

MILLENNIALISM

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The wide acceptance of Dispensational Premillennialism with its belief in the rapture of the Church before the tribulation has left many churchgoers complacent and unprepared. This booklet explains briefly and clearly the various millennial theories. Amillennialism or Non-Millennialism, is presented as the correct alternative, and reassures us of God's protection during the tribulation.

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MILLENNIALISM

Definition

The word millennium does not occur in the bible. It simply means one thousand years--from the Latin words 'milus' a thousand, and 'annum'-years. In Christian terms, the word millennium refers to the thousand years period that is mentioned six times in the first seven verses of Revelation 20.

KEY BIBLE READING

Revelation 20:1-10.

“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. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

This passage is one of the most controversial in the bible, because it is the foundation on which many are led to believe that Christ will physically live and reign on the earth with His saints for a literal period of one thousand years--before their eternal heavenly existence. This is despite the fact that such a thousand year reign is not mentioned anywhere else in the bible.

The three principal millennial beliefs are set out briefly below. It is impossible to give exact definitions of each because there are many variations within each system. These outlines are submitted as being an essentially correct account of the most widely held view of each doctrine.

PREMILLENNIALISM (Pre = before--Christ will return before the millennium)

The saints will be raptured from earth before the tribulation. There will be a literal seven year period of tribulation during which Antichrist will set up his throne in Jerusalem and have a world wide religious and political kingdom. At the end of the tribulation period, Christ will return with His saints, and Antichrist will be deposed. Christ will set up a worldly kingdom in Jerusalem, and all nations will be subjected to Israel. The temple will be restored, and the Jewish animal sacrifices and feasts will be re-instituted. There will be a 1000 year reign of peace and harmony during which Satan will be bound and imprisoned in a bottomless pit. Satan will be released, and

incite the nations to war against the saints at Jerusalem. Fire will come down from heaven and destroy his army, and he will be cast into the lake of fire. There will be a final resurrection of all believers, and a judgment of the wicked.

AMILLENNIALISM (Or non-millennialism--meaning no literal millennium).

The Amillennial model is simple. There is no literal one thousand year reign of Christ on earth. The 1000 years is a figurative time--the perfect time needed for God to evangelise the world. It is the church age during which Christians reign with Christ in establishing His spiritual kingdom on earth. It is concluded with the second coming of the Lord, the rapture of believers, and the judgment of those who have rejected God.

POSTMILLENNIALISM (Post = after--Christ comes after the millennium occurs)

Postmillennialists believe that the church will ultimately triumph over the wickedness in the world. Eventually all nations, and most people will be converted to Christianity, and good will overcome evil. This will usher in the millennium (not a literal 1000 years, but a very long period)--a golden era of peace, harmony, and prosperity. There will be a brief period of tribulation when Satan's forces will attack the church--but they will be defeated. Christ will return in triumph; all believers will be raptured, and the remaining wicked will be judged.

These doctrines will be discussed in more detail later in the study.

It is generally considered that these three millennial beliefs are held by their adherents so dogmatically that liberality should be recommended, and that all three should be accepted as possibilities. The truth, it is said, will not be revealed until Christ returns, and therefore we have no justification to find flaws in the beliefs of others.

The fact is that there is only one truth in the matter and all else is deception from Antichrist. It is always our obligation to search out truth and expose deception. Paul warned, **“The coming of the lawless one (Antichrist) is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”** II Th 2:9.

This aim of this book is to uncover millennial truth. At this time, at the end of the age, it is imperative that we do so if we are to be prepared for the tribulation ahead, and the second coming of Christ.

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

The reason that each millennial group has so many advocates is that apart from their eschatological (end time) beliefs, each is similarly founded on sound Christian doctrine. Each holds to the veracity of the Scriptures, the atoning death of Christ for sinners, His visible coming to rapture the saints, the heavenly reward of the saints and the eternal punishment of the wicked in hell. Each is consistently evangelical, and their followers are sincere in their desire to honour the Scriptures.

The reason that widely different millennial doctrines have developed is because of the distinctive method employed by each system in interpreting the Scriptures.

Broadly speaking, there are two methods of biblical interpretation. In the first, interpreters basically adhere to a literal interpretation of the Scriptures. In the second method, interpreters see much of the language to be figurative in its nature, and so they look beneath its literal surface to discover hidden depths of meaning.

This has caused contention in two main areas.

The first ten verses of Revelation 20.

Amillennialists and Postmillennialists see the whole Book of Revelation to be symbolic in nature, and so they interpret this passage figuratively, whilst Premillennialists adopt a more literal interpretation.

Old Testament prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel.

Premillennialists regard the many Old Testament prophecies of the end-time restoration of Israel to be literal. They believe that Israel will be restored, and with Christ enthroned in Jerusalem, Israel will rule over the nations of the world.

Amillennialists believe that these prophecies are figurative. In them Israel, Judah, Jerusalem, and Mt Zion, are often types of the church, and consequently the prophecies of future restoration of Israel will be fulfilled through spiritual Israel--that is, the church. They point to the fact that Jesus said, "*My kingdom is not of this world,*" [Jn 18:36], and, "*flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God...*" 1 Cor 15:50. They also point out that to look for a physical kingdom is to fall into the same error as the Jews at His first coming.

If we could come to one mind concerning the way we should interpret prophetic Scripture, many of the barriers dividing millennial theorists would disappear. For this reason some time will be spent outlining the nature of the bible, and the methods of its interpretation.

THE LITERAL METHOD OF INTERPRETATION

A literal interpretation involves an approach based on the actual words in their ordinary meaning, or not going beyond the facts.

Literal interpretation of the bible simply means to explain the original sense of the bible according to the normal and customary usages of its language. This is accomplished through an interpretation of the written text with due consideration to three factors:

It must conform to the recognised rules of grammar.

It must be consistent with the historical setting of the passage.

It must be interpreted in the context of the surrounding textual thought.

