

Session 3 Historic Premillennialism and the Victorious Church

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE END TIMES

- A. It is important to have a biblical perspective on the end times because what we believe about the end times greatly affects how we approach the work of the kingdom. Ideas have consequences.
- B. I do not ask anyone to accept my views; rather I urge you to think for yourself. Truth is never hurt by careful scrutiny, but is confirmed. We must boldly challenge all the ideas that are being taught and refuse any that we cannot clearly see in Scripture for ourselves.
- ¹¹They [Bereans] received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (Acts 17:11)***
- C. We honor the godliness and wisdom of many who uphold different views, but some errors in understanding will leave many unprepared and even offended at Jesus in the end-time pressures.
- D. The most controversial point that we teach is that the Church will be raptured *after* going through the tribulation in great victory. This differs from the pretribulation rapture view that teaches that the Church will be raptured at any moment, missing the end-time revival and crisis.
- E. There are several popular end-time views taught today. One is ***too pessimistic*** (dispensational premillennialism) with its pretribulation rapture. In total contrast, another view is ***too optimistic*** (postmillennialism) with its total Christianizing of all society before Jesus returns. This view claims that things will mostly get better. This overly optimistic view will lead to confusion and disappointment. *The power and promises of God will be released in fullness in the Millennium, yet are still released in part in this age and in greater measures as we get closer to Jesus' return.*
- F. IHOPU leadership teaches the ***historic premillennial*** view of the end times with a post-tribulation rapture and emphasizing a victorious, praying Church (Eph. 5:27; Rev. 19:7). The Church will be victorious in love with power during the most dramatic time in history. This view gives us confidence and urgency to participate dynamically with Jesus now and in the coming revival.
- G. The harvest *both* of righteousness *and* of sin will come to fullness at the end of the age resulting in the greatest outpouring of the Spirit and the greatest crisis in history—the tribulation.
- ³⁰Let both [wheat and tares] grow together until the harvest... (Mt. 13:30)***
- ¹¹For the Day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:11)***
- H. ***Many unique dynamics will occur in Jesus' end-time plan*** as He transitions the earth from this present age to the age to come and drives evil from the earth forever. He has a plan to intervene to confront oppression and corruption in a way that He has never done before (Rev. 19:2). God's judgments will remove all that hinders love so that multitudes are saved and matured in love. He uses the least severe means to reach the greatest number of people at the deepest level of love.

II. APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY: NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH LIFE

- A. The Lord is returning for a victorious Church (Eph. 5:27; Rev. 19:7). Because of the element of victory, we sometimes refer to our historic premillennial view as ***apostolic premillennialism***. We use the term *apostolic* to refer to the vision, values and victory of the New Testament Church.

²⁷ *...that He might present her to Himself a glorious church... (Eph. 5:27)*

⁷ *...for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. (Rev. 19:7)*

- B. Apostolic Christianity, or New Testament Christianity, will emerge in the end times as the Spirit raises up a victorious Church that operates in unprecedented unity, intimacy, and maturity (Mt. 16:18; 22:37; Jn. 17:21-26; Acts 2:17-21; Eph. 4:13; 5:27; Rev. 7:9; 12:11; 15:2; 19:7).

¹¹ *He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,* ¹² *for the equipping of the saints...¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge [intimacy] of the Son of God, to a perfect man [maturity]... (Eph. 4:11-13)*

