

"The Consequences of Premillennialism"

INTRODUCTION

There are different kinds of premillennialists, but whether they be historic or dispensational in their views, all of them agree that after the second coming of Christ, He will reign upon this earth for one thousand years before the final judgment. This teaching must not be regarded as harmless and merely speculative. It is a system of error and must therefore be dealt with accordingly. As other writers in this special series will be dealing with the doctrine itself, this treatise will be more concerned with its logical consequences.

The Scriptures teach that the church was built by Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18), was purchased by His precious blood (Acts 20:28), is revealed in the New Testament and originated in the mind of God. It was eternally purposed by God (Ephesians 3:11) and designed to be a part of God's redemptive plan for man (Ephesians 5:23). A distinguishing phase of premillennialism, however, is the view that the establishment of the church was not prophesied in the Old Testament. The idea is that the kingdom was foretold by Old Testament prophets and was announced by John the Baptist and by Christ, but because the Jews rejected Christ (the Messiah) it was postponed and the church was devised to serve as a substitute or contingent. The period in which we are now living is "the church age," and is to continue until Christ comes again. Then there will follow the establishment of the old Jewish kingdom, at which time Jesus will occupy the literal throne of David in Jerusalem where He will reign for one thousand years. During this millennium the temple will be rebuilt, and even the Levitical sacrifices of the Old Testament will be re-established. This is the general structure of the premillennial view, and their distinction between the kingdom and the church is clear.

(1) IT MINIMIZES THE CHURCH

The premillennial position makes the church a mere accident which is diametrically the opposite of what Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:11. He declared that it was "according to the eternal purpose of God." A serious consequence of the premillennial doctrine is that it destroys faith in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

R.H. Boll of Louisville, Kentucky, was the leader of the premillennial movement among churches of Christ. He referred to the church as "a new spiritual

contingent" (Word and Work, March, 1938). The word "contingent" means "a happening by chance or unforeseen causes" (Webster's Seventh Collegiate Dictionary, p. 180). According then, to the premillennial theory, had it not been for the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews, the old literal kingdom of David would have been re-established and the church would never have been brought into existence. Who can believe that the church, purchased by His Son's blood and filled with His Spirit, is accidental or by chance?

In the first place, the Old Testament prophets never foretold an earthly king nor an earthly kingdom. The Jews, including the apostles, were expecting a restoration of the literal kingdom of Israel (Acts 1:6) as are the modern-day premillennialists; but Jesus did not come to establish a literal and earthly kingdom. The kingdom He established began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the reign of Jesus is spiritual (I Corinthians 15:25, 26) and the very nature of the kingdom is spiritual (John 18:36; Romans 14:17). The terms "church" and "kingdom" are used interchangeable in the New Testament (Matthew 16:18,19), and to be in the kingdom is to be in the church (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:9). Jesus is the head of the church (Colossians 1:18) and rules over His kingdom (I Corinthians 15:25, 26; Revelation 1:6). The idea that the kingdom was postponed because of rejection by the Jews, and the church is an interruption" ("a parenthesis" as expressed by H.A. Ironside) was fathered by J.N. Darby in the latter part of the nineteenth century. He insisted that the church is distinctly not a part of God's initial redemptive plan (Clarence C. Bass, Backgrounds of Dispensationalism, p. 27). This idea is generally believed by modern premillennialists. It was promoted in churches of Christ by R.H. Boll (as previously mentioned), and is popularized by C.I. Scofield in the publication of his Bible with premillennial notes. The church was not only in the mind of God (Eph. 3:11) but is spiritual Israel, fulfilling in Christ the promise to Abraham (Galatians 3). It manifests the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10), is a part of the "mystery" (the divine plan of redemption, vs. 6), and will remain as long as the earth shall endure (vs. 21).

