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Premillennialism

Today there was much to be said about the end of the world being near, the rapture and the 1000 year reign. The Sun and other tabloids have headlines on their cover regarding the second coming of Christ based on the Middle East crisis. This is not a new doctrine, but it seems with the world events many theories have been put forth based upon the millennium. The word *millennium* is derived from two Latin words: *mille*, meaning "a thousand" and *annus*, meaning "year." Therefore, millennium means a thousand years. Its English equivalent, "a thousand years" is found six times in Revelation 20:1-7. If you will open your Bible and read that passage you will know all there is to know in scripture about the millennium.

There are many questions that make this a controversial subject as people have different interpretations of Revelation 20:1-7, hence different ideas about the millennium have arisen. One of the most popular of those theories centers on the premillennium theory.

In this series of studies, we hope to cover what the Bible teaches on the subjects of tribulation, rapture, antichrist, battle of Armageddon, etc. and determine if the world are signs that Jesus' return is near and if He's going to establish a reign of peace here on the earth?

Before we focus on the idea of premmillennialism, it's worthy to note there are other millennium theories. Following are some other pertinent definitions:

Millennialism is a general term denoting belief in the millennium. Papias of Hierapolis in the second century advanced millennial views, believing that there would be a period of a thousand years after the resurrection of Christ during which the kingdom of Christ would be set up in a material fashion. When the millennium did not occur with Jesus' resurrection some began to rethink the event that would initiate its beginning. It was decided that perhaps that event would begin at the return of Christ and not his resurrection

Postmillennialism teaches that Jesus Christ will return after the millennium. This theory holds that Christ will conquer Satan through the spread of the gospel by which the world will be converted. There will then be a thousand-year period of peace and righteousness on the earth. Afterward, Christ is to return and time will be no more. There were many

disciples of this doctrine among religious thinkers in the nineteenth century. Christ will return to earth prior to the millennium and when he returns, inaugurate the millennial reign in Jerusalem.

Then there is *premillennialism*. What are the elements of the doctrine called premillennialism? This is a big word about things that are to happen before a thousand years. As it relates to religion, it is the theology or the doctrine of the return of Christ *before* His thousand year earthly reign.

So we have the “*pre*” and “*post*” *millennialists*. There are also *amillennialists*. Amillennialism denotes the view that there will be no millennium. An amillennialists would include those who do not believe the Bible or in the return of Christ, but it would also include the Bible believer who feels that the book of Revelation is largely symbolic and that Revelation 20:1-7 is a figurative representation of something that happened under the Roman Empire. I fall in this category.

Let’s consider an overview of the premillennialists position. First is the idea that Jesus Christ came into the world at the time of His incarnation to establish His kingdom, His universal reign among men; but the divine plan was hampered by His unexpected rejection by the Jews and His crucifixion. However, Jesus, foreseeing that event, rather than suffer total defeat, established the church instead as sort of an afterthought or interim arrangement. Then He is supposed to have promised He would come again at which time He would establish the kingdom as originally planned which He could not establish the first time.

He is said to have given a number of signs leading up to His return, many of which are supposedly recorded in Matthew 24. It is taught that when He returns, He will come very quietly. Many people will not even know about it. He will snatch the saints away in some sort of “*rapture*,” but life will go on for the others left on the earth, i.e. the wicked and the unconverted. The “*raptured*” will be with the Lord somewhere for a period of seven years. A few years ago I saw a bumper sticker that said, “in case of the rapture, this car will be empty.” Once I saw in a restaurant a picture that showed some going up into heaven while others were being left behind carrying on their daily activities.

Meanwhile back on the earth there will be a seven-year period of great tribulation-such tribulation as the world has never experienced. During the first three and one-half years of the tribulation period, the Jews will all be returned to Palestine' and there will be a restoration of their religion. They will rebuild the temple which Solomon built and revive the system of animal sacrifices of the Law of Moses of the Old Testament period.