III. WHAT IS APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY?

- A. ***It is Jesus-centered:*** It has a deep allegiance to Jesus, proclaiming His supremacy, glory, and worth.
- B. ***It is Church-centered:*** Jesus is building His Church locally and universally, which will openly triumph over all the powers of hell (Mt. 16:18). The local church is central to the purpose of God.
- C. ***It is wholehearted:*** It embraces holiness and discipleship as the Holy Spirit establishes the first commandment in first place in the Church in relation to Sermon on the Mount lifestyles (Mt. 5-7).
- D. ***It operates in supernatural power:*** It heals the sick and operates in all the gifts of the Spirit.
- E. ***It grows through prayer and intimacy with God:*** Its ministries flow from a foundation of intimacy with God (Mt. 25:1-13), with persevering faith and prayer that releases the Spirit's power.
- F. ***It possesses a missionary spirit:*** It is focused on proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom in every nation and every area of society (Mt. 24:14; 28:19). This is referred to as the ***Great Commission*** or the ***cultural mandate***. In the Millennium there will be a continuity of some of our present labors.
- G. ***It embraces persecution:*** Persecution is part of spiritual warfare for the godly (2 Tim. 3:10-12).
- H. ***It engages in God's purpose for Israel:*** The salvation of Israel is a significant aspect of God's end-time plan. Jewish and Gentile believers are unified in salvation as one new man (Eph. 2:15).
- I. ***It is free from the wrath of God:*** It is protected from God's wrath through Jesus (Rom. 8:1).

⁹ ***For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord... (1 Thes. 5:9)***

IV. THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

- A. The Millennium is a literal 1,000-year period in which Jesus will rule the whole world from Jerusalem in righteousness, peace, and prosperity (Rev. 20:1-6). Jesus will govern in partnership with resurrected saints to establish a biblically-based social order (Mt. 19:28; 25:23; Lk. 19:17-19; 22:29-30; Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6).

⁴They lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years...⁶They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Rev. 20:4-6)

- B. The kingdom of God will be openly manifested worldwide, affecting every sphere of life (politics, economy, education, agriculture, media, technology, environment, social institutions, etc.).
- C. This period of worldwide blessing will be initiated by Jesus' second coming (Isa. 2:1-4; 9:6-9; 11:1-16; 65:17-25; cf. Ps. 2; 110; Mt. 6:10; 17:11; 19:28; 28:19; Acts 1:6; 3:21; Rev. 20:1-6).

V. THREE WRONG VIEWS OF THE END TIMES

- A. **Too negative:** Thinking that all society is destined to fall into the hands of the Antichrist. This view leads people to draw back from changing society now. They say, "Why should we work to bring change to society, if satanic darkness is destined to dominate all society in the tribulation?"
- B. **Too positive:** Thinking that most of society will be transformed before Jesus returns. This view ignores what Scripture says about the coming pressures in society and the necessity of Jesus returning to establish the fullness of the kingdom on earth. Though hope-filled desire is important, it must be tempered by Scripture. We must be loyal to God's end-time plan and wisdom as seen in Scripture and resist exaggerated humanistic optimism.
- C. **Too vague:** Thinking that it is impossible to know what the Scripture says about the end times, so why even try. They ignore the end times, being assured that the future will take care of itself and thus do not have urgency to be prepared in their understanding. Pan-millennial? It will all "pan out."

VI. THREE COMMON VIEWS OF THE MILLENNIUM

- A. **Premillennialism:** This view teaches that Jesus returns *before* (pre-) His 1,000-year millennial rule. This is the only view that interprets end-time prophecy in a literal or face-value way.
- B. **Postmillennialism:** This view teaches that Jesus returns *after* (post-) His 1000-year millennial rule. The Church establishes the Millennium by fully Christianizing the world before He returns.
- C. **Amillennialism:** This means "*no millennium.*" This view teaches that Jesus' 1,000-year reign is not a literal, earthly reign, but merely a spiritual victory over sin in the heart of the believer. Most amillennialists limit the kingdom on the earth to being mostly in the heart of a believer.