Literalists do recognise that some language is figurative, and interpret accordingly. But their approach is one of consistent literal interpretation wherever possible, without exploring the possibility of a deeper meaning, or a parallel application.

On face value, the literal approach to biblical interpretation is reasonable and logical. However, as a set form of biblical interpretation, it is clinically analytical and conservatively intellectual. Literalists would argue that it is possible to interpret biblical truth using the intellect only, the role of the Holy Spirit being to direct in the operation of the normal tools of exegesis. The 'higher criticism of the bible' was borne out of the literal interpretative school of thought.

INTERPRETING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN THE BIBLE

Figurative language is non-literal--a language where figures of speech such as symbols, types and metaphors are used to bring out unseen truths.

Figurative interpreters rely heavily on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for discernment and revelation. For instance, it is only by the Spirit that an object or person can be recognized as a symbol or type, and applied to receive revelatory truth. Their biblical warranty is: "***All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.***" 2 Tim 3:16, and, "***...the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.***" 1 Cor 2:14.

SYMBOLS *and* TYPES

Symbol

A symbol is an object used to represent something else—usually because they have similar characteristics. The Spirit uses created things as

symbols to bring out spiritual truths. E.g.

Symbols of the Holy Spirit

the dove--represents His gentle nature

water--His capacity to infill

wind--His fluidity

oil--His anointing

Symbols of Jesus

the lion--(Jesus the 'lion of Judah')--His all-conquering power

the lamb--His gentle innocence

the rock--His immutability

To interpret a symbol, it is necessary to compare the characteristics and qualities of the symbol, and of that which it symbolises.

Allegory An allegory is a story, play, poem, picture, or message in which the meaning is represented symbolically.

The allegorical method of interpretation, in which deeper hidden truths are discovered through exploring symbols and their meanings, was made popular by Origen in the Third Century. However his excessive zeal in seeking out symbols led to obvious errors, and his interpretations were later criticised by Luther. The allegorical method is well-founded, but is only valid when symbols and types are restricted to those that have been designated by God.

Jesus used the allegorical approach in His parables. For example, when asked to explain the parable of the wheat and the tares, He first explained the symbols. *"The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one."* Matt 13:38.

The Book of Revelation is also allegorical, being made up of a series of symbolic visions. The apostle John, who received the revelation, explained that it was given in symbolic form. *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants--things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it (i.e. the revelation) by His angel to His servant John..."* Rev 1:1.

The word 'signified' is translated from the original Greek word 'semaino,' which means 'to express by the use of signs or symbols.' Having declared the symbolic nature of the book at the outset, Jesus then confirmed this by the use of a series of symbolic representations.

"...in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength." Rev 1:13-16.

In clarifying this first vision, Jesus first explained the symbols. *"The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches."* Rev 1:20.

The allegorical approach was the prominent method of interpretation of the bible from the apostolic age until the Eighteenth Century, when the literal method was revived. It is by no coincidence that this occurred at the beginning of the scientific age, when man began to become pre-occupied with quantifying, measurement, and intellectual assessment.

Type

A type is similar to a symbol in that one thing is used to represent another. However it is different in that it is prophetic in nature--one thing is used to prefigure something future from itself. E.g.

Adam--a type of Christ--the first of a new creation

The Passover--a type of Christ--Christ our Passover, the spotless Lamb of God

"Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us." 1 Cor 5:7

Aaron--a type of Christ--prefiguring a similar priesthood. *"...as was Aaron. So also Christ."* Hebrews 5:4-5.

Rock--in this case rock is used as a type of Christ--prefiguring being smitten and water (the Spirit) pouring forth. *"all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ."* 1 Cor 10:4.

Typological symbolism is a Christian form of biblical interpretation that has its foundation in the belief that God placed anticipatory elements in the Old Testament that prefigured Christ. A passage containing a type has a primary or literal meaning, with a deeper and more important future application.

The thing prefiguring something in the future is called a type, and the thing in the future that it prefigures is called the anti-type. E.g. If Aaron is a type of Christ, Aaron is the type, and Christ is the anti-type. A general rule in typology is that the anti-type is much more important or expansive than the type--it is a fulfilment of the type.

To interpret typologically, it is necessary to explore the type, and then to create an extended analogy or similitude with its anti-type.

Three Kinds of Types

Historical Types: Historical figures like Moses, Samson, David, and Melchizedek, by their actions, character, or circumstances, were used as symbols to prefigure a future person--usually Christ. E.g.

David--A type of Christ, "the king of kings." *"Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David (Christ) their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days."* Hosea 3:5.

Legal Types: Ritual, ceremonial, and Levitical types were used to prefigure an aspect of Christ's earthly ministry. E.g.

The tabernacle--A type of Christ--our dwelling place. *"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people."* Rev 21:3.

Prophetic Types: An historical event is a type that prefigures a future event that is its anti-type--most often at the end of the age. It is an Old Testament prophecy that has a parallel application to its New Testament anti-type. E.g.

Old Testament physical Babylon--is a type of New Testament spiritual Babylon--the seat of Antichrist.

Israel--is a type of New Testament spiritual Israel--the church.

Prophecies in the Old Testament depicting the degeneration of the nation of Israel, and her being taken captive by Babylon, often have a parallel prophetic application to the end-time church falling under the power of Antichrist.

This parallel application is made obvious when we compare prophetic warnings and judgments announced on Old Testament Babylon with those to 'spiritual Babylon,' or the kingdom of Antichrist in the Book of Revelation.

OLD TESTAMENT *"Babylon was a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore the nations are deranged. Babylon has suddenly fallen and been destroyed. Wail for her!"* Jer 51:7-8.

REVELATION *"Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot (spiritual Babylon--the kingdom of Antichrist) who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." ... "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!"* Rev 17:1-2 & 18:2.

Both Israel in the Old Testament, and the church in the New Testament were warned to flee Babylon to evade her coming judgment.

