

P R E M I L L E N N I A L I S M



The Second Coming
of Christ

Charles R. Williams

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PREMILLENNIALISM

1. The Meaning and Definition of Premillennialism:

Premillennialism in its simplest terms means “before the millennium”.¹ Broken into its parts millennium comes from the Latin *mille*, meaning “thousand”, *annus*, meaning “year”. The term is used to designate the prophetic period of 1000 years of the triumph of the gospel, and consequently the supreme rule of Christ.² W. E. Blackstone, a propagator of premillennialism in the early part of the twentieth century defined it as a doctrine that holds much in common with the Jews.....that Jesus Christ as the Messiah is to return to the earth and overthrow Satan, all ungodly government and lawlessness, and establish a kingdom of righteousness, having the Church, with Himself as sovereign, Jerusalem as the capital, regathered and converted Israel as the center, and all nations included in a universal, world-wide kingdom of pure and blessed government.³

Some of the characteristics of the kingdom according to the premillennial view is as follows: (1) Christ will rule in person on earth from the throne of David in Jerusalem, (2) the kingdom involves the restoration of Israel to the land Palestine, and her exaltation over the nations of the earth, (3) the Gentiles will be blessed, and be a part of this kingdom, but they will be blessed through and in subservience to restored Israel, (4) the kingdom will be a theocracy in which church and state will be combined, and (5) the gospel will be preached, but the power of the sword, the coercive authority of government, will also be used to uphold the authority and reign of Christ.⁴

The doctrine of premillennialism further states that Christ came to earth the first time to set up the earthly kingdom of David in Jerusalem and to rule in His earthly body for a thousand years, but that He failed. He was defeated because the Jewish nation rejected Him. Because of His having failed in His promise to Christ, the seed of David, Christ is having to return to earth to undertake the correction of a failure at His first coming. Hence the doctrine that Christ is coming back to earth before this 1000 year reign of His begins on earth and hence the term premillennialism—“pre” meaning before, and “mille”

¹ E. R. Harper, The Last Days (Forth Worth, Texas: Forth Worth Christian Bookstore, 1968), P. 284.

² Walter L. Straub, Biblical Analysis (Rochester, Inc.: Christian Book Press, 1968), p. 215.

³ Idem.

⁴ James D. Bales, Prophecy and Premillennialism (Searcy, Arkansas: James D. Bales Publisher, 1972), p. 16.

meaning “one thousand”. But what about the “ism”? As brother Foy Wallace would say, “the ism just means it is not so.”⁵

H. Leo Boles in his debate with R. H. Boll, an advocate of premillennialism, presents the chief points of the theory as follows: (1) the kingdom of God is not yet in existence and will not be until Christ comes again, (2) the present dispensation of the gospel was not expected or intended to convert the world to Christianity, (3) the world is now growing worse and worse and will continue to do so until Christ comes, (4) His coming is always imminent, (5) Christ will first come and raise the righteous dead (the first resurrection) and transform the living saints, (6) He will catch them all up, both the dead and living saints, to meet Him in the air—this they call “the rapture”, (7) after the rapture there will be a period when God will pour out His judgments on the wicked—this they call the “tribulation”, (8) during the tribulation Christ and His saints are in the air hovering and when completed He and they will return to earth and bind Satan, and (9) He will then set up His kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital and the Jews back in Palestine to rule for a thousand years over a world-wide kingdom of holiness. After the millennium there will be a violent outbreak of wickedness, the wicked dead shall be raised—this is the second resurrection—and be judged. Then will come the end of the world.⁶

II. The Sources of the Premillennial Position:

Papias (born A. D. 80) is said to have derived the idea of premillennialism from tradition. In referring to him, Eusebius says:

The same historian also gives other accounts which he says he adds as received by him from unwritten tradition, likewise certain strange parables of our Lord, and of His doctrine, and some other matters rather too fabulous. In these he says there would be a certain millennium after the resurrection, and that there would be a corporal reign of Christ on this very earth; which things he appears to have imagined, as if they were authorized by apostolic narrations, not understanding correctly those matters which they propounded mystically in their representations, as is evident from his discourses; yet he *was the very cause why most of the ecclesiastical writers, urging the antiquity of man, were carried away by a similar opinion; as, for instance, Ireanaeus, or any other that adopted such sentiments.*⁷

⁵ Harper, *loc. cit.*

⁶ H. Leo Boles and R. H. Boll, *Unfulfilled Prophecy* (Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Company, 1954), pp. 332, 333.