VII. AMILLENNIAL VIEW OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- A. ***The strength of this view*** is in its focus on the spiritual triumph of the Church over sin and Satan before the Lord returns. Some amillennialists believe in a victorious end-time Church.
- B. ***The weaknesses of this view*** are found in interpreting much end-time prophecy as symbolic or figurative and in embracing replacement theology, which teaches that the Church replaces Israel as heir to Israel's prophetic promises. Some amillennialists believe in a tribulation with a literal Antichrist, but most reject this view.
- C. Most amillennialists have a preterist view of the end times (*preterit* is a verb tense that describes a past action). *Preterism* teaches that end-time prophecy has already been fulfilled in the past. Some amillennialists are what I call "eschatological cessationists" in that they do not believe the power of God will be manifest in the events related to the Great Tribulation and the Millennium.
- D. Many preterists do not believe in an end-time tribulation or Antichrist, nor do they interpret the book of Revelation in a literal way. Preterism sees most of the prophecies in Revelation (the tribulation, Antichrist, etc.) as being fulfilled when Israel was at war with Rome (AD 66–70) and/or sees them as merely symbolic—as a picture of spiritual conflict through Church history.
- E. Amillennialists see end-time prophecies (Mt. 24; Lk. 21) as completely fulfilled in AD 70. It is true that the events of AD 70 were a partial fulfillment of these prophecies, but those events are also meant to be understood as a significant prophetic foreshadowing of end-time events (e.g. abomination of desolation, cf. Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; Mt. 24:15-16; Mk. 13:14).

VIII. POSTMILLENNIAL VIEW OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- A. ***The strength of this view*** is found in zeal for the ***cultural mandate***—working to see every area of society transformed (*government, economy, education, media, arts, etc.*). The Lord will release an increased measure of His kingdom purposes and power in every sphere of society before He returns. Some of our labors in this age will have continuity in the age to come.
- B. ***The weakness of this view*** is similar to the weakness of amillennialism: end-time prophecies are usually interpreted symbolically instead of literally, and it embraces replacement theology.
- C. Most postmillennialists are preterist; they see many end-time prophecies as fulfilled in AD 70, rather than being partially fulfilled at that time as a prophetic foreshadowing of end-time events.
- D. Postmillennialism is an overly optimistic eschatology. It was most popular during the Victorian age (about 1840–1900) when the Spirit was restoring the truths of social action and human rights. At that time, many believers thought things would just get better and better until Jesus returned.
- E. The two world wars (1914-1918 and 1939-1945) in the early 20th century caused postmillennialism to fall out of favor. For example, Wheaton College was founded with postmillennial views, but switched to premillennialism after the world wars proved postmillennial optimism to be wrong.

IX. THE PREMILLENNIAL VIEW OF THE KINGDOM: 2 DIFFERENT APPROACHES

- A. Premillennialists believe that Jesus will return to rule the earth for a Millennium (1,000 years). The strength of this view is found in its literal interpretation of end-time biblical prophecy. The two differing premillennial views are *historic* and *dispensational* premillennialism.
- B. ***Historic Premillennialism***: Most teach a post-tribulation rapture (Jesus will return “after” the tribulation) and literal interpretation of end-time prophecy and honor God’s purpose for Israel.
- C. ***Dispensational Premillennialism***: All teach a pre-tribulation rapture (Jesus will return “before” the tribulation) and the literal interpretation of end-time prophecy and honor God’s purpose for Israel. Most do not believe that the Church will be used to transform parts of society, operate in the gifts of the Spirit or win an end-time harvest. This is a new theology that was systematized in the 1830s by John N. Darby. It is called *dispensational* because it teaches that God has related differently to His people in seven dispensations of history. It includes: (1) two covenants of salvation (Israel and the Church); (2) a literal interpretation of Scripture; (3) premillennial views; (4) pretribulation rapture; (5) imminency that sees the possibility of an “any moment” rapture.
- D. Today, some who hold dispensational views reject some of the early beliefs of their movement. *Classical Dispensationalism* (1850–1950s) sees the Church is a parenthesis in salvation history. *Revised Dispensationalism* (1950–1980s) rejects the idea of two new covenants (for Israel and the Church), but sees their distinction in eternity. *Progressive Dispensationalism* (1980s–present) refers to the “progressive” relationship of the successive dispensations to one another.

X. DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM

- A. ***The strength of this view*** is found in its literal interpretation of end-time prophecy and in embracing God’s purpose for Israel in the end times.
- B. ***Its weakness*** is that most who hold this view do not believe that the Church will be used to transform parts of society, that it will operate in the gifts of the Spirit, or that it will be on earth during the tribulation to finish winning the harvest. It sees two new covenants pertaining to salvation—one for Israel and one for the Church. (Dispensationalists have differing views on this).
- C. One weakness common to dispensationalists is teaching the pre-tribulation rapture of the Church. Dispensational premillennialism is an overly pessimistic eschatology. The common response is ***escapism*** (*why prepare and work hard if we will soon be raptured*) along with ***fatalism*** and defeatism (*society cannot be changed so why try*).
- D. The doctrine of imminency (Jesus returning at any moment) does not emphasize the need for a long-term plan to impact society or for Gentile believers to provoke Israel to jealousy and salvation by standing with them in persecution during the tribulation. Some with this view see the Church’s mandate as being like a life raft, limited to delivering people from drowning (preaching only salvation), while abdicating kingdom responsibility to call society out of darkness. This view can lead to a lazy disengagement. Yet, some dispensationalist churches are very active in soul-winning.

XI. HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM: THE TRADITIONAL VIEW

- A. *The strength of this view* is found in its literal interpretation of end-time prophecy, in preparing the Church for future persecution, and in teaching our responsibility to provoke Israel to salvation.
- B. *Its weakness* is that some who hold this view do not believe that the Church will grow strong in prayer resulting in the great harvest and end-time victory and power as she functions in her bridal identity (Rev. 22:17). Note: some with this view do see a victorious praying Church.

XII. HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM WITH A VICTORIOUS CHURCH

- A. *The strength of this view* is found in combining the biblical strengths of postmillennialism and amillennialism with historic premillennialism and the call to victory and wholeheartedness.
- B. *A victorious Church* attains to unity, intimacy, and maturity, resulting in the greatest revival in history (Eph. 4:13). This prophetic, praying Church will walk in great power as it is used to bring in the end-time harvest and transform society in various places.
- C. *A wholehearted Church* walks in the “Sermon on the Mount lifestyle” of self-denial and serving, giving, blessing, praying, and fasting as seen in the New Testament Church (Mt. 5-7).
- D. *A relevant Church* sees the *continuity* of some of our labors in impacting society now (righteous legislation, education, etc.) with the work of Jesus in the Millennium. All that is unrighteous will be dismantled and re-established in righteousness in the Millennium. However, truly righteous legislation in society that is established in this age will not need to be replaced. Works in society built on godliness and justice will last beyond the shaking of the tribulation judgments.

XIII. TWO COMMON OBJECTIONS TO HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM

- A. Some claim that the *Holy Spirit is the restrainer* who is removed when the Church is raptured. Paul prophesied the removal of a “someone” or “something” that restrains the Antichrist from being revealed (2 Thes. 2:6-8). Paul described the restrainer of the increase of sin and the release of the Antichrist as a “what” (neuter gender in 2:6) and as a “He” (masculine gender in 2:7).
⁶And now you know what is restraining, that he [Antichrist] may be revealed in his own time.
⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. ⁸And then the lawless one [Antichrist] will be revealed... (2 Thes. 2:6-8)
- B. Paul taught that governing authorities are appointed by God to restrain evil (Rom. 13:1-4). The restraining force is a combination of a “what,” which may be the existence of national governments that will not allow the Antichrist’s government to emerge, and a “He,” or God and His sovereign decree to bring the ten-nation confederation into unity with the Antichrist (Rev. 17:17).
- C. Some claim that we will not go through the tribulation because “*we are not appointed unto wrath*” (1 Thes. 5:9). It is true—the Church is *not* appointed to wrath. However, the wrath of God in the tribulation will be released to destroy the Antichrist’s empire (not the Church).