The second half of that seven-year period is supposed to be characterized by a great conflict, a terribly disastrous war called the battle of Armageddon. That conflict is to end with the third coming of Christ, this time *with His saints'* when He will establish His throne in Jerusalem and rule the world in a universal reign of peace and plenty for a thousand years. At the end of the thousand years, He is supposed to deliver up the kingdom to God; there will be judgment and, following the judgment, eternity; mixed in with all that is the idea of an antichrist and a lot of other off shoots. In the next few weeks we will search the Scriptures in an attempt to dissect these positions and determine if they align with Biblical teaching.

For the next few minutes I want us to consider Christ plan to establish His kingdom when He came into the world. Was He defeated and denied the sovereign will of God by the unexpected rejection of the Jews and crucifixion? Let's consider a few passages of scripture. (19) ***Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: (20) who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (I Peter 1: 19-20).***

About two months after the crucifixion, Peter preached to the Jews who were responsible and said: ***Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know (23) Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain (Acts 2:22, 23).***

Jesus' death for our sins was *foreknown* and *predetermined* of God unto our salvation. To

hold the position that Jewish rejection came as a surprise to Jesus and He was forced to alter His plan is a denial of God's infinite will and unlimited power. It also rejects the idea of God's divine scheme of redemption by way of the cross. Later, on the occasion of the healing of a lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple, Peter spoke to some of these same people again about the death of Christ and said: ***(Acts 3:17 KJV) ... now, brethren, I wot (know) that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. (18) But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.***

These verses teach that the rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah was no accidental event that resulted in His death, but rather was events that actually fulfilled God's purpose and prophecies. Things occurred in Jesus earthly sojourn just as God had planned and had said. To teach otherwise denies that Christ is currently reigning as King of kings on God's right hand (1 Timothy 6:15; 1 Peter 3:22). If the world rejected the teachings of Jesus 2000 years ago after the evidence of all the miracles and thus forced a substitute plan, why are we to think they won't reject him the same way after the tribulation?

Then there is the matter refutes His establishing the church as an afterthought, an interim arrangement – a plan B. With reference to his ministry to the Gentiles, Paul said it was: ***(Eph 3:9 KJV) And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: (10) To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, (11) According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:***

So the church is not an afterthought or a substitute thrown together to provide some kind of interim arrangement. No, the church was and is a vital part of God's purpose in Christ from before the world began and demonstrates God's wisdom.

It is obvious to the careful reader of the first four books of the New Testament, the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), that Jesus really believed He was the Messiah. He not only considered His mission as bringing salvation to the lost (Luke 19:10), but also to establish a reign over the community of those who receive that salvation and submit to Him as their king (Matthew 16:13-19). The Messiah was to be a

king, but there can be no king in the absence of people who submit to his kingship. So to deny Jesus' kingship is to deny His Messiah ship. If there is no kingdom, there is no king; therefore, no Messiah.

The Old Testament prophets spoke and wrote for centuries that when the Messiah came, He would establish His kingdom. Premillennialists do not deny these prophecies. As a matter of fact, they preach a lot about them, but they deny that Christ fulfilled them at His first coming and apply them to some later appearance. We will discuss some of those prophecies in particular in other lessons. But for now, notice what Jesus said about those prophecies.

Jesus said He fulfilled them. In Luke 24:44, after His resurrection, He said to the apostles (*Luke 24:44 KJV*) ... *These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.*

Jesus fulfilled *everything* Moses said in the law about Him, *everything* recorded in the *Psalms*, and *everything* written by the Old Testament prophets concerning the Messiah. The Jews knew their Scriptures well. If they could have produced just one scripture in the *Law*, the *Psalms*, or the *Prophets* concerning a prophecy that Jesus did not fulfill, they could have and would have proven Him a liar, a deceiver, and an imposter. Christianity would never have been born. One of the weightiest evidences we have of the deity of Jesus Christ is His fulfillment of every Old Testament Scripture about Him. Now, centuries later, some people are saying He did not actually fulfill the kingdom prophecies; He *postponed* them. This contradicts scripture and is false teaching.

It seems that every time there is a new development in the Mid-east, modern prophets have a hey-day with fantasies about how it all fits into some personal interpretation of prophecy about the sudden return of Christ and the end of the world. With instant worldwide communication, it is not surprising that we are hearing a lot about it, but if we are not careful, we will be as Jesus taught - the blind will be leading the blind.