

## Why Premillennial?

## A Brief History of the Conflict

- The Apostolic Fathers
  - Knew & instructed by the apostles or their disciples
  - Alive during the 1st century
  - Premillennialists:
    - Clement, bishop of Rome
    - Papias, bishop Hieropolis
    - Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna
    - Ignatius, bishop of Antioch
    - Miscellaneous writings
      - *The Didache*
      - *Epistle of Barnabas*

## A Brief History of the Conflict

- The Second Century
  - Justin Martyr
    - Expected a literal fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham and David during the coming millennium (*First Apol.* 30, 33, 52).
  - Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons
  - Tertullian, Africa

## A Brief History of the Conflict

- The Third Century through the Reformation
  - A number of leaders who embraced Premillennialism in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century
    - E.g., Cyprian, bishop of Carthage
  - Late third & early fourth centuries—Amillennialism displaced Premillennialism.
  - Why?
    - 1) The legalization of Christianity by Constantine with the Edict of Milan (313)
      - Raised anti-Jewish sentiment
      - Made the idea of a Christian empire the eschatological ideal.
    - 2) The rise of the allegorical approach to biblical interpretation.
      - Early proponents: Origen and others influenced by the teachers of Alexandria.
      - Chief proponent: Augustine.
      - Augustine is = the father of Amillennialism.

## Arguments Against Premillennialism

- It is not the predominant view of church history.
- The NT example of interpreting OT prophecies non-literally (or symbolically) allows us to do the same with NT prophecies.
  - Why we reject this approach:
    - 1) It leads to a morass of subjectivism.
    - 2) If the OT prophecies about the millennial kingdom should be applied only spiritually to the church, then it robs the OT text of meaning for its original recipients.
    - 3) A hermeneutical method that interprets the millennial prophecies spiritually creates huge inconsistencies.

## Arguments Against Premillennialism

- Certain passages teach a synchronized general end of the world with no space for a millennium.
  - E.g., Matt. 13:37-43, 47-50
- It is inconceivable that glorified humanity and sinful or non-glorified humanity could co-exist together.
  - Christ
  - Matt. 27:52-53 – The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.

## Arguments Against Premillennialism

- The Premillennial position requires multiple resurrections; Scripture teaches only one general resurrection.
  - Dan. 12:2 – “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt.
  - John 5:28-29 – “An hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth: those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.
  - Acts 24:15 – there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

## Arguments Against Premillennialism

- There is only one passage where Premillennialism is taught—Rev. 20:1-6.
  - Berkhof: “the only scriptural basis for this theory is Rev. 20:1-6 after an OT content has been poured into it.”

## Amillennialists on Rev. 20

- Satan is bound (1-2)
  - Happened during Jesus’ earthly ministry (cf. Matt. 12:28-29)
  - Cf. that with what Scripture says about Satan:
    - Plants hypocrites in the church (Acts 5)
    - Schemes against believers (2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11)
    - Disguises himself in false religion to mislead people (2 Cor. 11:14)
    - Attacks believers (2 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:27)
    - Hinders those in ministry (1 Th. 2:18)
    - Leads believers astray (1 Tim. 5:15)
    - Must be resisted (Jam. 4:7)

## Amillennialists on Rev. 20

- “They came to life and reigned with Christ for a 1000 years”
  - The Amillennialist says: “in heaven.”
- Two resurrections with a 1000 years between
  - 1st Resurrection = either the new life that comes when a person is born again or when a believer dies and goes to heaven.
  - 2nd Resurrection = the general resurrection of all the dead.

## Arguments For Premillennialism

- A normal, historical-grammatical approach leads to the Premillennial view.
  - Other examples of OT prophecies about the Millennium:
    - Deut. 30:1-5;
    - 2 Sam. 7:12-16;
    - Ps. 2:6-12;
    - Is. 2:2-4; 11:1-10; 12:1-6; 24:23; 32:15-20; 35:1-2; 60:10-18; 65:20-22;
    - Jer. 3:14-18; 23:5-6; 30:3; 31:35-40; 33:14-18;
    - Ezek. 34:23-24; 36:16-38; 37:15-28;
    - Dan. 2:44-45;
    - Hos. 3:4-5; Joel 3:18-21; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 4:1-8; Zeph. 3:14-20; Zech. 14:9-11

## Postmillennialists Agree

- Lorraine Boettner: “it is generally agreed that if the prophecies are taken literally, they do foretell a restoration of the nation of Israel in the land of Palestine with the Jews having a prominent place in that kingdom and ruling over the other nations.”

## Amillennialists Agree

- O.T. Allis: "literal interpretation has always been a marked feature of Premillennialism."
- Floyd Hamilton: "Now we must frankly admit that a literal interpretation of the OT prophecies gives us just such a picture of an earthly reign of the Messiah as the premillennialist pictures."

## Arguments For Premillennialism

- A normal, historical-grammatical approach leads to the Premillennial view.
- The early church fathers were primarily Premillennial.

## Arguments For Premillennialism

- A number of passages promise a future period greater than this age but not as great as the eternal state.
  - Ps. 72:8-14
  - Is. 11:6-9
  - Is. 65:20-- "No longer will there be in it an infant *who lives but a few days*, Or an old man who does not live out his days; For the youth will die at the age of one hundred And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred Will be *thought accursed*."
    - Cf. 65:17, 25 - "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.... 25 "The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent's food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain," says the LORD.
  - Zech. 14:6-21
  - 1 Cor. 15:24 - then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

## Arguments For Premillennialism

- A number of passages promise a future period greater than this age but not as great as the eternal state.
  - Rev. 2:26-27 - "He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received *authority* from My Father;
  - Rev. 12:5 - And she gave birth to a son, a male *child*, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.
  - Rev. 19:15 - From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

## Arguments For Premillennialism

- Other miscellaneous passages fit the Premillennial view best.
  - Matt. 19:28 - The disciples will sit on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel.
  - Luke 13:29 - Jesus will eat and drink with the disciples in the kingdom.
  - Luke 21:24 - Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.
  - Acts 1:6-7 - "are you going at this time to restore the kingdom to Israel."
  - 1 Cor. 15:22-26 - not explicitly about the millennium.
- Revelation 20:1-6

## Next Time

- Rev. 20:1-6
- The Nature of the Millennium
  - What will it be like?
  - What will we do?
  - We'll also look briefly at some of the stickier problems, like:
    - Where do the inhabitants come from?
    - What about a millennial temple? Will there be one? And if so, what will happen there?