

Sunday, September 12, 2021 pm

A STUDY OF PREMILLENNIALISM (1)

What Is Premillennialism?

Tonight, I would like to start a short study (a few) weeks examining a popular doctrine concerning the end times. This is a topic that has been on my mind for awhile, and I am sure is on some of your minds as well. I would like to begin a study of premillennialism.

With everything going on right now in this world, it has prompted some to say that the return of the Lord is imminent. We have this pandemic and other diseases, rampant immorality that is clearly getting worse, growing hostility toward the Christian faith and truth, “wars and rumors of wars”, natural disasters with some saying the demise of life on earth is imminent if we can’t stop “climate change” (it used to be “global warming” and before that it was an ice age that was imminent), uncaring attitudes towards others, wicked leaders and attempts to formulate a world-wide government, etc. The bottom line is that since this world is in such bad shape, He has to be coming back soon.

While I do not deny that His return MAY be imminent (2 Peter 3:10), I believe scriptures clearly teach we do not know when He will return and therefore, we must ALWAYS be ready, AS IF He is returning very soon.

However, exactly what will happen when He returns, is heavily discussed and much false doctrine has been produced by Revelation and apocalyptic books of prophecy (such as Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, etc.). A very popular doctrine that is advocated today and has been more greatly popularized in recent decades is the doctrine of premillennialism.

- Beginning in 1995-2007, Tim LaHaye and Jerry B Jenkins produced a series of 16 books called, “The Left Behind Series”. It was a fictitious story based upon what they believed to be the true doctrine of premillennialism (Left behind being reference to the rapture). It sold millions of copies 65 million copies as of 2016.
- This was preceded by a book by Hal Lindsey entitled, “The Late Great Planet Earth”, in 1970. While certainly not the originator of this view, that book popularized this doctrine.
- Today, it is taught in various forms by Jehovah’s Witnesses, many Baptists, Pentecostals, 7th Day Adventists, the World Wide Church of God, Messianic Jews, and others.
- It is behind much of the date setting that has been popularized in recent decades and a major theme of John Hagee’s preaching (who predicted the end of the world in September 2015) and the failed “prophecies” of the late Harold Camping (who predicted the Lord’s return in 2011)
- It is one of the key elements of discussion in study Bibles like the Ryrie (1978) and Scofield (1909) study Bibles, which are still popular. Many mainstream study Bibles cling to this doctrine.

So with this in mind, tonight I would like to take a few weeks to examine this subject with its various parts. Looking at my records, I presented a series of lessons in 2008 and have touched on it a few times since, including a lesson in January 2021 entitled, “Are we living in the last days?” This is a subject popular enough that we need to be equipped to answer why it is wrong. Properly understanding the Lord’s return is part of the “hope that is in you” that we are to defend (1 Peter 3:15) and concerns “elementary principles of Christ” as recorded in Hebrews 6:1-2 (“... of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”)

Our study will consist of the following: (not necessarily in this order, or each one an individual lesson)

- What is premillennialism? Why is it wrong?
- What is the nature of the kingdom of Christ?
- Has the promise to Abraham been fulfilled? (Genesis 12:1-3)
- Will there be a rapture?
- Will Jesus reign again on the earth for 1000 years?

- What about Matthew 24?
- Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom
- What about the book of Revelation?
- Who is the Anti-Christ?
- What about the Battle of Armageddon?
- What about Israel today?
- What does the Bible really say about the end times?
- What are the consequences of premillennialism?

With these lessons, we should have a good foundation of various facets of this doctrine, and be equipped to answer them. So let's get started.

I. **What is premillennialism?**

- a. Different views of the end times: NOTE: Revelation 20 teaches the 1000 year binding of Satan and reign of Christ. These views are based upon that. We will devote considerable time to that chapter in a later lesson. But here we just make note of it.
 - i. **Premillennialism** – the doctrine we are addressing. In this view, we are living in the time prior to our Lord returning at which time He will reign for 1000 years in Jerusalem on earth. After that, there will be judgment. More details about this in a moment.
 - ii. **Preterism** – aka, “the 70 AD doctrine” or “realized eschatology” which states that all of scripture has been fulfilled. The Lord returned in AD 70 and EVERYTHING including the Biblical resurrection has occurred. This is a popular doctrine that is influencing many brethren today.
 - iii. **Postmillennialism** – believes we are living in a time prior to the millennial reign of Revelation 20. However, there is going to be a period of time (not necessarily specified) in which the gospel will thrive on the earth and the majority will be won to Christ. AFTER that time, the Lord will return to receive His church, end history and judgment will commence.
 - iv. **Amillennialism** – the belief that the kingdom/church was established on Pentecost and continues to this day. We are in the fulfillment of Revelation 20 now (the 1000 year reign). His kingdom is spiritual and at the end He will return and there be a judgment of both the wicked & good followed by eternity. Jesus will NOT literally reign on earth as king. this is the Biblical view
- b. Described –
 - i. The word premillennialism broken down means, “pre” – before”, and “millennial” is the word for 1000 (years). And I heard some old time preachers would finish the word by saying, “ism” means “it just ain’t so”.
 - ii. Premillennialism is a doctrine that is based upon the belief that many Old Testament kingdom prophecies have yet to be fulfilled and that the book of Revelation is a picture of events yet future. It is a theory based on books of the Bible that are filled with visions and symbols, hidden meanings (apocalyptic), and other obscure passages that lend to speculations. It is a patchwork of passages that typically puts “this generation” (and it’s always the current generation) at the forefront of the end times and living in the “last days” which is often defined as the generation that is now living.
 - iii. Because of its nature, it is not easy to describe because there is much disagreement and debate on the exactness of the plan and various details.
 - iv. Some of the tenets of this view include:
 1. The promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 has not been fulfilled

