

I. **Lesson 16: Premillennialism and the Rapture**

- A. In an earlier lesson in this series, we looked at what the Bible has to say about the End Times.
1. We noted then that there are many false views about what will happen at the end of this age, and we very briefly discussed premillennialism.
 2. The purpose of this lesson is to dive more deeply into that topic and to demonstrate why that view is false.
 3. For a much more complete treatment of what actually will happen at the end of the world, please look at those earlier notes.
- B. There is a great deal of interest in this topic.
1. The "Left Behind" series of books by Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye advocates dispensational premillennialism throughout.
 2. One of the leading elements in that series of books is the idea that in the near-distant future the followers of Christ will be snatched away or raptured while events continue on Earth for those left behind.
 3. You may have seen the bumper sticker that says "Warning! In event of Rapture this car will be driverless!"
- C. Tim LaHaye describes the following statement as the "golden rule of biblical interpretation."
1. "When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, but take every word at its primary, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context clearly indicate otherwise."
 2. That sounds good, but there are two big problems with it when it comes to premillennialists.
 - a) It ignores the use of figurative, symbolic language in many of the prophetic portions of Scripture -- and we know that such

language is used because the symbols are identified and explained several times in Daniel and Revelation.

- b) While it may be a good rule for interpreting non-figurative language in the Bible, premillennialists ignore it in that context! In fact, premillennialists really turn things on its head -- they take figurative language literally and literal language figuratively!
 - (1) Matthew 24:1-33, for example, describes the judgment of Jerusalem in vivid language and concludes in verse 34 with a simple statement that all of those events will occur in the first century. Premillennialists take the first 33 verses literally and then either ignore or try to explain away the plain "common sense" statement in verse 34.
 - (2) 1 John 2:18 tells us that the "last hour" was then occurring and that "antichrists" were then operating on earth. Premillennialists put all of that into the future and ignore the "common sense" interpretation that they were first century events.
 - 3. If anything needs to be "left behind" it is premillennial and all of the false, blasphemous consequences that follow from it.
- D. It is important that the Lord's church be clear on what will transpire at the Lord's return.
- 1. As with any doctrine, we must proclaim what the Bible says on this subject, and we must defend the truth against the false teachings that seek to supplant it.
 - 2. This doctrine is particularly pernicious. Why?
 - a) It confuses people about their hope in Jesus Christ.
 - b) It confuses people about their need to obey the gospel today.
 - c) It distracts people from how they must live today.
 - d) It makes people believe that the word of God changes with the

day's headlines.

- (1) In his book "Arageddon, Oil and the Middle East," John Walvoord argued that the first Gulf War in the early 90's fulfilled conditions "exactly as the Bible anticipates in its prophecies of the end of time."

e) It has consequences that strike at the very heart of the gospel.

II. Terminology

A. Dispensationalism

1. Dispensationalism is the idea that all history is divided into seven ages or dispensations that supposedly correspond to the seven days of the creation week.
2. The seventh age is alleged to be the millennial reign of Jesus.

B. Premillennialism

1. The term "Millennium" in this context refers to the period of 1000 years that is mentioned in Revelation 20.
2. The term "Premillennialism" refers to the idea that Jesus will return to earth and then reign here on earth for 1000 years.
 - a) The prefix "pre" refers to the return of Christ occurring just prior to the 1000 year millennial period.
 - b) "Generally, premillennialists believe that shortly before the second coming the world will be marked by extraordinary tribulation and evil and the appearance of the Anti-Christ. At his coming, Christ will destroy this anti-Christ and believers will be raised from the dead. There will then follow a millennium of peace and order over which Christ will reign with his saints. At the close of this time, Satan will be loosed and the forces of evil will once again be rampant. The wicked will then be raised, and a final judgment will take place in which Satan and all evil ones will be consigned to eternal punishment" (Van A. Harvey, A Handbook

of Theological Terms, New York: Macmillan, 1964 p. 151).

