

Lesson 1: Introduction

Introduction: The god of this world (Satan) sees to it that falsehood and deception runs rampant. He loves those who believe his lies and are easily swayed from the gospel. He doesn't mind at all for people to be religious if he can mix a little error in with it. II Pet. 3:16 says some "wrest" the scriptures to their own destruction. One of the most vicious and anti-Biblical doctrines along this line is PREMILLENNIALISM. The majority of so-called Christianity is "sold" on this false doctrine. Many brethren too!!

PRE - before, MILLE - 1.000. ANNUM - year. ISM - doctrine/system, thus, before 1,000 year doctrine. This doctrine holds that Jesus will return to this earth *before* he establishes his kingdom spoken of in the Old Testament and that he will rule with his saints in Jerusalem for a period of 1,000 years. There are many, many variations of this doctrine with some basic threads running through them all. It is a very critical and complex subject. The proponents of this system turn the truth of God into a lie and create a man-made doctrine that is totally opposite of what the Bible teaches - there is no truth within it!

Those who accept this false doctrine generally believe:

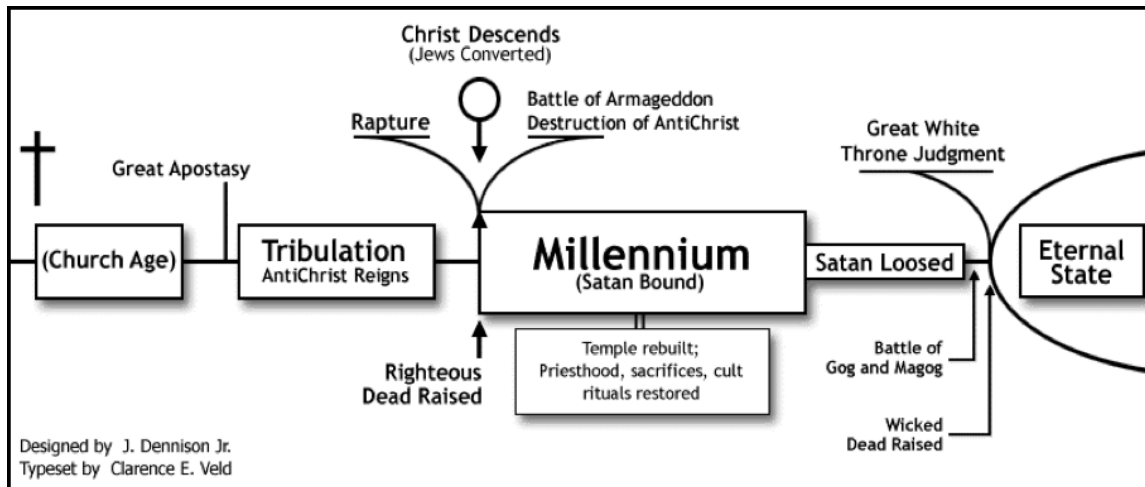
- The kingdom of Old Testament prophecy has not been established.
- We only have the church as an after-thought - a substitute that is temporary.
- That God's promise to make Abraham's seed a great nation by giving him a certain land has not been fulfilled. That Christ came to set up his kingdom but was rejected by the Jews, so he returned to heaven and set up the church instead.
- He will return to the earth in the future to establish his kingdom.
- The Jews, as a nation, will be converted and restored to Palestine.
- He will reign with the saints 1,000 years in Jerusalem on King David's literal throne.

The consequence of believing such a system of false doctrine is eternal! To believe it, you must forsake God's eternal purpose for his church/kingdom. You throw "out the door" the blood of Christ for it was the purchase price of the church (Eph. 3:10: Acts 20:28)! Nothing is harmless that destroys the body/church and blood of Christ! The church of the Lord must oppose this satanic doctrine with every ounce of fight within us. Hymenaeus and Alexander may compromise the truth. Big-name preachers today may do it. But those who want to go to heaven will be found opposing and exposing it for what it really is!

Key Definitions:

- **POSTMILLENNIALISM** is that view of the last things which holds that the Kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit, that the world eventually will be Christianized, and that the return of Christ will occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace commonly called the Millennium.
- **AMILLENNIALISM** is that view of the last things which holds that the Bible does not predict a "Millennium" or period of world-wide peace and righteousness on this earth before the end of the world.
- **PREMILLENNIALISM** is that view of the last things which holds that the second coming of Christ will be followed by a period of world-wide peace and righteousness before the end of the world called "the Millennium" or "the Kingdom of God," during which Christ will reign as King in person on this earth.
- **DISPENSATIONALISM** is a radical form of Premillennialism and is of comparatively recent development. Its views were first effectively set forth by John Darby, a leader in the Plymouth Brethren group in England about 1830, and later made popular by the Scofield Reference Bible. Through this Bible and its notes, these views have become the prevailing tenets of Premillennialism in the U.S.

