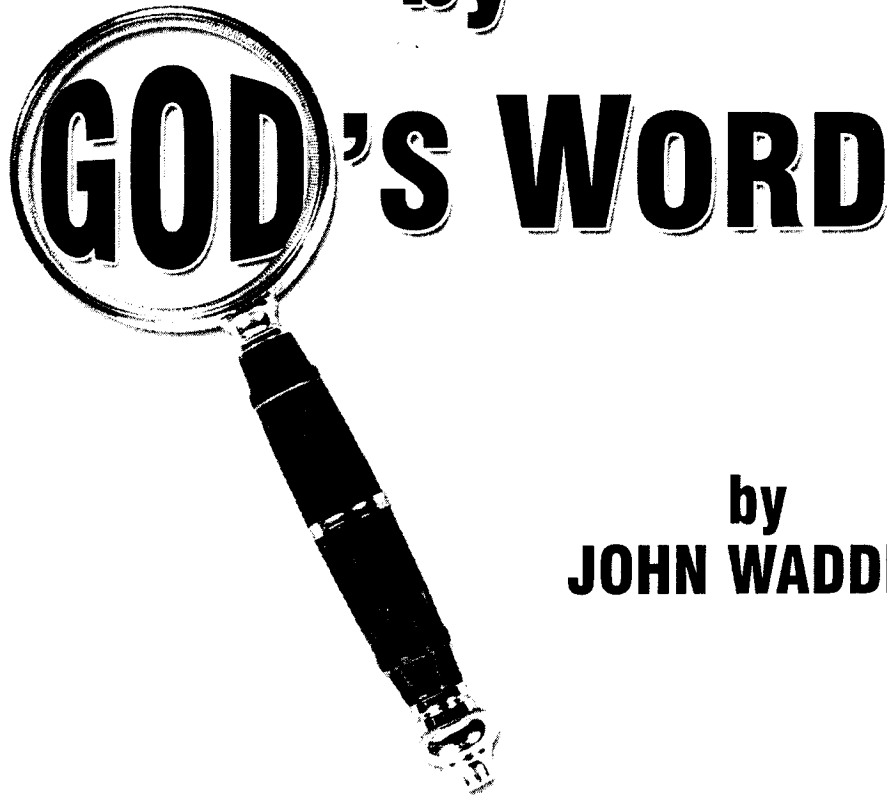


MILLENNIALISM EXAMINED

by

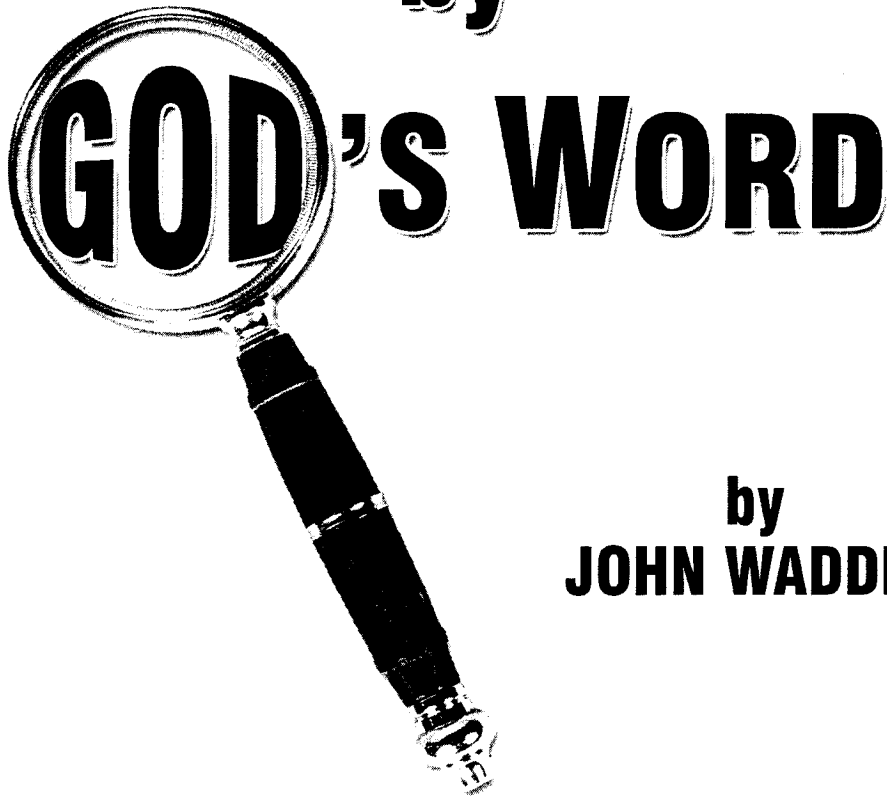


by
JOHN WADDEY

Published by
CHRISTIANITY: THEN & NOW
12630 W. Foxfire Dr., Sun City West, AZ 85375

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This book is dedicated to the memory of H. Leo Boles, James D. Bales and other men of God who helped our people understand and avoid the trap of Premillennialism.

INTRODUCTION

Few doctrines have taken such a hold on the Protestant world as has that called Premillennialism. It has come to be one of the identifying factors of those church that identify themselves as "Evangelical." Millions of church-going people talk about the rapture, the tribulation, the millennium, the Battle of Armageddon with the same confidence that they speak of the American Revolution and World War II. They are sure the time is near that Christ is going to return, being certain that all the signs indicate that. Among the best selling books are those advocating Premillennialism. The wilder the speculation and the bolder the prediction of unknown things, the more successful they are. Even worldly people with zero Bible knowledge or interest blithely speak of the Anti-christ and Armageddon. Movie producers, some Jewish, others worldly secularists, issue doleful movies about Apocalypse and Armageddon. The wide-spread ignorance of God's Word has made it possible for Satan to dazzle the minds of multitudes with this fantastic religious fable. Like hungry fish, lured by the angler's bait, they eagerly swallow the deadly hook and are snared. They devote the bulk of their time and energy to reading the books, listening to the recordings and attending the lectures of these speculative charlatans of millennial error. Most followers of this school of thought do not realize that in believing Premillennialism they are denying fundamental truths of Christianity.

- * They are saying that the omnipotent Christ was defeated by his enemies and was unable to establish his kingdom.
- * They are saying that the church is a poor, temporary substitute that Christ was forced to give when his plan for his kingdom was defeated.
- * They deny that Christ is now reigning as king on David's throne.
- * They are living in exciting anticipation for an event that will never occur; that is, that Christ will comeback to live on earth, establish an earthly kingdom and reign a thousand years.
- * The world they hope to live in for a thousand years will be consumed by fire.
- * They give false hope and encouragement to unbelieving Jews that Christ will ultimately save them.
- * They spend time in worthless speculation that should be used in seeking to know God's will and then doing it.

The several different schools of millennial thought make it very difficult for the average Christian to understand what the system is all about. In the lessons that follow I have endeavored to answer a number various planks of the millennial platform. The various articles were written at different time and circumstances. Some were in answer to questions submitted. Others were sermons or essays written on assigned themes. This means there will be some overlapping in the contents. Hopefully this will not be distracting to the readers. I encourage all teachers of Scriptures to use these lessons to the glory of Jesus Christ who, at God's right hand, reigns over his kingdom, the church.

John Waddey
Oct. 21, 2008

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2.

MILLENNIAL MANIA

There is a blizzard of uninformed speculation about the return of Christ and the end of the world. Many movies, books, and sermons produce more smoke than light on the subject. Even unbelievers have rushed to make money on this phenomena. Only from the Bible can we find reliable information about these great events. **The following items are facts:**

- * Jesus will return. He said, I will come again (John 14:3).
- * No man knows the time of Christ's coming, not even himself (Matt. 24:36).
- * When he returns there will be a resurrection of the righteous and wicked dead and a transformation of the living (John 5:28-29).
- * When he comes, Christians will meet him in the air and ever be with the Lord (I Thess. 4:16-17).
- * At that time the world will be destroyed by fire (II Peter 3:10).

There are many **unfounded assumptions** about the Lord's return.

- * That he will reign over an earthly kingdom for a literal thousand years. He said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).
- * That the Jewish people will all return to Palestine and occupy the land promised to Abraham, David and Solomon.
- * That there will be a literal carnal war between the forces of evil and the forces of Christ.
- * That there will be two or more resurrections.
- * That there will be a temporary rapture where the righteous will be caught up in the heavens and then returned to earth.
- * That a literal, personal man of sin or anti-Christ will lead a carnal war against God's Son and his people.
- * That a material Jewish temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem.

History records that millennial mania has arisen at the turn of every century since the church began. This mania has been multiplied ten-fold at 500, 1,000, 1,500 and 2,000 A.D. To believers, God's word says, "Let no man beguile you" concerning the Lord's return (II Thess. 2:3). Genuine Christianity is without speculation. The recorded facts should be sufficient for God's people. JHW

3.

WHY DOES MILLENNIALISM ATTRACT SO MANY PEOPLE?

I marvel at the eagerness with which so many people pursue and embrace the millennial speculations. Most of Protestant America is caught up in this wild speculation. Below are a few of the reasons for the popularity of this strange phenomena.

- * There is in the human heart a burning desire to know the future. This desire leads people to consult fortune-tellers and read horoscopes. Among "Christians" they are attracted to the prophets of premillennialism. The speculative nature of the premillennial writers excites that desire. The preachers and authors spin stories about future happenings and tack on bit and pieces of scriptures that, taken out of context, seem to support their ideas. In ancient times God's people were tempted to consult sooth-sayers, diviners and those with familiar spirits to learn what the future held (Deut. 18:10-12). Today to turn to millennial speculators.
- * The sinful heart finds great pride in knowing something others do not know. You might not know when Christ is returning but the avid millennialist proudly claims he does. You might not know what events will occur as the end nears, but he is sure that he does know!
- * Fallen man is greatly tempted to go where he is forbidden to trespass and to sample that which is prohibited. This was the downfall of Adam and Eve. Jesus said, "Of that day and that hour (of his return) knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only" (Matt. 24:36). The very fact that Jesus said "you cannot know the day

of my return” drives such sinners to madly search for that information. Satan then provides a smooth talking preacher who confidently assures them that he has discovered the forbidden information (Rom. 16:18). They rush to take the forbidden fruit.

* False teachers have found in millennialism the perfect bait to attract and snag followers who will gladly provide them fawning admiration and financial support. Such unscrupulous men spend endless days concocting the kinds of stories their star-struck followers want to hear. They spin their exciting yarns and their followers love to have it so (Jer. 5:31).

* There are people who care little about the ordinary, simple truths of Christianity. They are not excited about such things as godly living, congregation worship, service to humanity and obedience to God’s commands. Their jaded souls lust for spectacular and titillating stories about some mysterious future event. Paul says, “Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,...God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth...” (II Thess. 2:10-11).

* Of course we can not afford to overlook the influential role that Satan plays in promoting false religion. He is a liar and an enemy of God’s truth (John 8:44). He loves to lead people astray. He uses and rewards every false teacher. His very name, Satan, means the adversary. He is the adversary of God, Christ, the church and humanity. By sowing his tares of confusion he keeps multitudes from finding and understanding those simple truths that will save their souls in eternity (John 8:32). JHW

4.

UNDERSTANDING MILLENNIALISM

Confusion regarding the interpretation of prophecy, the return of Christ, the future of the Jews and related themes has given rise to false and misleading schools of thought about the end times. The purpose of this lesson is to present a brief synopsis of three major millennial views. The term millennial refers to the 1,000 years mentioned in Revelation 20:2-7 when the saved shall reign with Christ.

Postmillennialism is based on optimism and a belief in the progress of humanity. It sees the human race as gradually improving and the eventual triumph of the church over evil. The second coming of Christ will be delayed until after the completion of the millennium. They think the world will be governed by Christian principles rather than by Christ in person. This view was widely held in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. It provided impetus for the great missionary enterprises of Protestantism. It also drove the social reform movements of that era that greatly benefitted humanity. The Great Depression, the two World Wars and evil deeds of totalitarian governments dealt it a crushing blow. Some early restoration leaders such as Alexander Campbell held the postmillennial view.

Premillennialism is based on a pessimistic view of humanity and human history. They see the world as evil and corrupt since the Fall. It will become more and more degraded until Christ returns to defeat and banish the wicked. They believe that Christ failed in his first attempt to establish the kingdom of God on earth because the Jews rejected him. They hold that when he comes again, the saints will be bodily resurrected and Christ will personally reign on earth for a thousand years. Following that will be the battle of Armageddon and the final judgment. Some of the early church fathers held to a form of premillennialism called **chiliasm**. Among them were Justin, Irenaeus and Tertullian. It soon died out and was not revived until the early 17th century. It flourished in some circles in the 19th century but became the dominant view of most evangelical churches in the 20th century and continues in our day. For the last 75 years the **Dispensational** variety of premillennialism has been the dominant belief. It was pioneered by J. N. Darby of the Plymouth Brethren Church and popularized by C. I. Scofield here in America. Today this view is promoted in religious books and novels such as Hal Lindsey’s **The Late Great Planet Earth** and the “**Left Behind**” series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. A small group of our brethren, following Robert H. Boll, embraced premillennialism in the first half of the 20th century. They were rejected by the majority of our people and have now faded into obscurity.

