



AI Generated

Iran and Israel at War (Part 11)

By

Mark McGee

People look at ‘war’ from many perspectives. Some think of themselves as ‘hawks’ .. others as ‘doves’ .. some in-between. Christians are like that as well. I’ve heard many Christian leaders preach about America’s involvement in the current war between Iran and Israel. Listen for a couple of minutes and you’ll quickly identify those who are ‘hawkish, dovish, or in-betweenish.’

As I watch and listen to these pastors I sense they know what they’re doing. They are using the ‘power of the pulpit’ to impact the thinking of their congregation. What I’ve also noticed is that the ‘theology,’ specifically the ‘eschatology’ of the pastors, drives the way they handle the topic of ‘the war.’ That’s one of the primary reasons I’ve been sharing some of the reasons that there are so many divisions in Christianity – far more than we find in Judaism or Islam. I think it comes down to ‘rightly dividing the word of truth,’ as the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2:15. With that in mind, I want to share a bit more about divisions within Christianity that follows **from our last part**. What we believe about each part of the Bible will impact the way we interpret current events as well.

Millennial Reign?

Many Christians don't believe in a 'Millennial' reign by Christ because they say the word is not in the Bible. It's a truth claim with no supporting evidence. The word 'millennial' or 'millennium' comes from the Latin word mille which means 'thousand.' You'll find mille annis (thousand years) in the Latin Vulgate (written during the 4th and 5th centuries AD). It's a translation of the Greek words χίλιοι ἔτος, which are in the Bible. The Greek also means a 'thousand years.' We find the Greek word used six times in Revelation chapter 20:

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. And I saw thrones, and they sat

on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.” Revelation 20:1-8

1. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years
2. he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished
3. they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years
4. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished
5. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years
6. when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth

A-Millennialism

The Greek word χίλιοι, translated by the Latin word *mille*, is used each time for the English word 'thousand.' People who deny that there will be a Millennium are known as 'Amillennialists.' They 'spiritualize' Revelation 20 and say it's just 'symbolic' or 'allegorical.' Is that true?

The fact that Revelation 20 follows Revelation 19 brings up this question. If Revelation 20 is just 'symbolic' and 'allegorical,' is Revelation 19 also symbolic? How about the entire Book of Revelation? Is it all 'symbolic?' Many Christians have told me that Revelation is allegorical and should be interpreted based on 'symbolism' rather than 'literalism.'

Keep in mind that the first words of the Book are: 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants.' Note that this is not the 'Revelation that the Apostle John made up.' It's 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ.' That seems pretty clear to me, but millions of Christians see it differently.

Revelation 19 is where Jesus returns to earth with His mighty angels and other fighting forces to destroy the enemies of God who come against Israel. If, as millions of Christians believe, all or parts of Revelation are symbolic does that also mean the words of Jesus Christ to His disciples in Matthew 24 and 25 are also 'symbolic' rather than literal?

“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. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.” Matthew 25:31-33

Are the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 'symbolic' rather than literal?

“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our

testimony among you was believed.” 2 Thessalonians
1:3-10

Once you begin going down the road of Scriptures being ‘symbolic’ or ‘allegorical,’ where do you stop? Unfortunately for so many Christians, they’ve been taken down a path that doesn’t lead to the truth about ‘last things.’

Amillennialists also don’t believe in the rapture in the same way as Millennialists do. They believe 1 Thessalonians 4 is where Jesus returns, raises the dead and living believers who go to meet Him in the air, then immediately turn around and follow Him back to earth to enjoy His Kingdom.

Other Christians believe the thousand-year 'reign' of Christ is symbolic of the Lord's current reign from Heaven rather than something earthly that will occur in the future. That belief goes against most of the Bible's prophecies from Old and New Testaments, but it's what they believe. Some do believe in the 'tribulation' since Jesus said it, but they view what the world has experienced for the last two thousand years as the 'tribulation.' I find that a bit hard to believe because the view lacks solid evidence.

As for 'wars' that might precede Christ's return, I'd put an X next to the Amillennialist box. They don't fit into their theology. It's not that they don't believe wars happen, they just don't see any 'eschatological' significance to them.