3. While premillennialism is a recent departure, millennialism itself has a much longer history.
 - a) “The idea of a millennial reign proceeded from Judaism, for among the Jews the representation was current, that the Messiah would reign a thousand years on earth, and then bring to a close the present terrestrial System. This calculation was arrived at, by a literal interpretation of Psalm 90:4, ‘A thousand years are in thy sight as one day.’ It was further argued that as the World was created in six days, so it would last six thousand years, the seventh thousand would be a period of repose, a sabbath on Earth to be followed by the destruction of the World” (Augustus Neander, History of Christian Dogmas, London: Bohn, 1858, Vol. I, p. 248).
4. According to premillennialism, the vivid language in Revelation is not figurative language but is rather a literal description of something yet to occur.
 - a) To be a premillennialist you must literalize the figurative language in Revelation, and you must also ignore or otherwise overcome scores of other verses that contradict premillennialism.
5. This approach claims that nothing in Revelation from chapter 4 until the end of the book has been fulfilled yet, and that when it is fulfilled it will all be fulfilled literally. This approach includes the very popular dispensationalist view that is summarized below:
 - a) Jesus came to establish a visible rule on earth.
 - b) The Jews did not accept Christ so the offer to rule was withdrawn.
 - c) The establishment of the kingdom was postponed until his return.
 - d) The church was established for the interim period. The church is a parenthesis in history and is not a fulfillment of any Old Testament prophecy.

- e) The church age will end with a "rapture" in which all believers will meet Christ in the air. This is the first stage of the second advent.
 - f) During the next seven years, the antichrist will rule the earth, the Jews will be restored to Palestine, the temple will be rebuilt, and the sacrificial system will be reinstated. Those saved during this time are called tribulation saints.
 - g) The antichrist will break a covenant with the Jews after 3.5 years and a terrible persecution will follow.
 - h) After another 3.5 years Christ will appear, defeat the antichrist, and rule on earth for 1000 years.
6. Some proponents of this view are even more imaginative. Hal Lindsey presented the following scenario of the final seven years before the millennial reign:
- a) For 3.5 years Satan will rule the world through a Jewish antichrist in Rome.
 - b) The Jews will be allowed to rebuild the temple.
 - c) Many Jews will be converted and a worldwide evangelism program will be undertaken by 144,000 Jewish preachers.
 - d) After 3.5 years the antichrist will set up his own image in the newly rebuilt Jewish temple.
 - e) World War III will break out.
 - f) Egypt will invade Israel.
 - g) Russia will invade the Middle East and trample both Egypt and Israel.
 - h) The Roman dictator will invade Israel.
 - i) Rome will launch a nuclear attack against Russian forces in Israel.
 - j) 200,000,000 Chinese troops will march on Palestine to battle the

Roman army.

- k) The battle of Armageddon will begin and lead to worldwide destruction.
- l) Jesus will return to reign on earth for 1000 years.

C. Postmillennialism

1. As you might suspect, postmillennialism is the opposite of premillennialism. Where premillennialism says that Christ will return and then reign 1000 years, postmillennialism says that Christ will return after the millennium.
2. In that sense, they are opposites. But as for their consequences, premillennialism is infinitely worse. While premillennialism belittles the church and denies the success of Christ's mission here on earth, postmillennialism is not very different from amillennialism (which we will consider in a moment) except that postmillennialism does teach that there will be a 1000 year of peace on earth preceding the return of Christ.
3. You have all heard of a very famous postmillennialist but you may not realize it. Alexander Campbell was a postmillennialist.
 - a) In fact, Campbell's monthly publication from 1830 until 1870 was called the Millennial Harbinger.
 - b) His concept of the millennium was a period of time when the nations of the world would be in submission to the kingdom of Christ. He believed that in time Christianity would be victorious in this world. He believed that two things were necessary before this could come about:
 - (1) The annihilation of partyism.
 - (2) The restoration of Christian ordinances.
 - c) Here is what he wrote in his prospectus for the Millennial Harbinger:

- (1) "This work shall be devoted to the destruction of sectarianism, infidelity, and anti-Christian doctrine and practice. It shall have for its object the development and introduction of that political and religious order of society called the millennium, which will be the consummation of that ultimate society proposed in the Christian scripture."
- d) That is certainly a worthy goal, but no one believes in postmillennialism today as they once did in the 1800's. Why?
 - (1) Because of two world wars, because of Hitler and the millions he killed, because of Stalin and the millions he killed, and we could go on and on. In short, postmillennialism died during the half-century of bloodshed and war that followed the 1800's.

