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The Kingdom of Christ with Special Reference to Premillennialism

Carl N. Last

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_lastc@csl.edu

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THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO PREMILLENNIALISM

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of Systematic Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by

Carl N. Last

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Approved by:

J. T. Mueller
J. T. Mueller

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I. Historical Background

Chiliasm has always been taught in the Church by individuals and particular groups, but it has never been taught as the orthodox faith of the Church. There are some today who hold to Chiliasm because they believe that the early Christian Church advanced the chiliastic arguments. Dr. West in his History of the Premillenarian Doctrine claims that "a true Christian Chiliasm was the orthodox faith of the primitive Church in its purest days."¹ We want to show in introducing this paper that the Church in the first three centuries of its history did not believe in a millennial kingdom of Christ on earth; in fact, it admonished and denounced those who did advocate such a teaching. In sketching this brief outline of the development of Chiliasm, the author used the material of two men.² According to C.A. Briggs, there were three groups of Christian writers from the first three centuries of church history that opposed the chiliastic teaching. The earliest Christian writers, the Apostolic Fathers,

1. Quoted by C.A. Briggs, "Origin and History of Premillenarianism," *Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 9, p.208.

2. The historical material was provided by C.A. Briggs, Professor in Union Theological Seminary, New York; *Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol.9, p.208 ff. V.A. Mennicke, Reeseville, Wisconsin, presented valuable information concerning early Chiliasts and several schools of learning during the first three centuries; *Concordia Theological Monthly*, Vol.13.

leave no indication that they believed the doctrine of a millennial kingdom, or the thousand year reign of Christ on earth. The three chief representatives among those writers are Clement of Rome, Polycarp of Smyrna, and Ignatius of Antioch. In all their writings these church fathers recognize Christ as their king and His kingdom as spiritual; and all they desire is that they depart and be with Him. They leave no source which might be used as foundation for an idea of an earthly kingdom of Christ.³

Nor do other writings from the second century of church history show any definite traces of Chiliasm. From this period we have numerous writings of the second rank, generally listed with the works of the apostolic fathers. But only two of these might be interpreted as containing millennialistic teachings. One is the Pastor of Hermas; the other the Doctrine of Addai. From the short quotations from Briggs we can readily see these exhibit an entirely different type of eschatology from that which leads to Chiliasm. These men in their writings look for a speedy advent of Christ, and in connection with it, a universal resurrection and a general judgment. They lay stress upon the blessedness of departing from this world to be with Christ, not upon the advent of Christ to be with His people in this world.

Other writings quoted by the apostolic fathers do contain millennialistic passages, but they were not written by the fathers. These writings are, Jewish apocryphal literature and apocalypses, IV Ezra, the Book of Jubilees, the Assumption of Moses, the Apocalypse of Baruch, the Ascension

3. Papias, however, introduced the Chiliastic error. Eusebius, the great church historian quotes him as follows: "There will be a Millennium after the resurrection of the dead, when the personal reign of Christ will be established on this earth." C.A. Briggs, op. cit. p.217

of Isaiah and the Babylonian Talmud. But because none of these belong to the Scripture canon, they cannot be sufficient proof that the early church used them to set forth any kind of Chiliasm.

There is a second group of Christian writers from the first three centuries, called the Apologists, who objected to the chiliastic theory. Of these Apologists, Justin Martyr is regarded by modern Chiliasts as an advocate of the millennial doctrine. That he is regarded as such is no doubt due to the fact that his teaching on eschatology was so different from the general teaching of the Church. This different belief may have one of two possible explanations. Either he had his own individual belief concerning the 'thousand years' mentioned in Revelation XX; or the teaching which is attributed to him had been inserted by some other writer. Nevertheless, we do not have sufficient information to decide which is the case, but we believe there is not sufficient proof for the Premillenarian argument that the early Christian Church, during the first three centuries, taught a Chiliastic doctrine.

The third group of writers is the Ante-Nicene Fathers, who lived near the close of the third century. Among these some very influential men seem to have been advocates of Chiliasm. One of these was Irenaeus. With regard to Irenaeus, V.L. Mennicke believes that a critical investigation of his writings would lead us to think that the chiliastic statements ascribed to Irenaeus are nothing more than free quotations from Papias and Justin Martyr.⁴ Another great theologian, Tertullian, accepted the theory of a millennium. He was an advocate of Montanism, a reactionary movement against the increasing worldliness and disciplinary laxity of the Church. Christians were to sever

4. V.A. Mennicke, "Notes on History of Chiliasm", Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. 15, p.199

all worldly ties and prepare for the final consummation. This theory of Montanism stood for the rankest Chiliasm. And it gained followers from among the organized Church, especially from the churches in Asia Minor, Southern Gaul, and Africa, where Tertullian became very influential. But the Church herself condemned the movement. Claudius Apollinaris, bishop of Phrygia, opposed it immediately after it was born. He called together what was probably the earliest Provincial Synod to condemn the churches of Asia which were accepting Montanism. Thus Chiliasm in any form was not recognized by the early Church. Origen rebuked the Chiliasts very sharply, and Dionysius the Great, 190-264, assembled a synod at Arsinoe to stamp out Millenarianism once and for all in Egypt. Finally, in the most potent influence in the early Church, the school of Alexandria, we find no traces of Chiliasm. From this we might readily conclude that Chiliasm was not accepted as a dogma of the Church.

Millenarianism not only never entered into any of the creeds of the Church, but on the other hand was condemned by the Augsburg Confession (Article VIII), the Swiss Confession (Article XI), and by the original articles of the Church of England in these words: "They that go about to renew the fable of heretics called Millinnarii be repugnant to Holy Scriptures, and cast themselves into a Jewish dotage" (Article XLI). The Second Helvetic Confession is also very strongly worded; the article on Judgment contains this sentence: "Moreover, we reject the Jewish dreams that there will be before the day of judgment a golden age upon the earth and that the pious will take possession of the kingdoms of the world, after their enemies, the ungodly, have been subdued". The leading Reformers - Savonarola, Huss, Luther, Melancthon - were utterly hostile to the Chiliastic views of the

men that held them in the early period of Church history, and Calvin in his Institutes, Vol. II, Book III, chapter 25 says: "Not long after the days of Paul arose the Millennarians who limited the reign of Christ to a thousand years. Their fiction is too puerile to require or deserve refutation." ⁵

Johann Albrecht Bengel (d. 1752) has been called the father of modern Premillenarianism, but about a century later a new form of premillennialism was introduced by J.N. Darby (1800-1882), a Premillennialism wedded to Dispensationalism. The new views of Premillennialism were popularized by the Scofield Reference Bible. During the first and second World Wars such Chiliastic teaching was advanced by those who interpreted these wars as signs pointing to the end of time and Christ's personal, physical reign on earth. Wm. Blackstone was one of these. In these modern times J.A. Seiss was another who gave impetus to the spread of Chiliasm.

Premillennialism opposed to Postmillennialism

Until the 19th century the Chiliasts held: For 1000 years through Christian agencies the Gospel will reach through the entire world and become even more effective than at present. During this time the Jews will be converted. Christ will wage war with all his enemies. Then finally Christ will come. There will be the general resurrection, the judgment, the destruction of the world by fire, the revelation of the new heaven and the new earth.⁶ This is known as Post-millennialism, because Christ is

5. These quotations from the various confessions were taken from the booklet by George B. Fletcher, "The Millennium", p.20-21.