Amillennialism is the understanding that there will be no literal thousand year reign of Christ on earth. It interprets Revelation 20 as figurative or symbolic in nature. The millennial reign of Christ is the age of the church from the time of Christ’s enthronement until his second coming to judge the world. They view Christ’s church as his kingdom which

he did establish on earth (Matt. 16:18). They understand Christians, who by their faith in Christ are Abraham's seed (Gal. 3:26-29), are now God's chosen people, not the Hebrew race. When Christ does return there will be one general resurrection of the good and the bad, the world will be destroyed (II Pet. 3:10-13), and all will stand before Christ for judgment (Matt. 25:31-33). Most of the great Protestant reformers held to some variety of amillennialism. This view is now a minority view, held primarily by Churches of Christ, Mennonites, conservative Lutherans and conservative Presbyterian and Reformed churches.

Teachers of the Church of Christ have held firmly to the amillennial interpretation of end-times. They see postmillennialism as a failed system. Premillennialism is seen as a system of wild and unfounded speculation. It implies that sinful men were successful in defeating God's plan in sending Christ. It devalues the church. It grossly distorts the meaning and fulfilment of the prophecies of both the Old and New Testaments. It is the result of excessive literalism in interpreting the Scripture. JHW

5.

THREE FACES OF MILLENNIALISM

In Revelation 20, John describes a vision of a mighty angel coming down from heaven, chaining Satan and casting him into the abyss where he would be kept for a thousand years. He then saw the souls of Christian martyrs and "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20:1-4). Across the 2,000 years of Christian history there have been three primary views about Christ's return and the thousand years of this passage.

Some things are clearly revealed in Scripture.

- * Christ will return (John 14:3).
- * At his coming all the dead will be raised and judged (John 5:28-29). Those yet alive will be changed and together with the resurrected dead, they will be caught up (I Thess. 4:16-17) to stand before Christ as their judge (II Cor. 5:10).
- * The material universe, the earth and the works therein will be burned up (II Pet. 3:10).
- * No one but God knows the day and hour when this will occur (Matt. 24:36).
- * Christ's church on earth is his kingdom (Matt. 16:18). Every saved person is translated into Christ's kingdom when he is baptized (Col. 1:13; John 3:5).
- * Christ's throne is at the right hand of God in heaven (Acts 2:33). There he reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords (I Tim. 6:15).

Some argue that Christ will return and reign a thousand literal years over an earthly kingdom centered in Jerusalem. They insist that the Jews will return to Palestine and turn en-masse to Christ. Many other details are added to this basic foundation. This view is called "**premillennialism**." The word is defined thusly, "**pre**" means "before." "**Millennium**" speaks of "a thousand year period." "**Is**m" means "doctrine or belief." Hence premillennialism teaches that Christ will return before the thousand years, to reign on earth.

This theory is highly speculative and there are several differing varieties of it. A few disciples held to premillennialism in the second and third centuries. But from Augustine (354-430 A.D.) onward it was generally rejected. It revived in the 18th century and swept through Evangelical Protestantism in the 20th century. This has been promoted by the Scofield Reference Bible whose study notes promote a variety of premillennialism called **dispensationalism**. Also Hal Lindsey has played a major role in promoting this theory with books such as **The Late Great Planet Earth**. The "**Left Behind**" series of books and films by Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye have helped to popularize this faulty view.

Some argued that under the influence of Christianity the world was getting better and better. They optimistically expected a thousand years of peace and prosperity that would be followed by Christ's return and the termination of this earthly realm. This view is known as "**postmillennialism**." The prefix "**post**" suggests that Christ will come after the millennium. This theory gained popularity in America and Europe in the 19th century but was dashed by the great wars with their cruelty and carnage. It had been the preferred view of liberal Protestants but has now faded into obscurity.

Amillennialism asserts that the thousand year reign of Christ is a figurative description of the Christian age. It began with the ascension of Christ to the right hand of God (Acts 2:30-36). From there he reigns over his church on earth which is his kingdom (Matt. 16:18). Jesus made it plain to Pilate that his kingdom was "not of this world" (John 18:36). It is the kingdom of heaven, a spiritual kingdom without lands, armies or material riches (Luke 17:20-21). Amillennialists interpret the thousand years of Revelation 20 as a figurative description of Christ's reign over his church.

The Book of Revelation is replete with symbolism and figurative language. Jesus is depicted as a lamb (5:5-6). Rome is pictured as a harlot and as a cruel beast (17:1; 13:1-2). Satan is described as a serpent and a dragon (12:3,9). Congregations are likened to candlesticks (1:20). The numbers seven, ten, 666 and 1260 are used symbolically. It is reasonable therefore to see the thousand years as likewise symbolic. The central message of the Book of Revelation is that Christ and his church will triumph over every enemy and obstacle and He will be triumphant as will those who have faithfully served him.

Although premillennialism is now the most popular view among Protestants, **amillennialism is solidly biblical**. It avoids speculation. It easily harmonizes all the verses having to do with the Lord's return and the end of the world. It is the common belief of the Church of Christ. JHW

6.

PREMILLENNIALISM

Will Christ reign on earth for a thousand years? Many make this premillennial theory a major dogma of their faith. It first gained modern popularity in America through the teaching of Wm. Miller, founder of the Adventist movement and Charles Russell, father of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Now it has found its way into most Protestant groups. Let us examine three main points of this system by the light of the Bible.

I. Will Christ return to earth to establish the kingdom promised in the Old Testament? It is believed since the Jews rejected him, Christ was unable to do this in his life time. Daniel prophesied that in the days of the fourth world empire (the Roman Empire, 44 B.C.-476 A.D.) God would set up a kingdom. It would never be destroyed (2:44). In 30 A. D., John the Baptist said the kingdom was at hand (Matt.3:2). Jesus said some of his followers would live to see the kingdom come with power (Mark 9:1). This was fulfilled on the Pentecost after Christ's ascension (Acts 2). The Kingdom was established. Christ is now reigning as King (Acts 2:33; Col. 1:13). He will deliver the kingdom to the Father at the resurrection and judgement (I Cor. 15:24).

II. Will the Jews as a nation be saved? No national salvation is offered. Christ says, "in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is acceptable..." (Acts 10:35). All are Abraham's seed who in faith are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:26-29). Romans 11:26 explains, "and so all Israel shall be saved." How? "If they continue not in unbelief" (11:23). Every Hebrew who comes to faith in Christ will be saved, but no others (John 8:24).

III. Is Christ's coming imminent? Jesus says, "Of that day... knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son..." (Matt. 24:36).

Implications of This Theory

- * It makes the church a substitute for the kingdom, which they say Christ could not establish (Eph. 3:10-11). Christ's church is his kingdom (Matt. 16:18).
- * It confuses Christ's spiritual kingdom (John 18:36), with a temporal kingdom of this world.
- * It denies Christ is now king over his kingdom (Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:9).
- * It would again reduce Christ to an earthly status. Paul says we shall know Christ in the flesh no more (II Cor. 5:16).
- * It degrades God's wisdom and power, by implying He tried to set up a kingdom but wicked men caused him to fail.
- * It weakens faith in Christ. If he failed in his first attempt to establish his kingdom, how can we be sure he would succeed in the next attempt?

It is a false doctrine and should be rejected. JHW

BELIEVING THE PREMILLENNIAL LIE

Thinking folks are amazed at the wild speculation of the various teachers of premillennialism that seem to dominate the religious book market, the journals of most conservative denominations and the religious broadcast media. Almost weekly some new discovery is announced: the man of sin has been identified, Armageddon is just around the corner, the mark of the beast has been spotted, the State of Israel is ready to fulfill Bible prophecy. The date of Christ's return has been repeatedly set and then abandoned. The absurdity of this religious game-playing would be humorous were it not for the precious souls being led astray by its false teachers.

A few clearly stated Biblical facts forever refute this ancient heresy. God is omnipotent. Therefore, the Jewish nation could not thwart his plan to establish his kingdom in the days of the Roman kings (Dan. 2:44). Christ established his kingdom and first century saints were citizens of it (Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:6). Christ now reigns on David's throne in heaven (Rev. 3:7; Acts 2:29-33). No one knows the date of Christ's return (Matt. 24:36). When he does return there will be one general resurrection of the good and the evil (John 5:28-29). These and many other plainly stated Scriptural truths destroy once and for all the foundations of this false system. JHW

Why is Premillennialism So Popular?

The burden of this lesson is to try to understand why this anti-Scriptural teaching is so widely received. It is startling to observe that it is the **cause celebre** of most of the Evangelical churches. Generally speaking, only the Lutherans, conservative Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, Mennonites and Churches of Christ are free from its taint. Most other bodies are infected to some degree.

The following reasons help to explain why this strange, contradictory teaching has such an attraction and hold on people's minds.

A. Paul writes of people who believe a lie, "because they receive not the love of the truth... but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thess. 2:10-12). Those who have had much experience in trying to teach people who hold this view have observed this amazing lack of interest in those plain, simple truths of God that nullify the millennial heresy. Jesus spoke of a kind of person who "seeing, saw not and hearing, understood not." "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart..." (Matt. 3:14-15).

B. Some folks are attracted to the bizarre and incredible. The more unbelievable the proposition the more eagerly they rush to embrace and then cling to it. We see this spirit demonstrated in the huge crowds lined up to view the freak shows at the fair and the masses that pay their money to see movies based upon the occult, the ghoulish and the impossible. Perhaps the human race is not so far removed from the primitive superstitions of yesterday with witches, ghosts and apparitions of demons. Premillennialism abounds with spicy fruits for the superstitious soul.

C. Premillennialism appears to answer question of the unknown future. Men have always had an insatiable desire to know what lies beyond the curtain of tomorrow. With its predictions of the date of Christ's return and the end of the world, it attracts these date seekers even as does astrology its disciples.

D. There are people who relish the thought that they have discovered a mystery that others have not found. This, in their proud minds, elevates them and makes them superior. The infamous Gnostics of the early Christian centuries suffered from a similar illusion. Thus false pride and a feeling of superiority is at least one of the many causes. It will not take many encounters with such teachers to see this elitist attitude demonstrated. Paul warns against being lifted up with pride lest we "fall into the condemnation of the devil" (I Tim. 3:6).

E. Some folks are prone to be naive and gullible in matters religious. They do not like to expend the mental energy required to think for themselves. They reason, "Let the preacher do the studying and then explain it to me." Thus they are like baby birds, they trustingly open wide their mouths to whatever the preacher brings them. Such people need to

take heed to all those verses that stress individual responsibility for faith. Study to show yourself approved unto God, "rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). The Bereans were commended because they searched the Scriptures daily to see if the teaching of Paul was true (Acts 17:11). In judgment, each one of us will give account of himself before God (Rom. 14:12).

F. Some people believe this lie because they have been told that they are supposed to believe it in order to be faithful. They have the sheep complex; they blindly follow their leaders. They should remember that the Judas goat leads the flock into the slaughter pens. God never intended for his people to be blind followers of blind teachers. He warned us that both will fall into the pit (Matt. 15:14). John admonishes us "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1).

G. Some blindly hold to premillennialism because they have heard it proclaimed in a bold, matter of fact way all their lives and they have never thought to question it. Long ago propagandists learned that a lie oft repeated is soon held to be truth by the thoughtless masses. The early church had men miraculously endowed by the Holy Spirit to be discerners of spirits (I Cor. 12:10). Though inspiration has past, each of us needs to measure what we hear by the infallible Word of God. Jesus warned "Take heed what ye hear" (Mark 4:24).

H. There are some Bible students who have fallen into the trap of Premillennialism because they have failed to rightly divide the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15). By that we mean that they co-mingle Old and New Covenant promises. They have not compared Scripture with Scripture to learn of God's fulfillment of his promises to Israel. They fail to distinguish between figurative and literal language. It has well been said that a correct hermeneutic will destroy the premillennial doctrine.

I. Most believers in Premillennialism have not taken the time to review the spotted history of the many millennial movements and thus to discover their numerous false predictions and contradictions. Most glaring are the predictions of Christ's return by William Miller of the Adventists and Judge Rutherford of the Jehovah's Witnesses. One of the recent mistaken premillennial prophets is Hal Lindsey who has repeatedly set dates for the Master's return, only to see them proven false. Moses said "When a prophet speaketh in the name of Jehovah, if the thing follow not nor come to pass, that is the thing which Jehovah hath not spoken; the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously..." (Deut. 18:22).

J. Shrewd false teachers have taken advantage of the ignorance and credulity of the believing masses. They feed them their sorry diet of speculation for the notoriety and wealth it brings them. "By their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent" (Rom. 16:18). They are "false teachers, who... bring in destructive heresies... bringing upon themselves swift destruction" (II Pet. 2:1). They make merchandise of non-discerning believers.

Brethren it is not enough that we do not believe these strange doctrines of men. Our task is two fold;

- a). To fortify the faith of our brethren lest they be led astray.
- b). To liberate those held captive to this false system of Premillennialism.

May God give us wisdom to understand the issues and the courage to press the battle in Jesus' name. JHW

8.