OLD TESTAMENT *"Flee from the midst of Babylon, and every one save his life! Do not be cut off in her iniquity, for this is the time of the LORD'S vengeance; he shall recompense her."* Jer 51:6.

REVELATION *"Come out of her (Babylon), my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities."* Rev 18:4-5.

Prophecies depicting the future judgment of the nation of Babylon are figuratively paralleled in the judgment and destruction of the apostate church and the kingdom of Antichrist.

OLD TESTAMENT *"And I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea for all the evil they have done in Zion in your sight," says the LORD. "Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, who destroys all the earth," says the LORD. "And I will stretch out My hand against you, roll you down from the rocks, and make you a burnt mountain."* Jer 51:24-25.

REVELATION *"Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood."* Rev 8:8. *"Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore."* Rev 18:21.

If we recognise idolatrous Babylon as a type of the apostate church, we may also identify many of God's instructions to the Israelites as having a parallel application to the church: E.g. *"Depart! Depart! Go out from there, touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her (physical Babylon), be clean, you who bear the vessels of the LORD. For you shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight; for the LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard."* Isa 52:11-12.

THE NATURE OF THE BIBLE

Symbols and types were divinely imparted to the Jewish nation through their personal association with God. In the exodus and in the wilderness, the Israelites encountered unmistakable divinely inspired symbols and types that spoke to them of their relationship with their God. E.g. the burning bush, the ephod, the tabernacle with its divinely initiated parts, the cherubim, the blood, the manna, the law of the Sabbath, the cloud and the pillar of fire, the hyssop, the sacrificial goat, the serpent lifted up, the almond rod that budded, the ark of God's presence--the list is endless.

The Hebrews became far more type conscious than their non-Jewish neighbours. There is ample evidence to show that symbols and types became part of their literature--both biblical and non-biblical. They not only saw types in their relationship with God, but in their speaking of their own state. E.g. Isaiah saw in Sodom a type of God's judgment on gross depravity, and so he wrote-

“Unless the LORD of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah.” Isa 1:9.

Jacob’s blessing of his sons was rich in typology. ***“Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s children shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion’s whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people.”*** Gen 49:8-10.

In the New Testament Jesus used types when speaking privately with His disciples. E.g. He warned them to ***“Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.”*** Matt 16:6.

The NATURE of the BOOK OF REVELATION

As stated earlier, the Book of Revelation is allegorical in its nature, being composed of a series of symbolic visions--each vision having numerous symbols within itself. E.g.

In chapter 12 - ***“a great sign*** (or symbolic picture or vision) ***appeared in heaven.”*** Within this vision are numerous symbols: ***“a woman”; “clothed with the sun”; “the moon under her feet”; “on her head a garland of twelve stars”; “a great, fiery red dragon” “having seven heads”; “ten horns”; “seven diadems on his heads”; “His tail”; “a third of the stars of heaven,”*** and so on.

With the possible exception of “Song of Solomon,” there is no other book in the bible that is so consistently figurative, and so to understand the Book of Revelation it is imperative that we interpret the meaning of the symbols used. In many cases the key to their interpretation is found in the symbology of the Old Testament.

In line with the rest of Revelation, the first ten verses of Chapter 20 are by nature figurative, containing many symbols that have to be interpreted in order to discover the true meaning of the passage. E.g.

“angel”; “the key”; “bottomless pit”; “a great chain”; “the dragon”; “that serpent of old”; “bound him”; “a thousand years”; “shut him up”; “set a seal on him”; “I saw thrones”; “I saw the souls”; “who had been beheaded”; “the beast or his image”; “his mark on their foreheads or on their hands”; “first resurrection”; “the second death”; “priests of God”; “the four corners of the earth”; “Gog and Magog”; “the camp of the saints”; “fire came down from God,” and “the lake of fire and brimstone.”

An example of interpretation:

‘a great chain’ “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven,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.....so that he should deceive the nations no more...”

It would be impossible to bind Satan, a spirit being, with a literal chain. The spiritual chain that binds Satan is the truth of the gospel. When we make testimony to what Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross--Satan is bound by that truth--he is unable to deceive us when we believe the truth.

CONCLUSIONS *Concerning the* NATURE OF THE BIBLE

The bible is a spiritual book--inspired and interpreted through the Spirit. In reading the bible, we must have a spirit consciousness that opens our hearts to receive spiritual insights beyond our normal intellectual capacity.

A large percentage of the bible is figurative in nature. It is richly filled with non-literal images and figurative language, that when interpreted correctly, can greatly increase our depths of understanding. To be restricted to a literal approach that refuses to bend beyond the primary meaning is to miss the wealth of hidden truths beneath the surface.

The millennial passage in Revelation 20 is symbolic in its content. It is in a book that is allegorical in its nature. It should therefore be interpreted figuratively, by ascertaining the meaning of the various symbols.

Having set the foundation by examining methods of biblical interpretation, we will now study the millennial beliefs in detail.

PREMILLENNIALISM

There were two stages in the development of Premillennialism.

HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM

A millennial belief that was held by a percentage of Christians for the first three centuries. As a doctrine it was not fully developed or explained beyond the basic idea that Christ would return and establish the promised kingdom in Israel, and that He would reign in Jerusalem for a thousand years.

It was eventually discredited because it became very materialistic. Papius wrote vivid details of a millennial kingdom in which the fruitfulness of the earth would be increased to staggering proportions for the sake of the saints, and about 100 A.D, Cerinthus wrote of the luxury and sensual delights he expected the millennium to hold.

In the fourth century Augustine roundly condemned the materialistic attitudes associated with Historic Premillennialism, and consolidated the Amillennial viewpoint that the thousand year period was a figurative period corresponding with the church age. His arguments against millenarianism were so effective that for centuries it was practically ignored, eventually being branded as heretical. It did reappear sporadically among radical and rebel groups, or from groups suffering severe persecutions, who saw in it the hope of release from their current deprivation.

