

What I would like to find out is whether there is anything suspect in any of the seven rules of interpretation that would give us the key to the whole hermeneutics on eschatology as passed on to Augustine

Dear ...

The Old Testament looks forward to two great hopes: to the coming of Christ to bear the sins of the world, and also to the coming of a long period of universal peace and happiness covering the entire earth. The New Testament lays great stress on another hope, which was very prominent in the minds of the apostles -- the hope of the personal return of Christ as something that could happen in our lifetimes and will bring us the great joy of seeing our Lord and Redeemer. The Book of Revelation shows how these two hopes fit together, with the return of Christ introducing His millennial reign. Thus premillennialism has two major points: 1. that there is to be a long period of universal peace and happiness upon this earth; 2. that the return of Christ is not something that cannot occur until the very end of such a period, but something that may occur very soon, and is therefore a very real and present hope for the Christian. If one holds these two basic points he is a premillennialist; if one does not he is not a premillennialist. Amillennialism holds one of them and denies the other; postmillennialism holds the other and denies the one. Thus premillennialism has two great foci, while each of the other views has only one. Although the other two are really opposite, they are often so presented that one would get the impression that they were really similar.

Anyone who holds to both of these great points and thus looks forward both to the personal coming of Christ and to His reign of joy and peace upon the earth is a premillennialist. People may take various views about other questions, such as the time of the rapture, but most of these views could actually fit as well with either a-millennialism or post-millennialism, as with premillennialism. They are not a part of the essential question. The same is true of the question whether God still has a place for Israel in His plan. While I have strong views on some of these other matters I do not consider them to be part of the discussion of premillennialism.