6. Concordia Cyclopedia, p.128.

said to return for the judgment after (post) the millennium. Since the 19th century some Chiliasts have taught a different theory known as Pre-millennialism, because Christ is said to return before (pre) the millennium for judgment. Their theory is as follows: At some time after the antichristian apostasy Christ will suddenly appear and will personally begin His 1000 year reign at Jerusalem. After the 1000 years there will be the final apostasy for a short time; the resurrection of the wicked and their judgment at the last day; the condemnation; the final consummation; and the new heavens and the new earth. We shall restrict ourselves to Premillennialism in its commonly accepted definition, namely: the teaching that Christ will return to earth to establish a visible kingdom here on earth. The exponents of this theory are apparently divided in their teaching; they hold various views concerning the sequence of events and the number of resurrections. But they are agreed in their concept of the 'kingdom' of Christ, as distinguished from the 'kingdom' of God. The theme of this paper is: . The kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of God are identical. Its purpose is to show that the Premillennial theory concerning the kingdom of Christ is not Scriptural.

II. The distinction the Premillennialists make between
'the kingdom of God' and the 'kingdom of Christ'

In the mind of the Premillennialist, the term 'kingdom', as Scripture uses the term, implies two entirely different realms, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ or of heaven. The kingdom of God is that kingdom in which God by His omnipotence rules all things here in time. The kingdom of Christ is that kingdom yet to be established in the millennium in which Christ will rule the earth together with all His saints. That these two kingdoms are to be clearly distinguished is taught by Donald Grey Barnhouse, probably one of the best known Premillennialists of this century. Some of his reasons for accepting this view of a twofold kingdom, and the reasons which other men like Barnhouse set forth, will be discussed briefly in the following. Barnhouse's theory of the two kingdoms is based on the passage, John 1,11: "His own received Him not, but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." It seems apparent to Barnhouse that the kingdom which Christ wanted to set up, the kingdom prophesied by all the prophets, was rejected by Christ's people; therefore He postponed that kingdom and substituted for it Gospel hope which was to be given to the Gentiles also. Barnhouse tells us, "And He came only as the Jewish Messiah could come to that people. Then something occurred which changes the whole picture. Now He offers the Gospel 'To as many as received Him!'"⁷ But even though Christ offers the Gospel of forgiveness of sins to all men, He does not forget the message of the kingdom which He had intended to set up. Barnhouse insists that such

7. Barnhouse, D.G., "His Own Received Him Not, But." p.15.

is the case: "If it be thought for a moment that Jesus came only to die, without making an honest offer of the Kingdom to Israel, how will you explain the ministry of John the forerunner?"⁸ John had come to offer the kingdom to the Jews, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, Matt. 3,1-2. Jesus had explained the character of this kingdom in the sermon on the mount. But according to Barnhouse's explanation, the Jews did not want such a kingdom. And because they did not want it, Jesus should postpone it until He would come again.

But what does Barnhouse do with such passages that speak of a kingdom which is 'at hand'? Is that a different kingdom? Barnhouse says it is. He holds that Scripture in describing this kingdom speaks of the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of Christ or of heaven. When Scripture means the kingdom of Christ it calls it the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom which Christ would set up; and when it speaks of the kingdom of God, it says the kingdom of God. And this kingdom is entirely different from Christ's kingdom: "The Kingdom in view here is not the Kingdom that had been prophesied, but an aspect of God's dealings which had been hidden from man until now God was ready to reveal His purpose to men."⁹

From these quotations we learn that Barnhouse believes that Scripture speaks of two different kingdoms because the Jews rejected Christ's kingdom and were given another in its place until Christ would establish His own in due time. But the Premillennialists advance other arguments. They hold that the times described in the New Testament do not seem to harmonize with that blessed kingdom which the prophets describe in the Old

8. Barnhouse D.G., op. cit. p.18.

9. Barnhouse D.G., op. cit. p.170.

Testament. S.H. Kellog, of the Dallas Theological Seminary presents this argument:

"Premillennialists affirm that the advent precedes the promised earthly triumph of the Gospel. This proposition they support by a great variety of Scripture proof, the most of which may be summed up in the comprehensive affirmation that the representation which the Scriptures of the New Testament give of the character and history of the period between the first and the second advents is such as to exclude the possibility within its limits any such happy state of things as the Old Testament prophets predict in connection with Messiah's reign. They urge that whereas the Old Testament predictions of the kingdom of Christ are universalistic in their character, the New Testament presentations of the period before the second advent are the opposite of this; that where the former tell us of 'all nations' serving and obeying the Christ of God, the New Testament tells us that whereas 'many are called, few chosen' and represents this state of things as continuing through the dispensation till the marriage feast is set. (Matt. 22,2-14)¹⁰

According to Kellog's belief and definition of Premillennialistic teaching, God in Old Testament times pictured a very happy kingdom in which Christ would reign; but Christ turned to the Gentiles when the Jews rejected this kingdom. This kingdom is yet to come, because Old Testament prophecy demands it, and New Testament history knows of no such kingdom.

Barnhouse, Kellog and the entire Premillennialistic group arrive at these views because they demand a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Kingdom of Christ. Kellog, in his essay on Premillennialism asks: if we interpret the prophecies of the life of Christ literally, that he should be born in Bethlehem, poor, meek, suffering in this life, dying, then why cannot we interpret the prophecies literally which tell of Christ's glory, His eternal kingdom,

10. Kellog S.H., "Premillennialism: Its Relation to Doctrine and Practice," Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol. 99, No.394, p.243.

the blessedness of that kingdom, and His coming in glory as it is prophesied?¹¹ Thus by literal interpretation of Old Testament Scripture concerning Christ's kingdom, the Premillennialists come up with two distinct kingdoms, the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of God.

We dare not say that the Premillennialists interpret Scripture arbitrarily without any rules of hermeneutics. Charles Feinberg outlines their principles of interpretation. "The first general principle of all sound hermeneutics is to interpret grammatically."¹² Milligan in his "Is the Kingdom Age at Hand" says: "The only safe and infallible rule for the interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself."¹³ For this Feinberg quotes 2 Peter: "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." But with reference to the kingdom of Christ Feinberg insists on a literal interpretation: "In the interpretation of prophecy that has not yet been fulfilled, those prophecies which have been fulfilled are to form the pattern...the only way to know how God will fulfill prophecy in the future is to ascertain how He has done it in the past. All the prophecies of the suffering Messiah were literally fulfilled in the first advent of Christ. We have no reason to believe that the predictions of a glorified and reigning Messiah will be brought to pass in any other manner."¹⁴ Feinberg then sums up their whole principle

11. Kellog S.H., op. cit. Vol.99, No.395, p.366

12. Feinberg C., "Premillennialism or Amillennialism", p.33

13. Milligan E.M., "Is the Kingdom Age at Hand" p.24

14. Feinberg C., op. cit. p.39

of interpretation with this:

"First, all will admit that God intended His revelation in prophecy to be understood as much as other parts of the Word. Secondly God often calls attention in His Word to the literal fulfillment of predictions which came to pass just as fore-told. Thirdly, the literal interpretation does not minimize the worth of the Old Testament revelation...They do hold, that if the language is symbolic, it is to be governed by the laws relating to symbols; if figurative, by the laws dealing with figures; if typical, by the laws connected with types; if literal, by the laws of non-figurative speech. And Scripture themselves gives the key of what is metaphorical or symbolic."¹⁵

It seems strange that with such principles of interpretation the Premillennialist should arrive at two different kingdoms described in Scripture. We want to prove that Scripture speaks of only one kingdom, that the kingdom of Christ is the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. In proving this we will briefly discuss our principles of hermeneutics and interpretation of Old Testament prophecy. By such discussion we hope to show where the Premillennialists are inconsistent in their interpretation, and where they fail to understand the prophecy itself.