Premillennialists like to claim that historically their doctrine is the only one that dates back to apostolic times, and that it was the predominate view of the early church. But this is not so. Amillennialism had at the very least, as many advocates among the Church Fathers of the second and third centuries.

Furthermore, an earthly 1000-year reign of Christ was never mentioned in any of the Church Creeds. For instance, the Nicene Creed, which was ratified in AD 325, states in part,

“..Lord Jesus Christ...was Crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.”

The fact that such an important event as reigning over an earthly kingdom in Israel for one thousand years was not mentioned, implies that in the minds of the doctrinal fathers, it did not exist.

DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM

Premillennialism was virtually non-existent from the time of Augustine until the late 1850's, when it was revived by John Nelson Darby in the form of Dispensational Millennialism.

Dispensationalists have divided God's dealings with mankind into several eras of time, or dispensations, and maintain that in each God deals with the human race on the basis of some one specific principle.

Premillennialists generally recognise the following seven dispensations. (I) Edenic--the age of innocence. (ii) Conscience--after the Fall man was held accountable. (iii) Human government--after the flood man was to govern the world. (iv) Promise--under the Abrahamic covenant. (v) The

law and sacrifices. (vi) Grace--Christ and the New Covenant (vii) The Kingdom--establishment of the kingdom.

It is their viewpoint of what constitutes "the kingdom" that sets the foundation of Premillennialism. It should be understood at the outset that dispensationalists consistently employed a grammatical, historical, literalistic interpretation of the bible.

When Darby contemplated Old Testament promises of the restoration of the nation of Israel, he felt a tension between his own heavenly position in Christ, and the prophetic pictures of the restored kingdom. He reasoned that these promises to Israel should be regarded as literal promises of a physical kingdom. He then concluded that there are two separate dispensations--a heavenly one for the church, and an earthly one for Israel. J.N.Darby: *"The Church is in relationship with the Fathers, and the Jews with Jehovah...The Jewish nation is never to enter the Church."* (From *"The Hopes of the Church of God"*)

The earthly dispensation for Israel involved the literal fulfilling of the Old Testament prophecies of the restoration of the kingdom of Israel--a kingdom in which all the nations of the world will be subjected to Israel; Christ will reign from Jerusalem; and the temple and sacrifices will be restored, ushering in a literal thousand year period of peace and prosperity.

The premillennial philosophy was borne out of the dispensational view of a literal restoration the kingdom of Israel, and a literal interpretation of the thousand-year reign in Revelation 20. Many other Scriptures were then interpreted in such a way as to support the doctrine.

Darby documented his findings with extensive notes and bible references, and when his beliefs were accepted by Cyrus Scofield, and included in his reference bible in 1909, Premillennialism was catapulted into the Protestant mainstream. With the support of major Publishing Houses, the Scofield and Ryrie study bibles became models for future study bibles, entrenching Premillennialism among Bible-believing churches--particularly in America.

The Premillennial ORDER OF EVENTS

The essential identifying elements of Premillennialism lack clarity, and the order of events is imprecise, varying among individual followers. The following order of events expresses the essence of Premillennialism--the saints will not have to endure the tribulation; at least two raptures; establishment of an earthly kingdom of Israel; restoration of the temple and Old Covenant sacrificial rites; and a literal 1000 year reign of Christ.

There will be a literal seven-year period of tribulation (from Daniel's 'Seventy Week Prophecy.' Instead of interpreting Daniel's prophecy in the time frame between the restoration of Jerusalem, and its desolation in AD 70, Premillennialists insert a huge time gap, or parenthesis, which makes the last week of Daniel's prophecy start immediately after the first of their raptures. Daniel's seventieth week is then interpreted as seven literal years of tribulation).

At the start of the seven-year period of tribulation, Antichrist, as a prominent world figure, will appear on the scene and establish his throne in Jerusalem. He will make a covenant with the Jews to restore their Judaic ritual for seven years. But after three and a half years he will break the covenant, and the last three and a half years will be of horrendous tribulation wrath.

The believing Christians will not have to go through the tribulation period. Christ will come secretly, and the believing living and dead will be raptured into heaven just before the tribulation starts (the secret rapture). Their bodies will be changed to immortal bodies.

At the end of the tribulation period, Christ will return openly with the glorified saints; Antichrist will be deposed; the kingdom of Israel will be restored in line with Old Testament prophecies; the temple, the feasts, and the animal sacrificial offerings will be restored; there will be a thousand year reign of prosperity, peace, and harmony.

Satan is literally bound and cast into a bottomless pit during this thousand year period.

At the end of the thousand-year period Satan is released. Despite Christ's golden reign of peace and harmony, Satan is able to seduce the nations, and incite them to war against the saints. The picture is of the Christians of the whole world physically congregated at Jerusalem, and surrounded by hostile armies controlled by Satan.

Satan's armies are destroyed by fire that comes down from heaven.

Satan is cast into the lake of fire.

After the defeat of the rebel armies, the final resurrection and judgment take place. For the saints, the eternal state then commences in a renewed heaven and earth.

There are other variations to this order of events, particularly concerning the timing of the first rapture. There are for instance, pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, and post-tribulation rapturists.

BIBLICAL FLAWS in *Dispensational Premillennialism*

A thousand year reign of Christ on earth is not mentioned anywhere else in the bible except the first seven verses of Revelation 20--a highly symbolic passage in an allegorical book. It is quite wrong to fashion such an important doctrine from one biblical passage.

Jesus told Pilate, "*My kingdom is not of this world... My kingdom is not from here* (Israel)." John 18:36. He told the Pharisees that His is a spiritual kingdom.

"Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:20-21.

The most odious flaw in Premillennialism is the restoration of the temple, the animal sacrifices, and the feasts. The bible states that these things were but a shadow of the things to come, and that Jesus came to replace animal sacrifices with the sacrifice of Himself.