⁷ Straub, *op. cit.*, p. 216

Hastings Cyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics states:

The Ebionites and Montanists also cherished millennial views of an unspiritual kind. With the latter, Christ was speedily to come and found an earthly kingdom of the saints in the New Jerusalem, which would descend visibly out of heaven and be established at Pepuza Phrygia. This would be the sign of Christ's coming...Montanists wished to separate believers from worldly affairs, and so prepare them for the kingdom by gathering them together in the region where Christ would have His seat.⁸

Tertullian (born A. D. 160) stated, "But we do confess that a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth, although before heaven, only in another state of existence...for a thousand years in the divinely built city of Jerusalem."⁹ Here, we begin to see the tradition set forth by Papias. Justin (A. D. 125) stated, "But I and others who are right minded Christians on all points, are assured there will be resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem."¹⁰

The idea of premillennialism, however, grew out of the allegorical method of interpretation. The Epistle of Barnabas (A. D. 119) gives us a good example:

The Sabbath is mentioned at the beginning of creation (thus): 'And God made in six days the works of His hands, and made an end on the seventh day, and rested on it, and sanctified it'. Attend, my children, to the meaning of this expression, 'He finished in six days'. That implieth that the Lord will finish all things in six thousand years, for a day is with Him a thousand years. And He Himself testifieth, saying, "Behold, today will be as a thousand years". Therefore, my children, in six days, that is, in six thousand years, all things will be finished.¹¹

The Premillennial theory seems also to have been coined out of Jewish conceptions of the kingdom promised before the Christ was born. The same ideas were injected later into the New Testament church by Jewish Christians.¹² Josephus attributed the millennium theory to a Jewish origin.¹³ Because of its Jewish origin the doctrine is found in apocryphal books by Jews and Jewish Christians. Among them are the following: the

⁸ Idem.

⁹ Ibid., p. 217

¹⁰ Idem.

¹¹ Idem.

¹² Ibid., p. 218

¹³ John M'Clintock, and James Strong, Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1969), Vol. VI., p. 264

“Twelve Patriarchs”, the “Books of Sibylline”, the Book of Enoch”, and in the works of Cerinthus.¹⁴ Justin admits that in his day there was much opposition to the theory and was never accepted throughout the early church. In his “Dialogue with Trypho”, (Chap. LXXX) he says:

And Trypho in this replied, ‘I remark to you, sir, that you are very anxious to be safe in all respects, since you cling to the Scriptures. But tell me, do you really admit that His place, Jerusalem, shall be rebuilt; and do you expect your people to be gathered together, and make joyful with Christ and the patriarchs, and the prophets, both the men of our nation, and other proselytes who joined them before your Christ came or have you given way, and admitted this in order to have the appearance of worsting us in the controversies’?

Then I answered, ‘I am not so miserable a fellow, Trypho as to say one thing and think another. I admitted to you formally that I and many others are of this opinion, and (believe) that such will take place, as you assuredly are aware; but, on the other hand, I signified to you that many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians, think otherwise.’¹⁵

Dr. Augustus Neander, a church historian, declares that the churches of the first half of the second century were generally unacquainted with the premillennial theory when it was launched by Papias. He says,

There, in the first half of the second century, lived Papias, bishop of the church in Hierapolis; a man, it is true, of sincere piety, but, as appears from the fragments of his writings, and from the accounts which we have of him of a narrow mind and easy credulity. He collected from oral traditions, certain narratives concerning the life and sayings of Christ and of the apostles; and among these he received a great deal that was misconceived and untrue. Thus by his means were diffused abroad many strange fantastic images of the enjoyments to be expected in the thousand years’ reign. The injurious consequence of all which was, to foster among Christians the taste of a gross sensual happiness, incompatible with the spirit of the gospel, and to give birth among the educated heathens to many a prejudice against Christianity.¹⁶

Dr. Neander also points out that Ireanaeus got the premillennial theology from Papias, Caius, the Alexandrian school, Origen, Dionysius, Jerome, Augustine and others opposed

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 265

¹⁵ Straub, *loc. cit.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 265

the theory with great vigor because of the lack of support from historical writings and evidence.¹⁷

III. The Basic Error of Premillennialism:

The doctrine of premillennialism as a whole is saying that the kingdom of God prophesied in the Old Testament has been postponed for a while.¹⁸ The kingdom which was at hand in Matthew 3:2 is yet to come.¹⁹ It was planned by God to be established at the coming of Christ and the introduction of the gospel age, but it failed. Richard Dehaan, another propagator of the theory states in his tract “The Second Coming of Christ,” “But God in His foreknowledge knew that Israel would reject the king when He came, and therefore the kingdom would be postponed, and not set up until His second coming”. He then adds, “They rejected the king, and now instead of the kingdom comes the Cross, the Resurrection, the setting aside of Israel, the calling out of the Church, and then after that will come the kingdom”.²⁰ In other words the church was and is a substitute until Christ can come again and be successful in setting up His kingdom.