D. Amillennialism

1. Amillennialism says that there will be no literal millennial period either before or after the return of Christ.
2. Instead, the 1000 year in Revelation 20 is figurative as is practically everything else in that book. Numbers in particular have symbolic significance in that book as we saw when discussed the meaning of 666 in our earlier lesson on the end times.
3. Revelation 20 opens with Satan being bound for 1000 years and the saints reigning with Christ for 1000 years. What does this mean?
 - a) The first 19 chapters of Revelation deal exclusively with the conflict between Rome and the Church. Rome has now been completely destroyed. Satan's plan to destroy the Church through Rome has been completely stopped. How is this pictured? By showing Satan bound for 1000 years.
 - b) What does this picture mean? That with regard to Rome Satan has been completely bound and defeated. The number 10 represents "completeness" and the number 1000 indicates "complete completeness." Satan's defeat with regard to Rome was a complete defeat; hence, he is pictured as being bound for 1000

years. Remember that in apocalyptic language periods of time are often used to depict a state of affairs or a condition.

- c) The "1000 years" of this chapter represents a state of affairs and not a period of time. Here it is used to depict Satan's complete binding with regard to Rome. Later, it will be used to depict the Church's complete victory over Rome. Ps. 50:10 says God owns cattle on 1000 hills; that is, his ownership is complete. Deut. 7:9 says God keeps his covenant to 1000 generations; that is, his faithfulness is complete.
- d) What about the 1000 year reign with Christ? The "1000 years" simply depicts the perfection and completeness of a status that the martyrs enjoyed even before their death. Recall from Rom. 5:17 that we reign in life through Jesus.
- e) Note that even if taken literally, this passage says nothing about the duration of Christ's reign. The saints are said to reign with Christ for 1000 years. Ahaz ruled with his father Jotham for 12 years. Does that tell us how long Jotham reigned?
- f) We don't have time here to give a complete picture of the wonderful events in Revelation 20, but here is a summary of what this chapter tells us:
 - (1) Those who lived or died in service to Christ and opposition to Rome experience a total and complete victory.
 - (2) Those who lived or died in service to Rome and opposition to Christ experience a total and complete defeat.
 - (3) Satan will attack the Church in the future but will never be successful even if he able to assemble the entire world on his side.
- g) Barnes: "It is admitted, on all hands, that this doctrine, if contained in the Scriptures at all, is found in this one passage only. It is not pretended that there is, in any other place, a direct affirmation that this will literally occur, nor would the advocates for that opinion undertake to show that it is fairly implied in any

other part of the Bible. But it is strange, not to say improbable, that the doctrine of the literal resurrection of, the righteous, a thousand years before the wicked, should be announced in one passage only" (Commentary on Revelation, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1954, pp. 428-429).

E. Rapture

1. The word "rapture" is derived from the Latin word "rapio," which means to seize or to snatch.
2. Although this word is not found in the Bible, premillennialists claim that the idea is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 where Paul says that when Jesus returns those saints who are then living will be "caught up" in the clouds to meet him. They also point to Revelation 4:1 where a heavenly voice beckons John to "come up hither."
3. They refer to those verses as proof of a silent, secret return of Christ that will proceed his visible return a few years later to set up his millennial kingdom.
4. As even one of their own (Alexander Reese, a premillennialist) acknowledged, twisting that verse to support that false doctrine is one of the sorriest attempts in the whole history of freak exegesis!
5. As with all false doctrines, its history can be traced to a point of departure from the teachings of Scripture, and as with many false teachings, its history can be traced to a recent departure.
 - a) The idea seems to have appeared during a Pentecostal movement founded by Edward Irving in the early 1800's.
 - b) A young lady from Scotland named Margaret Macdonald purportedly had a prophetic vision in which she was told that there was a distinction between the final stage of the Lord's coming in which every eye shall see him and his prior appearance to those who are looking for him.
 - c) George Murray: "I am not aware that there was any definite teaching that there should be a Secret Rapture of the Church at a

secret coming until this was given forth as an 'utterance' in Mr. Irving's church from what was then received as being the voice of the Spirit."