Dr. Theo. Laetsch, in his class notes on Limitations of Prophecy and Chronology, fully presents proof that the kingdom of God in the New Testament is the kingdom prophesied in the Old Testament.¹⁶ The Premillennialists do not understand this, because they do not understand that Scripture itself recognizes clearly certain limitations affecting the contents of prophecy. Some of these limitations are: Inability of man's finite mind to comprehend fully the infinite, and to describe in

15. *ibid.* p.49

16. Laetsch Theo., IV Year Mimeo Notes, "Limitations of Prophecy and Chronology, p.1-6

adequate human language a divine revelation; the prophets only saw what God permitted them to see and spoke only what God permitted them to speak. Still another limitation was due to the time and place of the prophets' activity. The prophets who lived in the Old Testament era were members of the Jewish nation, and God's spokesmen to a nation whom God had chosen as His own and to whom He had given a very detailed legislation governing their national, social, religious and home life. Worshipping Jehovah in a manner differing from that in the ceremonial law was for a Jew a sacrilege, idolatry. Since the Jews knew no other form of God's kingdom than that of the Jewish theocracy, and no other form of worship than that prescribed in the Levitical legislation, the prophets in describing the times of the Messiah were compelled by force of circumstances to speak to their fellow-Jews in terms of the Old Testament prophecy. So in the New Testament Church there would be found no uncircumcised people, Is. 52,1; the nations would come to Jerusalem, to Zion, to the Temple, Is. 2,2.3; Jerusalem would become the glory of all the earth, Is. 60,62. That was the only language a Jew in the Old Testament could understand. But the prophets were aware of the transitory character of the Old Covenant. Cessation of the old Levitical worship was foretold, and in its place the establishment of a new covenant not according to the old, but a kingdom whose ruler shall not be a mere human king like David, but though a descendant, yet at the same time Mighty God, the Everlasting Father. Hence the prophesied kingdom of the Old Testament would come with Christ. And His kingdom would be the very same kingdom of which the prophets spoke in Jewish terms.

But prophecy in the Old Testament, in addition to being limited as to terms, is also limited as to chronology. Dr. Laetsch applies a term which he calls 'perspective prophecy' - viewing a grand panorama of events in one picture. Eschatological prophecies in this manner are viewed as intimately connected with the announcements of events occurring in the near future. Thus the Premillennialist, ignorant of the whole picture, place the kingdom of Christ after all human history, expecting unfulfilled prophecy to occur before Christ's kingdom is established. If we study the prophets we will see that the advent of the Messiah and the dawn of the New Testament salvation is viewed together with the end of the Babylonian exile and the return of Babel. Actually the coming of the Messiah came centuries later.

The Premillennialist tells us that where the literal interpretation of these Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom is clearly demanded, we dare not use any other principle than the literal. But we must here mention that they forget that where the text is not clear, or where the context does not give us a hint as to interpretation, we must not interpret literally if a literal interpretation would result in doctrine contrary to that which the Bible elsewhere clearly teaches. This we shall illustrate when we take up the discussion of Scriptures' teaching on the Kingdom of Christ. We have already stated that the Premillennialists believe Scripture speaks of two distinct kingdoms, the kingdom of God, which is God's rule over all creatures,¹⁷ and the kingdom of heaven or

17. Scofield C.I., "Addresses on Prophecy", p.105 tells us: "The Kingdom of God includes whatever God rules over; whatever intelligences, in any world or in any sphere, are willingly subject to the rule of God." Scofield is a Dispensationalist, who teaches that the world's history is divided into 7 dispensations or ages, of which the last dispensation will be Christ's rule on earth. With this view he is a Premillennialist.

of Christ which is a visible reign of Christ on earth. This kingdom of Christ is to be a material, earthly kingdom. Scripture teaches that this kingdom of Christ is the same as the kingdom of God, or of heaven. The most common meaning of the word 'kingdom' in the New Testament is not 'subjects', 'realm', or 'domain'. 'Kingdom' as used by the evangelists and apostles means authority, power to rule, actual exercise of royal power, performance of the rights and duties of a king.¹⁸ To illustrate we cite Scripture: Rev. 17,18, Antichrist rules;"has kingdom over the kings of the world." The Authorized Version has "reigneth." Luke 11,18, "Satan's kingdom could not stand" means he could not exercise his satanic power over men. And Luke 11,20, "The kingdom of God is come upon you" means God's power and activity is exercised in man's welfare. In Luke 17,20,21 the rule of God is not recognized by outward sign; "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say Lo, here, or Lo there; for behold, the kingdom of God is within you (in your midst). We see from these passages that the New Testament kingdom comes by the establishing of God's rule among and in men. Edersheim adds:

"A review of many passages on the subject shows that, in the Jewish mind the expression 'Kingdom of Heaven' referred, not so much to any particular period, as in general to the rule of God, as acknowledged, manifested, and eventually perfected. Very often it is the equivalent for personal acknowledgement of God: the taking upon oneself of the 'yoke' of 'the Kingdom' or of the commandments - the former preceding and conditioning the latter."¹⁹

If the term kingdom means rule of God, his continuous activity, then we might conclude that the kingdom of Christ is God's rule in man's heart. Scripture itself makes no distinction between any of these

18. Mayer F.E., Proceedings of the 25th Convention of the Texas District, "The Kingdom of God according to the New Testament, Vol.1942, No. 7, p.16

19. Edersheim, "Life of Christ", Vol. 1, p.267

terms when it speaks of the kingdom. Scripture uses the terms Kingdom of Christ, My Kingdom, Kingdom of God and Kingdom of heaven to denote one kingdom, the Kingdom of Christ. Fahling in his "Harmony of the Gospels" shows that Matthew and Luke, using different terms, mean the same kingdom.²⁰ Matt. 13,11: "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not;" Luke 8,10: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to others parables." Matt. 11,11 and Luke 7,28 again use different terminology, but refer to one kingdom and who shall be greater in the Kingdom. Matt.4,17 and Mark 1,14-15 tell us of Jesus' preaching, not two messages of two different kingdoms, but one message of repentance and of believing the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, for the kingdom is at hand. Why then did the evangelists use different expressions if they meant the same thing? Edersheim explains it this way: "According to the Rabbinic views of the time, the terms 'Kingdom,' 'Kingdom' of heaven, and 'Kingdom of God' were equivalent. In fact, the word 'heaven' was very often used instead of 'God', so as to avoid unduly familiarizing the ear with the Sacred Name."²¹ That probably accounts for the use of the expression 'Kingdom of heaven' in Matthew.

The evangelists are not the only writers to identify the Kingdom of Christ and of heaven with the Kingdom of God. The apostles make no distinction in using the expressions 'Kingdom of God' and 'Kingdom of Christ.' Tracing these terms through the New Testament we find in Acts 8,12: "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized

20.Fahling, "Harmony of the Gospels", p.71

21.Edersheim, op. cit. p.267

both men and women." There is in this passage a very close relationship between Christ and the Kingdom of God. Other passages will show that Christ's kingdom is the Kingdom of God. Acts 28,23 again links the message of the Kingdom of God with Christ and all He is and does for the sinner: "And when they appointed him a day, there came many to him (Paul) into his lodging, to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets from morning until evening." Paul identifies the two kingdoms in Eph. 5,5 - For this ye know that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." The requirements mentioned are for one kingdom, as are the membership and the essence. How can a distinction be made? No distinction can be made; hence we conclude that the Kingdom of Christ is the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of heaven - it is God's continuous gracious rule in man's heart.

If Christ's kingdom is God's rule in man's heart, it is a spiritual kingdom. The Premillennialist interprets the Old Testament prophecies of this kingdom literally and come up with a material, earthly kingdom, Christ's reign on earth. With this literal interpretation they refuse to believe and accept that 2 Sam. 7,12 ff has been fulfilled in Christ's first advent. 2 Sam. 7,12 ff reads: "I will build his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." Premillennialists insist that this prophecy must yet be fulfilled; Christ did not establish David's throne as yet,²²

22. Mayer F.E., Syllabus, Comparative Symbolics 1943, p.58

But the Old Testament has passages which clearly show that the New Testament kingdom of Christ is spiritual. Such passages as speak of only a believing remnant being saved, in the day of Messiah, not every Israelite, stress the purely spiritual character of the New Testament kingdom. Is. 11,11: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left." Jer. 15,11; Jer. 31,7; Micah 7,17 and Joel 2,32 all reveal God's graciousness to the remnant, God's mercy and forgiveness to those in Israel who will still trust in Him.