W. Herschel Ford, a premillennialist, makes this statement about the second coming of Christ, “Some people think that everything will be over then, that the world will be burned and all the people will be gone. No, the world will still be here and millions of lost people will be here upon the earth. The true Church, which means all those who have been saved through faith in Christ, will have gone up on glory to be with Jesus. This will be the end of the age. The period of grace will be over, but this will not be the end of the world.”²¹

If this interpretation of the nature of the kingdom prophecies within the scriptures is correct, the Old Testament did not prepare for the New Testament, but for something which is to come after the end of the present, the church age. The doctrine is saying that the church age itself was not prophesied.²² The church was simply an after thought

¹⁷ M’Clintock, *loc. cit.*

¹⁸ Harper, *loc. cit.*

¹⁹ Bales, *loc. cit.*

²⁰ Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 285

²¹ W. Herschel Ford, *Seven Simple Sermons on the Second Coming*, Grand Rapids, Mich (Zondervan Publishing House, 1945), p. 36

²² Bales, *loc. cit.*

because of the lack of success by Christ and His word. R. H. Boll, another advocate of this doctrine, so wrote:

That the Gentiles were to be blessed in Messianic days was no mystery; that had been previously revealed. But the observant reader of the prophets will notice that it is always after the national restoration and exaltation of Israel, and always through restored Israel and in subservience to Israel that the Gentiles were to be so blessed. But Israel was not restored; yet the Gentiles are coming in, being admitted upon equal terms with Jews, to equal share and right with them of the promises. If we cannot appreciate this stunning blow to Jewish thought and faith, we are not able to understand the great conflict that arose.²³

In other words, the church age treats Jews and Gentiles on equal basis but the prophesied kingdom age will restore Israel as a nation and the Gentiles or other nations will enter subservient to them.

In a written discussion on the theme, H. Leo Boles debated the topic with R. H. Boll. In his rebuttal arguments on the restoration of Israel he points out John 4:21-24 where Jesus teaches the woman at the well that the time would come when Jerusalem would not be the center of worship. Jesus says: “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, or in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father”. Clearly and definitely the Savior here points to the time when Jerusalem should be no longer necessary to the successful worship of God and when mere locality should form no element in the true religion. One place will be as good as another to worship God.²⁴

The question is then did Jesus do what He came to do? Jesus states in Matthew 5:17-18 that He came to fulfill the law and the prophets. To put it succinctly, if the kingdom was prophesied, but not established, and if the church was not prophesied, but was established, Christ did not do what He came to do, ie. to fulfill the law and the prophets.²⁵ The Language of the premillennialists is saying that the New Testament, with all that perfected it, is not part of the Old Testament revealed promises. In this doctrine the church and the New Testament become an interim arrangement for a plan gone wrong,

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁴ Bolls, *op. cit.*, pp 30,31

²⁵ Bales, *op. cit.*, p. 17

giving the Lord time to rearrange His affairs and marshal His forces for a second trial to perform that which He tried so desperately to accomplish at His Son's first appearing.²⁶

IV. The Basis for the Error of Premillennialism:

No writer of the New Testament ever used the words "premillennial." The theory is based upon a false interpretation of selection of scripture, mainly Revelation 20: 1-10, which is highly symbolical, and allegorical.²⁷ "The theory of the millennium depends upon an interpretation of this scripture."²⁸ To get proof of the theory one is forced to take the position of being an infallible interpreter of unfulfilled prophecy, figures, symbols, and allegories.²⁹ The best that can be said about the millennium is that it is a theory which is based upon a school of interpretations. If it were not for the Revelation scripture about all that could be said about the doctrine is that it stands for a high disbelief in the prophetic scriptures of the Old Testament and the claims of the inspired writers of the New Testament.

The Bible has something to say about "a thousand years" in Revelation 20 but nothing about a thousand years reign on the earth. It says that Christ reigns, but the reign is not the reign of Christ. It is a peculiar and special reign of certain souls with Christ not of Christ. John's vision was of souls out of the body, not in the body, and those souls were of martyrs living and reigning with Christ in a particular and peculiar sense.³⁰

It should also be pointed out that John speaks of "they" rather than "we" and the action verbs "lived" and "reigned" are of past tense. The passage does not give a picture of Christ reigning over thousands of humans on earth but rather martyred souls living and reigning with Christ and no indication of where.³¹

Foy E. Wallace, Jr. presents the following chart to demonstrate what the scripture does not say, yet advocates of the doctrine attempt to prove or conclude from the scriptures:

²⁶ Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 285

²⁷ Bolls, *op. cit.*, p. 331

²⁸ Idem.

²⁹ Idem.