F. Antichrist

1. You hear a lot about "the Antichrist" but the Bible does not speak of a single Antichrist but instead speaks of many antichrists.
 - a) 1 John 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.
 - b) 1 John 2:22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.
 - c) 1 John 4:3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.
 - d) 2 John 7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.
2. So instead of being just one, there are many. And instead of appearing in the future, there were many in the first century and no doubt in every century after the first century.
3. Who is an antichrist? Let's just let John answer that question: He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son, and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.
4. It is interesting that the Antichrist is often associated with Satan, and sometimes identified with him -- and yet Satan certainly would confess that Jesus came in the flesh. In fact, he talked with him! Men may be foolish enough to deny that there is a God and that Jesus is his son, but not Satan. He knows these things....and trembles.

G. Armageddon

1. Armageddon is specifically mentioned only one time in the Bible. (Revelation 16:16)
2. In a context dealing with the pouring out of seven bowls of God's wrath into the earth, John writes that unclean spirits gather the kings of the earth together for war in a place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon.
3. Most believe that the term "Har-Magedon" refers to the hill of Megiddo in the plain of Megiddo, which is about 20 miles by 14 miles wide.
4. The history of Megiddo is interesting. It is the earth's most famous battlefield.
 - a) J. L. Hurlbut said that "more battles have been fought on this plane than on any other in the world."
 - b) A number of Old Testament conflicts occurred there, including the victories of Deborah and Barak over the Canaanites in Judges 4 and of Gideon over the Midianites in Judges 7. Josiah was killed in battle there in 2 Kings 23.
5. The connection with Deborah is particularly instructive with regard to its use in Revelation.
 - a) Israel's position in Judges 4-5 seemed hopeless against Sisera and his 900 chariots of iron, but when the battle was joined Judges 4:15 tells us that the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and his army.
 - b) If we replace Israel with the church and Sisera with the Roman Empire, then the connection becomes clear. Armageddon was a code word for hope and victory in the face of seemingly hopeless odds!

III. Does any of this really matter?

- A. Does it make any difference what we believe about premillennialism? Is

it all just a matter of opinion? Should we make an issue out of it?

1. Here is one opinion. Listen to what Professor Carroll Osburn of Abilene Christian University has to say on pages 90 and 91 of his book *The Peaceable Kingdom*:
 - a) There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who believe that Christ is the Son of God, but who differ on ... premillennialism, ... congregational organization, or ... whether baptism is “for” or “because of” the remission of sins.
 - b) Thus, according to Professor Osburn, premillennialism (and the necessity of baptism, for that matter) is just a side issue that is really of little importance.
 - c) If that is what it takes to have peace in Professor Osburn's "Peaceable Kingdom," then the price is too high. You will search the scriptures in vain for a command that we pursue peace at any cost.
- B. Is premillennialism really just a side issue that doesn't really make that much difference?
 1. To answer that question, let's turn to John Walvoord, who is perhaps the leading proponent of premillennialism. Here is what he has to say about its importance:
 - a) If premillennialism is only a dispute about what will happen in a future age which is quite removed from present issues, that is one thing. If, however, premillennialism is a system of interpretation which involves the meaning and significance of the entire Bible, defines the meaning and course of the present age, determines the present purpose of God, and gives both material and method to theology, that is something else. It is the growing realization that premillennialism is more than a dispute about Revelation 20. It is not too much to say that millennialism is a determining factor in Biblical interpretation of comparable importance to the doctrines of verbal inspiration, the deity of Christ, substitutionary atonement, and bodily resurrection.

2. Thus, according to Walvoord, premillennialism is a “determining factor in Biblical interpretation.” And if you read their commentaries, you soon find out that this in no exaggeration. They manage to work it in practically everywhere, even though the ‘1000 year’ figure they rely on occurs only in Revelation 20.
3. Premillennialism is false, but if it concerned only events that will happen at the end of the world then it might be something on which we could agree to disagree -- but it does not. Premillennialism comes with consequences that run directly counter to the gospel of Jesus Christ. To accept premillennialism is to reject Christ as King and Savior.

IV. Consequences of Premillennialism

- A. Premillennialism falsely states that Jesus failed to accomplish his mission.
 1. “It is held that the Old Testament prophets predicted the re-establishment of David’s kingdom and that Christ himself intended to bring this about. It is alleged however, that because the Jews refused his person and work he postponed the establishment of his kingdom until the time of his return. Meanwhile, it is argued, the Lord gathered together ‘the church’ as a kind of interim measure” (Ernest F. Kevan, Wycliffe Dictionary of Theology, E.F. Harrison, G.W. Bromiley, C.F. Henry, Eds., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999, p. 352).
 2. But what does the Bible say? That the Jewish people rejected Christ was not a surprise -- it had been prophesied long ago.
 - a) Isaiah 53:1 asks "Who hath believed our report?" in describing the death of Christ. If Isaiah described his death, then how could his rejection have been a surprise?
 - b) John points to that very passage from Isaiah to explain the rejection of Christ in John 12:37–38.
 - c) Similarly, Matthew 21:33–46 points to Psalm 118:2 ("The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner.") to

explain the rejection of Christ by the Jews.