Dispensational Premillennialism View:



Historical Timeline: (See Attachment 1)

Features of the Doctrine: (See Attachment 2)

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the impact of premillennial doctrine on worldview thinking (i.e. church, politically, historically, terminology)?
2. Why is it important to study about premillennialism?
3. What are the key differences in different definitions of millennial definitions?
4. What is dispensational premillennialism?
5. What are the key features of dispensational premillennialism?

Conclusions:

- Premellennialism is a theory – a false and dangerous theory. We must be on guard against it and those who teach it.
- Millennial views differences relate primarily to the time and purpose of Christ coming and to the kind of kingdom it will be.
- The scriptures plainly teach that when Jesus comes again: **TIME WILL END, ALL THE DEAD WILL BE RAISED AT THE SAME TIME, THE JUDGMENT WILL OCCUR, and ETERNITY WILL COMMENCE.**

Attachment 1: Historic Timeline

- **1st Century**
 - There was an “age to come” which was commonly viewed as a nationalistic golden age in which the hopes of the prophets would become a reality for the nation of Israel.
 - Based on interpretation developed within the apocalyptic literature of early Judaism.
 - Various rabbis around the close of the first century have claimed that the messianic reign would last anywhere from 60 to 2000 years based upon verses like Ezra 7:28.
- **1st to 3rd Century**
 - Many early Christian interpreters applied the earlier Jewish apocalyptic idea of a temporary Messianic kingdom to their interpretation of chapter 20 of John's apocalypse.

- Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian all made explicit references to the concept of a thousand year earthly kingdom at Christ's coming.
- **4th to 5th Century**
 - Although he is now known as being against Premillennialism, Augustine was an advocate of it for some time. The following is from perhaps his most famous writing, *The City of God*,
 - *"The evangelist John has spoken of these two resurrections in the book which is called the Apocalypse...the Apostle John says in the foresaid book, "And I saw an angel come down from heaven. . . . Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on 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." Those who, on the strength of this passage, have suspected that the first resurrection is future and bodily, have been moved, among other things, specially by the number of a thousand years, as if it were a fit thing that the saints should thus enjoy a kind of Sabbathrest during that period, a holy leisure after the labors of the six thousand years since man was created ..."*
- **Middle Ages to the Reformation**
 - Oxford theologian, Alister McGrath has noted that "all medieval theology is 'Augustinian' to a greater or lesser extent." Augustine's (354-430) influence shaped not only the Middle Ages, but it also influenced the Reformers, who constantly referred to his teaching in their own debates. His teaching is "still one of the most potent elements in Western religious thought." Augustine divided history into two separate dispensations, first the church age (the current age of 6,000 years), and then the millennial kingdom.
 - During the Reformation period, amillennialism continued to be the popular view of the Reformers. The Lutherans formally rejected chiliasm in the Augsburg Confession. Likewise, the Swiss Reformer, Heinrich Bullinger wrote up the Second Helvetic Confession which reads "We also reject the Jewish dream of a millennium, or golden age on earth, before the last judgment." Furthermore, John Calvin wrote in *Institutes* that millennialism is a "fiction" that is "too childish either to need or to be worth a refutation."
- **17th to 18th Century**
 - In the Modern Age millenarianism gained a surprising acceptance among the Pietists of Germany during the 17th and 18th century. And although they were not premillennial, the English theologian Daniel Whitby (1688-1726), the German Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), and the American Jonathan Edwards (1703-58) "fueled millennial ideas with new influence in the nineteenth century." It was authors such as these who concluded that the decline of the Roman Catholic Church would make way for the conversion and restoration of the nation of Israel.
- **19th Century to Present**
 - During this time period, dispensational Premillennialism traces its roots to the 1830s and John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), a Calvinist theologian and a founder of the Plymouth Brethren. In the US, the dispensational form of Premillennialism was propagated on the popular level largely through the Scofield Reference Bible and on the academic level with Lewis Sperry Chafer's eight volume *Systematic Theology*.
 - Between 1790 and the mid-19th century, Premillennialism was a popular view among English Evangelicals, even within the Anglican Church. Thomas Macaulay observed this and wrote "Many Christians believe that the Messiah will shortly establish a kingdom on the earth, and visibly reign over all its inhabitants." Throughout the 19th century, Premillennialism continued to gain wider acceptance in both the US and in Britain, particularly among the Irvingites, Plymouth Brethren, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians, Church of God, and Seventh-day Adventists. Premillennialism continues to be popular among Evangelical, Fundamentalist Christian, and Living Church of God communities in the 20th and 21st centuries, expanding further into the churches of Asia, Africa and South America.
 - More recently dispensationalism has been popularized through Hal Lindsey's 1970s bestseller, *The Late, Great Planet Earth* and through the *Left Behind* Series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. Popular proponents of dispensational Premillennialism are John F. MacArthur, Phil Johnson, Ray Comfort, Todd Friel, Dwight Pentecost, John Walvoord, Tim LaHaye, Charles Ryrie (in the notes for the Ryrie Study Bible) and Charles Feinberg.
 - "Churches of Christ". Taken from a blog from Danny Dodd, preaching at Gateway Church of Christ, Pensacola, FL.
 - From the very beginning of our Restoration Movement the doctrine of Premillennialism was taught and embraced. None other than the "Father of the Restoration Movement"- Alexander Campbell- was a believer. (In post-millennialism- thanks BV- His second major periodical was not named the Millennial Harbinger for nothing!)