(2) IT MINIMIZES THE GOSPEL

Since the church is a part of the divine "mystery" (Ephesians 3:5, 6), if the church is minimized, then so is the gospel; because the gospel is revelation of the "mystery." It reveals the salvation of man in the church; therefore, to minimize one is to minimize the other.

(3) IT NULLIFIES GOD'S PROMISE

Both John the Baptist and Jesus preached that the kingdom was at hand (Matthew 3:2; 4:17). "At hand" is from the Greek word *engizo*, and is translated "nigh" or "near." But if the kingdom was postponed, these prophecies failed and God would not be true to His promise. The result would be that what Jesus preached was not the gospel of the kingdom (Mark 1:14,15), for the kingdom did not come. Multitudes had responded in good faith that the kingdom would come. If it did not come, then God was not true to His promise. It should be noted also that not one word was uttered about national repentance being the condition that the kingdom would come. Furthermore, if God did not know that the kingdom would be postponed when He made His promise, then God would not be omniscient. God announced something that he did not know would be postponed. And, if the kingdom was postponed, then the veracity of Jesus would be impeached because He promised that which did not come. Remember, that He even said that some living then would not die before they would "*see the kingdom of God come with power*" (Mark 9:1). Who can believe that God and Jesus made a false promise? Such is the serious consequence of premillennialism.

(4) IT MAKES THE GREAT COMMISSION VOID

Jesus said that all power was given to Him in heaven and on earth, and that His apostles were to teach all nations (Matthew 28:18, 19). Premillennialists contend that the "nations" referred to by Jesus at the judgment (Matthew 25:31,32) does not mean the Jews, but rather the Gentiles. They think the "nations" mean the Gentiles as distinguished from Israel. But the commission says go and teach "all the nations." If the term "nations" never refers to Jews, then Peter was preaching in vain to the Jews on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. The consequence is that the great commission is nullified as far as the Jew is concerned. Where is the commission for the Jew? There is none, if this contention is correct. And, if Jesus does not exercise all power now, then the great commission is nullified. As to the contention that "nations" refer only to the Jews, is a mistake to begin with; because the Greek word *ethnos* that is translated "nations" in Matthew 25:32 is also the same form which appears in Luke 24:47 and Acts 17:26. In both verses the context itself shows that all races are referred to -- all men and not only Gentiles. Luke 24:47 is fulfilled in Acts 2 when repentance and remission of sins were preached "in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." The preaching at that time was to Jews; therefore, Jews are included in "all nations." The gospel is God's power to save everyone who obeys it, Jews and Gentiles alike (Romans 1:16).

(5) IT DENIES "THE LAST DAYS"

Premillennialists deny that we are now living in "the last days." They refer to this present period as "the church age" and "the last days" will not begin until after the return of Jesus from heaven. According to them, there is to be a literal one thousand years after the days called the last ones. But Peter identified the time of "the last days" when he declared on the day of Pentecost, "*but this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel: And it shall be in the last days...*" (Acts 2:16, 17). Jesus came at the end of the Jewish dispensation (Hebrews 1:1) and the day of Pentecost inaugurated the period known as "the last days," the age in which we are now living. Peter was referring to this present age, not the end of time, when he referred to "the last days" in II Peter 3:2. Mockers would occur throughout this present age. Paul speaks of "later times" in I Timothy 4:1, referring to this present age when some, would "*fall away from the faith*"; and then gave specific examples of how they would do so. There is a difference between the expressions "the last day" and "the last days." Last days mean this present dispensation, whereas "the last day" means the end of it. All the dead are to be raised (both the righteous and the wicked): when Jesus comes the second time (John 5:28,29). This will take place on "the last day" (John 6:44). Here we simply observe that if it is the last day, there cannot be 365,000 more to follow. Note also that the righteous and the wicked will be raised together, at the same time; therefore, there can be no intervening interval of one day between the resurrection of the two classes, much less an interval of 365,000 days as claimed by the premillennialists.