"And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God,...For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified." Heb 10:11-12, 14.

To get over this flaw, Premillennialists say that these sacrifices are commemorative. But Christ came to deliver us from the law and continual sin consciousness.

"For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year." Heb 10:1-3.

To restore the Old Testament animal sacrifices would be blasphemous.

Then there are the multiple raptures, with the 1000-year period inserted between them. The Premillennial three-age model (the present age, the 1000 year period, and the eternal age), differs from the biblical two age model. Both Jesus and Paul spoke of only two eschatological ages--*“this age,”* and *“the age to come.”*

“...who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come everlasting life.” Luke 18:30, (Mk 10:30).

“...which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.” Eph 1:20-21.

“...whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.” Matt 12:32.

“For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” 1 Tim 4:8.

In these readings, *“this age”* refers to the current age in which we are living. The age *“that is to come”* is characterised by *“everlasting”* or *“eternal life.”* There are only two eschatological ages. There is no 1000 year gap between them. One, and only one event in history separates these ages--the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, when He brings to end the temporal, and establishes the eternal age.

The ideas of multiple raptures and of a secret rapture are completely unscriptural. Nor will His second coming be in secret. The bible clearly states that the appearing of Christ, the resurrection, and judgment, are all simultaneous--part of the one climactic event--an event so dynamically spectacular that it will captivate the attention of every individual in the whole world.

“For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be...Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Matt 24:27, 29-31.

“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.” Rev 1:7.

Only God knows the time of the coming of the Lord. *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.”* Matt 24:36. Peter said it would come as a *“thief in the night,”* or take people by surprise. Yet with the seven year tribulation period, divided in two by the broken covenant, the day of the Lord would be no surprise.

The bible presents a consistent picture of the church having to pass through the tribulation at the close of the age. E.g.

“Because you (the church at Philadelphia) have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Rev 3:10--Also Mtt 24:5-13, Rev 7:13-14, Dan 12:1, Is 24:17-23. Note:

“from the hour”--“The preposition (from) implies, not a keeping from temptation (lit: ‘trial’), but a keeping in temptation, as the result of which they shall be delivered out of its power.”--*Vincent’s Word Studies of the New Testament.*”

(There is still a church at Philadelphia).

The imposing of a huge parenthesis in Daniel’s ‘Seventieth Week Prophecy’ adulterates recognised methods of prophetic interpretation.

Although Dispensational Premillennialism is widespread amongst Charismatic and Evangelical churches, it is now undergoing an identity crises. This is because its main tenets lack definition and meaning, and some of its past doctrines are biblically indefensible.

Secondly, it has also been embarrassed by the preoccupation of some of its proponents with prominent worldly figures and events, and their false predictions concerning the date of the Lord’s second coming.

Chapter 4

AMILLENNIALISM

Amillennialism is the only millenarian doctrine that has been consistently present throughout the church age. It was supported by most of the Church Fathers. It was implied in all the Church Creeds and Confessions. It was recognised by the Catholic Church, and was accepted by the Reformers. It is still the predominant eschatological belief of the classical Protestant Churches.

Amillennialists adopt a literal, historical, grammatical interpretation of the Scriptures where the language is obviously non-figurative. However, being aware of the hidden language of symbols and types, they have a spirit consciousness that looks to the Holy Spirit to reveal where language is to be taken figuratively, and to reveal the meaning of the figures and types used. Since Scripture reveals Scripture, other clearer passages are often the key to unlocking the meaning of the symbolic language.

Whereas Premillennialists separate God's dealings with Israel from the church, Amillennialists regard Israel as a type of the church. They perceive Old Testament promises of the eventual restoration of Israel fulfilled through spiritual Israel, i.e. the church.

Amillennialists believe that the Messianic kingdom is spiritual in its nature, and was initiated by the Lord Jesus Christ on earth at His first coming. The thousand years of Revelation 20 is figurative, being the perfect time needed to evangelise the world. It is the current church age in which the saints' reign with Christ in extending His kingdom throughout the world.

During the church age Satan is bound, or restricted to the degree that the whole world is able to be evangelised. At the end of the age, the restrictions on Satan will be removed, and there will be a time of gross spiritual darkness, in which Antichrist's kingdom will be fully developed. The church will be surrounded by spiritual foes, and engulfed in apostasy. There will be a time of tribulation, and a 'falling away.' Correspondingly, this will be a time of purging and refining the church, and a returning to the Lord.

The nature of Antichrist and his kingdom will be revealed by the light of truth as the Lord restores and anoints His prophets and teachers. Antichrist will be finally defeated by the truth, and by the power of the Lord reinstated as head of the church. Those who obstinately refuse to come out of Antichrist's kingdom and return to the Lord will face God's judgment.

At the end of the time needed for God to accomplish His purposes, Christ will return in the clouds, and rapture all believers. The believing dead, and "...*we* (believers) *who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*" 1Thes 4:17.

Those who have rejected God and His salvation will then be faced with His judgment. "*The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.*" Rev 11:18.

The Amillennial ORDER OF EVENTS

As far as most Premillennialists are concerned, the rapture could happen at any time. They have no expectation of tribulation, or of the church facing judgment. Why would a loving God require His

children to go through the tribulation period? And if there is no 1000-year reign of Christ, what does happen before He returns?

In order to answer these questions, the detailing of the order of events portrayed here will be extended to provide a wider prophetic view of what is to happen at the end of the age. Events should not be regarded as strictly sequential, as some will occur concurrently with others.

One Thousand Years

In keeping with the nature of the Book of Revelation, the thousand years in Revelation 20 is figurative--based on its numerical symbolic meaning. Ten is the number of completion. 10x10x10 = perfect completion. It is the perfectly complete time needed by God for the "***gospel of the kingdom (to) be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.***" Matt 24:14. It is the perfectly complete time necessary for the whole world to be effectively evangelised, and for Christ's kingdom to be established in the church. It is the current church age.