Besides these passages there are some in the Old Testament which declare the universal character of the New Testament kingdom, composed of Jew and Gentiles. These passages are Is. 11,10, Is. 60, 9.10; Jer. 3,17.19. They stress God's activity over both Jew and Gentile, how He will spare them, and how they in the time of the Messiah will trust in Him, their God and Lord. It was this kingdom that John announced in his preaching, the message that Christ would rule in the hearts of men. It was to be prepared for my repentance, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," Matt. 3,2. This same kingdom was to be entered by a new birth, as Jesus revealed to Nicodemus, John 3,3.5. The discreet scribe who understood the real meaning of the law was not far from it, Mark 12,34. To Pilate Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world," John 18,36. Had Jesus come to set up a material, visible kingdom as the Premillennialists describe, Jesus could not have made this reply to Pilate. Is not this sufficient proof that Christ's kingdom is not of this world, not a material earthly kingdom which He might set up? If it were,

then His servants would fight for His life. All these passages point to the fact that Christ's kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, where He rules with love and grace.

III. The Premillennialists teach that Christ's kingdom will be set up by force.

The next point under consideration is, How do men enter this spiritual kingdom, and by what means does Christ govern His beloved? In showing what Scripture teaches about this Kingdom of Christ we want to prove that the earthly kingdom of the Premillennialist theory is not set up in the manner that Scripture describes. Their teaching mutilates the passages of Scripture which establish the doctrine that Christ sets up His kingdom through His Word, that He calls men into His Kingdom through the Gospel of His suffering and death. We have shown that the Premillennialists ignore the spiritual nature of the kingdom of Christ, that they read into Scripture a theory of two distinct kingdoms, the Kingdom of God which is in the world today, and the Kingdom of Christ which is still to come. They teach that this earthly kingdom of Christ will not be built by the love of God through the merits of Jesus' death for mankind, but by force. Such an idea is invented by the misuse

of the passage in Revelation 19,11-21. J.A. Seiss quotes this passage when he presents his idea that Christ will display force in the establishment of His kingdom. Seiss' theory is:

"The marriage of the Lamb, and the grand banquet which attends it, are speedily followed with the closing scene of this present world. It is a scene of war and blood. It is the battle of the great day of God Almighty. It is the coming forth of the powers of eternity to take forcible possession of the earth. It finds all the confederated kingdoms of man mustered in rebellion against the anointed and rightful sovereign of the earth. A collision ensues, which is the most wonderful that ever occurs under heaven. And the result is a victory for the right, which is to be forever."²⁵

This picture of Christ does not harmonize with the picture Paul gives in Colossians when he describes the establishment of Christ's kingdom in the hearts of men: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood even the forgiveness of sins." Col. 1,13. It is the Word of God, the Gospel which brings men to knowledge of the Savior. Paul wrote to the Romans, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation," Rom.1,16. The blessings that go with this salvation are described in Rom. 14,17: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." From these passages it is clear that Christ does not establish His kingdom by force. So when the Premillennialists advance a passage like the one in Revelation 19, they picture a Christ different from the Christ described in all the other portions of Scripture, a loving Christ who spreads His kingdom through His Gospel. The Premillennialists, with no evil intention, mean that Christ as a judge will be stern, or in the words of Albert Kempin, "That the Holy Christ, the spotless Lamb of God

25. Seiss J.A., "Lectures on the Apocalypse, Vol. III, p.258

who never lifted up His voice in the streets or resorted to revenge, and who laid down His life for His enemies, will at His second coming actually mount a white charger and, with sword in hand, lead His people into one of the most bloody battles of all time."²⁴ After this fierce battle and after destroying the enemy, He will set up His Kingdom. However, we have shown from Scripture that Christ's kingdom is spiritual. He will not build a spiritual kingdom with carnal weapons. And yet the Premillennialists teach that Christ will set up His kingdom by force. The principle of literal interpretation demands that Scripture teaches Christ will use force in establishing His kingdom. Other Premillennialists, along with Seiss, have arrived at the same conclusion. S.H. Kellog dreams of a kingdom where there is besides improvement of such forms of government and social organization which now exist through the moral and spiritual influence of the gospel, a kingdom where Christ will judge and destroy enemy government and social organization and take their rule upon Himself.²⁵ This view is in full agreement with that of Rev. J.J. Hunter of Moore, Montana, who says, "It will be in that battle (at Christ's second coming) described by the prophets that Jesus Himself will wield the sword by which those nations which have taken the sword shall be destroyed, 'For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.'"²⁶ Hunter means that the Old Testament supports his view of a kingdom established by force. He holds that Isaiah 11,4 describes Christ's action, "He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." On the contrary, this passage gives every evidence that

24.Kempin A.J., "Why the Millennial Doctrine is not Biblical." p.10

25.Kellog E.J., op. cit. p.365

26.Hunter J.J., "Thy Kingdom Come" in Christian Life and Faith p.288

it should be interpreted figuratively. The figurative language of this passage, Is. 11,4 produces no conflicting kingdoms of Christ, no different ways of establishing the true Kingdom of Christ other than by "the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips," by His Word.

But the Premillennialist here ignores all hermeneutical principles of Bible interpretation. He has his theory; he is not conscious of what such application of Scripture to support their theory does to the means whereby Christ establishes His Kingdom. Christ had said, "Though heaven and earth shall pass away, my Word shall not pass away," Matt. 24,35. But the Christian's hope and comfort in an unchanging, everlasting Word is given a shocking blow. The theory of the Premillennial kingdom of Christ reveals that Christ in His kingdom will no longer rule His people with the gracious promises of eternal life through His atonement, but will with judgment and destruction rule all things. This Premillennial teaching disparages the means of grace, the Gospel. Scripture says that this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in "all the world...and then shall the end come." Matt. 24,14. Until the end of the world people can still find comfort and relief from their sins from the Gospel of Christ and His kingdom. Where, then, is there assurance and strength in the Gospel if there is no Gospel when Christ comes again? Christ said there would be a Gospel until the end of all things here on earth. It would seem that Christ's Gospel has not been able to bring men to Him for peace and righteousness, but that in the millennial kingdom after Christ's second coming He must substitute His wrath and judgment and send His enemies to destruction while His saints remain with Him. No longer would Christ govern the world by His Word, as He has done for some 6,000 years. No longer

would He offer grace and pardon through His Gospel. The Gospel could no longer change men's hearts from evil and sin-filled hearts to hearts filled with Christ's Spirit. The new kingdom must be established by force.

While the Premillennialist holds that salvation is offered to mankind in this life and that the kingdom then will be established by Christ to destroy His enemies, the Dispensationalist believes that salvation will be offered to many during the Kingdom age.²⁷ Theo. Engelder asks: "What does this mean if not the preaching of the cross is relatively of little efficacy as compared with the exercise of the kingly power, at or in connection with the coming of the King and 'removal of Satan from the 'scene' in the Kingdom age?"²⁸ The Word that shall remain forever does not remain forever in the Premillennial system of teaching the doctrine of Christ's kingdom. Yes, they admit that the cross is the center of human history, that man receives salvation alone through Christ's meritorious suffering and death. But the establishment of Christ's kingdom by force, if it were established as the Premillennialists believe, would minimize the all important Gospel in the interest of the 'force'. The Kingdom Age would supplant the Gospel age and the instruments used by Christ in governing His people would be that of force instead of His Word. No unbeliever could be saved through the Gospel. How then can they

27. The Dispensationalist is a Premillennialist in so far as he believes in the earthly kingdom of Christ established when Christ returns. Theo. Engelder quotes Scofield: "Salvation will be on quite a different basis in the Kingdom age from what it is today in the Church age." Concordia Theological Monthly Vol. VIII, p.651

28. Engelder Theo., "Dispensationalism Disparaging the Gospel, Vol. VIII, p.652. Reviewing the dispensational argument Engelder says: "The Bible teaches this is (now, the present* reign (invisible reign) of the sovereign Lord who said, 'All power is given' - dispensationalists call this age demonstrably bankrupt and ~~are~~ looking to the Kingdom age to accomplish by a display of kingly power and through the binding of Satan what the preaching of the Cross has been unable to accomplish in 19 centuries."

exalt the cross only for this age, when the cross through all ages brings men to eternal life in their Savior?