JESUS IS COMING

The words of our title will affect different people different ways. If you are a faithful Christian they will bring joy and gladness to your heart. Your pulse will quicken as you contemplate the thrill of seeing your Savior face to face, to hear him say, "well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." If on the other hand you are among those millions who, though knowing the Lord's will, have not done it, such words will likely strike terror in your heart. The man who knew his Lord's will and did it not shall be beaten with many stripes, said Jesus (Luke 12:47). A third class of people will experience no emotion because they are ignorant of Jesus, his promises and the consequences thereof. Their tragedy is double because they cannot enter into life if they "know not God and...obey not the gospel of our Lord" (II Thess. 1:8), and yet they do not realize their jeopardy.

I. The divine promise. Jesus said "...I go to prepare a place for you...I come again, and will receive you unto myself: that where I am there ye may be also" (John 14:2-3). If we believe that Jesus is God's Son who cannot lie, we must accept the fact of his return.

II. How shall he come? It will be in majesty. "At the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire..." (II Thess. 1:7-8). We look for the "glorious appearing of...our Savior Jesus Christ." (Tit. 2:13 KJV). His coming will be **visible**. "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him..." (Rev. 1:7). It will be **audible**. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God..." (I Thess. 4:16). He will come when least expected, and **unannounced**. The day of the Lord will come "therefore be ye also ready; for an hour that ye think not the Son of Man cometh" (Matt. 24:44).

III. What events will accompany his coming? At his coming **the dead will be raised**. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise" (I Thess. 4:16). "For the hour cometh in which **all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment**" (John 5:28-29). When the dead have been raised, "then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them **be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air...**" (I Thess. 4:17). If we are yet alive when he comes, "**we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, for this...mortal must put on immortality** (I Cor. 15:51-53).

The material universe will be destroyed at his return. At that day of the Lord, "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up...dissolved..." (II Pet. 3:10-11). This being the case, there will be neither time nor place for a thousand year reign of Christ on earth as many teach.

At that time the **final judgment will occur**. "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all the nations and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separated the sheep from the goats.... And these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life" (Matt. 25:31-33, 46). All "the dead, the great and the small" shall stand before the throne and be judged by the things written in books according to their works (Rev. 20:12). Then will he say to the righteous, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And the wicked will hear their awful sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:34, 41).

Satan will be finally and forever subjugated when Jesus comes. When the Lord comes as a mighty conquering king, he will cause "the devil that deceived them (to be) cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Rev. 20:10)

The Lord Jesus will deliver up the authority of his kingdom to the heavenly Father when he has raised the dead. (I Cor. 15:24). Christ is reigning over his kingdom now and all Christians are members of it (Col. 1:13). The kingdom of Christ is his church (Matt. 16:18-19). Christ's kingdom has been on earth since it was established in the life-time of the

apostles (Mark 9:1). Christians in the first century were in the kingdom and we can be also (Rev. 1:9). Since the Lord rules his kingdom now and since he will surrender his reign upon his return, there is obviously no time, place or need for a future thousand year reign on earth.

Jesus is coming. There will be no signs of warning other than those already recorded in God's word. When that eventful hour comes, all earthly pursuits will cease and each one will stand before the Creator and Judge to receive his eternal reward (Heb. 9:27). It will not be a trial in which we argue our case; it will be to hear the court's decision. "Now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2). We will then receive the things done in this body, according to what (we) have done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor.5:10). There will be no second chance for those who died in sin. (Luke 16:26). Purgatory is a concept completely foreign to Scripture. The consequences of that judgment will be eternal and irrevocable. It will be "eternal punishment" for the wicked and "eternal life" for the righteous (Matt. 25:46). The saved will live forever in heavenly bliss, as for the lost "the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day and night..." (Rev. 14:11). The lost will not be annihilated as some fondly hope. To escape into a Nirvana of non-existence is a vain wish.

Jesus is Coming! The most important question in the world is "Are You Ready?" Our plea to you is, "Prepare to meet thy God" (Amos 4:12). JHW

9.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Six hundred years before Christ came, Daniel prophesied of a coming day when God would set up his kingdom on earth (Dan. 2:44). The Christian religion, including the Church of Christ is that heavenly kingdom (Matt. 16:18). The church is that kingdom which cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:28).

The Kingdom is variously referred to as the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 3:2), the kingdom of God (Matt. 12:38) and by inference the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13).

To understand the kingdom of Christ, we must realize that it is a spiritual, not a temporal entity. To Pilate, Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36). The kingdom of Christ controls no geographic territory. It's territory is the hearts of his disciples. "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20-21). This is why it is called "the kingdom of heaven." Heaven is its origin; heaven is its destiny. It's mission is to gather and prepare citizens for life in the heavenly realms (Phil. 3:20).

The kingdom of God is ruled by a divine sovereign. To Jesus, God gave all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). Thus it is the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:12-13). He is King of kings and Lord of lords" (I Tim. 6:14-16). No man or body of men have the right to rule over his church on earth for Christ alone is head of his kingdom/church (Eph. 1:22).

Citizens of Christ's spiritual kingdom are those saved by his blood and added to his church. When the heavenly Father delivers a sinner from the power of darkness, He translates him into the kingdom of his Son (Col. 1:13; Acts 2:47 KJV). John reminded the Christians in Asia Minor that Jesus "made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father" (Rev. 1:6). We Christians are priests now and thus members of his kingdom (I Pet. 2:5,9). Those who have not yet been saved are yet in the kingdom of darkness, not in the Lord's kingdom. To be added to the kingdom, one must be

born of water and the Spirit (John 3:3-5). This occurs when a sinner repents and is baptized in the name of Jesus for remission of his sins and receives the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

Christ's spiritual kingdom is governed by righteous laws. David wrote that "The ordinances of Jehovah are true, and righteous altogether" (Ps. 19:9). "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made (us) free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). The law of Christ (Gal. 6:2) is his new and better covenant (Heb. 8:6-13). It is "the perfect law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25).

Citizenship in this kingdom brings many and valuable privileges. In the kingdom, we have "redemption, the forgiveness of our sins" (Col. 1:13-14). We have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3). As citizens, Christ lives in us and is our hope of glory (Col. 1:27-28).

The kingdom of heaven has before it a destiny bright and glorious. When Christ returns to raise the dead, he will deliver up his kingdom to the Father (I Cor. 15:24). "No fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph. 5:5; I Cor. 6:9-11). In the heavenly realm, kingdom citizens will have new bodies, free from the curse of sickness and old age (I Cor. 15:50-52). Eternal life will be theirs to enjoy (II Pet. 1:11). That unending life will be blessed beyond words because they will live in the presence of their Creator, Provider and Savior forever (Rev. 22:1-5).

The most important questions facing mortal men are: Have you been born of water and the Spirit so you can enter the kingdom of heaven (John 3:3-5)? Are you living for and serving the King as a faithful citizen? Only those who are faithful will receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10). JHW

10.

GOD AND THE JEWS

One of the marvels of the world is the Jewish race. Greater nations of the past have vanished but they continue to survive; hated, despised and persecuted. They stand as prominent evidence of the existence of God, the moral ruler of the universe, and the inspiration of the Bible which predicted their fate.

It is tragic how little most Christians know about the Jews and their history. Christ, the founder of our faith, was a Jew. The apostles were all Jews. The first generation of Christian disciples were from the ranks of the Jews. The church began in the Jewish capitol of Jerusalem on the Jewish holy-day, Pentecost. All Christians from then to now have studied and loved the Jewish Scriptures (the Old Testament) in addition to their own New Testament.

They Were God's Chosen People

God's relationship to the Hebrews is seen in (Is. 41:8-9), "... Israel, my chosen, the seen of Abraham my friend... Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee and not caste thee away." It all began with Abraham when God called him from Ur of the Chaldees in c.a. 1981 B.C. (Gen. 12:1-4). God promised to make him a great nation and that through him all the families of the earth would be blest. From that one man and his son Isaac has flowed this fateful nation.

Why They Were Chosen?

They were chosen that all the world might be blest by the Messiah who would spring from their line. "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3).

They were to be a righteous stock from which the Christ could spring. As Malachi wrote, "He sought a godly seed" (Mal. 2:15). For Messiah to enter the world as a helpless babe, he needed a godly family to nurture and care for him. Thus he came unto his own... some of whom received him and became that nucleus (John 1:11).

The nation was chosen and blest to fulfill an ancient promise and oath "which he sware unto (their) fathers" (Deut. 7:7-8). They were not chosen because they were great in numbers (Deut. 7:7), nor were they selected because of their own righteousness or strength (Deut. 9:6). God chose them to demonstrate his righteousness and grace to "all the peoples of the earth" (Deut. 28:9-10). Thus their mission was to be a living memorial and witness of the one true God and light to a world in heathen darkness.

Another purpose for their calling was to demonstrate man's inability to save himself from sin by "law-keeping." There have always been two distinct attitudes toward salvation. There are those who feel they are smart enough to devise their own solution to the problem of sin and thus escape the consequences. God allowed the Gentiles, 2,000 years to pursue this vain dream. He blest them with some of the wisest minds to wrestle the problem, such as Plato and Aristotle. Paul notes that "The world through its wisdom knew not God..." (I Cor. 1:21). Then there are those who feel they are strong enough that if given a perfect set of rules, they can keep the law and thus save themselves. This was the folly of the Jews. God set them forth as his pilot project for all ages to demonstrate once and for all that "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Rom. 3:20).

Their Names

They are called the "seed of Abraham" because they were his posterity (Ps. 105:6). From Jacob their ancestor, they inherited the name **Israel**. He received the name following his experience with the angel of Jehovah at Peniel. It means "he who hath striven with God" (Gen. 32:28, see footnote). Later it came to mean "the people of God." The last syllable *el* signifies God. They are called Hebrews (Gen. 14:13). This term may denote their national origin from beyond the Euphrates River (it means beyond the river). It might spring from the name Eber, a son of Shem (Gen. 10:21). Others have suggested it might relate to Hebron where Abraham lived for a while (Gen. 13:18). They are known as **Jews** from the days of Isaiah (II Kings 16:6). Jew is derived from Jehudi, one belonging to the tribe of Judah. They are **Semites** since they are descended from Shem, the son of Noah (Gen. 10:21). Thus anti-Semitism is hatred of Jews because of their race.

Their Peculiar Blessings

- A. In the material realm the Israelites were blest "above all peoples" of the earth (Deut. 7:14-15).
- B. They alone had the written word of God (Rom. 3:1-2). In Romans 9:3-5 Paul catalogues their spiritual blessings.
- C. They shared the **adoption as God's children** (Deut. 14:1).
- D. Theirs was the **glory**. He spoke not of personal or national glory but of the glory of the Lord (the Shekinah) that was manifest above the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies (Ex. 29:43).
- E. They had the several **covenants** of God (Gen. 17:7-10; Deut. 5:1-21, etc.).
- F. To them God had given the **Law of Moses** (Deut. 4:8). Such a righteous code no other nation was privileged to have.
- G. They were blest with **the service of God**, i.e., the tabernacle and temple with their holy ordinances, to keep them close to God. Only they knew how to worship the living God correctly.
- H. To them were given **the promises** of God which showered them with rich blessings. The most significant promises were those of the coming Savior and his Kingdom.
- I. They had **the fathers such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses**. What a great tradition they inherited. They were the children of the giants of the faith.
- J. **Christ** was born of their race and in their nation. The whole world desperately desired and anxiously awaited the Messiah. They were privileged to have him in their midst.
- K. God gave them **the Land of Palestine** and made it flow with milk and honey (Gen. 13:14-15; 15:18-20).
- L. He gave them **the Levitical priesthood** to teach and guide them in life and worship. (Lev. 10:8-11).

M. Added to the priesthood, God gave them **the holy prophets** to correct their erring steps, to forewarn them and to further reveal the will of Heaven. Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah and others blest their lives.

N. They were blest with **David's dynasty**. God had promised David that his descendants would reign after him (II Sam. 7:10-17). Although some of their kings were wicked, great men like Solomon, Hezekiah, and Josiah blest the nation.

What other nation on earth ever enjoyed such abundant blessings as those Hebrews?

The Jews and Jesus

The Christ was born of the tribe of Judah of the family of David (Matt. 1:1). How foolish that some have sought to deny his Jewishness. He grew up in a Jewish home in the Jewish community of Nazareth (Matt. 2:23). He attended a Jewish synagogue in his home town (Matt. 4:4-6) and worshiped in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem (Luke 2:4). A Jewish prophet (John the Baptizer) baptized him along with thousands of other Jews (Matt. 3:5-6; 13). The three and one half years of his public ministry were spent among his own people, offering them salvation and a place in his kingdom (John 1:11-12). He openly affirmed that he was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 15:24). While many individuals received him, as a nation, they refused him.

