

Sunday, September 19, 2021 pm

PREMILLENNIALISM (2)

The Relationship Between the Kingdom and Church

Was the church an afterthought?

Last week we began a study of the doctrine of premillennialism. This is a doctrine that teaches we are in an age PRIOR to the reign of our Lord in His kingdom. In essence the doctrine teaches that after a series of age ending events (rapture, tribulation, battle of Armageddon, Jews converted to Jesus, etc.) that the Lord will return and assume His proper place on the throne of David in Jerusalem for a period of 1000 years. This will be followed by end time events.

In our first lesson we introduced a few of the Biblical errors associated with this doctrine. Today, we begin a more detailed examination of this doctrine.

To properly refute premillennialism, we need to establish some foundational principles. I want to address these in the next 2 lessons: 1) How are the church and kingdom related to each other? (In this we will answer the question: Was the church an afterthought or time described as a parenthesis or “stop-gap” between the Lord’s coming and His return to reign for 1000 years?) and 2) A discussion of figurative and literal language in the Bible. After this we will examine specific events associated with the theory of dispensational premillennialism.

I. The Premillennial Position

- a. As we shall see, there are numerous OT passages and teachings of Jesus that identified the kingdom of God with the coming during the timeframe of His earthly reign. Daniel 2:44 speaks of the days of the 4th kingdom – Rome – that God would set up His kingdom which would never be destroyed. Daniel actually proceeds to identify 3 of the 4 kingdoms by name. Mark 9:1 – Jesus taught they would see the kingdom of God come with power.
- b. To reconcile these, SOME premillennialists say that Jesus intended to establish His kingdom, but at some point during His ministry, because of the rejection of the Jews, God established an alternate plan which included His crucifixion (it would not have been necessary had the Jews accepted Him) and the establishment of the church for an unspecified period of time, until He can return to establish His kingdom on earth.
 - i. A quote from Dwight Pentecost, in an article entitled “The Relationship of the Church to the Kingdom of God.”¹ On page 3 of this article, in a section entitled, “Jesus’ Judgment Upon Israel” he describes how Israel rejected Jesus and His message turned from one of hope to one of judgment. He placed the timing in an incident recorded in Matthew 12:22-24. Concerning the change, Pentecost says, *“This signifies the withdrawal of the offer of the covenanted kingdom of Israel and its postponement to the future.”* Summarizing this section he says, *Thus the kingdom program for Israel, which began with such high hopes at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, ends with the somber note of judgment and postponement.*
 - ii. Another quote, from Sean Brasseaux², answering the question, “What does ‘My kingdom is not of this world’ mean?” wrote, *Jesus Christ came to earth and left 2,000 years ago as Israel’s **rejected** King: He never did rule Israel, for Israel declared in John 19:15: “We have no king but Caesar!” So, how can Luke 1:33 say Jesus Christ will rule Israel “for ever?”* *Dispensational Bible study relieves us of confusion and consternation. Luke 1:33 is to be taken literally, but it is to be believed dispensationally. Israel’s prophetic (kingdom) program,*

¹ Pentecost, Dwight. <https://www.pre-trib.org/pretribfiles/pdfs/Pentecost-TheRelationshipOfTheChurchToTheKingdomOfGod.pdf>

² <https://forwhatsaiththescriptures.org/2014/12/05/my-kingdom-is-not-of-this-world/>

*the program to which Luke 1:33 belongs, is currently suspended. God is **not** restoring the earth's governments today. Instead, He is forming the Church the Body of Christ, a heavenly people whom He will use to restore the **heavenly** governments in the ages to come (see Colossians 1:16-20). While our Dispensation of Grace is operating, Israel's kingdom program is delayed. Once our dispensation ends (at the rapture), then God will resume Israel's program and Christ will return at His Second Coming to fulfill Luke 1:33 (establishing His literal, physical, visible earthly kingdom). You can read about that in Romans 11:25-36.*

- c. Others contend the church was in God's plan, but it is not the same as the kingdom of heaven. They appeal to Daniel chapter 9:24-27 which speaks of 70 weeks, with events happening during the 69th week including the Messiah being cut off until the end.
 - Some describe this as a parenthetical time planned by God (John Walvoord³ – The Church Age as a Parenthesis).
 - One site said of the church in the OT was “a mystery plan”, “locked up in the loving heart of God.”⁴
 - Some make a distinction between the kingdom of God (which they say includes the church) and kingdom of heaven – a reference to His actual return.
- d. I will deal with the Daniel 9 prophecy later. Today I want to talk about how the kingdom and church are related to one another.