D.G. Barnhouse makes an attempt to explain why the Gospel only serves to save men in this period of world's history. He sees the world out of order, God's Word, the Sermon on the Mount, does not fit into any phase of our civilization. And this is what he sees: "It will take the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ coming not as the meek and lowly Savior, but as the Lord of power, and glory, to enforce righteous principles upon this earth. The earth will have Him as Dictator soon, and He will see to it that the pure in heart see God."²⁹ Barnhouse confesses that Jesus is His Lord and Savior, but with the same stroke of the pen reveals that he believes the Gospel of Christ has done nothing to bring peace and righteousness to this earth. The only hope of mankind for the grace of God, for the love of God which instills love for the neighbor must be in the Premillennial kingdom. This teaching is contrary to Scripture, contrary to God's Word, which in many places speaks of the Kingdom of Christ and of God as a kingdom of peace established by God's Word, by the Means of Grace.

The coming of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom constituted the very heart of the Old Testament. Isaiah writes of that hope, 61,1:

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

That was the kingdom of which John spoke, "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Word of God brings the Kingdom to men's hearts. God has been reconciled to the whole world by the death of His Son Jesus.

29. Barnhouse D.G., op. cit. p.46

This message is the Gospel message. The Gospel of Christ reveals, offers, conveys and engenders faith in Him.³⁰ That this coming to faith is what Scripture means by the Kingdom is denied by the Pre-millennialists. Yet they have no satisfactory answer for: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins," Col. 1,13. The forgiveness of sins, the gracious rule of Christ in man's heart, can only come if, as Jesus told Nicodemus, he is "born again." "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John 3,3. Christ establishes His kingdom only where He graciously rules in a man's heart. Is there any need for another kind of kingdom? C.H. Nash answers "No,":

"Jesus in John 3,3 most emphatically tells Nicodemus that every one must be born from "above" from heaven - of God- of the Holy Spirit- must become a spiritual child of God as Father, by God's omnipotent creating grace, in order to see or know the Kingdom of God in earth and in heaven...What other king of second birth can there possibly be in any case at all necessary 'from above?' I cannot see any need whatever for any other qualification for me to see the promised Kingdom of David restored!"³¹

Man is born again through Christ's Word; he receives new life. But the Gospel does not stop operating at this point. The Word of God is always effective when it is applied, because it is spirit and life, John 6,63.³² In this passage Jesus reveals that He is the Bread of Life and whoever eats of this spiritual food has life. Jesus begins to dwell and rule in his heart. His kingdom is then established, Rev. 12,10: "And I heard a voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation,

30. Mayer F.E., "Means of Grace", in Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol.10 p.84

32. Mueller J.T., Christian Dogmatics, p.443.

32. Nash C.H., "Spiritual Kingdom of God" in Review and Expositor p.31, Vol.26

and strength and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ." This and many other passages reveal that the kingdom of Christ has come when Christ reveals Himself through His Word.⁵⁵

With so many clear passages that speak of a spiritual kingdom, established by Christ's Word, it seems strange that the Premillennialists invent an earthly kingdom. If they would understand the teachings of Scripture concerning Christ's spiritual rule in the hearts of men, they would see that their theory of a material kingdom of Christ is entirely out of harmony with these clear passages of Scripture.

55. Col. 1,13; 1 Thess. 2,12; 2 Thess. 1,5; 2 Tim. 4,18; Heb. 12,28.

III. The Premillennial Interpretation of the Members of the Kingdom of Christ.

If the Kingdom of Christ is a spiritual Kingdom established in the hearts of men by the Gospel, then the members of the kingdom are those in whose heart Christ rules. So it was during Old Testament history, when the children of Judah and Israel, hoping in the Messiah, trusted in God's merciful care. The original promise made to Abraham, recorded in Gen. 12,3 is termed by St. Paul, "the covenant that was confirmed by an oath (Gen. 22,18; Hebrews 6,15-18).⁵⁴ The promise in this covenant is, "In thee shall all nations be blessed." Paul explains it in Gal. 3,8 entirely in a spiritual sense, as being the gospel which was preached before to Abraham, respecting God's design of justifying the heathen through faith; and upon this view of it he grounds his argument through Galatians, chapter 3. The apostle Peter declares this promised blessing to be spiritual and fulfilled in the gospel (Acts 3, 25.26). Nowhere in the New Testament is the promised blessing said to be national, and to include a restoration of fleshly Israel to their kingdom. But that Israel as a nation is to receive the promised kingdom of Christ is just what the Premillennialists teach. The Premillennialists ascribe those prophecies of the Church of Christ in the Old Testament to the Millennial kingdom of Christ which He will establish when He returns to reign on earth. The Chiliasts want Bible interpreters to make a sharp

54. Fletcher Geo. B., op. cit. p.43.

distinction between Christ's Kingdom and His Church. They say that when Christ came first to establish His kingdom, the Jews rejected it. But because He had promised them the kingdom, He had to keep His word. It would seem that Christ then was satisfied to establish the Church for the Gentile, until the time would be ripe to give the Kingdom to the Jews.³⁵

The Premillennialists find in Scripture a vast quantity of prophecy concerning the Lord Jesus Christ which falls into two groups; those which present Him as the suffering and rejected Messiah, our Redeemer; and those which vividly portray him as coming in power and great glory to restore divine government in the earth, with Himself as ruler over all nations. Making clear distinction between these descriptions, the Premillennialists ascribe one kind of prophecy to Christ as the Redeemer and in that office of His He becomes the Head of the Church; the other prophecy they ascribe to His rule on earth after His second coming. When the Old Testament speaks of Christ's coming to rule, the Premillennialists forget that Christ had not as yet made His first appearance; they ascribe these prophecies to the end of history, to Christ's personal earthly rule. They say, however, that during the time between the two comings of Christ God will provide for the Gentile and the Jew who accepts Christ. This provision of God is the Church. At the rejection of the kingdom by Israel, Christ gave immediately the future Church, Matt. 16,17,18. This view is held by Barnhouse. He also confesses, "There is only one Church and there is only one way to get into it. The one Church is composed of all those who put their whole trust in nothing less than the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ as their

35. Peck, Arthur Clermont, "Christ's Return", p.25. "The Jews...failed to comprehend that redemption had to precede their elevation to world rulership; also, that they were then unfit to administer wisely the authority which that great distinction would confer."

own personal Savior."³⁶ This, indeed, is a fine confession of faith, and very orthodox. Yet even such faith does not prevent Barnhouse from formulating his own theory about Christ's kingdom and distinguishing it from the Church. The Premillennialists all believe that the Church is primarily the communion of Gentile believers and a few Jews, while the Kingdom of Christ was given by God to the Jews as natural descendants of Abraham and Isaac.