Later Restoration luminaries such as David Lipscomb and James A. Harding continued the premillennial tradition. This doctrine only increased in popularity among Churches of Christ in the early twentieth century thanks to the work of a prominent Nashville Bible School product, R. H. Boll and to J.N. Armstrong who was the first president of Harding College.

Eventually though this doctrine and those who taught it came under attack led by Foy E. Wallace, Jr. and H. Leo Boles. At one point the very future of Harding College hung in the premillennial wind. Ultimately the Wallace's and Boles of our fellowship had their way and the "damnable doctrine" of Premillennialism was pushed to the margins of our movement. But it never completely went away. There are still pockets of premillennial Churches of Christ in south Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas and other places.

Attachment 2: Features of Premillennial Doctrine

1. That the Kingdom of God is not now in the world, and that it will not be instituted until Christ returns.
2. That it is not the purpose of the present gospel age to convert the world to Christianity, but rather to preach the gospel as a witness to the nations and so to warn them of and make them justly subject to judgment; also to gather out of all nations God's elect, the Church saints.
3. That the world is growing worse and will continue to grow worse until Christ comes to establish His Kingdom.
4. That immediately preceding the return of Christ there is to be a period of general apostasy and wickedness.
5. That we are now in the latter stages of the Church age and that the return of Christ is near, probably to occur within the lifetime of the present generation.
6. That at Christ's coming the righteous dead of all ages are to be raised in the "first resurrection."
7. That the resurrected dead together with the transfigured living saints who are then on the earth are to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.
8. That the judgment of all the righteous then takes place, which judgment consists primarily in the assignment of rewards.
9. That before and during the tribulation period the Jew are to be restored to the land of Palestine.
10. That at the mere sight of their Messiah the Jews are to turn to Him in a national conversion and true repentance.
11. That Christ at His coming destroys the Antichrist and all his forces in the battle of Armageddon.
12. That after the battle of Armageddon Christ establishes a world-wide Kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital, in which he and the resurrected and transfigured saints rule for a thousand years in righteousness, peace and prosperity.
13. That during this reign the city of Jerusalem and the temple are to be rebuilt, the feasts and fasts and the priesthood ritual and sacrificial system reinstituted, though performed in a Christian spirit and by Christian worshippers.
14. That the golden age also is to be characterized by the removal of the curse from nature so that the desert shall blossom as the rose and the wild ferocious nature of the beasts shall be changed.
15. That during the Millennium great numbers of the Gentiles will turn to God and be incorporated into the Kingdom.
16. That while many remain unconverted and rebellious at heart they are not destroyed, but are held in check by the rod-of-iron rule of Christ.
17. That during the Millennium Satan is to be bound, cast into the abyss, and so shut away from the earth.
18. That at the close of the Millennium Satan is to be loosed for a short time.
19. That the Millennium is to be followed by a short but violent outbreak of wickedness and rebellion headed by Satan which all but overwhelms the saints and the holy city of Jerusalem.
20. That the forces of wickedness are to be destroyed by fire which is cast down upon them from heaven.
21. That the wicked dead of all ages are then to be raised in the "second resurrection," judged, and with the Devil and the wicked angels cast into hell.
22. That heaven and hell are then introduced in their fullness, with the new heavens and the new earth as the future home of the redeemed, which will constitute the eternal state.