³⁰ Foy E. Wallace, Jr., God's Prophetic Word (Oklahoma City: Foy E. Wallace, Jr. Publication, 1960), p. 282

³¹ Ibid. p. 283

THINGS NOT MENTIONED IN REVELATION 20: 1-6

1. IT DOES NOT MENTION THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.
2. IT DOES NOT MENTION A BODILY RESURRECTION.
3. IT DOES NOT MENTION A REIGN ON EARTH.
4. IT DOES NOT MENTION LITERAL THRONE (OF DAVID).
5. IT DOES NOT MENTION JERUSALEM OR PALESTINE.
6. IT DOES NOT MENTION US.
7. IT DOES NOT MENTION CHRIST ON EARTH.³²

At the bottom of the chart Mr. Wallace points out that John concludes the Book of Revelation with a warning to anyone who adds to the words of this book. He also makes the same point as H. Leo Boles by saying:

“Jesus said that Jerusalem is not the place where men should worship, but they want to put it there. He said that His kingdom is not of the world, but they want to put it here and make it of the world. Can the millennialists consistently say that though it mentions none of these things, it teaches all of them?”³³

The millennialists main problem with Revelation is their inconsistency in figurative and literal language. It's figurative when it doesn't fit in their theory and literal when it does. Mr. Wallace says, however, that one author of a book that dealt with the theory regarded all of it as literal. He asks,

“Take a look at all that—literal horses, literal swords, literal rods of iron, literal wine press, literal did they say? Then literal buzzards—fowls eating the literal flesh of kings! All of that literal? Then a literal angel coming down with a literal chain to literally bind the literal dragon! And the literal body of the dragon literally filled the whole earth. His literal tail reached to the literal heavens and literally plucked the stars of the heaven out of their literal orbits.”³⁴

If the dragon filled the whole earth how could he be put in a pit, tail and all? If the literal pit was literally bottomless would it after all be a pit? If he filled the literal earth and yet a hole is dug in the ground to seal him up where did they throw the dirt? Mr. Wallace says, “I have heard of the West Texas sand storms that fill the sky so full of sand that

³² Ibid. p. 284

³³ Idem.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 285

prairie dogs dig holes in the air! Is that the way it is here?”³⁵ There are over twenty figures of speech in Revelation 20. Which are literal and which are figurative?

One of the key phrases of Revelation 20 is in verse five where John defines the thousand year reign as “the first resurrection.” Those who take part in it will be blessed and holy, the second death will have no power over them, and they shall be priests during that reign. Foy E. Wallace, Jr. believes this to be a spiritual or figurative resurrection. He quotes Ezekiel 37:1-14 which speaks of a figurative resurrection of Israel out of the land of captivity back to their home land, and Isaiah 26:13-19 which speaks of a figurative death of wicked kings and lords and the figurative resurrection of the dead who were in bondage and persecuted captivity. Their coming out of captivity was spoken of as figurative resurrection. Another example given in Romans 11:15 where Paul speaks of the Jews converted to Christ under the gospel as a spiritual resurrection.³⁶

A good comparison verse in the Book of Revelation is chapter two, verse eleven: “He that overcometh shall not be hurt by the second death”. To have part in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5) and to overcome tribulation as a Christian provides equal exemption, the second death will have no power in reference to them. When one becomes a member of the body of Christ by being buried in baptism into Christ’s death, it is spoken of as a resurrection. Romans chapter six gives to us great detail on the symbolism and results involved in baptism. A few of these statements are as follows: “baptized into death...buried with Him by baptism...like as Christ was raised from the dead...so we also should walk in newness of life...if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection...if we have died with Christ, we shall also live with Him” Rom. 6:3-8. Those who have part in the first resurrection shall be priests of God and of Christ. 1 Peter 2:5 and Revelation 1:6 speaks of Christians as members of Christ’s kingdom and His priests in the present tense.

C. H. Roberson in his commentary on Revelation compares John 5:25 and John 5:28. In John 5:25, Jesus says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that live shall hear”, and in the 28th verse He continues, “Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are

³⁵ Idem.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 289

in the tombs shall hear His voice, and they shall come forth”. The first represents a present (now is) coming forth from the grave and the latter a future coming forth from the tombs. The first is spiritual resurrection and the second a bodily one. The first, therefore, compares to the “first resurrection” of Revelation 20, a resurrection “from death of sin unto a life of righteousness”. It admits men into the kingdom of Christ, the church, within which the power of the Devil is restrained. This state of things will last throughout the whole course of the present dispensation which is symbolically described as a thousand years, a complete or long length of time.³⁷

V. The Scriptures and Premillennialism:

The writer of Hebrews says that God spoke to the fathers in times past by the prophets, (Heb. 1:1). God’s word is true; therefore, it must harmonize with itself. The prophecies of the Old Testament, including those that pointed to the Messiah and His rule, are part of His word of truth; therefore, they also harmonize with each other. If our way or manner of interpretation of the prophecies results in one prophecy contradicting another, we know that we have misunderstood one or both of the prophecies. The interpretation we seek, therefore, must harmonize with what is clearly taught in the Testaments.³⁸