2. Prophecies in Daniel and Ezekiel have still not been fulfilled, and possibly they were suspended when our Lord came to earth and was rejected.
 3. Revelation was not dealing primarily with timing associated with its original audience.
 4. The Kingdom of God/Christ has not yet been established
 5. The nature of the kingdom is physical and thus Christ is going to return and reign on earth for 1000 years seated on the literal throne of David in Jerusalem and during that time there will be world peace.
 6. Physical Israel will be restored to its rightful place as God's chosen people and rule the world with Christ accepted as king.
 7. Prior to these events taking place, several things will happen – there will a rapture of the righteous, numerous worldwide devastating catastrophes, a period of 7 years of severe persecutions and tribulation which most believe will happen after the rapture. At the end of this 7 years the Lord will return with His saints (both raptured and those who died during the tribulation) and wage war against Satan (the battle of Armageddon). Jesus will be victorious, Satan defeated and bound, and then the 1000 year reign will begin.
 8. At the end of this millennial reign, Satan will be released for a short time where he will wage a brief battle and again lose.
 9. Then the end will come and FINAL judgment will take place – the wicked will be eternally condemned.
- c. NOTE: There are varying views of this doctrine. People move the timeline of events around. And different people take different views about various events – for example: Some see the church as substitute until the Lord returns, but not all who espouse premillennialism believe this; some see the rapture of the saints at the beginning of the tribulation and other at the end of the tribulation, etc.

II. **Why is premillennialism wrong?**

- a. As noted: We will examine most of these tenets in greater detail in coming lessons, but here we want to focus at the beginning on some of the problems with this doctrinal view.
- b. One the primary fallacies is its materialistic nature – it makes the intended kingdom of Christ materialistic – which Jesus specifically emphasized was NOT its nature.
 - i. John 18:36 – before Pilate.
 - ii. Luke 17:21 – the kingdom of God is within you.
 - iii. Also Romans 14:17 – the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
 - iv. Furthermore, did Jesus ever want to be a physical king? John 6:15
- c. For some it presents Christ as failing to accomplish His mission when He came to earth –
 - i. The church is viewed by some as an afterthought – a substitute for the kingdom until He returns. There are ALL sorts of problems with this.
 - ii. First, Ephesians 3:10-11 tells us the church was part of God's eternal purpose. Matthew 16:18-19 notes Jesus' intent to build His church AND give His apostles "the keys to the kingdom" together.
 - iii. Second, it leads to the question, Is God really in control? If he failed to accomplish His will the first time, how can we be assured He will win the second time?
 - iv. Third, scriptures teach the kingdom is now in existence – Colossians 1:13, cf. Mark 9:1, Daniel 2:44, etc. establish timing for when the kingdom of God would be established. If not, then God DID fail!
- d. It states that God has not yet fulfilled His promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 –
 - i. The promise to Abraham is 3-fold – scripture show they have been fulfilled
 - ii. A land promise – Joshua 21:43-45 clearly states God fulfilled His land promise.

- iii. A great nation – they were a great nation, reaching their peak during the reigns of David and Solomon. Note also Deuteronomy 4:6-8 as they prepare to enter the land
- iv. In you all families of the earth will be blessed – clearly this was fulfilled in Jesus coming to this earth. Galatians 3:7-9 appeals to this promise specifically. The material kingdom was replaced with a spiritual kingdom
- v. NOTE: Something we must remember as we consider this promise to Israel – that fulfilling the promise was certain. God did this as we have noted. KEEPING the various elements of the promise were conditional. Israel was expected to remain faithful to Him. In summary, God did not take it from them, they gave it back to Him! In crucifying Jesus they made it abundantly clear they wanted no part with God’s plan!
- e. It questions the current reign of Christ as King – 1 Peter 3:21-22 notes that Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God (reigning). 1 Corinthians 15:24-25 notes that He is now reigning. It was the message Peter taught on Pentecost – Acts 2:30-36 – the conclusion of His sermon.
- f. It teaches that Christ intends to return to the earth to reign here – where is the passage that teaches that. We will examine what scripture says about the 2nd coming of Jesus. And you will NOTE that nowhere does it say He will set foot on earth again. Consider 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 which notes that He will descend from heaven and the dead in Christ will rise, and *“we who are alive and remain will 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.”*
- g. It presents Judaism as a faith still accepted by God – a key doctrine addressed in scripture is how and why physical Israel is no longer God’s chosen people.
 - i. Romans, Galatians and Hebrews address this as a major theme.
 - ii. The gospels explain WHY this is so as the Jewish nation as a whole rejected Jesus as their Messiah and murdered Him.
 - iii. Matthew 21:42-44 speaks about the stone they rejected has become the chief cornerstone. Jesus explains this is why God was turning to another people. Jesus specifically said the kingdom would be taken from them and given to another.
 - iv. Romans 2:28-29 speaks of the true Jew being one inwardly and it is not based upon physical circumcision (anymore).

These are a few of the concerns associated with premillennialism. In coming lessons we will address each of these in greater detail as we examine the various elements associated with this false and harmful doctrine. Meanwhile, I would like to invite you to become part of the Kingdom of Christ. He is NOW reigning. Will you let Him be your king?