- d) Acts 2:23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain
3. Jesus perfectly accomplished his mission. He failed at nothing he came to do.
- a) John 17:4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.
 - b) John 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.
 - c) Luke 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.
 - (1) This verse tells us that far from being a surprise, Jesus' death was necessary for the accomplishment of his mission.
 - d) Matt. 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
- B. Premillennialism falsely states that the church is a "Plan B" that came about as a result of Jesus' failure to perform "Plan A."
- 1. How can anyone read Ephesians 3:10–11 and conclude that the church was a "Plan B"?
 - a) Eph. 3:10–11 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 - 2. We have spoken about the kingdom in other lessons, and we should recall here that the eternal kingdom was prophesied in Daniel 2:44.
 - 3. Daniel pinpointed its establishment as being during the days of the

Roman empire -- which began around 63 BC and ended around AD 476. Either the eternal kingdom was established in that time period or Daniel was a false prophet.

4. Premillennialists recognize the problem, and they try to get around it by arguing that the Roman empire will be revived so that it can fulfill its role in history. But the very book they point to for their 1000 reign repeatedly says that Rome would not rise again.
 - a) Revelation 18:21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.
 5. Jesus said in Mark 9:1 that his kingdom would come with power during the lifetime of his listeners. Paul tells us in Colossians 1:13 that when we are saved we are translated into that kingdom. How can these things be true if the kingdom is yet to come?
- C. Premillennialism falsely states that Jesus is not presently reigning as King.
1. "For centuries the Jews have been scattered among many nations. In preparation for the return of Christ and the beginning of the millennium, they are being gathered back to their own land, according to prophecy, in a national restoration. David's throne will be re-established at Jerusalem, and through these restored people as a nucleus Christ will reign with his immortal saints over the whole world" (James A. Nichols, Jr., Christian Doctrine - A Presentation of Biblical Theology, Nutley, NJ: Craig, p. 279).
 2. Premillennialists deny the complete Lordship of Jesus. They insist he is not presently ruling over Israel.
 - a) Premillennialists claim that although Jesus has the right to rule the earth, he is not exercising that authority at this time. For proof they point to the mess that the world is in.
 - b) What does the Bible say?

- (1) Psalm 29:10 reminds us that God ruled at the time of the flood even though the world was in a mess at the time.
 - (2) Paul told the Ephesians in Eph. 1:21 that Jesus is "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion" in this age. Acts 2:36 says that Jesus is Lord over Israel. In Rev. 2:26–27 Jesus claims to have already been given the authority over nations that was prophesied in Psalm 2:8–9. In Rev. 1:5 we see that Jesus is the ruler of the kings of the earth.
 - (3) Psalm 110 depicts Jesus as sitting at God's right hand and ruling in the midst of his enemies. (This passage is quoted many times in the New Testament as having been already fulfilled.) Hebrews 10:12 says that Jesus is now a priest sitting at the right hand of God. Jesus' office is a royal priesthood.
 - (4) What does the leading premillennialist John Walvoord say? He claims that although Psalm 110:1 and Psalm 110:4 have been fulfilled, the remaining verses in Psalm 110 have not been fulfilled! (Is this the "common sense" approach that LaHaye trumpets?)
3. Premillennialists argue that Jesus will one day literally sit on the throne of David and reign in Judah, and yet what does the Bible say?
- a) Jeremiah 22:30 Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.
 - (1) Jeremiah was speaking about the descendants of the last king to reign on the throne of David in the Old Testament, Jehoiachin. Christ was of the seed of Jehoiachin, both legally through Joseph and physically through Mary. Thus, Christ will never reign on David's earthly throne and prosper!
- D. Premillennialism falsely states that the Old Covenant will once again be in effect.
1. Premillennialists teach that the Levitical Priesthood will be restored

during the millennium.