Satan is Bound

During this period Satan is bound from deceiving the nations by the truth of the gospel, the prayers and testimonies of the saints, and the use of our authority in the name of Jesus. Jesus gave the Church this authority when He said, "***Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.***" Matt 18:18.

Satan is declared to be "***the ruler of this world,***" but during the church age Jesus is plundering his house. But first we must learn to bind the strong man. "***Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.***" Matt 12:29.

As the saints testify to the word of the cross and wield their authority in the name of Jesus, the Holy Spirit signifies His agreement by binding the power of Satan. "***For the mystery of lawlessness (Antichrist) is already at work; only He (the Holy Spirit) who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.***" II Th 2:7.

Note that the Greek word 'deo' 'to bind' may be used literally or figuratively. An example of its figurative use is found in the case of the woman who was bent over by an infirmity. Jesus asked, "***ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound (deo)--think of it--for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?***" Luke 13:16. In a similar manner Satan's overall power is restricted.

When contemplating the corruption and wickedness that abounds in the world, some would argue that it is ludicrous to claim that Satan has been bound. But he has been restrained from fully deceiving the nations, and setting up an unchallenged kingdom of Antichrist. And due to his being restricted, the gospel has been proclaimed over the world, and as a consequence there are something like 1.75 billion self professing Christians in seven continents--[North America: 235.5 million; South America: 419.1 million; Europe: 411.3 million; Africa: 310.6 million; Asia: 252.8 million; USSR: 107.5 million; Oceania: 22 million. [*Statistics from 1992 World Almanac*].

Reigning With Christ

During the church age a procession of saints live and reign with Christ, being His instruments in establishing His kingdom. "***Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God...And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.***" Rev 20:4.

At first glance these appear to be those who have been physically martyred, and who now live and reign with Christ in heaven. But let us look beyond the literal picture to discover its figurative meaning.

The soul is the centre of ego or self, and the head is a symbol of government. These 'souls' have been 'beheaded,' or surrendered to death "*for [the sake of] their witness to Jesus and for the word of God.*" These are spiritual martyrs rather than those who have been physically beheaded.

Jesus said to His disciples, "*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.*" Lk 9:32-24.

The paradox is that in order to reign with Christ, the believer must give up his self-life to death. Death must precede resurrection. The soul life or self-life of ego and self opinion has to be 'beheaded.'

The result of being "*crucified with Christ,*" is that we are "*raised...up (to a spiritual position) together, and made...to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*" Eph 2:5-6. This is a place of authority--sharing the authority of Christ's throne. In the key bible reading, the result of having died to self is *that "they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."* Rev 20:4.

These are the overcomers. They are a procession of saints down through the centuries who have learned to overcome the powers of darkness and reign with Christ. Their means of overcoming are quite specific. "*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their (self) lives to the death.*" Rev 12:10-11.

The raising of the overcomers to a position where they "*sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*" is called "*the first resurrection.*" Rev 20:5. "*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.*" Rev 20:6. Their first death was the death of their self life. The second death, which is that of their physical bodies, will have no power over them.

Another company of people are mentioned who have not given up their lives for Christ's sake, and therefore have no part in the first resurrection. "*But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.*" Their death is not of self, but that of their physical bodies. They "*did not live again*" until the time of the resurrection of everyone at the close of the age. Rev 20:5.

The Tribulation

When Jesus told the Philadelphian church, "*I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth,*" His prophecy extended beyond their immediate future to the testing trials that would confront the whole world, including the end-time church, before Christ's return. But this is not limited to a literal seven year period. Moral depravity, and spiritual darkness and apostasy will gradually increase, until finally the world will be confronted by God's testing and judgment.

God will initiate a gigantic shaking of all institutions to test their origins--whether they are of Him, or of man. "*He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made (by man), that the things which cannot be shaken (things of the Spirit) may remain.*" Heb 12:26-27.

God will use agents of Satan to precipitate this shaking. He will lower the hedge of protection He has placed around the church so that it might face a measured judgment. These readings speak of Satan and his agents being loosed from their restraints.

Satan Released

“Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth...” Rev 20:7.

The Pit Opened

“And he (an angel) opened the bottomless pit, and smoke (deceit and deception obscuring truth) arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air (symbols of light and truth) were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke locusts (symbols of demon spirits, who operate in a climate of deceit and deception) came upon the earth.” Rev 9:2-3.

The Holy Spirit Taken Away The Holy Spirit, who has been restraining Satan and preventing Antichrist’s kingdom from being developed fully, will be taken out of the way. ***“And now you know what is restraining, that he (Antichrist) may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He (the Holy Spirit) who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.”*** II Th 2:6-7.

The Two Witnesses Killed The “two witnesses” of Revelation 11 will be silenced. ***“Now when they (the “two witnesses”) finish their testimony, the beast (Antichrist) that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.”*** Rev 11:7. The “two Witnesses” are linked to Moses and Elijah, and represent the word of God, and the voice of prophecy. Due to Antichrist’s counterfeiting deceptions, the ministry of prophetic teaching is silenced, resulting in a time of spiritual darkness.

This great shaking and the loosing of the powers of darkness will precipitate what is generally referred to as the tribulation. This should not be confused with the Great Tribulation of the Jews in AD 70. At that time Jerusalem was surrounded by Roman legions under the headship of the Roman general Titus. The Christians had heeded Jesus’ prophetic warning: ***“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her.”*** Luke 21:20-22.

But the rest of the population was not as fortunate. The horrendous siege that followed provoked a massive self-destruction in which an estimated one and a half million Jews were slain. The remainder of the populace was dispersed throughout the world, and the Jews lost their identity as a nation.

The Great Tribulation of the Jews is a type of the tribulation confronting the church at the end of the age. However its general nature will be different. Whereas the tribulation of the Jews resulted in a physical judgment, the tribulation of the church will be generally spiritual in nature.