One of, if not the earliest scriptures which points to and promises Christ’s coming is Genesis 3:15. The promise is made that the seed of woman (Eve) would bruise the head of Satan. In Genesis 22:18 the promise was made that through this seed God would “bless all nations”. We find in 1 Samuel 7: 12-13 that this seed was to be given the throne of His father David and “build for the name of the Lord a house”. The apostle Paul identifies this seed as Christ in Galatians 3:16. In Acts 2:30, the apostle Peter forever settles the truthfulness of this promise when he said that “God had raised up Christ—this seed—to sit on his (David’s) Throne”. This seed argument when traced fully to its conclusion is a death-knell to every premillennial argument that can be made.³⁹

³⁷ Charles Heber Roberson, *Studies in the Revelation* (Tyler, Texas: The Manney Company, 1957), pp. 164, 165

³⁸ Bales, *op. cit.*, p. 66

³⁹ Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 286

Dr. James Bales gives the following passages for study which speak of the kingdom; First it was prophesied that Christ would reign on David's throne, (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Acts 2:30); second, it was prophesied that Christ would rule in heaven at God's right hand. (Psa. 110:1-4); third, the rule of the divine-human king on David's throne, (Isa. 9:6-7); fourth, it was prophesied that David would reign over God's people, (Ezek. 37: 24-27); fifth, one everlasting kingdom, (Dan. 2:44); sixth, one last day's dispensation, (Acts 2:16-17); seventh, one final and sufficient new covenant, (Jer. 31: 31-34); and eighth, one system of realities, (Heb. 10:1).⁴⁰ In these prophecies we see the type and anti-type. David on his throne ruling over united Israel was a type of Christ on His throne ruling over His united kingdom, spiritual Israel. David the king was a type of Christ the King. The anti-type or substance is superior to the type or shadow; therefore, Christ and His throne are superior to David and his throne as the scripture so states.⁴¹ This brings to mind the scripture where Jesus asked the question, "How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool'? If David then called Him Lord, how is He his son"? The answer is that David was a type of what the Lord Jesus Christ was to be, a king on the throne of the kingdom of God. Peter quotes this in Acts 2:25-26 to demonstrate that this prophecy had come to pass.

One needs to see and realize that a prophecy does not have to be literally fulfilled in order to be actually fulfilled. In other word, Christ does not have to reign on David's literal throne in order to reign on the actual throne which David's throne typified and promised. Though prophesied, Jesus was not a literal shoot or stock of David or literal lamb before shearers. Each has an actual meaning, but not a literal meaning.⁴² It should be remembered that David never had a throne in his own right, but rather he was God's temporal ruler over the Jews and Christ was promised that throne in a spiritual reign. (Luke 1:30-32).⁴³

Christ was promised but one reign and according to the scriptures He now reigns and rules at God's right hand, (Psa. 110:1-4; Acts 2:34-36). It therefore leaves no room for

⁴⁰ Bales, *loc. cit.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.67

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 67, 68

⁴³ C. R. Nichol, Sound Doctrine (Clifton, Texas: The Nichol Publishing Company, 1952), Vol. 5, pp. 129, 130

another reign, for it lasts until after whatever the thousand years signifies in Revelation 20. It continues until death is conquered, and death is not conquered until it and Hades are cast into the lake of fire. This is to come after the thousand years; therefore, whatever the thousand years represents, it comes within the present reign of Christ, (1 Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 20: 11-21:5).⁴⁴

The basic prophecy of the kingdom is found in 1 Samuel 7:12-13 when Nathan said to David, “When your days are fulfilled and thou shalt sleep with thy father, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish His kingdom...forever”. Nathan states that the kingdom would be set up then, not after David’s resurrection. Isaiah 2:2-4 prophesies, “It shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains...” This prophecy is repeated in Micah 4:1-2 and according to Daniel 2:35-44, 46 mountain stands for government. This kingdom was to be established in the last days while the “nations on earth were still in existence” so that they could “flow into it”, and it was to begin in the city of Jerusalem. Daniel describes four kings or kingdoms to be established. During the fourth kingdom (Roman Empire) Christ would build His kingdom and reign forever.⁴⁵

In Daniel 7:13-14 is an undeniable passage of what took place at the ascension of Christ. The question is when Christ ascended upon high as described in Acts 1, did God make good this promise or did He fail Him? If Christ came to die on a cross in 30 and 3 years, be buried and raised the third day, remain on earth only forty days and then ascend back to heaven to be presented before God to receive dominion, glory, and a kingdom, then for certain He did not come to live and reign on earth on a literal throne in His flesh for a literal thousand years. This is all one really needs to refute the entire premillennial reign of Christ.⁴⁶

First, we see Christ’s death prophesied in Isaiah 53: 7-9. Acts 8:31-35, 37 proves this scripture to be speaking about Christ and His being put to death. The fleshly death of Christ was not a surprise to the Father or the Son. His resurrection is prophesied in Psalm 16:10 and applied to Christ in Acts 2: 25-32. His resurrection was not an after-thought so

⁴⁴ Bales, *op. cit.*, p. 69

⁴⁵ Harper, *op. cit.*, pp. 298, 299

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 292

He could come back later and set up a kingdom. He thought the Jews would accept Him but instead they rejected Him. After His resurrection He still spoke of the kingdom in Acts 1:3. In Mark 9:1, Jesus promised the kingdom would come with power. That power is identified as the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:5-8 and that power is stated as having come in Acts 2:1-4 on the day of Pentecost, the day the church was built.