(6) IT DEMOTES JESUS FROM HIS THRONE

When Jesus ascended to heaven, He occupied His throne, which is said to be forever (Heb. 1:8). But premillennialists claim that Jesus is not on His throne, but on His Father's throne. Hebrews 1:3 and 8:1 declare that He is on the right hand of the majesty "on high" and "in the heavens." This earth is now His footstool (Isaiah 66:1; Acts 7:49); so premillennialism demotes Jesus by bringing Him down to sit upon a literal, carnal, temporal and dilapidated throne on earth. It would bring Him down to His footstool.

That premillennialism demotes Christ, we consider Acts 2:30-32 where Peter said that Jesus was raised up to sit on David's throne. He sits and rules not only upon His throne but also upon David's throne. It is on this throne that He now reigns as Lord of lords and King of kings, and He will continue to reign until He has put the last enemy under His feet (I Corinthians 15:25). R.H. Boll is quoted as saying that "Jesus Christ is King de jure et potentia, but not King de facto et

actu" (Latin, king by right but not in fact and in act) (See N.B. Hardeman, *Tabernacle Sermons*, Vol. 4, p. 162; Boles-Boll Discussion, p. 174-75). So, according to this position, rather than Jesus being actually King in fact now; He only rules with the expectation of being King, consequently assuming more the role of a crown prince. It virtually denies that Jesus is, in reality or in fact, reigning now. But in Revelation. 1:5,6 we are said to be a kingdom of priests, and we are now reigning with Him on earth (Revelation 5:9,10). Notice that we were made a kingdom (past tense) and we reign upon the earth (present tense). This present reign with Christ began when He ascended into heaven and will continue until His second coming. This will be the end when the kingdom is returned to the Father (I Corinthians 15:20-25).

(7) IT DENIES SALVATION TO GENTILES

Israel became an established kingdom in 1053 B.C. Then the kingdom divided in 931 B.C. Two tribes remained with the house of David (tabernacle of David) and his seed continued on the throne until 586 B.C., when Zedekiah was dethroned. Amos prophesied that the tabernacle of David would be rebuilt (Amos 9:11). Jesus is of the seed of David and He was raised up to sit on the throne of David (Acts 2:30-32). This is a fulfillment of 2 Samuel 7:12. David had prophesied that, "of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon this throne" (Acts 2:30). Why was the tabernacle of David to be rebuilt? The answer is given in Acts 15:13-17, "*that the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called.*" This is quoted from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Premillennialists say that the tabernacle of David will not be rebuilt until Christ returns, and will be set up on earth. But the tabernacle of David was rebuilt that the Gentiles might seek the Lord. We insist, therefore, that if Jesus Christ is not on David's throne now, then there is no promise of any Gentile being saved now. The tabernacle of David exists in the church. Christ is on David's throne in heaven, not on earth. We stress that if the tabernacle, or lineage of David, has not been restored, then Gentiles do not have the privilege of seeking the Lord. Some consequences of premillennialism are that the Jews are not included in the great commission, the Gentiles cannot seek the Lord and, thus, the redeeming purpose and power of the gospel are destroyed.

CONCLUSION

The consequences of premillennialism are many and we have considered but a few. **Premillennialists make the same mistake as did the Jews, when they expected Jesus to be a king like Caesar.** The whole system is materialistic because it anticipates an earthly, temporal regime of an earthly millennium.

Jesus accomplished all that He came to do, and His mission is complete (John 17:4). We are not looking for an earthly millennium but an eternal heaven.

REVIEW: THE CONSEQUENCES OF PREMILLENNIALISM

- 1) It Minimizes the Church**
- 2) It Minimizes the Gospel**
- 3) It Nullifies God's Promise**
- 4) It Makes the Great Commission Void**
- 5) It Denies "The Last Days"**
- 6) It Demotes Jesus From His Throne**
- 7) It Denies Salvation To Gentiles**

God's Plan for Man's Salvation