Post-Millennialism

So, how about 'Post-Millennialists?' They believe that Jesus will return 'after' (post) a long period of time where Christians evangelize the world and prepare the people of earth for Jesus to come back. That view also doesn't fit with Scripture, but it's what they believe. I'd also have to put an X next to the Post-Millennialist box when it comes to wars that would precede Christ's return. They believe the world will all be evangelized (saved) when Jesus comes back, so no wars would occur. That has a nice ring to it – no wars, everybody saved, Jesus safely comes back and is welcomed by the whole world with open arms. The only problem is that it can't be true if the Bible is true. Either the prophets, Jesus, and His apostles got it right or they got it wrong.

“Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” Luke 18:6-8

Notice what He said about questioning whether He would find ‘faith on the earth’ when the ‘Son of Man comes.’ Why would Jesus ask that question if the world was going to be fully evangelized by the time He returns? It’s a contradiction in terms and meaning. Either Jesus made a big mistake in saying that or millions of Christians are wrong in what they believe. So, where does that leave us?

Pre-Millennialism

The only view that I believe fits with Scripture is 'Pre-Millennial.' That's where Jesus returns before His thousand-year reign. According to many of the prophecies in the Old and New Testaments the world will be in a very bad place before Jesus returns. In fact, Jesus said this to His Jewish disciples:

“But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”

Matthew 24:37-39

“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.” Matthew 24:21-22

“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. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ... Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” Matthew 25:31

– 34

Does that sound like a world that was full evangelized and ready to receive Jesus with open arms? I think not. That’s why Jesus does this from Heaven:

“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war ... Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, “Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great. And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.” Revelation 19:11, 17-21

Does that sound like Jesus leaving Heaven to enter an Earth where everybody was saved and ready for His return? I don't think so. I repeat: the only eschatology that fits Scripture is 'Pre-Millennialism.'

A Historical Note on Various Millennial Views

The earliest Church Fathers were 'Pre-Millennialists.' Those included Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Papias, Tertullian, and Irenaeus. The Apostolic Fathers who personally knew one or more of the apostles were Pre-Millennialists. They included the fathers who knew the Apostle John, the human author of the Book of Revelation where the Millennium is described in detail.

Views changed later due to the influence of 'Platonism' on Church theology. That was a beginning of the 'spiritualization' of many Scriptures and theological perspectives. Origen, who lived from the end of the 2nd century AD to the early part of the 3rd century AD believed in something called 'Universalism.' He taught that all beings would eventually be saved. Some of his later writings included the possibility that the devil and his angels could choose to be saved as well. Gregory of Nyssa, a 4th century AD bishop, seemed to agree with Origen's 'universalist' theology which comes from the Greek word *apokatastasis* (meaning universal restoration). People who agree with perspective often quote one of Peter's

sermons to Jews in Jerusalem to support their belief that all people will be 'restored' in the end:

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 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.”

Acts 3:19-21

Augustine was influenced by **Tyconius** who was an influential North African theologian. Augustine lived during the latter part of the 4th century and early part of the 5th century AD. He taught that the 'thousand years' in Revelation was 'symbolic' rather than an actual period of time. Augustine has had a profound impact on centuries of Christians being 'Amillennialists.' It has been a dominant eschatology of Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox, and many of the Reformed and other Protestant denominations. Some also believe in 'Post-Millennialism.' Many Christian historians

believe Post-Millennialism was responsible for much of the missionary emphasis of the 17th through 19th centuries. That was based on their belief that evangelizing the world would lead to Jesus Christ being able to reign on the Earth.

Rightly Dividing the Return of Christ

Eschatology is not an easy thing to understand, but I do recommend Christians spend time to make sure they are 'rightly dividing' the Word of Truth. Jesus is going to return when He's going to return, so we will all know one day which eschatological view is correct. The important thing, I believe, is that we agree that Jesus Christ will return to the Earth. To believe otherwise is to contradict too much of what is clearly presented in Scripture.

“And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” Acts 1:10-11

Next Time

Amillennialists believe that the 'Church' is 'Spiritual Israel.' That idea has led many large Christian denominations through the centuries to adopt a theory known as 'Replacement Theology.' What does that mean? I'll explain in the next part of our special series, Iran and Israel at War.

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®.
Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission.
All rights reserved.

Faith and Self Defense © 2026

Faith&SelfDefense