The overall picture is the same. The Jews were surrounded by a physical army. The end-time church will be encompassed by spiritual foes.

“And they (the spiritual army of Antichrist) went up on the breadth of the earth (suggesting a great extent over all the earth), and compassed the camp of the saints (overcomers) about, and the beloved city (the church): and fire (symbol of judgment) came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.” Rev 20:9(KJV).

A literal interpretation would tax the imagination--somewhere about 1.75 billion Christians encamped at Jerusalem, and surrounded by the armies of the world. Again we must acknowledge that this is a symbolic passage, and we must interpret the symbols.

The "beloved city" is the church, and she is not confined to physical Jerusalem. Her presence is in the whole of the world, and that is why her spiritual foes are said to go "up on the breadth of the earth" to surround her. The "camp of the saints," is a figurative picture of the overcomers encompassing and defending the city, or church. These are the overcomers who reign with Christ, and part of their commission is to be spiritual warriors in defending the church.

Already the church is under attack, and is being besieged by spiritual foes. The hordes of demon spirits erupting from the pit have clouded the light of truth by deceit and deception, spawning many false movements and doctrines. E.g. The lying signs and wonders of the "Toronto Blessing" and "Pensacola"; the false doctrines of the "Faith Movement"; the false "Ecumenical Movement" advocating unity under the banner of the Pope; dubious television ministries; the 'prosperity' doctrine; the encroachment of 'Eastern' religions; heretical teachings; Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses; Free Masonry; Spiritism and the Occult; the 'Women's' and 'Equal Rights' movements, to name but a few. But by far the most pervasive is the mark of humanism, which has been entrenched in the church by Antichrist.

By promoting the importance of man, Antichrist's aim is to replace the government of Christ in the church by that of man. That is the essence of the worldly church—the whole structure is permeated with the spirit of antichrist, or humanism. The buildings, the vestments, the liturgy, the trappings of Christianity, glorify man rather than God. Ministries and programs are initiated by man rather than the Holy Spirit. Leadership is not prepared and appointed by Christ, but rather through clerical qualifications. By and large the headship and government of Christ has been replaced by that of man.

The Emergence of Antichrist's Kingdom

To the Premillennialist, Antichrist will be a human figure who will gain world prominence religiously and politically, and who will set up his throne in Jerusalem and reign over the world for seven years. But the bible says that many antichrists were already present in the church in the apostle John's day.

"Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour." I Jn 2:18.

The fact is that Antichrist himself is a spirit being, a Satanic commander in chief, and the "many antichrists" are those who have allowed themselves to come under his control. He was the force behind Nimrod, the first Emperor to rebel against God and establish himself as divine. He was in all of the succeeding worldly Emperors who proclaimed their divinity. Each occupant of the papal throne who has proclaimed himself head of all Christendom was an antichrist, and there may be such a figure on a papal throne at the end of the age being proclaimed head of the universal church. But he will be just another tool of Antichrist the spirit being.

The word 'anti' in Antichrist, has two root meanings, 'against,' and 'instead of.' In other words, Antichrist opposes Christ by substituting Christ and His church with a counterfeit that, to the most of the world, is more comfortable than the original. His counterfeit church, with its counterfeit spirit, appears to be alive with spiritual activity. The reality is that its origins are in the spirit of Antichrist, and it is lawless, and spiritually dead. **"The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those**

who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved." II Th 2:6-10.

Other End-Time Tribulation Signs

Prophesied by Paul: Here Paul is not talking about those in the world, but tares within the church. *"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power."* 2 Tim 3:1-5.

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables." 2 Tim 4:3-4.

By Christ: *"And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold."* Matt 24:10-12.

"...you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth...you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'-- and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked." Rev 3:16-17.

By Isaiah: In chapters 2-4 in Isaiah there are repeated references to *"the latter days...when He (God) arises to shake the earth mightily."* Isa 2:21. The condition of the end-time church is described in these references.

"...they are filled with eastern ways; they are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they are pleased with the children of foreigners. Their land is also full of silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is also full of horses, and there is no end to their chariots (symbols of weapons of war). Their land is also full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made." Isa 2:6-8.

"The people will be oppressed, every one by another and every one by his neighbour; the child will be insolent toward the elder, and the base toward the honourable." Isa 3:5.

"As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them."

"O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths." Isa 3:12.

A Falling Away

Paul Prophesied: *"Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first."* II Th 2:3

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" 1 Tim 4:1.

Zechariah: *"For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem (the church); the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city."* Zech 14:2. Half of the church will be

taken captive by **“lying signs and wonders,” “deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,”** and the taint of humanism.

Many will become disenchanted with the state of the church, and there will be a **‘falling away,’** or **“depart(ure) from the faith.”**

Revelation of Antichrist and His Kingdom

To this point the counterfeits of Antichrist have been so deceptively plausible and subtle, that even some of the elite Christian leaders of the world have been deceived. **“For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”** Matt 24:24. But now, by releasing the restrictions imposed on Satan, the subtleties of Antichrist are being removed. The darkness of apostasy is set beside the light of Christ’s truth.

Zechariah prophesies, **“the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle** (as when He delivered the Israelites out of the hands of the Egyptians).” Zech 14:3. He will defeat Antichrist by the ‘sword of His mouth’—by revealing the light of truth through the mouth of His prophets. **“And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.”** II Th 2:6-10.

The two witnesses, the word of God and the voice of prophecy, which were silenced, are now being reinstated in the church. **“Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them** (the two witnesses), **and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.”** Rev 11:11.

When the word says that **“the lawless one will be revealed,”** this speaks of a total exposure of Antichrist the spirit being--the counterfeit church he has created with its false authorities, the man made institutions, the lying signs and wonders, and the tide of humanism that has engulfed the church and the world.

A Time of Testing, Judgment, and Refinement

For the church, the tribulation period is a period of testing, judgment, and refinement. Its purpose is to shake Christians out of their lawlessness and worldly independence, and turn their hearts in obedience to the Lord. To create this change of heart there must of necessity be some privation.