If the kingdom is for the Jews, what part do the Jews play in the establishment of the kingdom? A.C. Peck answers this thus: "The Church will be gathered out of the Gentiles, the Jews not debarred. Whoever believes in Christ is eligible."³⁷ At the establishment of the kingdom by force, the "Jews will accept Christ - they will recognize Him by the scars He bears from the wounds of the cross to which they sent Him."³⁸ Forgetting what Scripture says about coming to Christ through the Gospel, the Premillennialists believe that the Gospel will cease to be the agency for bringing men to Christ when Christ returns in glory. Christ will then not gather together His Church on earth, for they will have been taken to Him. But there will still be the Jews to be brought by other means. In the millennium the Jew will recognize Christ by His power and authority. By teaching that doctrine the Premillennialists pervert the Word of God which teaches that the true members of the Church of God alone will be saved, those that have been brought to Christ in this life. Scripture itself affirms that, "Whosoever believeth in me should not perish," John 3,16; "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." According to Scripture man comes to Christ in faith only by the Word of God.

36. Barnhouse D.G., op. cit. p.179

37. Peck A.C., op. cit. p.65

38. Ibid. p.23

By misunderstanding the Scriptural concept of the Kingdom of God and of Christ, the Premillennialists misinterpret the gathering of the Church, the spiritual Israel; they misapply the prophecy concerning the House of David; they misunderstand 'the elect of Israel'; they misinterpret the prophecies concerning the establishing of Christ's Church on earth; and they designate the terms 'latter days' and 'in those days' to mean the millennial kingdom when Scripture clearly shows them to mean the New Testament age. The Premillennialists deny the Scriptural teaching that the Church is the Kingdom of Christ in reality. Feinberg claims: "The Kingdom of heaven is the earthly sphere of the kingdom of God, and is visible and outward. The Church is a part of the kingdom of heaven in its mystery form."³⁹ In giving the Premillennial position on the membership of the kingdom, Feinberg states that the Church is only a part of the great kingdom, the kingdom of God, which too is heavenly insofar as the kingdom of God is invisible. But in its relationship to the Kingdom of Christ, Feinberg says, the Church will not be a part of it (under His rule), but it will rule with Christ. In reality then, the members of the Kingdom will be those to whom the Kingdom was promised, the Jews. One misinterpretation of Scripture invariably leads to another; one false teaching breeds others. This is evidenced in the Chiliastic teaching. In denying the spiritual character of the Kingdom of Christ, they deny the spiritual character of Israel where Scripture teaches it. Feinberg makes this distinction: "It is proper to speak of believing Jews and believing Gentiles as Abraham's spiritual seed (so Paul designates them in Galatians 3), but spiritual Israelites are believing Jews only."⁴⁰ He, with all the Premillennialists deny that Scripture makes

39. Feinberg G., op. cit. p.194

40. Ibid. p.185

no distinction between a believing Jew or a believing Gentile, that they are all Israel if they trust in Christ. Instead, according to Premillennial principles, Scripture distinguishes between those in the nation of Israel who are unbelievers, Abraham's natural seed, and those of Israel who are believers, the spiritual seed of Abraham.⁴¹ Then in detail, Feinberg gives the Premillennial logic in believing that the 'Israel' mentioned in the New Testament and the 'Church' cannot be identified. He lists the arguments that each have different kinds of birth, one physical and the other spiritual; each has a different head, each different covenants; Israel is found in the Old and New Testaments, the Church only in the New. But, finally, at Christ's coming, Israel is to be made members of the kingdom - "As to the kingdom reign, the nation Israel will be subjects of the King; the Church, His Bride, will reign with Him as co-reigners."⁴² Thus the misunderstanding of the concept of 'Kingdom of Christ' develops the false teaching that the unbelieving Jews will be members of Christ's kingdom, called not by the Gospel message of Christ's vicarious atonement, but forced to believe when they see His almighty power. The Church also loses its purpose and essence in the Premillennial system, because it is no longer the body of Christ, subject to Him, servants of the Great King, but she becomes co-reigner with Him.

All Premillennialists teach that primarily the Kingdom and membership in the Kingdom belong to the Jew, as a natural descendant of Abraham. It should be noted here that the Dispensationalist goes even farther in placing emphasis on the importance the Jews have in God's plans. In their

⁴¹. Ibid. p.186

⁴². Ibid. p.188

official writings they proclaim that Divine grace was upon Israel as a nation; Jehovah redeemed them as a nation unto Himself both by blood and power; and Israel remains a redeemed nation through all history. Thus the redeemed nation became Jehovah's abiding treasure.⁴³ A.C.Gaeb-
elein gives full assent to this in the Dispensational magazine, "Our Hope." He writes:

"Identified with Christ, individually, and called by His name, stands Israel collectively, in His whole Messianic work and kingdom. Neither acts without the other. The Pentateuch prophecies refer chiefly to the people. The Messianic Psalms emphasize the King, the Kingdom, and the Priest. Isaiah dwells upon the prophetic character of Israel; Ezekiel displays the priestly; Daniel reveals the kingly; Zechariah blends all in one. Old Testament prophecy knows no other subjects of discourse than these, Israel, Messiah, and the Nations. As to the kingdom, Israel had it, under the Old Testament, in its outward form; the Gentiles have it under the New Testament; in its inward form; in the age to come, Jews and Gentiles together, shall have it, both forms in one, one kingdom of Messiah, spiritual, visible and glorious, with Israel still the central people, the prelude of the New Jerusalem and the nations walking in its light forever."⁴⁴

Israel is the center of Christ's rule, the kingdom is Israel's; and with such teaching the hope of the Church is destroyed - the trust in God's everlasting Gospel is turned to a Jewish hope. The Dispensationalist makes eternal glory for the Jew dependent only on his eternal election, and their service to God. Dr. Engelder in this point quotes the dispensationalist, Frost: "He will make salvation possible by consummating all that the past promised and the present secures, enjoining faith with works and constraining men to worship Christ as they see Him in all the splendor of His being and reign."⁴⁵ In the words of O.T. Allis, the author of "Prophecy and the Church", "Men are to be saved apparently by obedience to the King and not by trust in the Savior."⁴⁶

43. Chafer L., "Dispensationalism" in Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol. 93, p.411

44. Gaebelin, "Our Hope", Vol. 40, No. 8, p.480

45. Engelder Theo, "Dispensationalism Disparaging the Gospel," in Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. VIII, p.656

46. Ibid. -p.656

If the Premillennialists had the right understanding of what Scripture says concerning Israel of the New Testament and the relation this Israel has to the Old Testament Israel, its relation to the Church and Christ's Kingdom, they would see that their present teachings have no true foundation. Who is the Israel mentioned in the New Testament in connection with 'the true seed of Abraham'? St. Paul says in the ninth chapter of Romans, verse 6: "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel. Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." The promise of God's mercy, of forgiveness of sins, of eternal life is given to all who trust in Christ's atonement, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," Rom. 10,13. These believers are the children of Israel. The Old Testament affirms this. Jeremiah tells how all believers together shall walk before God. Jeremiah had been sent to preach the coming of the kingdom to Judah and Israel. Israel had become pagan; she had mixed with Gentile nations, so that she could hardly be recognized as a nation. Judah was wicked, corrupt, and had forgotten about God. Jeremiah was sent to these people to preach repentance; God wanted them for His own, if they would only repent! In chapter 3 of Jeremiah, God tells the children of Judah of the New Testament Church, describes the days when Christ would fulfill the promises spoken of him:

v.16. "And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord, neither shall it come to mind; neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more. At that time shall they call

Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord; to Jerusalem, neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel."

In Jeremiah 31,31 God tells the Jews that they would receive a new covenant, not the old covenant of the Ark, but the covenant given and sealed in Christ. This is the new covenant of which Paul speaks both to the Corinthians and to the Galatians. "If any man put on Christ, he is a new creature." 2 Cor. 5,17; "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," Gal. 6,15.