- a) This view arises from a misinterpretation of Ezekiel 44. (See our verse by verse commentary on Ezekiel at www.thywordistruth.com.)
 - b) The role of the Levitical priests was to offer the sacrifices for sin that were demanded by the Law of Moses. Jesus' perfect sacrifice put these people out of business permanently (Hebrews 10:12, 18). The Levitical system was imperfect, weak, and useless (Hebrews 7:11, 18) and was set aside by Jesus Christ (Hebrews 7:18). The coming of reality in Jesus Christ meant that the shadow of the Levitical system was removed forever.
 - c) Further, Jesus could not be a priest if the Levitical system were still functioning. Under the Law of Moses (Numbers 18), only Aaron's sons could be priests. The Law of Moses and the Levitical system cannot be separated— one cannot exist without the other (Hebrews 7:12). In addition, the old and new covenants cannot coexist (Romans 7:1–6). The first covenant was taken away so that the second could be established (Hebrews 10:9–10). Jesus (from the royal tribe of Judah) could not be priest on earth under the Levitical system (Hebrews 8:4).
2. Premillennialists teach that the sacrificial system will be restored.
- a) Premillennialists teach that bloody sacrifices for sin will be restored during the millennium. This view arises from a misinterpretation of Ezekiel 43–45 and Zechariah 14.
 - b) Animal sacrifices were never able to cleanse the soul. They simply shadowed the coming sacrifice that would provide true cleansing. Jesus' sacrifice was all sufficient. His perfect once-for-all sacrifice meant that future sacrifices were unnecessary (Hebrews 10:17–18).
 - c) Those who have remission of sin have no further need of sacrifice. The premillennial view undermines the sufficiency of Christ's sacrificial atonement. Paul wrote in Galatians 2:21 that "if justification were through the Law, then Christ died to no

purpose."

3. Premillennialists teach that the New Covenant is not in effect now.
 - a) Premillennialists teach that the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31ff is not yet in force and that it will not come into force until the millennium.
 - b) Walvoord says that the new covenant applies only to Israel and has no relation with this present age.
 - c) What does the Bible say? In Luke 22:20 Jesus says "this cup is the new covenant in my blood." In Hebrews 9:15 we read that Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant. In 2 Corinthians 3:5–6 Paul writes that "our sufficiency is from God; who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant."
 - d) The problem of sin is the motivation behind both covenants. The new covenant provides forgiveness through the blood of Christ. Walvoord claims that Christ's blood produced two new covenants.
 - e) The new covenant of Jeremiah 31 is the covenant that we are under today. This covenant provides salvation and forgiveness through the blood of Christ and there is no need for any other covenant.
4. Premillennialists teach that God's land promises to Israel have not yet been fulfilled.
 - a) Concerning Canaan, God promised Abraham, "Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. 12:7). This land-covenant with the patriarch involved all that land "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates," (Gen. 15:18), and it was pledged to his seed "for ever" (Gen. 13:15).
 - b) Premillennialism argues that God unconditionally promised Canaan to the descendants of Abraham. Further, it is contended that the promise has never been completely granted. Thus, they claim that the Jews eventually will be restored to Palestine to fulfill God's promise to them.

- c) Many of them argue that, with the establishment of Israel as an independent government in 1948, the Jewish restoration was begun, and this is a signal of the imminent return of Jesus Christ.
- d) What does the Bible say?
 - (1) The land promise to Israel was fulfilled long ago.
 - (a) 1 Kings 4:21 And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life.
 - (b) Nehemiah 9:7 Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; 8 And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous.
 - (c) Joshua 21:43–45 And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. 44 And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. 45 There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.
 - (2) The land promise was conditional.
 - (a) Joshua 23:16 When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you.

V. We have already looked at Revelation 20. Let's look at a few other key passages that are misinterpreted by premillennialists.