On two occasions the people sought to make Jesus a king. Of course, they had in mind a different sort of king, i.e., a temporal king for a temporal kingdom. After feeding the 5,000 Jesus perceived that they were about to come and make him king. He quickly departed from them. They wanted a "bread king" who would give them free bread. For that he later rebuked them (John 6:15, 25-26). Shortly before his arrest, a mob of street people in Jerusalem thronged about him shouting "Hosanna: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel" (John 12:13-14). The carnal minded crowd were ready to launch a rebellion against Rome immediately. Hosanna mean "save us now"! They could not comprehend why he chose the lowly ass to ride upon. In those days a king on a mission of war rode a warhorse. A man on an ass or mule was on a mission of peace. Again, Jesus rejected their offer. He plainly told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

The religious leaders of Judah decided and ordered his death. They feared most of all that they would lose their position of power with the people (John 11:49-53). At their instigation the street mob screamed for his blood. "All the people answered (Pilate) and said His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. 27:25). The apostles laid the responsibility for Christ's murder at their feet (Acts 13:27-28).

Following the resurrection, the Lord sent his apostles to the Jews first (Acts 1:8). Paul always made it his point to first seek out the Jews with his gospel message (Rom. 1:16). The first generation of the church was composed of Jewish disciples (Acts 2:5, 14, 41). Even a great company of the priests were converts (Acts 6:7). John foresaw the remnant of Abraham's children, who had followed the Christ, in the heavenly realms (Rev. 14:4). When, as a people, they rejected God's offer of salvation and became fierce enemies and persecutors of the church, Paul, brokenheartedly, turned to the Gentiles (Acts 13:45-46; Rom. 9:1-3).

The Jews Relation to God Today

Having rejected the Son and his kingdom, God has rejected them as a favored nation. "By their unbelief they were broken off" from God's covenant (Rom. 11:20). Jesus had warned them, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof," i.e., the Gentiles (Matt. 21:34-43). Their rejection, however, does not exclude any Jew who will believe in Jesus as Lord (Rom. 11:1-5, 23, 26). Paul shows us that in reality God never saved a Hebrew because of his race, rather it was always by faith even as today (Rom. 4:1-16). Of course, this was and is an obedient faith that saves (Rom. 1:5). Today there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile (Rom. 10:12). All who reject Jesus are lost, all who obey him are saved.

The Jews are no longer a holy people for they rejected God's Messiah and his new covenant. They are no longer a chosen nation. The church is God's chosen people (I Pet. 2:9). Christians are now the true Israel of God (Gal. 6:15-16). No longer are Jews a favored people. They prosper because of their diligence in business. They survive in the new state of Israel because of U.S. money and arms and a courageous survival instinct to avoid extermination at the hands of their enemies.

There is no Biblical promise of a national restoration of the Jews to Palestine. The land promises made to Abraham were

fulfilled in the conquest under Joshua. "So Jehovah gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it... There failed not ought of any good thing which Jehovah had spoken unto the house of Israel..." (Josh. 21:43-45). God has not promised to rebuild their temple in the Christian age. All those prophecies of rebuilding the temple referred to Ezra's so doing following the Babylonian captivity. There is no promise of national salvation to the Jews. Contrary to popular opinion, this is not the intent of Paul's teaching in Romans, Chapter 11. The oft-quoted words of verse 26, "And so all Israel shall be saved" do not promise a general salvation; rather, the adverb "so" indicates the "manner" of saving. Verse 23 clarifies the issue, "and they also (Jews) if they continue not in their unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again."

Ancient Prophecies About the Jews

Deuteronomy 28:47-53: "Because thou servest not Jehovah... with joyfulness and gladness of heart, by reason of the abundance of all things, therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies that Jehovah shall send against thee... Jehovah will bring a nation against thee from the end of the earth... of fierce countenance that shall not regard the person of the old or show favor to the young..." Time and again the Hebrews felt the judgment of this prophecy applied: Assyria, Babylon, Syria, and Rome crushed them.

Deuteronomy 28:62: "And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou didst not harken to the voice of Jehovah..."

Deuteronomy 28:64-66: "And Jehovah will scatter thee among all peoples from the one end of the earth even unto the other... and among these nations shalt thou find no ease, and there shall be no rest for the sole of thy foot: but Jehovah will give thee a trembling heart, and failing of eyes and pining of soul; and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear night and day, and have not assurance of thy life." This is a word portrait of the situation in Europe 60 years ago.

Deuteronomy 28:25: "... and thou shalt be tossed to and fro among all the kingdoms of the earth."

Deuteronomy 28:37: "And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb and a byword among all the people wither Jehovah shall lead thee away."

Jeremiah 30:11: "... for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee, but I will not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will in no wise leave thee unpunished."

Jeremiah 31:37: "Thus saith Jehovah: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I cast off *all* the seed of Israel for all that they have done..."

Matthew 24:2: Jesus said, "See ye not all these things" (the city of Jerusalem and its temple) verily I say unto you, these shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

"For then shalt be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be..." (vs. 21).

"Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all these things be accomplished." The Romans under General Titus destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. with the loss of over one million Jewish lives and the dismembering and scattering of the nation that survived.

We and the Jews

Since God is no respecter of persons (Rom. 10:12-13) the Hebrews are subject to the same gospel as we Gentiles. God cleanses their hearts as well as ours by faith, without distinction (Acts 15:8-9). They have a God-given right to hear the gospel (Mark 16:15). Many Jews who followed the Messiah in this life will share the bliss of heaven (Rev. 7:4). Sadly this race which enjoys such an illustrious history is the most neglected race on earth so far as our evangelistic work is concerned. Multitudes of Jews have demonstrated an eagerness to follow Jesus. Witness the thousands of young Jews in the Messianic Jewish Movement.

God's children must never allow themselves to be guilty of anti-Semitism. It is remarkable that the most vicious persecutions of the Jews have come from those who professed to follow the Savior. Jews suffered unmercifully at the hands of the Catholic Crusaders. Martin Luther is quoted as saying, "... the Jews...do great evil in the land. If they could kill us all, they would gladly do so, aye, and often do it, especially those who profess to be physicians... they can give poison to a man of which he will die in an hour... I say to you lastly, as a countryman, if the Jews refuse to be convicted, we ought not to suffer them or bear with them any longer" (Graetz, *History of the Jews*, Vol 4, p. 551).

What a remarkable contrast we see in Paul. "I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:2-3).

May all of us who are Abraham's spiritual heirs never forget our obligation to his fleshly children and may we treat with kindness those who already have so great a judgment on them. JHW

11.

GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

We often see articles by Evangelical writers insisting that Christians must back the nation of Israel in her struggle against the Muslims, because God expects it of us. While my sympathies tend to run with Israel, as she faces the hostile and determined Muslim world, it is not because of any Biblical mandate.

Yes, there was a time when the Hebrew nation was God's chosen people. "Jehovah thy God, hath chosen thee to be a people for his own possession" (Deut. 7:6). He chose them not because they were a better or stronger people, but because of his promise to faithful Abraham, that through his descendants He would bring Messiah into the world (Gen. 12:2-3). For 1500 long years he nurtured, provided for and protected them so that there would be a suitable environment for his promised Son. The record of the Israelites during that period was not laudable. It was one of disobedience, rebellion and unfaithfulness.

When in the fulness of time God sent forth his Son, they not only rejected him and his message, they secured his death on the cross (Matt. 27:20-25; Acts 2:23). Brazenly, they cried out, "Let his blood be on us, and on our children" They insisted, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). Jesus lamented "O Jerusalem...how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:37-38). Still God insisted that the promises of the gospel be given to the Jew first (Rom. 1:16). When Paul encountered a consistent pattern of rejection, he said to the Jews, "It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). God rejected political Israel, as was evidenced by his giving them over to the Romans who destroyed their nation in 70 A.D. Paul likens that rejection to the pruning off of unfruitful branches from an olive tree. He did not however reject that righteous remnant among them that had faith such as Abraham had. They believed on his Son and he grafted them into his covenant family (Rom. 11:23).

In this present dispensation of time, Christians, of whatever race, are children of God. By their faith and baptism and they are "Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:26-29). The Church of Christ is the true Israel of God (Gal. 6:14-16). "He chose us in Christ" (Eph. 1:4). Today God's people are not chosen on the basis of their race, but their faith. "It is not the children of the flesh that are children of God, but the children of the promise" (Rom. 9:8). Thus any Jew who accepts Jesus as his savior and is obedient to his will shall be saved (Rom. 11:23-26).

For humanitarian reasons, we should be supportive of the Israelis having a homeland and should oppose those who are determined to destroy them. However, we have no obligation to back political Israel, right or wrong. God does not expect that. Our government is no more obligated to the nation of Israel than it is to any other democratic nation. JHW

12.

THE TRUE ISRAEL OF GOD

The bulk of the Protestant world has been deceived into thinking that all Jews are still God's special people, that they will be restored to Palestine as a nation and the ancient Hebrew ritual resumed. All of this is supposed to happen when Christ comes back to reign on earth for a thousand years, as they erroneously suppose. What is commonly overlooked is the fact that all of those prophecies and promises that were spoken of **Israel**, to be realized in the messianic age, were not spoken of **fleshly Israel**, but of **spiritual Israel**, Christ's church. The five points that follow will prove this point .

1. Christians are now **Abraham's seed**. Paul declares this in Galatians 3:29. "If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise." Again in Romans he reasons that Abraham is "father of all them that believe" (4:11). Although we are not literally fleshly descendants of Abraham, we are his descendants spiritually for we have the same faith he had. Today, God does not reckon son-ship by the flesh, rather it is by our spiritual likeness to Abraham.

2. In the Christian age, **Christians are the True Israel of God**. "For neither is circumcision (being a Jew) anything, nor uncircumcision (being a Gentile), but a new creature. And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:15-16). Thus the Hebrews are no longer God's special people. Today, God's people are reckoned by grace, not by race. Again Paul stresses this point in Romans 9:8, "It is not the children of the flesh that are the children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed. In 4:16 of Romans he concludes that Abraham "is the father of us all."

3. The Church of Christ is the Commonwealth of Israel. In Christ Jesus we are made nigh by his blood. "So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. . ." (Eph. 2:12-13, 19-20). God cast off the Jewish nation (Rom. 11:15). Yet He saves all who believe in Jesus, irrespective of their nationality, adding them to Christ's church (Acts 2:47).

4. The church is the heavenly Jerusalem. The writer to the Hebrews said, "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly of church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven. . ." (Heb. 12:22-23). So we see that it is not ancient Jerusalem in Palestine, but the Lord's Church that is the heavenly, spiritual Jerusalem and Mount Zion. Those many promises of old concerning Zion in Messiah's day, find their fulfillment in the church and not in Palestinian Jerusalem.

5. Christians are the true "circumcision" of God in this age. Thus Paul reminds the saints at Philippi, "For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (3:3). He also tells the Colossians that in Christ "ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of flesh, in the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism..." (Col. 2:11-12). No literal fleshly circumcision is required today. But there is a likeness to circumcision in baptism. For as in the actual circumcision, the flesh was removed that kept a man from being identified with the covenant people, so in baptism the old life of sin is cut off and removed that the recipient might be numbered with God's people. Again Paul declares, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision (being Jewish) availeth anything, nor uncircumcision (being Gentiles), but faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6).

When the Jewish nation rejected Christ and murdered him, they forever forfeited their role as His special people. They cried, "His blood be upon us and our children" (Matt. 27:25). They made their choice. Not only the Palestinian Jews, but the Dispersion as well generally thrust the gospel from themselves and judged themselves unworthy of eternal life (Acts 13:46). Because of this rejection, God turned his attention to we Gentiles (Acts 28:28).

We stress again that it was national Israel that rejected the Savior and national Israel was rejected by God. "By their unbelief they were broken off" (Rom. 11:20). Today each individual Jew stands before God on precisely the same footing as we Gentiles. They are either saved or lost, solely on the basis of their belief or disbelief in Christ. "And they (Jews) also, if they continue not in their unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again" (Rom. 11:23). Today, as always, there are a few of Abraham's fleshly descendants who believe in Jesus. They are saved and a part of the true Israel of God, not because of the blood in their veins, but because of the faith in their hearts. What a great privilege it is to we Gentile Christians to be joint partakers in the commonwealth of spiritual Israel and to share the rich

blessings which God promises to all of Abraham's seed according to the promise (Col. 3:29). JHW

* I am indebted to James Bales and his book, **New Testament Interpretation of Old Testament Prophecies.**

13.

WILL THE JEWS TURN TO CHRIST WHEN HE RETURNS?

It is a major tenet of Premillennialism that when Christ returns, the Jews will be gathered unto Palestine and to him as their messiah. Their hopes soared when, following World War II, the state of Israel was established. Speculation was rampant that prophecy was being fulfilled. Millennialist teachers were confident that Christ would soon return and the Jews would embrace him. Sixty years have passed. Israel is a secular nation. Few in Palestine have become Christians. Many of those who migrated there have now returned to the countries they originally called home. Upon examination, of the Scripture, this teaching is found to be false.

When at last Messiah came and the leaders of Judaism along with many of the Hebrews rejected Him and the salvation he offered them, they forfeited their status as the chosen of God (Acts 13:46). Paul explains this in great detail in Romans 11. God did not cast off the people whom he foreknew, i.e., the righteous remnant, but he did reject and cut off the nation, political Israel, and all of its citizens who refused His Son (Rom. 11:2-5;20).