Again we turn to Isaiah, where he describes **“the latter days...when He (God) arises to shake the earth mightily.”**

We read that God will, as part of His shaking and testing, remove the “stock and the store.” **“For behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stock and the store, the whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water...”** Isa 3:1.

The “**stock and the store**” symbolise the things that man depend on for their well being instead of God. E.g. Financial security, worldly goods and luxuries, the counsel of notable worldly people, the army, the legal system--the things of man and the world. This theme is echoed in Revelation 6:5, where the black horse of famine appears, and presumably through a world wide economic collapse, all but the basic necessities for living are removed.

Judgment of Leaders

Spiritual leaders who have led their flock astray are especially singled out for judgment. ***“The LORD will enter into judgment with the elders of His people and His princes:”*** Isa 3:14.

The end result of God’s judgments will be the humbling of man, and the exaltation of the Lord. ***“The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up--and it shall be brought low.”*** Isa 2:11-12.

Judgment on the House of God

Peter warned that ***“the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God;”*** 1 Pet 4:17. A righteous God must judge the church before He judges the world. This is not the final judgment deciding the eternal fate of man. These purging and refining judgments on the church will provide a last opportunity for those under the power of Antichrist to repent and return to the Lord.

Consistent with all of His judgments, God has issued a prophetic warning: ***“And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her (the apostasies of the counterfeit church), my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Rev 18:4-5. Those who heed the prophetic warning and “come out of her,” will enter into God’s covenant care and protection.***

The Valley of Decision

By exposing the apostasies introduced into the church by Antichrist, the Lord has created a valley of decision no one can evade. ***“Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the LORD will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel (the true church).”*** Joel 3:14-16.

The choice is made clear—Christ or Antichrist.

Resurrection of the Righteous--Judgment of the Wicked

Every opportunity is given for all to repent. Despite this, many will remain unrepentant, and must face God’s final eternal judgment. “

“...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...” 2 Thes 1:7-10.

The earth and the heavens, or atmosphere, as we know it, will be consumed by fire. ***“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”*** 2 Pet 3:10.

Chapter 5

POSTMILLENNIALISM

There have been many individuals throughout the church age who have believed in the eventual triumph of the church over her enemies, and of good over evil. However Postmillennialism did not become a formal teaching until it was introduced by Unitarian minister Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), and did not receive widespread acceptance until early in the Nineteenth Century when people perceived what they thought was a gradual movement towards social perfection. A doctrine was formed which predicted a gradual triumph of the church over evil, with all nations and leaders becoming Christianised. This would then usher in a millennial age of peace and prosperity. Christ would then come, and the resurrection, judgment, and eternity would follow.

With the advent of two world wars, and the obvious disintegration and demoralisation of society, Postmillennialists have modified their views to those set out below.

Postmillennialists agree with Amillennialists that the Messianic kingdom was founded on the earth by the Lord Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry, and the nature of this kingdom is spiritual rather than political.

Christ's kingdom will gradually transform society as more and more people become Christians.

Christ's kingdom will gradually expand and develop by the power of God, through His word, fervent prayer, and the labour of the saints. This expansion will be directed by Christ, who is now reigning on earth through His Spirit.

God will send a spirit of repentance and revival to the world on a scale never seen before.

The majority of men and nations will be Christianised, righteousness will abound, wars will cease, and peace and prosperity will flourish. Godless leaders will be hindered in carrying out their plans.

The thousand year millennial period is not literal, but rather a very long age in which Christ's kingdom will be triumphant over the earth.

The millennial period will be drawn to a close by the visible bodily appearance of Jesus Christ, accompanied by one literal resurrection of all people, and one final judgment.

The eternal form of the kingdom will follow on earth.

BIBLICAL FLAWS in *Postmillennialism*

The main flaw in the Postmillennial doctrine lies in, the fact that the many biblical references to the moral and spiritual decline of humanity towards the end of the age are ignored. The historical record of wars, mass genocide, hatred and unrest, moral decline, and spiritual apostasy backs up these references. The decline of human history appears irreversible, and seems certain to indicate a catastrophic end of the world. Postmillennialists now pin their hopes on a massive world-wide revival that will reverse the downward trend.

The period of tribulation and the loosing of Satan, and Antichrist's attack on the church, are largely ignored.

Peter's prophetic statement concerning the end of the world rules out the possibility of an eternal reign of Christ on the earth.

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” 2 Pet 3:10.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

There are three most popular approaches to end time prophecy.

The first is to avoid delving into them, fearing error, ridicule etc.

The second is to accept the view that provides the least hardship. In this respect, the premillennial aspect of not having to face tribulation, and then a 1000 year period of peace and harmony, has the most appeal. In the harsh circumstances of the world, it gives a promise of great blessing in the not so distant future.

The third approach is to accept without question Study Bible reference notes--which for the most part are premillennial. After all, the average Christian would feel loathe to question the statements of prominent theologians.

Circumstances weigh heavily in favour of the premillennial viewpoint, even though it rests on the shaky foundation of dispensationalism. It attracts a huge amount of emotional preaching and supporting literature, and it has become the predominant view of Charismatic Christians.

By comparison, Amillennialists are almost silent. This booklet unashamedly proposes that Amillennialism is the only historic and correct millennial doctrine of the Church. It is the only one that does not minimise the tribulation ahead, or avoid it altogether by secretly rapturing the saints out of the way.

When the bible is interpreted typologically, it supports the view that there is no literal, physical kingdom reign of Christ on earth; and that the end-time Church will be confronted by purifying tribulation and judgment.

This booklet accepts the responsibility of warning Christians of the impending judgment that is to fall on the apostate church, so that those who heed the Lord's prophetic warning to ***Come out of her, My people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues,*** may be partakers of Joels' promise. ***“But the Lord will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel.”*** Joel 3:16.