

Amillenianism: Some thoughts

(A brief initial reply to a brother who believes strongly in Amillenianism)

Firstly, my understanding is that this view about the Kingdom of God originated with Augustine in the 5th century AD and was later supported by Luther & Calvin.

It appears that the leading view in the 2nd & 3rd century was the “premillennialism” understanding that the reign of Christ described in Rev 20:4-6 would happen after the 2nd coming of Christ.

Evaluating this reign with other passages related to the resurrection and joint reign of Christ & the saints should be helpful.

Starting with Dan 7 (esp. 13,14,18,22,27) it would appear this time when the saints reign with Christ if after the kingdoms of this present age have been destroyed. Look at Dan 2:44.

*Dan 7¹³ "I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.*

*¹⁴ "And to Him was given dominion,
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and men of every language
Might serve Him
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;
And His kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed.*

¹⁸ "But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.'

²² until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.

²⁷ "Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'

Dan 2:44 "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

It should be very clear that the nations and dominions of our present world are very far from being under subjection to Christ and the church. The Kingdom is dependant on the return of Christ. The petition “Thy Kingdom come” calls for Christ to return to set it up. It does not say “Thy Kingdom spread”.

What does the NT say?

*Matt 25: 31 **“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.***

*Matt 19: 28 So Jesus said to them, **“Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.***

The Kingdom is a gift to the disciples:

*Luke 22: 28 **“But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. ²⁹ And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, ³⁰ that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”***

Similarly, in the parable of the nobleman (Christ), the kingdom is likewise placed at the return of Christ, when he destroys his enemies and puts his servants in charge of urban populations.

Luke 19: 15,17,27 "And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, ... have authority over ten cities ...But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me."

Jesus clearly did not think the Kingdom had come nor that his disciples were in it:

Luke 22:16 for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." 18 for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

Jesus told his disciples to expect the Kingdom to arrive when he returned. Until then he and they would be "waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. (Heb 10:13, Ps 110).

Note Ps 110 is the most cited and alluded to OT scripture in the NT (some 23 times). This surely stresses that our Messiah is currently sitting at the right hand of Yahweh awaiting the time when he will return to take up his reign as King of Kings.

Luke tells us that the Kingdom will come after the troubles preceding the 2nd coming:

Luke 21: 31 So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near.

When the thief on the cross asked to be remembered when Christ came to establish his kingdom Jesus replied that he would be with Him in paradise i.e. the Kingdom of God.

While Paul acknowledged that possession of the spirit of God guaranteed the saints a future inheritance into the Kingdom of the Son, Paul corrected the false notion of some at Corinth that they were already reigning:

1 Cor 4:8: ...You have reigned as kings without us—and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you!

Paul was indignant that they had forgotten one of the first principles of the faith – the prospect of reigning with Christ in the future "Do you not know that the saints are to manage the world? If the **world is to come under** your jurisdiction are you incompetent to adjudicate upon trifles? (1 Cor 6:2 Moffat). He also says the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Clearly inheriting the kingdom is managing the world. To make it even clearer that the saints were not currently 'managing the world' and therefore had not inherited the kingdom he said his job at present was to administer only those inside the church.

1 Cor 5:12 For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?

Jesus said to hold fast until he comes.

Rev 2:25,26 But hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—

Rulership is not promised for the present but for a time after the return of our Lord and as a reward for faithful service in the present life.

Exactly the same scheme appears in Rev 19 6,7:

*⁶ And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" ⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the **marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.**"*

This is the fulfilment of Psalm 2. Until this time Jesus is to remain in heaven (Acts 3:21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.)

Jesus is waiting (Heb 10:13 "waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.") since the time of his ascension until he returns to inaugurate the Kingdom of God.

So what of Rev 20? All other passages place the reign after the 2nd coming. To suggest from this passage that this talks of a present Kingdom of God "in the heart" or in the church flies in the face of the rest of scripture.

All the texts of the NT which speak of Christians ruling as kings do so with verbs in the future tense. After all, "flesh & blood" cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Cor 15:50). When we are physically resurrected we will be like Jesus after His resurrection and have "flesh & bone" (whatever that may mean).

Luke 24: ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

Some of reasons why the millennial reign must lie in the future:

1. The reign of Christ in Rev 20 follows the events of the return of Christ in Rev 19. (Amill's spend a lot of time denying this chronology – I will not argue in detail on this point here.)
2. The reign of the saints depends on a resurrection i.e. a real raising to life from death, NOT from a life of sin to a Christian life.
3. In Revelation, John clearly describes a real resurrection not a figurative one by saying the occupants of the thrones "came to life" after being beheaded!
4. In Rev 20:3 Satan is bound "so that he can no longer deceive the nations". Earlier John describes Satan as "the one (now) deceiving the whole world" (Rev 12:9). Satan cannot **at the same time** be "deceiving the whole world and "deceiving the nations no longer". Amill is committed to this contradiction.

5. **To suggest, in a world of 50-70 million abortions per year, that Satan has already been totally bound and is NOT deceiving the whole world is absolutely ridiculous.**

6. In Rev 12:12,13 the Devil is thrown down from heaven into the earth. This is prior to the 2nd coming. In Rev 20:1-2 the Devil is banished entirely from the earth and sent to the abyss. This banishment which coincides with the beginning of the millennial reign, must lie in the future. Satan can't both be confined to the earth and banished into the abyss at the same time.

7. In fact, many NT passages make it clear that Satan is extremely active and powerful in this present age.

Gal 1:4; 1 John 5:19; 2 Cor 4:4; Luke 22:3; Acts 5:3; 2 Cor 11:14; Eph 2:2; 1 Thess 2:18; 2 Tim 2:26 1 Pet 5:8.

8. It is clear from Rev 20:10 that Satan is finally cast into the lake of fire AFTER the millennial reign (whether this is a thousand years or not). Thus a significant time period exists between his binding and sealing in the abyss and his casting into the lake of fire. It is also clear that the beast and false prophet are already in the lake of fire when Satan joins them.

*Rev 20:10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone **where the beast and the false prophet are.** And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

If we hold the amillennial position that the thousand years begins at the crucifixion or the conversion of a believer, what can it possibly mean by the casting of the beast and false prophet into the lake of fire at or before this time?

9. Some amills appear to argue that the premill position that Satan has not been bound contradicts the effects of the crucifixion. They admit that Satan must be free for a little time (Rev 20:3). This period of freedom would also contradict the effects of the cross based on their argument. Yes, Satan has already been defeated (Jesus by his life, death and resurrection has demonstrated that the final victory over Satan is guaranteed; Satan will eventually be bound – Jesus has proven his power his greater), but his sentence is put into effect only when his authority as 'god' of this age is finally removed by the 2 stage punishment of the abyss and the lake of fire.

10. Christ at His coming strikes the nations (Rev 19:15 *Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*), precisely because they have been so disastrously deceived by Satan into opposing the Messiah at His arrival.

The incredible influence of Augustine (and hence Platonism and Hellenism) and his resultant amillennial ("spiritualising") view has resulted in an entrenched anti-Messianic (and even anti-Jewish) tendency in the church which has persisted to today and helps explain why Jesus' Gospel, which was and is, the good news of the Kingdom of God has not been heard much in our churches.

Instead the churches present only half of the gospel when they present only the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

This spiritualising of the Word of God is so clearly seen in the denial that those who have been beheaded coming to life and beginning to reign with the Messiah (Rev 20:4), means literally dead people being physically resurrected. It is hard to believe that Augustine has managed to convince so many that this passage does not mean what it says!

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