Paul's message is that while the vast majority of the Hebrew people of Jesus' day rejected Him and thus were cut off, the righteous remnant among them, who did believe in and obey the Messiah, were saved. (11:1-5). This is clearly seen in the 3,000 that confessed Christ and were baptized on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41) Additional thousands were soon added to Jesus' church (Acts 4:4). They were the fleshly descendants of Abraham, but contrary to the leaders and the majority of their brethren, they cast their lot with Jesus and were saved (Acts 2:38). Those whose hearts were hard and unrepentant, persecuted the church as did Saul of Tarsus (Gal. 1:13; Acts 8:1).

Not to be defeated in His purpose for the Hebrew people, God used their fall as the occasion to send the gospel of His Son to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:11). This did provoke them to jealousy as can be seen in their seething hatred of Paul, the Jewish missionary to the Gentiles. We do not find evidence of a righteous jealousy that made Jews turn to Jesus.

In Romans 11:23-28 Paul reminds us that all Israelites, just like all Gentiles, will be saved, **if they come to believe in the Savior.** Jews who continue to reject Jesus as their messiah, and die in that unbelief, are lost. JHW

14.

THE RAPTURE

It is amazing how humanity rushes to embrace palpable error while despising and rejecting obvious truth. Nowhere is this more evident than in the wild speculations of those preachers who make their living promoting speculative theories about events connected with end of the world. Hal Lindsey's books, **The Late Great Planet Earth, Countdown to Armageddon**, etc. and the "Left Behind" series of books by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins (later made into movies) have sold millions of copies and are eagerly read by multitudes of people who are ignorant of the Bible's true message.

One chapter of their imagined story they call "**The Rapture.**" According to their scenario, as the time of the end draws near, Christ will suddenly cause all deceased righteous inhabitants of earth to be resurrected. These saints of ages past

and all living Christians will be transformed and taken away to heaven for seven years. All sinners will be left behind to suffer through seven years of great tribulation and the war of Armageddon (H. P. Lindsey, **There's A New World Coming**, p. 77; 275). Following Armageddon, Christ and his saints will return to earth to reign a thousand years (*Ibid*, p. 263).

The word "rapture" is not found in the Bible but the concept is found in I Thessalonians 4:16-17. There, Paul says that when Christ descends from heaven and the dead are raised, "then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Thus we do not deny that God's children will be caught up to heaven to be with the Lord. It is all the other speculative points they have tacked on to this truth to which we object.

* The Bible knows only one resurrection, a general resurrection of all, both good and evil (John 5:28-29). It will occur on the last day (John 6:39,40, 44, 54).

* The Bible says nothing of the righteous leaving heaven and returning to the earth to reign with Christ a thousand years. When caught up, we will ever be with the Lord!

* Paul sets forth in clear, non-symbolic, terms the sequence of events that will occur at the end.

"...in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ, the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at his coming. Then comes the end when he shall deliver the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put an end to all rule and authority and power" (I Cor. 15:22-24). The sequence is clear. Christ will return. His people shall be raised. At that time his reign will be concluded and he will deliver his kingdom up to the Father.

There is no mention in scripture of additional resurrections. No mention is made of a seven year rapture and tribulation. Remember that just finding a word, does not constitute a doctrine. Nothing is said of a literal battle to be fought at Megiddo. No mention is made of Christ then establishing his kingdom. We do not read of a literal thousand year reign of Christ on earth. In fact, when he returns it will be the end his reign, not the beginning. This is the case because in the resurrection of the dead, his last enemy, i.e., death will be destroyed and he will deliver the kingdom up to the Father!

The Bible knows only one future resurrection which will include all of humanity, both good and bad (John 5:28-29). Millennialists predict up to three resurrections. The Bible presents Christ's church as his kingdom (Matt. 16:18). It has existed from the first century and all Christians were translated into it when they were saved (Col. 1:12-13). John, the author of the Revelation, was in the kingdom (Rev. 1:6). It is not something yet to be established.

When Christ returns, humanity will be judged and given their appropriate reward or punishment (John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:11-12). The planet earth will melt with fervent heat and the earth and the works that are in it will all be burned up (II Pet. 3:10). The righteous will spend eternity in the presence of the Father in heaven (Matt. 25:23; Rev. 21:1-6).

Like a thousand other myths and legends, the premillennial doctrine of "The Rapture" is nought but a curious speculation and a worthless fabrication. JHW

15.

ANTI-CHRISTS

No other term in the Bible stirs the imagination and fires such wild speculation as the expression, "anti-christ." The speculation is most extreme among those religious teachers holding the various pre-millennial theories. It is the stuff of scary movies and novels that attract multitudes of superstitious worldlings. In their ignorance, authors weave a web of error. God's word provides the light that will help us understand the who and what of "anti-christ."

The term is a combination of "anti" and Christ. "Anti" has two basic meanings: (1) "over against," hence one who puts himself in the place of Christ; (2). "opposition to," i.e., one who stands in opposition to Christ.

From first to last, the story of the Bible is that of Satan's attempts to take the place of God, and his opposition to the

Creator's rule and will. This was first displayed in heaven in the misty past when certain angels, not content with their position, sinned and were cast down to hell (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Satan then appeared in Eden to corrupt the only creatures made in God's image (Gen. 3:1-6).

In Noah's day he nearly succeeding in snaring all of humanity in his vile net (Gen. 6:9-12). In Egypt, Satan's man enslaved the Hebrew's and slaughtered their male children. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, crushed God's people and demanded that they worship his image (Dan. 3:1-5).

The Holy Spirit inspired Daniel to foresee Satanic efforts to hinder and even destroy God's cause. From the broken Grecian Empire he saw a "little-horn that rose up to persecute God's people (Dan. 8:9-14; 23-25). This represented the Syrian tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes (176-164 BC). He hated the Jews and their religion. Their temple he robbed. He placed an image of Jupiter in the Holy of Holies. A swine was sacrificed on the sacred altar and the temple defiled with its blood. He forbade circumcision. Every copy of the Hebrew Scriptures that could be found was destroyed. He tore down the walls of Jerusalem. Truly he was anti-God.

Daniel also saw yet another little horn that persecuted God's people. It sprang from the Roman Empire and most likely represented the vicious emperor Domitian (Dan. 7:23-26). From Nero onward most of the Roman emperors were anti-christs.

Jesus was confronted by anti-christ forces of evil. At his birth, wicked Herod the Great sought to have him murdered. When his ministry was launched, the Jewish hierarchy waged an ongoing war against him and his teaching. Ultimately they secured his death. The Master warned his disciples of imposters who would claim to be Christs, i.e. messiahs (Matt. 24:5). With deceitful signs they would lead many astray, even among the elect (Matt. 24:24).

Paul warned of a coming "man of sin" (II Thess. 2:1-12). He was described as the "son of perdition." He would oppose and exalt himself against all that is called God or worshiped. He would sit in the temple of God and set forth himself as God. His coming would surely be a work of Satan. He would use lying signs and wonders to deceive people. This malevolent spirit of anti-christian iniquity was already at work in Paul's day.

The Apostle John wrote of "anti-christs," not just one single evil individual. In his day there were already many antichrists. They formerly had been among the faithful churches but they have gone out from them because they were no longer with them in heart and mind (I John 2:18-19). They were liars because they denied that Jesus is the Christ (I John 2:22). They denied his Sonship to God. They were false prophets. In their teaching they denied Jesus had come in the flesh, i.e., his incarnation. They were actively at work in John's day and he warned the brethren to reject and avoid them. They were deceivers (II John 7). Because they did not abide in the doctrine of Christ, they had not God (II John 9). There is an attitude or spirit held by certain false teachers then and now which John labels "anti-christian" (I John 4:1-3).

Anti-christs are of two varieties. There are those yet within the church. Paul warned the Ephesian elders, "From among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). He likewise warned Timothy that "some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons..." (I Tim. 4:1-3). Such anti-christs seek to corrupt the faith and practice of the church. They seek power and control over congregations.

Some create their own churches that compete with Christ's church for the souls of men. These are counterfeit churches that do great damage to Christianity. We see popes who put themselves in the place of Christ, claiming to be the head of the church (Eph. 1:22). Of similar nature are the founders and heads of denominations. Founders and leaders of all the cults that pervert the message of the Master and seek to situate their "church" in the place of Christ's sacred body are anti-christs. Most prominent in this class of antichrists are those theologians and "pastors" who have embraced one of the many varieties of religious skepticism. Claiming to be Christians, they deny Jesus existed from eternity, that he is God, that he was virgin born, that he worked genuine miracles, that his death secured forgiveness of humanity's sins and that he arose and ascended back to heaven. Occupying positions in seminaries and churches, these unbelievers are against Christ and his holy Cause.

Then there are those anti-christs who in no way are associated with Christianity. They are unbelievers of every stripe

who hate Jesus, his church, his word and his disciples. Their hatred drives them to make war against the saints (Rev. 12:13-17). This warfare can be violent, physical persecution such as Rome and Jews employed in the early years. Modern examples of this violent anti-christian spirit is seen in Russia under Communism, China, Cuba and most Muslim nations.

The opposition of unbelieving anti-christians can be ideological such as presently prevails in academia, the media and the entertainment industry. They ignore the existence of Christianity, or they marginalize Christians. They subject them to ridicule and continual assaults on their faith. This opposition can take the form of legal harassment. Anti-Christian organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State use every legal trick to hinder, hobble and undermine the influence of Christianity in America.

Imagining anti-Christ to be some horrid supernatural enemy who is to come at the end of our age, many are ignorant, blind and unaware of the anti-christs boldingworking in their very midst!

Paul describes the end of all such anti-Christian enemies, "Whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his coming (II Thess. 2:8). In the day when the Christ returns, "every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God" (Phil. 2:10-11). This will certainly include every person who has set himself in the place of Christ or worked against Him and his Cause! JHW

16.

666

When it comes to the Book of Revelation ignorance, speculation and superstition reign supreme. The most mysterious feature of this spectacular book is the man mentioned in 13:16-18, whose number is 666. Among those speculated to be this mysterious man are emperors Nero and Domitian, various Popes, Joseph Smith, Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and Henry Kissinger. Folks have tried to discover the identity from the numerical value of the letters of these and other men's names. Like the Latin with its Roman numerals I, V, X, etc., the characters of the Greek alphabet have numerical value. The weakness of this method is that it is purely speculative and thus without any assurance of being right. There is a much better approach.

In the Book of Revelation, several numbers have symbolic value: 7, 10, 12, 1260, 3 ½. There are seven stars, seven angels, seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets and seven bowls of wrath. The anti-Christian beast has seven heads. Seven was considered the perfect number. It meant perfection, completion, wholeness. The beast with seven heads and ten horns is the Roman Empire (Rev. 17:9-13). The evil lamb is the pagan priesthood that supported Rome by their lies and deceit (13:11-14). The image of the beast is their idols used to promote emperor worship. The mark that all were required to have on their hand or forehead was the certificate that was issued when one publicly worshiped Caesar. It was proof of his loyalty.

By reading chapters 13-14 together we notice two different groups of people, each with a different mark on their forehead. There are those who dwell on the earth (13:14). They worship the beast and have his identifying mark on their forehead. There are those who dwell with Christ on Mt. Zion. The name of Christ and his Father is on their foreheads (14:1). The first group are sinners, lost in their present state. The second are Christians, saved by Jesus. We are told what the mark on Christians is. In Rev. 7:1-4, the mark is God's seal. Kings had their seal or signet by which their documents were validated and their property marked. Every Christian is sealed with the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 1:22). He is sealed when in faith he is baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins and receives the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) This mark is not visible to the human eye but certainly is to God. Those with God's seal are complete in Christ (Col. 2:10). Those with the mark of the beast, marked 666, are lost. If their mark was seven they would be among the saved. Six is less than seven. They are incomplete before God, sinners in need of salvation. Which of these two marks do you bear?

The greater mystery of 666 is in all the speculation. This simple explanation makes sense. JHW

17.

WILL ONLY 144,000 SEE HEAVEN?

A favorite theory of those who claim to be witnesses of Jehovah is that only 144,000 will see heaven (**Let God Be True**, p. 113). This idea is based on an erroneous interpretation of Rev. 7 and 14:1-5. Here we see a group of 144,000 souls standing with Christ the Lamb on Mt. Zion.

A **literal interpretation** of the passage forces one to an absurd position. A careful reading reveals the following: (1). All of them are Jews (7:4); (2). All are men (14:4); (3). All are male virgins not defiled with women (14:4); (4). The number excludes Jews of the tribes of Dan and Ephraim (7:5-8); (5). The number is very small compared to the billions who will stand before God in the judgment; (6). They stand with a lamb (14:1); (7). They stand on Mt. Zion in Palestine (14:1); (8). They have the seal of God stamped on their forehead (7:3-4). If we interpret this passage literally, then the following would be the conclusion: Only 144,000 branded, unmarried, male Jews with no sexual experience could stand with a lamb in Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. Sound ridiculous? It is because it is a false conclusion forced by an erroneous interpretation.

