect towards those people that he laid down his life for. And we should remember that we are to always engage with others in a loving manner that edifies them and points them to the Lord Jesus Christ.
* Because, despite how convicted you might be regarding your Eschatology, there is only life and love in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us continue this debate and discussion in a way that will put a smile on our Lord’s face.

**AMEN!**