Referring again to Daniel 7:13, 14 we find the same description, in principle, as the kingdom of Daniel 2:44. It should “never be destroyed”, and it should “stand forever”. The kingdom of Christ was to be built during the time of the Roman Empire existence, not afterwards.⁴⁷

The premillennialists see the prophesied kingdom of Christ as literal and of the world, but Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” (John 18:36). E. R. Harper poses these questions in reflection on the later events of the life of Christ on this earth:

Why did the Father allow Christ to come preaching ‘The time is full-filled and the kingdom of God is at hand’, and throughout His entire ministry continues preaching this same message? Why lead Him to the cross still preaching it, even at the last Passover, telling His disciples He would not eat it again until He ate it anew with them in the kingdom, And then promising them a kingdom where they may eat the supper with Him in His Kingdom, if God knew this was not true?⁴⁸

If premillennialism be right, then under the direction of the Holy Spirit the apostle Paul stole the supper from the kingdom of Christ and placed it in the church, an entirely different institution.⁴⁹

In Matthew 21:33-45 Jesus gives a parable describing how the Jews would reject Christ and His kingdom. This parable answers once and for all the premillennial cry that He could not establish the kingdom because the Jews of Israel rejected Him. In the parable the householder is Christ, the vineyard is Israel, and the husbandmen who became wicked are the Jews of Israel. After the parable is spoken, Jesus makes the following statement; “Did ye never read the scriptures, the stone which the builders rejected, the same became the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 294

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 297

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 298

marvelous in our eyes? Therefore, say I unto you the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to another nation bringing forth the fruit thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken but whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind them to powder”, (Matt. 21:42-44). Matthew then says in verse forty-five, “They (the Pharisees) perceived that He spake of them”. The apostle Peter spake of Christ as a rejected stone of stumbling and rock of offense to the Jews, (1 Peter 2:4-9; 1:9-12).⁵⁰

VI. The Kingdom Established:

The prophecies of a kingdom, a new covenant, a new name, and a new people made up of many nations in Isaiah 2, Micah 2, Joel 2, and Daniel 2 were to be fulfilled in the last days. The apostle Peter in Acts 2:16 stated that those miracles and actions taking place on Pentecost before the eyes of thousands “is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel...in the last day”. Peter declares that Christ had been crucified in fulfillment of Isaiah 53 and raised in fulfillment of Psalms 16. Peter then begins in verse 29 to relate the promised kingdom established as prophesied in 2 Samuel 7:12-13. But what is Peter’s conclusion? Listen to it in Acts 2:36, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ”.

Paul declared Christ to be King of Kings, 1 Tim. 6:15, cf. Rev. 17:14. Paul further stated in Col. 1:13, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son”. When Phillip preached to the Samaritans, he preached “things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ...” Acts 8:12. John in his opening remarks in the Book of Revelation speaks of those who had been washed in the blood of Christ, made kings and priests unto God, and were companions in tribulation with John in the kingdom. These words are then addressed to the seven churches of Asia, (Rev. 1:5, 6, 11, 12). The kingdom had been established as promised.

Premillennialists deny the church to be the kingdom because the two words do not mean the same. R. L. Whiteside quotes Ira C. Moore, a premillennialist, to prove their belief in this respect. But Mr. Whiteside points out correctly that these are word

⁵⁰ Harper, *op. cit.*

descriptions of different functions of the same institution. One person can be a man, husband, father, citizen, author, and president all at the same time yet each word has a different meaning. Apostle, Author, Shepherd, Bishop, Bread of life, Bridegroom, Star, Captain, Christ, Corner Stone, Counselor, Governor, Head, High Priest, King, Master, Mediator, Prophet, Physician, Etc. apply to one being yet they differ in meaning.⁵¹