The **true interpretation** is found when we realize that much of our Bible is presented in a **figurative language**, designed to teach spiritual truths. In this light we see a limited number of Jews who believed in Christ. They are cleansed from their sins and followers of Jesus the lamb who gave His life as a sacrifice to God for us. We see a tremendously large group of Gentiles also saved. The lesson contrasts the limited number of Hebrews who would follow Christ with the innumerable number of Gentiles who would do so. All, of whatever race, who follow him in this life will be with him in eternity. There is **One Hope** for all Christians (Eph. 4:4). That is eternal life with God in heaven (Rev. 21:1-4). The true church will thus represent the Scripture to all men. False witnesses offer a false hope of heaven for only 144,000. JHW

18.

THE NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH

Some folks are perplexed about the “new heavens and new earth” of II Peter 3:13. They wonder if eternal life will be spent in heaven or here on the earth?

As to where the saved will spend their eternity, Scripture reveals the following things:

- * Heaven is the abode of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt. 6:9).
- * To come to earth, Jesus **came down** (John 6:51) and to go the Father **he went back up to heaven** (Acts 1:9-11).
- * To have eternal life means that we will live with Christ and the Father in eternity (John 14:11-3).
- * As saved people, “our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20).
- * At God’s appointed time Christ will return and raise all the dead, both good and bad (John 5:28-29). The living will be changed (i.e., their mortal bodies will become immortal) (I Cor. 15:51-52) and **all will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord**” (I Thess. 4:17).
- * At that same time the “heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (II Pet. 3:10). This means that the cosmos, the material

creation will be utterly consumed.

* All of humanity will stand before Christ for judgement (Acts 17:30; Matt. 25:31–33).

* Eternal rewards and punishments will be assigned (Matt. 25:34; 41; 46).

* Since this material realm will be consumed, the new heavens and new earth will be the place that God has prepared wherein his children will spend eternity. “There are two words translated ‘new’ in the New Testament; one is prospective and indicates that which is young as opposed to old; the other is retrospective and points to that which is fresh in contrast to that which is worn out. It is the second of these (*kainos*) which is used here. The heavens and the earth which the apostle describes in this passage will be fresh and new, and not worn and old, as are the heavens and the earth which now exist” (G. N. Woods, *Commentary on The Epistles of Peter, John and Jude*, p. 188).

* The new heavens and earth will be the place where God is and where his saved children will dwell in his presence for eternity (Rev. 21:1-3).

* Given these passages, most Bible believing scholars have concluded that the new heavens and the new earth speak of our future home with the Father, in heaven. It was to be the new place of abode for God’s faithful children when their place of abode (earth) has been consumed with fire.

The source of this confusion is often the tainted religious literature or teaching the uninformed have been ingesting. The most common source of this particular error is the Jehovah’s Witnesses cult. Those who desire to know more about end times will be much better rewarded if they devote their time to reading the Bible. Even the **New World Translation of the Bible** prepared by the Jehovah’s Witnesses has been doctored to promote their views. Get a good Bible translation such as the New International Version, or the New American Standard Version. Begin with the Gospel of John, then one of the other gospels, then the Book of Acts. Read and believe the wonderful message therein. Pray to God for help in rightly understanding his wonderful Word (II Tim. 2:15). JHW

19.

IS THE END OF THE WORLD IMMINENT?

For over 150 years, people who have embraced Premillennialism have been saying the end of the world is near at hand.. They build their case by searching through the Bible and finding obscure verses that speak of the day of the Lord. These are then patched together to prove their assumptions about the time of the end.

Hundreds of premillennial writers and speakers have predicted the return of Christ and the end of our world to be at hand. Most notable here in America have been the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Seventh Day Adventists, and Herbert Armstrong’s, World Wide Church of God. Among Evangelical Protestant churches, writers such as Hal Lindsey, author of the book **The Late Great Planet Earth**, which has sold well over 40 million copies, has been a major promoter of this flawed speculation. The **Left Behind** series of novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins have also contributed greatly to the spread of this erroneous view.

C. I. Scofield attached his strong premillennial views to his **Scofield Reference Bible**. Through this medium he has had great influence on Evangelical disciples. Dallas Theological Seminary has sent forth a swarm of preachers, thoroughly indoctrinated in this speculative millennial view. Chief among its teachers were Lewis Sperry Chafer and John Walvoord. Today, most Evangelical Protestant preachers have embraced the premillennial approach to the Bible. Premillennialism is the belief that Jesus will return to earth and set up a messianic kingdom and make war on his enemies and then reign a thousand years. The doctrine is like a quilt made of hundreds of unrelated scraps of materials, stitched together to make a pattern. It is contrary to the overall teaching of the Bible on Christ’s kingdom and his return. Jesus accomplished his mission on earth (John 17:4). His death was part of the eternal purpose of God (Acts 2:23). He is now King of Kings (I Tim. 6:15), reigning in heaven upon the throne of David (Rev. 3:7). His kingdom is the church and is now in existence (Matt. 16:18; Col.1:13). When he returns, the earth will be destroyed by fire (II Pet. 3:12) and the kingdom (church) will be delivered up to the Father (I Cor. 15:24).

Be reminded that in every generation, as various great aggressor nations have arisen, premillennial teachers have tried to apply these and similar verses to them. Each in turn failed to materialize.

As to the date of Christ's return he makes it very clear, "Of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only" (Matt. 24:36). Given this verse, any man who claims to know the date of Christ's return is claiming to know more than Christ himself. Such a claimant is a false teacher and a deceiver. JHW

20.

WHO ARE GOG AND MAGOG?

In Ezekiel 38 and 39, the writer speaks of Gog whom God is against (38:1-3). Just who Gog is the author does not state, nor can we determine who or what specific nation the writer had in mind. The one thing that is discernable is that Gog stands for those godless nations that have opposed God and persecuted his people. To understand this or any section of the Bible, the historical context must be taken in to consideration. Ezekiel was God's prophet to the Hebrews who were in Babylonian Captivity between 606 and 536 B.C. They had been swept from their land by Assyrian and Babylonian armies and their allies. The prophet's book was written to comfort the Hebrews in their affliction and to provide them hope of survival and restoration to their homeland. Gog most likely stands for the leaders of those powerful heathen nations who had enslaved God's people. In 38:21-39:4 the prophet promises that God will destroy Gog and all of his allies who have made war on Israel. "And the nations shall know that I am Jehovah, the Holy One in Israel" (39:7). "So the house of Israel shall know that I am Jehovah their God, from that day forward. And the nations (Gentiles) shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity" (39:22-23). "Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Now will I bring back the captivity of Jacob and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel" (39:25). This last verse provides the key. It has to do with the restoration of the Hebrews from their Babylonian Captivity. Thus it has nothing to do with modern Russia, China or Iran, etc.

John borrows Ezekiel's imagery to describe the heathen powers that Satan will send against Christ's church in a final effort to destroy her (Rev. 20:7-9). He assures us they will not succeed, rather God will destroy them. As in Ezekiel, we cannot know specifically whom John's Gog and Magog are. That they are heathen enemies of Christ and his church is certain, but beyond that we must wait for that day in the heavenly realms when Christ will reveal just whom they were. JHW

21.

HAVE THE LAND PROMISES MADE TO ABRAHAM BEEN FULFILLED?

Premillennialists say the Jews have never received all the land God promised them and thus the State of Israel will one day control all the land in that God promised Abraham.

In Genesis 15:18 God promised Abram, "Unto thy seed have I give this land, from the river of Egypt (this refers to the brook of Egypt, a seasonal stream known as the wady el-Arish that was the southern border of ancient Israel) unto the great river, the river Euphrates..." He did not have in mind the whole expanse of land between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates. Arising in the Armenian Mountains, that great river twists and turns as it flows South. One of its loops flows through the land of Syria. That would be the northern most point of the land which God gave the Hebrews.

In Joshua 21:43-45 Joshua reported, "There *failed not aught of any good thing* which Jehovah had spoken unto the house of Israel; *all came to pass*." Notice he twice states that all the promises had been fulfilled.

In I Kings 4:21 we read "And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms *from the River (Euphrates) unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt*." Those are precisely the markers God promised to Abram.

Because of their disobedience, the Hebrews later lost much of that territory to their enemies, but the promise had been fulfilled and no one can rightly claim that it is yet to be fulfilled.

This belief that the modern state of Israel will one day control all of the land as in ancient times is a sturdy plank in the speculative doctrine of Premillennialism. Such mistaken teaching creates apprehension in the political neighbors of Israel as they are concerned that Israel might one day attempt to expand her borders and take their land from them. JHW

22.

ARE BIBLE PROPHECIES BEING FULFILLED IN OUR DAY?

The Bible is filled with numerous prophecies. The teachers of Premillennialism spend much time mining among the prophecies trying to find some verse that will substantiate the doctrine they have espoused. Serious students of the Bible are certainly interested in the prophecies. They want to understand them as God intended for them to be understood. They avoid unfounded speculation and lifting prophetic texts from their proper context.

Bible prophecies are of several kinds.

1. There are prophecies regarding the seed of Abraham.
2. There are prophecies regarding the nation of Israel.
3. There are prophecies regarding individuals in Israel and even surrounding nations.
4. There are prophecies of gentile nations such as Babylon, Moabites, Egyptians, etc.
5. There are prophecies of judgement both on individuals, nations, Israel
6. There are prophecies of Messiah
7. There are prophecies of Messiah's kingdom.
8. There are prophecies of the church's struggle with and victory over pagan Rome.
9. There are prophecies of great wickedness before Christ comes (II Tim. 3:1-9).
10. There are prophecies of apostasy within the church (I Tim. 4:1-4)
11. There are prophecies of Christ's return to raise the dead, judge the world, reward the righteous and punish the wicked.

In general we conclude that prophecies of the first eight groups were all fulfilled. The prophecies about Christ, his birth, his ministry, his death, resurrection and ascension have been fulfilled. Prophecies of the coming of his kingdom (church) have been fulfilled. But the prophets predicted that his church would be an everlasting kingdom (Dan. 2:44), and that is still being fulfilled. The prophecies predict that Christ would come a second time to raise the dead and judge the world. Those are yet to be fulfilled. It is my understanding that John in the Book of Revelation predicts that Christ will be triumphant over all his enemies (Rev.19:11-16). That is yet to be.

What we do not find in Scripture is the detailed prophecies of contemporary social, political and military events. Especially we have no specific prophecies about the state of Israel and her perpetual conflict with her Muslim neighbors. We have no predictions of when the end of the world will occur and Christ will return. The proof of this is evident. Jesus said such was unknown (Matt. 24:36). In every generation since the death of the apostles there have been teachers who claimed they had discovered hidden truth and information in the prophecies and tried to match them with contemporary events. All have failed, including our present crop of "Bible Prophecy" experts. Hal Lindsey is one of the most glaring of the failed interpreters of prophecy. He is now in at least his third revisal of his book, **The Late Great Planet Earth**.

Mark it well that those preachers claiming to have found "the fulfillment of ancient prophecy" in today's events are men and women with overactive imaginations and a minuscule amount of solid Bible knowledge. JHW

23.

OUTLINE STUDY OF MATTHEW 24 & 25

Promoters of Premillennialism rely heavily on Matthew chapters 24 and 25, Paul's Thessalonian epistles and Revelation chapter 20. No study of this doctrine is complete without consideration of those texts. Below is a scriptural exposition of these sections of Scripture which reveals the fallacies of the Premillennial approach.

"The Olivet discourse must be interpreted in accordance with the 'apocalyptic' dialect employed by Old Testament prophets. Our Lord used well-known prophetic language to answer the inquiry of the apostles concerning the future of the Temple at Jerusalem. When scripture is interpreted by the Scripture, erroneous conjectures of 'prophetic students' will cease, recourse to 'double meanings' will not be necessary, and the charge of error on the part of Jesus will be seen to be groundless" (J. M. Kik, *Matthew XXIV*, p. 114).

* The key to Matt. 24 is verse 34, "***this generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished.***"

* The chapter naturally divides itself into two main sections: 24:1-35 speaks to events which were to befall the contemporary generation of Jesus; 24:36-51 and chapter 25 speak to events which will occur at the second coming of Christ.

* For a contextual background, see Matt. 23:29-39.

* For parallel readings see Mark 13:1-37 and Luke 21:5-36.

OUTLINE

Introduction and Setting (24:1-3).

A. Jesus' declaration: the temple shall be destroyed (vss. 1-2).

B. The disciples' questions (vs. 3).

1. When shall these things be?
2. What shall be the sign of thy coming?
3. What shall be the sign of the end of the world?

I. Jesus Answers Their First Two Questions and Predicts the Destruction of Jerusalem with Attendant Signs and Horrors (24:4-35).

A. Misleading Signs of the End (24:4-13).

1. False Christs (vss. 4-5).
2. Wars, Famines, Pestilences and Earthquakes (vss. 6-8).
 - a. But the end is not yet...and these are the beginnings of travail (i.e., birth pangs).
3. Persecution of the disciples (vss. 9-10).
4. False prophets and apostasy (vss. 11-13).

B. Definite and True Signs of the End of the Jewish Nation (24:14-16).

1. The gospel shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony (vs 14).
 - a. See Acts 2:5; Col. 1:6,23
2. When the Abomination of Desolation is seen standing in the Holy Place (vs.15).
 - a. The armies of the conqueror (Lk.21:20).
 - b. The Roman legions carried ensigns of eagles and images of the emperor to which homage was paid. Hence they are described as idolatrous abominations.
 - c. See Dan. 9:27.