II. **The relationship between the church and kingdom.**

- a. It is my conviction that the church and the kingdom are the same, or at least consist of the same people, as far as salvation is concerned. I base this on a number of factors.
- b. This can be established from a timing standpoint
 - i. The kingdom prophesied –
 1. Daniel 2:44 – “in the days of these kings God will set up a kingdom.”
 2. Daniel 7:13-14 – “to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom... for all nations
 3. Psalm 45:6, Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. (see Hebrews 1:8-9)
 4. See also Mark 9:1, Matthew 4:17 – Jesus taught the eminent appearance of the kingdom. As noted some seek to make a distinction between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven – but there are passages that defeat this argument - Matthew 19:23-24 uses both phrases; also passages like Matthew 11:11 & Luke 7:28 (concerning John the Baptist) and Matthew 13:11 & Mark 4:11 (explaining parables) in the same context use the different phrases. NOTE: Only Matthew makes reference to the kingdom of heaven – something Jews could relate to.
 - ii. The church prophesied –
 1. While not addressed by this term in the OT, Matthew 16:18-19 is a passage that shows the intent of Jesus to build His church – showing it was future
 2. But also consider Ephesians 3:10-11 which notes that the church was part of God's eternal purpose (His plan all along).
 3. Also in that text Jesus tied the church and kingdom together telling the apostles He would give to them the keys to the kingdom of heaven.
 - iii. BOTH the church and kingdom can trace their beginning to Acts 2.

³ <https://walvoord.com/article/152>

⁴ Middletown Bible Church, “False Charges Against Dispensationalism”, <https://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/dispens/fcharges.htm?fbclid=IwAR26nwDugcK1CXDZkChwvowMrxbh-5xYiJSoxsdJGqcLjX05WIUB9kkYwE0>

1. You will find there the fulfillment of prophecies from Isaiah 2:2-4 & Joel 2:28-32 (which Peter quotes). Considering that the Old Testament made specific reference to the kingdom established, we can conclude that it is what is fulfilled in this text.
 2. The CHURCH has its beginning in this context and read of its development throughout Acts and addressed in the epistles.
- iv. AFTER Acts 2, both are portrayed as in existence.
1. Again, the church is the premise of Acts and its first mention is found in Acts 2:47 (KJV, NKJV), Acts 5:11 & 8:1 in all versions.
 2. Kingdom – see Colossians 1:13 – which speaks of the kingdom in existence. Also Hebrews 12:28 which speaks of the kingdom as something we are receiving now (present tense verb).
- c. This can be determined from a descriptive standpoint
- i. A study of the NT reveals that their identities tie them together.
 - ii. Used together in texts such as Matthew 16:18-19 & Hebrews 12:22-23, 28
 - iii. Purchased with His blood –
 1. The kingdom - Colossians 1:13-14
 2. Church – Acts 20:28
 - iv. Terms of entrance –
 1. Baptism into the kingdom - John 3:5, Acts 8:12
 2. Baptized, added to His church/body - 1 Corinthians 12:13
 - v. Christ is head –
 1. Kingdom – He is our King – 1 Corinthians 15:25 – He reigns; Acts 2:30 & 36 – He is Lord; Hebrews 1:8-9
 2. Church – Ephesians 1:22-23, Colossians 1:18
 - vi. We are His subjects –
 1. Kingdom – Ephesians 2:19 – citizens, indicating a kingdom
 2. Church – Romans 12:4-5 – members of His body (cf. Ephesians 1:22-23 – the church), 1 Corinthians 12:27
 - vii. Concerning the Lord’s Supper
 1. Kingdom – Luke 22:18, 29-30 – he would eat and drink with them in His kingdom
 2. Church – 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, 11:18-26 – we partake as we come together as the church (cf. Acts 20:7).
 - viii. Perhaps other descriptions could be added to these. But we can see how closely the church and kingdom are related. So close, it is a stretch to separate them
- d. Why the use of two different terms?
- i. They describe different aspects of our relationship with God. In reality, the collective of Christians are called by several different terms each designating something about relationship:
 1. Household – indicating family relationship.
 2. Body – indicating functional relationship.
 3. Vineyard – indicating how Christ is our lifeline.
 4. Temple (and priesthood) – as to worship (collective and individual).
 5. Church indicates we are a gathering or assembly working together.
 6. Kingdom implies we are a nation of subjects (citizens) together of our King Jesus.
 - ii. In all these descriptive terms, we have a better understanding of relationship and responsibility to our Lord and our God.
 - iii. In considering all these things, to answer the question: Was the church an afterthought? The answer is a resounding NO!

And thus we can see that the church and kingdom are the same in so many ways. The terms can be used interchangeably to refer to the same people – the body of the saved. To say that the church is now, and the kingdom (either as a whole or in a different form) is future, is not consistent with God's word. And in essence it belittles the church making it less important than the kingdom (consider this when one advocates, "attend the church of your choice". One source noted, you do not hear such admonitions concerning the kingdom). Like so much of this doctrine, it requires the manipulation and picking and choosing of passages to fit what you want them to say. We cannot do that. So having said this, are part of His kingdom? Continued next week.