VII. The Consequences of Premillennialism:

The premillennial view of the kingdom results in the position that the church which was not at hand came into hand, and the kingdom which was at hand finally got out of hand. The prophesied kingdom was not established, but the unprophesied church was established. But there are simply too many scriptures to disclaim the church was the prophesied, and since only one kingdom was prophesied then the church and the kingdom are the same.⁵² Some of these scriptures are as follows: (Luke 24:25-27), (Eph. 2:13-16), (Matt. 16:15-19), (Acts 2:40-47; Acts 2:34-38), (John 3:1-5; Col. 1:13,14), (Rom. 6:2-5; Gal. 3:26-27), (Psa. 110:1-2; 1Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 20:11-21; Acts 2:16-17), (Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; Matt. 1:20-25; Rom. 1:1-4), (Rom. 7:1-6; Heb. 7:11-19), (Col. 2:14-17; Heb. 10:1), (1 Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 20:11-21:5), and (Acts 15:13-19; Amos 9:11, 12). If Christ is to establish a kingdom, in which Israel will be restored to the land and exalted over the nations of the earth, why are there no New Testament prophesies of such a kingdom?⁵³

Those who preach and teach the doctrine must face the consequence of their doctrine. In summary they deny that Christ is reigning now, (Rev. 1:5-6, 5:8). They annul this dispensation as last days, (Heb. 1:2; Acts 2:16, 17). They make God false to His promises, (Mark 1:14, 15; 9:1). They minimize the gospel and belittle the church, (Eph. 3:9-11). They nullify salvation to Gentiles now, (Acts 15:14-18). They demote Christ from His throne in heaven to the earth His footstool, (Heb. 1:3-13). Finally they make the first coming of Christ a failure.⁵⁴

⁵¹ R. L. Whiteside, Kingdom of Promise and Prophecy (Denton, Texas: The Manney Company, 1956), pp. 166, 167.

⁵² Bales, op. cit., p. 94

⁵³ Ibid., p. 183

⁵⁴ Wallace, op. cit., p. 349

APPENDIX

THE COMING SEQUENCE OF EVENTS IN PREMILLENNIALISM

The next coming event on God's Timetable of prophecy according to the premillennialists is the RAPTURE. The word Rapture (to be "caught up") does not appear in the Bible. It is used, however, to describe the event of 1 Thess. 4:14-17 in which believers are "caught up" to be with Christ at His Second Coming.

The RAPTURE refers to the time prior to the start of the 7 year Tribulation Period, when believing Christians (both dead and alive) will "in the twinkling of an eye" rise up to meet Christ in the air.

After the Rapture will come the TRIBULATION. This will be a 7 year period, following the Rapture, of phenomenal world trial and suffering. It is at this time that Antichrist will reign over a federation of 10 nations which quite possibly can include the United States. (Daniel 9:27; Matt. 24:21).

JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST. Here the believers raptured into heaven will stand before their Lord to receive crowns and rewards. Their sins have already been paid for at the cross (11 Cor. 5:10).

BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON. This will occur at the end of the 7 year Tribulation Period when the Lord Jesus Christ comes down from Heaven and wipes out the combined armies of more than 200 million men. The blood bath covers over 185 miles of Israel (Rev. 14:20).

JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS. After Armageddon Christ will personally inaugurate upon the earth His earthly Kingdom Reign. The people from all nations who have survived the Tribulation will be judged individually as to whether or not they may enter

Christ's Kingdom (Matt. 25:31-46). At this time the surviving unsaved, non-believers are judged before God, and the wicked are expelled from off the earth into hell, where they will await the final Judgment Day (Rev. 20:11-15). The righteous, however, with joy will be permitted to enter the promised millennial kingdom.

RESURRECTION OF THE TRIBULATION SAINTS. Those who have accepted Christ during the Tribulation will be raised from the dead by the close of the Tribulation's 7 years as part of the First Resurrection (Dan. 12:1-2 and Rev. 20).

DISPOSITION OF EVIL ONES. During this same time period...Antichrist and the False Prophets are thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:1-3).

MILLENNIAL ("1000 Years") REIGN OF CHRIST. When all the believers of all the ages reign with Christ. Christ will reign on this earth and Old Testament promised Kingdom prophecies of world peace will at last come true. (Isaiah 11 and Rev. 20).

THE FINAL REBELLION. At the end of the millennium Satan will have a brief and last opportunity to deceive people. You must remember that many will be born during the Millennial period. Millions will follow Satan. This horde of perhaps millions of people will completely encircle the Believers and encompass Jerusalem in a state of siege. When this occurs, God brings fire down from Heaven killing the millions of Satan's army (Rev. 20).

GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT. This is when the unsaved, non-believers are judged before God and condemned forever to the Lake of Fire. Both living and dead unsaved are judged here. Those previously dead up to this point, have already been in hell in torment, awaiting this final Judgment Day (Rev. 20:11-15).

EARTH BURNS UP. To purify this earth God sets it afire with a fervent heat. (11 Pet. 3:7, 10).

THE NEW HEAVEN and the NEW EARTH. All Christians finally reach the ultimate in glory reigning forever with Christ in a new heaven and a new, purged earth (Rev. 21).

The above statements were taken from:

Questions Frequently Asked me on Prophecy by Salem Kirban.