We arrive at this conclusion by going to the clear sections of Scripture that speaks of the same subject. G.B. Fletcher considers it to be a very essential principle that he "begin with Him Who is the Light of the World; in other words to begin with the study of the New Testament, and go back into the Old Testament with the light of the New."⁴⁷ So that the Gospel is not disparaged, nor is the Church membership obtained by any other means than by the Gospel, nor that any other teaching of Christ is contradicted in the Old Testament, certain factors must be remembered. The New Testament spreads light on Old Testament interpretation. The Jewish economy was a prefiguration of Christ's church and kingdom. For example, the ministry of Moses was "for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after" namely, under the gospel (Heb. 3,5)- that the law had a shadow of things to come (Heb. 10,1) and that the body or substance of that shadow is Christ (Col. 2,17).⁴⁸

47. Fletcher G.B., op. cit. p.41

48. Ibid. p.41

Understanding the clear passages of the New Testament on the same subject, we can understand more clearly the Old Testament meaning of kingdom and Israel as they typify the Church. The kingdom prophesied in the Old Testament was to be given to the Jews. But the Jews rejected Christ, the King. It is certain, then, that the Jews rejected the kingdom. The New Testament reveals, too, that the Jews as a nation had also been rejected, Matt. 21,43: "Therefore say I unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you,"; I Thess. 2,16: "The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." But if all Israel is to be saved, as St. Paul says in Rom. 11,25,26, this must mean all spiritual Israel, for Isaiah 1,22 confirms, "a remnant of them shall be converted." How then can it be determined from Scripture what is meant by the spiritual Israel? St. Paul explains that concept in his 4th chapter to the Romans: "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." Paul says again: "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly...but he is a Jew which is one inwardly," Rom. 2,28,29. Thus the members of the house of Israel are those who in faith accept Jesus as their Savior. Scripture tells of no other way by which Jew or Gentile can enter Christ's kingdom.

This kingdom is the Church, not built up of any earthly nation, but a Church built up of believers. The believers are to be brought in by the Gospel of Christ "which shall be preached to all nations, unto the uttermost part of the earth, Matt. 28,18. Allis quotes this passage as a "pointed rebuke to the bigoted nationalism of the Jews, and also a solemn reminder that Jesus had Himself gone to the Samaritans and preached this world-embracing gospel to them."⁴⁹ The Jews as a nation were not to

49. Allis O.T., "Prophecy and the Church", p.135

receive the Kingdom. Anyone who believed the Gospel of the Kingdom, who would accept Jesus as His Savior was a member of the Kingdom. But this was nothing new. Jeremiah had already prophesied that when he said, "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered unto it," 3,17. When the prophets of God speak of "the last days," the days "hereafter" they mean the whole era, or period, of the New Testament times. The mountain of the house of the Lord is the Christian Church (compare with this passage Is. 28,16; 1 Peter 2,6-8; Matt. 21,42; Eph. 2, 19ff) to which many nations shall come by being converted to the living God, Acts 28,17 ff.⁵⁰ The Church is pictured in the book of Micah, the fourth chapter, "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it." That this prophecy refers alone to the Church is in full agreement with Scripture. Matthew Henry's interpretation of Micah's prophecy is also that it refers to the Church; that the church of God will be set up in the world, after the destruction of the Jewish church, and this in the last days (New Testament era). The people of God will have a new charter, a new establishing of their spiritual worship; there will be made provision for the enlarging and establishing of the kingdom of Christ among men better than had been made by the Old Testament constitution.⁵¹

These paragraphs have shown that Christ's kingdom is the Church, which will spread the Gospel of the world's Savior, ever bringing men to that Savior until at Christ's second coming in glory the Church shall be forever with Him. Then shall the end of all else come.

50. Heerboth L.A., "The Millennium and the Bible", p.16

51. Henry, Matthew, Commentary, Vol. IV, p.1517-1518.

V. The Premillennialist's Kingdom is Future,
of a Thousand Years on Earth.

Scripture teaches that when Christ returns in glory, He will gather the members of His Kingdom, that is, all believers, to Himself. On this last day, when He comes, all unbelievers will be judged and sent to their doom and all believers, the dead being raised, will live with Christ in eternity. This is all that Scripture says of the events leading up to the 'last day.' But the Premillennialists have their own theory concerning the 'last day.' We shall discuss briefly the "events" which the Premillennialists insert into God's plan of the 'last things', as they effect or are related to the Kingdom of Christ. The Premillennialists themselves are not in full agreement as to the sequence of events, because each interpreter must insert each event prophesied in Revelation in the order in which he himself has interpreted the passage and according to the entire picture of Revelation as he conceives it. Nor are the Premillennialists all agreed as to the number of judgments or resurrections. The "events" taught by the Premillennialists are:

1. The rapture
2. The resurrections
3. Israel inheriting its own land
4. The binding of Satan
5. The coming of the Antichrist
6. The loosing of Satan for a little while
7. The judgments

We will show how the misconception of Christ's spiritual kingdom can lead

to these fantastic theories.

The Rapture

Before Christ will actually establish His kingdom of a thousand years duration, there will be, the Premillennialists believe, a secret rapture.⁵² The secret rapture theory teaches that Christ will descend from heaven to "the air," raise the righteous dead and translate the living saints, who will be caught away to the "secret chamber", there to remain with Christ for a period of approximately seven years. Of this so-called secret rapture neither the waiting Church, nor the world is to have a moment's warning, the saints being aware of it by their heavenward flight, and the world by the departure of the "missing ones." The Premillennialists say that the rapture concerns the Church and that this is taught in Scripture. Barnhouse's belief concerning this theory is:

"Today our Lord is in heaven. The new body, the Church, being called out of the world. We wait for our Lord from heaven who shall take us to Himself before returning to this earth to consummate every promise and plan which He has formed for His earthly people, and to establish His kingdom through power, over all the earth." 53

It is evident that Blackstone agrees with Barnhouse concerning the rapture, for he says, "When the Church will be taken up, caught up."⁵⁴ Nor is A.C. Peck's theory any different from the views of Barnhouse and Blackstone. Peck tells what will happen at the time of the rapture: "The Church is the salt of the earth... When it is removed, and Satan and his angels make their appearance among men, every quiescent power of sin in Satan, his angels, demons and men, will break forth into ungoverned rage."⁵⁵

52. Hunter J.J., "Thy Kingdom Come," in *Christain Faith and Life*, p.287 Vol. 43.

53. Barnhouse, D.G., op. cit. p.185.

54. Blackstone Wm., "Jesus is Coming," p.85

55. Peck A.C., op. cit. p.84

A.J. Kempin gives his reply to the theories of the Premillennialists:

"Teachers of the millennium give free play to their imagination when they speak of this fanciful rapture. They wax eloquent in describing how saved loved ones will suddenly be snatched away to leave business, school, social, and family life paralyzed. This is all due to a misconception of Matthew 24,40-42. This passage teaches one thing, if it teaches anything - namely, that when Jesus comes there will be a final separation between the saved and the unsaved. It does not teach a secret rapture.⁵⁶ It seems apparent that Premillennialists twist passages that speak of Christ's "coming" for His saints at the last day, to suit their position. They seek to relate the passage of 1 Thess. 4, 13-17 with Matthew 24, 40-42 and say the saints will be snatched away from this earth for about seven years, while a supposed tribulation period scourges the world. This view is said to be supported by the use of three Greek words: "Parousia", "Apokalupsis", and "Epiphaneia". The first Greek word applies to the secret coming of Christ to the air 'for' His saints (the rapture), and the two other words to the visible coming of Christ 'with' His saints to the earth (commonly called the Revelation.) Realizing that Scripture uses these terms interchangeably, Charles Feinberg denies this argument for distinguishing between rapture and revelation. Instead he states that the secret coming was never known in the Old Testament, but the visible coming of Christ to judgment is mentioned in both; Christ will appear to the Church as Bridegroom, Lord and Head, and to Israel in the Revelation He will come as King.⁵⁷ Feinberg does nothing

56. Kempin A.J., op. cit. p. 29

57. Feinberg, Chas., op. cit. p. 207

more than give new theories to prove a former theory.