A. Amos 9

1. Amos 9:11–15 is a favorite Old Testament prophesy of the premillennialists.
2. C.I. Scofield, alluding to James' citation of this passage in Acts 15, called this "the most important passage in the N.T." for dispensationalists (Scofield Reference Bible, New York: Oxford Press, 1945, p. 1169).
3. It is argued that the rebuilding of the "tabernacle of David" refers to the restoration of national Judaism in the "millennium," at which time Solomon's temple literally will be rebuilt, and the Jewish economy reinstated.
4. In Acts 15 a question was raised among the early disciples as to whether Gentiles were obligated to circumcision. Peter, who had preached first to the Gentiles, denied such. James utters an inspired oracle corroborating Peter, and in connection, he cites the words of Amos concerning the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David.
5. The rebuilding of David's tabernacle was the enthronement of Christ and the establishment of his church! And a part of this design was that the Gentiles might have the privilege of seeking the Lord. It thus would follow, if the tabernacle of David is yet in the future (as premillennialists contend), that all Gentiles are still lost! (Acts 15:16–17).

B. Zechariah 14

1. Premillennialists rely heavily on Zechariah 14.
 - a) In that chapter, the prophet Zechariah foretells a coming "day of Jehovah" when the nations will be gathered against "Jerusalem" for a great battle. The horrors of the conflict are interrupted when the Lord intervenes and defends the city against the

nations. The mount of Olives east of Jerusalem is rent asunder, providing a passageway of escape for the faithful. The enemies of God are punished with fearful plagues and henceforth Jerusalem dwells in safety, and from year to year, the people worship Jehovah who is "King over the whole earth."

- b) Freeman says that this chapter describes "the destruction of Israel's enemies, salvation of Jerusalem and the millennial reign of the Messiah over all the world from Zion."
- c) He also writes: "The book of Zechariah, especially chapter 14, stands as a continual corrective to all those theories which deny the literal, future restoration of Israel, after a period of chastening, in her own land, over whom the Messiah will reign in Zion."

2. What is Zechariah 14 really about?

- a) As a starting point, we should operate under the presumption that Zechariah was speaking of first century events rather than end time events. Why? Because Peter tells us in Acts 3:24 that "all the prophets ... told of these days," meaning the days of the first century. Peter also tells us that the prophetic focus of the Old Testament was the dawn of the gospel age. (1 Peter 1:10-11)
 - (1) We know from Mark 14:27 that Zechariah 13:7 was fulfilled in the first century.
- b) Second, we should note that as with Revelation, this book is filled with vivid symbolic language. As Professor Milton Terry reminded us, "A thorough interpretation of the prophetic portions of the holy Scripture is largely dependent upon a mastery of the principles and laws of figurative language, and of types and symbols."
- c) Verses 16 and 21 speak of those who go up to observe the feast of tabernacles and offer sacrifices. Premillennialists conclude from this that the Old Covenant will make a comeback during the so-called millennial dispensation and the reign of Christ on earth, but as we have already seen that can never happen. Jesus

is both priest and king, and he cannot be a priest under the Old Covenant. Also, what need would there for a return to animal sacrifices after Jesus' perfect sacrifice? We know the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin. Premillennialism involves a rejection of Christ and his perfect sacrifice.

- d) The correct view of this admittedly difficult chapter is likely either that it refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 or that it is a figurative depiction of the history of the church beginning on the day of its commencement in Acts 2. (I favor the former.) But even if we cannot say for certain what it refers to, that does not mean that we are unable to say for certain what it does not refer to -- and it does not refer to premillennialism!

VI. The Parable That Demolishes Premillennialism

- A. In Luke 19 we find a parable that explains much about the kingdom and Christ and the reign of Christ.

- 1. Luke 19:11–27 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. 12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. 13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. 14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. 15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. 17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. 18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. 19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. 20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: 21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and

reapest that thou didst not sow. 22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: 23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? 24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. 25 (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) 26 For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. 27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

- B. The parable involves a certain nobleman (Christ) who went into a far country (Heaven) to receive a kingdom, and to return. Some citizens, however, sent a message saying "We will not have that this man reign over us." Having received the kingdom, the nobleman returns to render judgment.
- C. The details of this parable are strikingly different from premillennialism.
 - 1. The Kingdom was received in heaven rather than on earth.
 - a) This is also how Daniel describes the event in Daniel 7:13–14.
 - 2. The reign of Christ is from heaven rather than from earth.
 - 3. The return of Christ is after the reception of the kingdom rather than prior to it.
 - a) This fits with what Nathan told King David in 2 Samuel 7:12–13. He told David that the eternal kingdom would be established while David while still sleeping with his fathers -- that is, before the final resurrection at the return of Christ. (See also Hebrews 1:8 and Acts 2:29–31.)