C. The Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:17-22).

1. When the armies appear, Christians are to flee to the mountains (vs. 16).
2. Do not try to take possessions (vss.17-18).
3. Woe to mothers and those with child (vs. 19).
4. Pray that it not be winter or a Sabbath day when the gates will be shut (vs. 20).
5. There shall be tribulation such as never before.
 - a. Never have the Jews experienced such suffering and anguish.
 - b. The Jews themselves were divided into three warring factions.
 - c. The Romans surrounded the city and starved them for many months; famine, pestilence, vicious self-destruction took a terrible toll. At least 116,000 bodies were thrown over the walls.
 - d. All who tried to escape were slaughtered.
 - e. The Romans killed over a million Jews in the siege and its aftermath.
 - f. 100,000 Jews were sold into slavery.
 - g. The nation was dismantled, Jerusalem and the temple were leveled and their ground plowed.
6. The days will be shortened for the elect's sake (vs. 22).
 - a. An urgent call to return to Rome caused Titus to change his plans for starving the city. He breached the wall and forcibly took it. Titus remarked, "We have certainly had God for our assistant in this war." "And it was none other than God who ejected the Jews out of these fortifications, for what could the hands of men, or any machines do toward overthrowing these towers."

D. No Personal Coming of Christ During the Siege (24:23-28).

1. During the siege, false Christs and false prophets would arise (vss. 23-24).
2. With great signs and wonders they will try to lead astray even the elect, i.e. Christians (vs.25).
3. Some will say Christ has returned (vs. 26a).
4. Believe them not (vs. 26b).
5. The personal coming of Christ will be as conspicuous as the lightening, seen by all men; manifested in heaven, not on earth (vs. 27).
6. Proverb of the eagles and the carcass (vs. 2).
 - a. The carcass stands for the Jewish nation, morally, spiritually and judicially dead.
 - b. Eagles (Heb. neshar) stands for the Romans, gathering like vultures to devour the Jewish state.

E. Signs in the Sun, Moon and Stars (vss. 29-31). (Most people assume this to refer to the end of the world and second coming of Christ. Yet when studied in the light of prophetic language it is seen to be descriptive of the passing away of Judaism.)

1. These signs would occur **immediately** after the tribulation of those days (vs. 29a).
2. Sun, moon, and stars being darkened refer to the eclipse of the Jewish state (vs.29b).
 - a. Compare these prophetic passages for similar language describing the overthrow of nations.
 - 1) Is. 13:10; 34:4-5.
 - 2) Ezek. 32:7-8.
 - 3) Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21.
 - 4) Rev. 6:12-17.

F. Appearance of the Sign (vs. 24:30).

1. The judgement upon Jerusalem was the sign of the fact that the Son of Man was reigning in heaven.
2. Note that the verse speaks of a **sign** and not of the personal appearance of Christ himself.
3. Note also it does not say, "a sign in heaven," rather it says, "**the sign of the Son of Man in heaven.**"
 - a. "in heaven" defines the locality of the Son of Man, not the sign.
4. The mourning of the tribes (vs. 30b).
 - a. The tribes of Israel,
 - b. Jews scattered throughout the world mourned.

- 1) Some for having seen their Messiah crucified (Lk 23:48).
- 2) Some for their own sins (Acts 2:37).
- 3) Some for the destruction of their nation, temple and attendant persecutions.
- 5. The Son coming on the Clouds with great power and glory (vs. 30c).
 - a. Not a visible return as at the end of the world, but a coming in a providential judgment upon his enemies.
 - 1) Compare Is. 19:1.
 - 2) Matt. 16:28; 26:64.
 - b. One of the first manifestations of the power and glory of the Messiah was the destruction of the city and nation that refused to accept Him as King.

G. The Trumpet Sounds, the Angels Sent (24:31).

- 1. Although the trumpet often is mentioned in connection with the resurrection, it also is used to announce the year of Jubilee, freedom from bondage and deliverance.
 - a. Lev.25:8-9; 39-42.
 - b. Is. 27:12-13.
 - c. Lk. 4:17-21.
- 2. This greater Jubilee of the Christian age would not be limited to Jews only, but extended to all men.
- 3. The angels are God's messengers.
 - a. The word **angelos**, does not always mean heavenly messengers, it sometimes means earthly messengers.
 - b. Compare Matt. 11:10.
 - c. James 2:25.
 - d. These messengers are the servants of Christ, soul-winners (Mk. 16:15).
- 4. From the Four Winds, a world-wide harvest of souls.
 - a. Luke 13:29.
 - b. This began on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-42).
 - c. The destruction of the Jewish nation forever removed the:
 - 1). Persecution of the Jews.
 - 2). Problems of Judaizing teachers crippling the spread of the gospel into Gentile lands.

H. The Parable of the Fig Tree (24:32-33).

- 1. The budding of the fig tree is a sign that summer is near.
- 2. So, these signs, when seen, announce that Jerusalem's judgment is near.
- 3. Also they announced the "summer" of the gospel age for all nations.

I. The Time Text (24:34).

- 1. This generation shall not pass away, **till all these things be accomplished.**
- 2. This verse precludes the extension of these prophesied events beyond the days of Jesus' contemporary generation.

J. The Solemn Assurance that these predictions would be fulfilled (vs. 35).

II. Prediction Concerning the Second Coming of Christ, the Judgment and the End of the Age (24:36-25:46).

A. "That day and hour" (vs. 36).

- 1. "That day and hour" denotes a change of subject.
- 2. The distinctive use of the plural "days" in the first section and the singular "day" in the second, points out that different periods are under consideration.
- 3. This refers to the final day of judgment.
 - a. Compare (Matt. 7:22).

B. No Man Knows the Day (vs. 36b).

- 1. Not even the angels or the Son, only God the Father. Notice in the first section everything is very specific, in the second everything is general.
 - a. In the first the Christians had time to flee, in the second no time for flight.

C. The Second Coming Will be as in the Days of Noah (vs. 37-39).

1. People living in "normal times."
 2. No sign except the preaching of Noah.
 3. So shall the coming of the Son of Man be.
- D. It will be "Unexpected" (24:40-44).
1. People working as normal.
 2. Like a thief in the night.
- E. Three Parables that Illustrate the Nature of His Second Coming.
1. Parable of the servants (24:45-51).
 - a. This stresses the fact that the Lord may delay his coming a long time and come unexpectedly.
 2. Parable of the Virgins (25:1-13).
 - a. This stresses the need for preparation at all times, since no warning sign will be given of his arrival, just the announcement.
 3. Parable of the Talents (25:14-30).
 - a. The Master travels into a far country and after a long time he returns to reckon with his servants.
 4. All these teach delay, lack of warning and absence of signs.
- F. The Last Judgment (25:31-46).
1. Christ, the Judge
 2. On his throne of glory (Compare Rev. 20:11-13).
 3. All nations to be judged
 4. Eternal rewards and punishment will be rendered.

CONCLUSION: The careful reader is impressed with the **contrasts** between Matthew 24:1-35 and 24:36-25:46. Consider this tabulation of contrasts:

- * The **First** gives the impression of abnormal times: wars. The **Second** gives the impression of normal times: eating and drinking, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, persecution, marrying and giving in marriage, peaceful work. and great tribulation.
- * The **First** gives specific signs in relation to judgment. In the **Second**, specific signs are absent in regard to the final judgment upon Jerusalem.
- * The **First** is concerned with "those days." The **Second** is concerned with "that day."
- * The **First** limits the judgment to Palestine. The **Second** judgment embraces all nations.
- * The **First** contains warnings. The **Second** has no warning except a general admonition to be prepared.
- * In the **First** the saints were warned to flee to the mountains. In the **Second** the saints are taken up from earth.
- * The **First** pictures a judgment upon the earth. The **Second** pictures a judgment in heaven.

Clearly these two sections have different, though related, subjects under consideration. JHW

Note: The foregoing outline is of the book, **Matthew XXIV**, by J. Marcellus Kik, published by the Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., Philadelphia, 1948. Now published as **An Eschatology of Victory**.

PREMILLENNIALISM AND THE THESSALONIAN EPISTLES

Every doctrine originating in the mind of uninspired man sooner or later is found to be in conflict with divine revelation.

The false doctrine of Premillennialism is at odds with I Thessalonians 2:12 which says that God "is calling you" into his kingdom (Jerusalem Bible). If the kingdom has not yet come, how could God call them (present tense) into it in Paul's day?

I Thessalonians 4:16-18 refutes the false doctrine of the rapture and two resurrections. This verse clearly declares that when Christ returns the righteous dead will be raised and the living saints will be "caught up" (raptured) together with them to meet the Lord in the air and "ever be with the Lord." There is no indication here or elsewhere of a return to earth of a 1,000 year reign, of a second resurrection for the wicked, or any other of the vagaries of the millennial speculators.

Those who dare to predict a specific time for Christ's return must do so in the face of I Thessalonians 5:1-3. "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." It will be a "sudden destruction" that will be totally unannounced. There will be no signs or forewarnings of the Lord's return.

The idea of separate resurrections for the righteous and the wicked falls before II Thessalonians 1:6-10. When Jesus is revealed he will render rest to the saints and fiery vengeance to sinners. This is **one act of judgment** with consequences suited to each category of men. Where is there room for a millennial reign between?

II Thessalonians 2:1-3 contains exhortations sorely needed by modern man in view of the massive bombardment of millennial speculation deluging our generation. "Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind (don't lose your head, JHW.), nor yet be troubled, either by spirit (alleged revelation, JHW.) or by word, or by epistle as from us as that the day of the Lord is just at hand; let no man beguile you in any wise..." We should pity the thousands of Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Armstrongites and others whose lives have been unsettled by false predictions of Christ's return. However, they should have known better than to believe any such prognostications in view of plain Biblical warnings.

A heavenly explanation is given as to why the masses of people are so gullible in receiving the absurd speculations of the millennial mania. In II Thessalonians 2:10-12 Paul explains, "...because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved...God sendeth them a working or error (strong delusions, KJV), that they all might be judged who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." No system of doctrine is more patently false. No scheme is more difficult to comprehend. No teaching is more at odds with the basic fundamentals of the gospel of Christ. No religious system has bewildered and disappointed more people in the last 2,000 years. Yet, it surely is the most popular approach to religion in our day. Perhaps its adherents have received the strong delusion because they did not love God's truth.

As citizens of the kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us "walk worthily of God" (I Thess 2:12) and "wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come" (I Thess. 1:10). JHW

REVELATION 20, AN EXPOSITION

The twentieth chapter of the Revelation has been a battle ground for ages. It is the **only possible** foothold Premillennialists can find in the Bible. If it can be established that the events of this chapter are not to be interpreted literally, then their wild speculative system falls to the ground.

Revelation is a Book of Figures and Symbols

This is indisputable fact. Notice a few examples. In 1:1, John tells us the book was "signified" unto him. The root of this word is sign. In 1:13-18, John saw Jesus but used numerous similies and metaphors to describe him. "His eyes were *as* a flame of fire." "His feet were *like into* burnished brass." "Out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword." None would take these descriptive terms literally. In chapter 1:20 John saw seven stars and golden candlesticks which he explains are seven churches and their angels. In 12:3 and 9 he saw a great red dragon which was said to be symbolic of Satan. He saw a harlot which he identifies as the great city that ruled over all the world, obviously Rome.

Chapter 20 is also filled with symbols. We see an angel, a chain, a serpent, an abyss with a lid, 1,000 years and evil forces named Gog and Magog. Even the Premillennialists understand all of this as symbolic save the 1,000 years. But it is unreasonable and inconsistent to explain all these as figurative and then single out the 1,000 years as literal.

The Symbols Identified

Who is the angel of chapter 20? First, we ask **what** is an angel? The word simply means messenger, it may be a heavenly, a diabolical or a human one. The angel of this passage is likely Jesus. He alone has the power to do what this angel does. He has the keys of death and Hades (Rev. 1:10). All judgement and authority are his. (John 5:22-27). He came to bind the strong man Satan, that he might rescue those held in Satan's domain (Matt. 12:28-29). Christ is "the angel of the Lord" in the Old Testament. Compare Exodus 23:20 and I Corinthians 10:4, to see the evidence of this. For a fine discussion of this question the reader is referred to the book, **The Divinity of Our Lord**, by Canon H. P. Liddon. When we say Christ is the angel or messenger of Jehovah, we in no way deny his deity. Nor do we argue that he is in nature an angel, i.e., a created being. The word is used for its definition, i.e., a messenger.

Who is the dragon? John answers this for us in 20:2 by saying it is the Devil and Satan. Like the fierce dragons of ancient myth, Satan threatens all of humanity.

What is the chain that bound Satan? That chain is the gospel. When Satan tempted Christ, the Savior successfully resisted his every attempt with the aid of the word of God (Compare Matt. 4:1-11). That which is the power of God to salvation is also his power to restrain Satan's power (Rom. 1:16).

