

# 7 Reasons Tom Schreiner (Tentatively) Holds to Amillennialism

By Justin Taylor and Tom Schreiner<sup>1</sup>

---

It would be hard to find a more gracious and humble commentator than Tom Schreiner. This is especially true when it comes to the controversy of what Revelation 20 teaches on the millennium. Schreiner has recently written a full-length commentary on Revelation in the ESV Expository Commentary series. Schreiner's colleague Rob Plummer—who wrote the commentary on James—calls it “the clearest and most helpful commentary on Revelation I’ve ever read.”

When it comes to the various and disputed end-time paradigms, Schreiner admits that he does not regard the exegesis behind the dispensational premillennial view or the postmillennial view very compelling.

Against dispensational premillennialism, he notes:

- The notion of a rapture seven years before Jesus returns is quite unlikely. (1 Thessalonians 4:16 does not describe a secret rapture. 2 Thessalonians 1–2 teaches that the punishment of the wicked, deliverance of the righteous, and gathering of the saints occur at the same time.)
- The notion of promises specially fulfilled for the Jews in the millennium is not even mentioned by John in Revelation 20. Nor is this idea found in the rest of the NT. Dispensationalists read their interpretations of OT prophecies into Revelation 20, but their interpretation is flawed, for the NT maintains that Jews and Gentiles are equally members of the people of God (e.g., Eph. 2:11–3:13). The notion of Jews having a special place in the millennium contradicts the NT witness that all believers are children of Abraham (cf. Rom. 4:9–17; Gal. 3:6–9).

Against postmillennialism, he writes:

- Scripture clearly indicates that evil will intensify before the end (cf. Matt. 24:9–31; 1 Tim. 4:1–3; 2 Tim. 3:1–5).
- Revelation 19:11–21 almost certainly refers to the second coming—not, as postmillennialists claim, to the routing of God's enemies, leading to a long period of peace and prosperity on earth.

Therefore, he focuses on the historic premillennial and amillennial readings of the passage. Contrary to the rhetoric of partisans on either side, he writes: “I include both views equally since it is difficult to decipher which view is correct, and readers should appreciate this difficulty.” “Still,” he notes, “for the following reasons I tentatively opt for the amillennial view, although I have changed my mind more than once and feel uncertainty as I write.”

Here are his seven reasons:

## **1. Scripture Nowhere Else Clearly Teaches a Thousand-Year Millennium**

First, nowhere else in Scripture is a thousand-year millennium clearly taught, and a new doctrine should not be founded on an intensely controversial text, especially from an apocalyptic book full of symbolism.

## **2. Revelation 20 Might Be Telling the Story of Revelation 19:11–21 from Another Perspective**

Second, we have seen that Revelation is recursive and recapitulatory, coming to the end and then telling the same story again from a fresh perspective. John might be doing the same thing in Revelation 20, telling the story of Revelation 19:11–21 from another perspective.

<sup>1</sup> This article was first posted by The Gospel Coalition on October 11, 2019 (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/7-reasons-tom-schreiner-tentatively-holds-amillennialism/>)

### **3. The Supposed Millennium Texts of the OT Don't Appear in Revelation 20—But They Do in the New Creation Texts of Revelation 21–22**

Third, many of the texts allegedly speaking of the millennium in the OT (e.g., Isaiah 60 and Ezekiel 40–48) are not alluded to in Revelation 20. What is even more striking is that these same chapters are copiously alluded to in Revelation 21:1–22:5. In other words, the so-called millennial texts are fulfilled in the new creation! This suggests the promises of a renewed world and new temple in the OT are fulfilled in the new creation, not in a millennium. Some want to say the fulfillment is in both the millennium and the new creation, but it is hard to see how the new temple prophesied in Ezekiel 40–48 is fulfilled in any way in the millennium.

### **4. The Early Church Fathers Were Divided on This Question**

Fourth, the early church fathers were divided on the millennium. Sometimes it is claimed the earliest fathers were premillennial, but Charles Hill has demonstrated the matter was disputed, and many were amillennialists. Hence, we cannot appeal to the early church to find a consensus on the matter.

### **5. Who Are the Unglorified People in the Millennium If Jesus Destroys All His Enemies at the End of Revelation 19?**

Fifth, the historic premillennial view has difficulty explaining the unglorified people in the millennium, for when Jesus returns at the end of chapter 19, he destroys all his enemies. It is straining to say that some were left on earth who survived Jesus's return. The NT clearly teaches Jesus's return is the day of reward and judgment for all (Matt. 25:31–46).

### **6. Scripture Nowhere Separates Out the Timing of the Final Resurrection, Final Judgment, Victory over Death, Arrival of the New Creation, and Second Coming of Christ**

Sixth, in Scripture the final resurrection, final judgment, victory over death, arrival of the new creation, and second coming of Christ are part of a total package. There is no indication in any other text that these great events are separated.

### **7. Amillennialism Fits Best with the Rest of the Scriptures**

Finally, we will see below [meaning in the following portion of his commentary] that the premillennial reading of Revelation 20 has some very good arguments, but the amillennial reading has remarkable strengths too. And since the latter fits best with the rest of the scriptural witness, it should be favored.

Unfortunately, clarity will be lacking on this issue until Jesus returns. Fortunately, the central truth is that Jesus is indeed returning!