Moody Press, Chicago: 1972 pp. 48-49

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Premillennialists do not agree, however, on the order of events. It is not just a matter of unclear texts in the Bible, but the absence of scriptures to support their theories which gives them problems. Notice the following statement from the Second Coming by Ralph Earle:

The Rapture is a term commonly used to designate the coming of Christ for His church, or the rising of the saints “to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess. 4:17). When will this take place? Three answers are given to this question. The most popular view today is the pre-tribulation rapture; that is, Christ will come for His Church just before the great tribulation begins. So the saints will escape the awful sufferings of those days. In recent years, an increasing number of evangelicals have expressed their belief in a post-tribulation rapture: the church will be on earth during the great tribulation. In between these two is the view of a mid-tribulation rapture: just as the Israelites suffered in the first plagues on Egypt, so the Church will share in the sufferings of the early part of the tribulation period. This is really a modification of the pre-tribulation view, and it has been held by some very astute Bible expositors. It certainly has much to commend it. One advantage is that it escapes most of the strong objections leveled at both the other views.

Two factual observations need to be made. The first is that all three of these views are a part of Premillennialism. Those who hold to a post-tribulation rapture are just as much pre-millennialists as those who hold to a pre-tribulation rapture. Both believe that Christ will come before the millennium. -- Pre-tribulationists differentiate between “the rapture” – Christ coming for His Church before the great tribulation -- and “The Revelation” -- Christ coming with His Church after the tribulation. They hold that the rapture is described in 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and 1 Cor. 15:52-54, and the Revelation in 11 Thess. 2. This explains the different points of view in the two Thessalonian passages.

Post-tribulationists identify these as one event. They claim that the New Testament does not teach that there will be two phases to the Second Coming – the rapture before the great tribulation and the revelation after the tribulation – separated by three and a half years or by seven years, depending on whether one is a mid-tribulationist or a pre-tribulationist.

The other factual observation is this: The teaching of a pre-tribulation rapture seems first to have been emphasized widely about 100 years ago by John Darby of the Plymouth Brethren. It was popularized in the United States by the Scofield Bible, which became the Bible of the Fundamentalists.

Mr. Earle states that the well-informed Christian will recognize that each of these three views is held today by equally devout students of the Word. He says that Christ-like Christians will show respect for the adherents of all three. The fact of the matter is, if one shows respect for pre-millennial teachings, he shows disrespect for the church as the kingdom of Christ in this present age.

Mr. Earle also says the majority of evangelicals are premillennialists, but that this was not always so. He says it is only in the present generation that Premillennialism has become dominant among evangelicals.

The above statements were taken from:

Second Coming by Ralph Earle

Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan

1970; pp. 73-73; 76-78

THEORY OF PREMILLENNIALISM

1. A great nation would be developed out of the seed of Abraham.
2. Canaan would be given to them as an everlasting possession.
3. Christ was to come of the seed of David, sit on David's Throne, and thru Israel as a sovereign nation the Gentiles would be blessed.
4. This end God purposed and promised, and the prophets spoke regarding. John and Jesus announced a material kingdom to be established in connection with the Lord's first coming.
5. Jesus came to establish this material kingdom but the Jews rejected Him. He therefore was prevented from doing that which He intended to do.
6. Instead of establishing the kingdom which He came to establish He substituted the church; He established the church. The church was contingent—occurred by accident. Was not intended by God in Old Testament prophesies.
7. The church is designed to develop Gentile rulers or leaders for the millennium.
8. After the church age, when a sufficient number of Gentile rulers have been prepared, several things will take place.
 - (1) The Lord will come for His saints—Rapture—bumper stickers: “Caution: this car will be driverless at the rapture.
 - (2) The dead saints will be raised.
 - (3) The living saints will be transferred and return with the Lord.
 - (4) Marriage feasts will take place, ruling assignments made; Mayor of Atlanta, etc.
 - (5) The Roman Empire will be re-established and tribulation will take place.
 - (6) The Jews will be miraculously converted and miraculously transported back to Palestine.
 - (7) The temple worship will be restored.
9. With everything now in readiness for His kingdom, the Lord will come with His saints—seven years since He came “for” saints.
10. He will then establish His literal, earthly, material, physical kingdom and literally reign for a literal 1,000 years on literal Mt. Moriah, on the literal earth, in literal Jerusalem, on David's literal throne.

11. At the end of 1,000 years Satan will be loosed and will deceive man, the wicked will be raised, judged, and cast into the lake of fire, and saints will be taken to heaven to stay.

The Bible shows that the Lord will not return to this earth—1 Thess. 4:13-18, but will meet the saints in the air.

A blasphemous doctrine – against Christ, His church.

If he sets his foot on earth,
He will cease being our priest
but he is to be our priest
“forever” after the order of
Melchizedec.

Heb. 7:1-28; 8:1-8

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