When was Satan bound? If we can determine this from the Scripture, we will know for sure when the 1,000 years began. The Bible shows that by his coming, his death and resurrection, Christ bound Satan. Notice again Matthew 12:24-29, Christ argues, "But if I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you. Or how can one enter into the house of the strong man, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house." The fact that Jesus cast out demons, that he now saves men from sin, is proof that he has bound the strong man, Satan, who is god of this world (II Cor. 4:4). As Jesus contemplated his forthcoming death he said, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12:31). In Colossians 2:14-15, Paul reasons that when Christ was nailed to the cross he "despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." The expression principalities and powers has reference to the evil spiritual powers, i.e., he stripped them of their power and authority. Again, Paul says that Christ "brought to naught him that had the power of death, that is the devil" (Heb. 2:14). John says that Christ was manifested to the end that he might destroy the works of the devil (I John 3:8).

Some cannot believe that Satan is presently bound since so much sin and wickedness yet abound in the world. The verse says, "Satan is bound "that he should deceive the nations no more" (Rev. 20:3). With respect to the nations and sin, Satan is bound in a relative sense. He cannot stop the spread of the kingdom. He cannot stop the spread of the gospel (Matt. 24:35). We say that Satan's binding is relative or partial as concerns the world, even as reflected in Jude 6. Angels that fell from their sinless state, God has "kept in everlasting bonds under darkness until the judgment of the great day." Yet Satan and his fallen helpers are allowed some degree of freedom to tempt mankind even while this heaven-imposed restraint is in place.

With respect to the saints of God, Satan is absolutely bound. In John 10:28, Jesus said of his disciples, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." So long as the disciple is faithful, Satan is incapable of separating him from God. With the whole armor of God, we can stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11-13). The man begotten of God, who does not make a practice of sinning, keepeth himself and the evil one toucheth him not" (John 5:18). We can illustrate this by likening Satan to a vicious dog bound to a chain of 10 feet. If we stay outside the circumference of the chain the dog cannot touch us. But if we wander within his boundary, he can devour us. The chain is God's word. Keep that word between you and Satan and you are safe. Ignore the word at your own peril. Satan was bound at Calvary when the seed of the woman bruised the serpent's head (Compare Gen. 3:15). He will continue bound until the little season just prior to Christ's second advent.

Who Reigns With Christ? In Revelation 20:4, John saw the souls of martyred saints reigning with Christ. Here is a vision of men from the earth, not of men on the earth. This is the pre-resurrection state of martyrs for Christ. Notice that these martyred saints were presently reigning with Christ. Early in Revelation, Jesus had promised persecuted disciples that if they would be "faithful unto death" he would give them a crown of life (2:10) In 3:21, he said, "He that overcometh I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in His throne." Faithful saints who die for the Lord reign with him now. Nothing is said of a future reign on earth!

Where Do They Reign? John says that these triumphant saints reign with Christ (20:4) But Christ's throne is in heaven, not on the earth. We notice in Revelation 3:21 that he promises that the overcoming saint will sit down with him in His throne even as he sat down with the Father upon his throne. In Acts 2:32-36, Peter argues that the resurrected Jesus ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. Again, Paul argued that he must depart this earth to be with Christ (Phil. 1:23). Therefore, the knowledgeable Bible student does not look for an earthly reign of Christ.

What Is The First Resurrection? Premillennialists argue for two bodily resurrections, One of the righteous at the time of Christ's alleged return to earth, the second, for the wicked at the end of that reign. They seem to forget that the term "resurrection" can have a spiritual import. For example, in Romans 6:4-5 our salvation and baptism are likened to a death, burial and resurrection. The same illustration is used in Ephesians 2:1, 4-6, and Colossians 2:12-13 and 3:1-4. These cases prove that we need not interpret the word literally. In John 5:24-29, Jesus speaks of salvation as a resurrection and then mentions the literal resurrection of the body in the same context. "He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life." The saved man has experienced one resurrection (a spiritual one) and at the last day he will be raised to the resurrection of life. Thus the first resurrection is the result of salvation. For those who have experienced that first resurrection there is no fear of the second death because their sins are forgiven and they will be raised to eternal life (See Rev. 20:6, 14-15).

What Is The Thousand Years? Already we have shown that both the book of Revelation and its twentieth chapter are highly figurative. Throughout the Bible, *numbers* especially are given figurative or spiritual meanings. The number seven is the most commonly used symbolic number, usually it means completeness or perfection. Also, the numbers twelve and forty often have meanings beyond their numerical value. "The word thousand is used more than twenty times in the book of Revelation. Not once, we believe, is it to be taken literally" (R. B. Jones, *The Latter Days*, p. 152). The expression "thousand years" means a long period of time in contrast to the "little seasons" of 20:3. "The figure of one thousand represents a definite period of time, measured by and known to God" (G.L. Murray, *Millennial Studies*, p. 184). It is the period of time extending from the Lord's first advent and victory over Satan until the little season which will occur just prior to his second coming. It is the time when Satan is bound (Rev. 20:2). But we have already shown that Satan is bound now. It is the time of the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5). But the first resurrection is our experience in salvation which occurs now. It is the time of the martyr's reign with Christ.(20:4). But those who overcome Satan reign with Christ now (Rev. 3:21). Therefore we conclude that the thousand years is the period of the Christian age while Christ sits at his Father's right hand in heaven, reigning on David's throne (Acts 2:32-36)

What Is The Little Season? There are a number of points we can glean about this matter. It is a brief period of time just prior to the coming of the Lord in final judgment. It will take place after a long period of time in which the departed saints have reigned with Christ. It will be a relatively brief period of unusual Satanic activity (Rev. 20:7-9) Other passages also speak of extremely wicked and anti-Christian conditions that will prevail before the Lord comes (See II Peter. 3:3-4; II Tim. 3:1-5) It appears that the little season will involve a world-wide persecution of the Lord's true church. It will be Satan's last attempt to crush the cause of Christ. The little season of persecution will end with the Lord's second coming whereupon he will save the saints and judge the wicked.

Who Are Gog And Magog? The nations which Satan will deceive are called Gog and Magog (Rev. 20:8) We also find Gog mentioned in Ezekiel, chapters 38 and 39, but there are numerous distinctions in the two records. In Revelation, Gog is a nation, in Ezekiel he is a prince. Ezekiel's Gog comes from the north, in Revelation he comes from the four corners of the earth. John speaks of two persons, Gog and Magog, while Ezekiel speaks of Gog out of the land of Magog. Gog and Magog represent future enemies of the church whose true identity are as yet unknown. There is no evidence at all that would justify us applying these references to Russia, China or Iran.

What Is The Camp of the Saints? In Revelation 20:9, the church is likened to a military camp under fierce attack, completely surrounded by its enemies. The situation seems hopeless by human standards. But God intervenes to save her. The figure is probably borrowed from the time of the Exodus when the nation of Israel was organized as a military camp in the wilderness with hostile forces on every hand. John also styles the church as "the beloved city" which could only refer to Jerusalem. But this would not be the old material Jerusalem which had perished some 26 years before. It would be the new, spiritual Jerusalem as mentioned in Hebrews 12:22. We see a picture of the church under persecution by worldly forces far greater and more powerful than herself. The case looks fatal to human eyes.

What Is The Fire That Fell From Heaven? Just when it appears that the forces of Satan will overwhelm the Lord's cause, fire will come from heaven to destroy the enemy. It reminds us of God's judgment upon Sodom (Gen. 19:24). God had promised Ezekiel that he would send fire upon Magog (Ezek. 39:6) This surely refers to the Lord's coming in fiery judgment upon the wicked as described vividly by Paul in II Thessalonians 1:7-9.

What Is The Great White Throne of Judgment? In this section (Rev. 20:11-12), John describes a universal judgment, for all the dead were summoned to stand before the throne. It will be a personal judgment in which each individual will give account of his conduct. This judgment will be righteous in nature for the Lord will be the judge and the individual's own personal record will be measured by God's book. The whiteness of the throne suggests the purity of the judgment to be meted out. It will be the final judgment, punishment of the wicked will be the final punishment of the lake of fire. Christ will be the judge upon the great white throne (Matt. 25:31-32).

What Revelation 20 Does Not Say. Through the years, our brethren have refuted Premillennial speculations on this passage of scripture by noting the many things not mentioned therein that are essential if the premillennial theory is to be established. The careful reader will note the silence of the chapter on the second coming of Christ; the bodily resurrection; an earthly reign; the throne of David on earth; Jerusalem or Palestine; living, earth-bound Christians; or the final resurrection. We do read, however, of curses pronounced upon those who dare to add anything to the words of this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

Rather than Revelation 20 teaching the thousand year reign of Christ on earth, it teaches the present reign of Jesus in heaven with his saints. It also tells of a second coming which will bring judgment upon the wicked. JHW

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES THAT FORBID A PREMILLENNIAL INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY AND HISTORY

INTRODUCTION - The Theory:

- A. A coming world-wide dictator, the Antichrist, who will seek to make all men worship him.
- B. The return to Palestine of all living Jews.
- C. Conversion of National Israel to Christ.
- D. The Rapture of the Saints for seven years in the sky while the great tribulation, a period of *unparalleled* woe, comes upon the earth.
- E. Christ will return to occupy David's literal throne in Jerusalem and reign in a glorious material kingdom on earth for 1,000 years.
 - 1. Converted Israel and the resurrected saints will reign with him.
 - 2. Mosaic ordinances will be *reinstated*.
- F. The resurrection of the just before the millennial kingdom is established.
- G. The wicked dead to be raised after the 1,000 years reign.
- H. We must keep in mind that Christ came to do a spiritual work
 - 1. Matt. 1:21...to save his people from their sins
 - 2. Hebrews 9:24-28
 - 3. Since his mission was spiritual, his kingdom would also be spiritual.

II. The cross was in the eternal plan of God. The cross had to come before the crown.

- A. Hebrews 10:5-10
- B. Luke 2:34-35. Simeon
- C. Rev. 13:8; I Peter 1:18-20
- D. Acts 2:23
- E. His death was no unforeseen rejection by the Jews.

III. The kingdom Jesus came to establish was spiritual, not temporal.

- A. John 18:36
- B. John 35. It is entered by a spiritual, not a physical birth.
- C. Twice he refused a material kingdom from the Jews.
 - 1. John 6:15
 - 2. John 12:12-13, 36

IV. Christ's kingdom was established and now exists, it is not a future occurrence.

- A. Col. 1:13

- B. Rev. 1:6, 9
- V. Christ's spiritual kingdom is his church.
 - A. Matthew 16:18-19
 - B. When he spoke of his kingdom, he spoke of his church.
 - C. Not two different things as Premillennialists say.
- VI. Christ's kingdom is everlasting, no new dispensation or phase will supercede it.
 - A. Daniel 2:44
 - B. I Cor. 15: 24-26
- VII. This kingdom is not local, like David's but is universal in its dimensions.
 - A. John 4:20-26
 - B. Acts 1:6-8
- VIII. Christ now is King over his kingdom, he does not have to wait until some future date.
 - A. I Tim. 6:14-15
 - B. Luke 1:32-33
 - C. Hebrews 6:20; 7:2; 8:1
- IX. Christ now reigns on David's throne in Heaven.
 - A. Luke 1:32-33
 - B. Acts 2:29-36
 - C. Heb. 1:3, 8 "when he had made purification for sins he sat down..."
 - D. Rev. 3:7
 - E. Eph. 1:20-22
 - F. Phil. 2:7-11
- X. He could not reign on David's throne on earth.
 - A. Jer. 22:28-30
 - B. Matt. 1:12
- XI. Christ is now high-priest in heaven and also a king on his throne.
 - A. Heb. 8:1
 - B. Zech. 6:12-13
 - C. Being of the tribe of Judah, He could not be a high-priest on earth
 - 1. Heb 7:12-14; 8:4
- XII. When Christ returns, he will deliver the kingdom up to the Father, not begin to reign on earth.
 - A. I Cor. 15:24-28
- XIII. All national and racial distinctions have been destroyed by Christ, Jews have no special standing with God today.
 - A. Gal. 3:27-29
 - B. Gal. 5:6
- XIV. The Church...Christians, are the true Israel of God today, racial Jews are sinners like all others and in need of salvation.
 - A. Gal. 3:27-29

- B. Gal. 6:15-16
- C. Gal. 4:28-31
- D. Rom. 2:28-29

XV. We are now in "the last days", hence we should not expect another "age" to follow.

- A. Acts 2:16-17
- B. I Cor. 15:24-26

XVI. The land promises God made to Abraham were completely fulfilled in Joshua's day, Solomon's and Nehemiah's days.

- A. Gen. 15:18-19
- B. Jas. 21:43-45, Joshua saw them fulfilled
- C. I Kings 4:21, Solomon ruled over all the promised land.

XVII. Christ's Second coming will end this earth's existence.

- A. II Peter 3:10-13, There will be no time or place for a 1,000 year reign.

XVIII. When He comes, every eye will see Him, not just the righteous and the Jews as millennialists say.

- A. Rev. 1:7

XIX. At His coming there will be one general resurrection of all the dead.

- A. John 5:28-29

CONCLUSION: Premillennialism is a false belief because it clashes with the Bible at virtually every point. **JHW**

THE END