To show that Scripture knows of no such rapture, we quote Matt. 24, 26.27: "If they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth; behold he is in the secret chambers, believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the East, and shineth unto the West; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Hence, as the lightning flash is open and visible to all, so is Christ's coming to be. Nor does 1 Thess. 4,15, the Premillennialists' foundation for the rapture theory, teach a secret rapture. Here St. Paul is speaking to Christians; those who are living on earth will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of any eye, at the last trumpet sound. Those who are living at Christ's second coming will not enter into the presence of the Lord before the saints who have died, are raised. So, the dead in Christ will rise first, and then the living believers will be caught up along with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and we shall be ever with the Lord. "Only in that sense can the 'rapture' be used. That meeting with Christ and with our loved ones will indeed be a rapturous experience."⁵⁸

If Premillennial teaching concerning the rapture is Scriptural, then Scripture contradicts itself in many places. The details of the secret rapture do not agree with 2 Tim. 4,8: A crown of righteousness is laid up for "All them that love his (Christ's) appearing." God gives the crown of righteousness to members of Christ's spiritual kingdom at His coming - not at a period before, in a period such as the rapture. Another contradiction would occur with 2 Tim. 4,1.2. Here the Gospel of the Kingdom is to be preached until the coming of Christ and His kingdom of glory,

58. Kempin A.J., op. cit. p. 30

which is the culmination of His spiritual kingdom on earth. Geo. Fletcher wonders who will then, in the rapture, preach the Gospel: "But all the preachers of God's Word, according to the Secret Rapture theory are delivered at the precious appearing of Christ."⁵⁹ Scriptural teaching concerning the duration of Christ's kingdom is given a severe jolt. Matt. 13, 24-30 and 36-42 teach that the members of Christ's kingdom will remain with the unbelievers to the end of time; wheat and tares together in the field. A rapture theory teaches that all the wheat will be removed for awhile and the tares are left standing.

Thus the rapture theory is entirely out of harmony with what Scripture teaches concerning the kingdom. Scripture teaches nothing more than that at the end of time, Christ will come to take the members of the kingdom to be with Him. He will come swiftly, and in that hour the dead in Christ will be raised and we will all appear before the judgment throne of God. The believers will go to everlasting bliss and the unbelievers to everlasting damnation.

The Resurrections

This teaching of the 'last day' - of Judgment Day is Scriptural and leaves no room for the Premillennial kingdom, the material, earthly kingdom of Christ which is supposed to last 1,000 years. In order to preserve their teaching of a millennial kingdom, the Premillennialists invent a second resurrection. Their belief is: "There is a difference in time as well as in character in the order of the resurrection; the first

59. Fletcher Geo., op. cit. pamphlet "Will a Secret Rapture precede the Second Coming of Christ."

being that of the just, and the second that of the unjust; and this difference in time is perfectly in accordance with the account in Rev. 20 where the interval is stated to be the 1000 years of the Millennial kingdom."⁶⁰ But in Rev. 20, where the thousand years are mentioned six times, there is nothing said about a personal, corporeal reign of Christ of a thousand years duration. The Apostle John said he saw "the souls" of certain martyrs living and reigning with Christ, and this living and reigning with Christ is the first resurrection. This must refer to the believers whose souls have passed to their heavenly Father, for nothing is said here about bodies being raised, or of thrones established on earth. Rev. 20, 5 can only mean that, while the souls of the righteous were seen as living and reigning with Christ in glory, the rest of the dead had no place in this picture at all. When they do appear once more, it will be to be sent into perdition, which is the second death, Rev. 20,15. Dr. Seiss and other Premillennialists write at length on Revelation 20. Dr. Seiss fails to see that the first resurrection mentioned in verse 5 is a spiritual one.⁶¹ That is where all the confusion originates. All will admit that sin causes spiritual death. Only a spiritual resurrection can recover such persons from that spiritual death. The New Testament speaks often of the spiritual resurrection. "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found," Luke 15,24. In Rev. 20,5 John describes the spiritual resurrection which takes place now as a result of believing on Jesus as the Savior. In his

60. Blackstone Wm., op. cit. p.63

61. Seiss, op. cit. p.310: "As Alford well says, 'If in a passage where two resurrections are mentioned, where certain souls live again at the first, and the rest of the dead live again only at the end of a specified period after the first - if in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean spiritual rising with Christ, while the second means literal rising from the grave; then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything. If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second; but if the second is literal, then so is the first.'"

Gospel John also speaks of the spiritual resurrection, v. 24.25:

"The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." Paul too taught that those who were redeemed by faith in Christ were already partakers of that first resurrection: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," Col. 3,1. This spiritual resurrection is the one first mentioned in Rev. 20. If the Premillennialist is not satisfied with this interpretation of Scripture concerning the first resurrection, let him read John 5,29 and 2 Cor. 5,10 to see that only one general resurrection is still future. Paul meant 'the end' when he spoke of the resurrection. Dr. Engelder writes that if the Premillennialists are right in deducing two literal resurrections, then John 5, 28.29, Matt. 25,31-46, John 6,40 and 1 Cor. 15,52 are absolutely denied in Rev. 20.⁶² His estimation of their interpretation is they first read their notions into the text and then find their doctrines in those texts.

The Israelites inheriting their own land

By stressing that Scripture teaches two resurrections, the Premillennialists deny that the final judgment is at hand. They do not deny the imminence of a second coming, but they place a period of 1000 years between that event and the last judgment. It will be during these 1000 years, between the two resurrections that the Throne of David will be restored, and this prophecy of Scripture is taken by the Premillennialists to mean a very literal fulfillment of the establishment of David's kingdom, throne, temple, and power. In presenting the Premillennial teaching

⁶². Engelder Theo., "Notes on Chiliasm," in Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. VI, p.324.

of the events that are to take place in the 1000 years after the first resurrection of believers, we touch the very heart of their doctrine. The Premillennialists take Matt. 25,31 out of its context and try to prove that it teaches the establishing of Christ's kingdom, the setting up of his throne, "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory."⁶³ These Chiliastic Bible interpreters show their literalism particularly in the treatment of those prophecies which speak of Christ's kingdom. Dr. F.E. Mayer points out their literalism when he quotes L.S. Chafer of Dallas Seminary, who explains the prophecy of the Prophet Nathan foretelling the establishing and the perpetuity of David's throne as follows:

"Second Samuel 7,16 records the covenant Jehovah made with David. This Covenant binds Jehovah with an oath to the perpetuity of the Davidic House, the Davidic Throne, and the Davidic Kingdom, but with the express declaration that the covenant cannot be abrogated. The Covenant is of an earthly throne related to a people whose expectation is earthly. There is no evidence that David foresaw an earthly throne merging into a spiritual reign. Nor is this kingdom and throne established in heaven. It is established on the earth when the Son of David returns to the earth. (Matt. 25,31.32. Cf. 19,28; Acts 15,16.17; Luke 1, 31-33; Matt. 2,2)⁶⁴

With the establishment of the throne of David will come all the Millennial blessings. Men will see that the divine dealings with them, also on earth, were a necessary and perfectly fitting part of the completed mosaic of redemption. The election of the Hebrews, the sacrifice of Jesus, the calling out of the Church, the return of the Lord and the restoration of the Jews to their land, were all essential, not as in themselves, but to perfect the only plan by which the earth can be delivered from the curse of sin.⁶⁵ Barnhouse believes the Jewish kingdom must be established or

63. Chafer, op. cit. p. 454

64. Mayer F.E. Texas Proceedings, 1942 p.48

65. Peck A.C., op. cit. p.140

else such passages as Isaiah 9,7; Ps. 2,6; Isaiah 24,25; Ps. 72,8; Zech. 24,19 will not be fulfilled, and our confidence in the Bible will be lost.⁶⁶ The Premillennialists believe that most of the Old Testament prophecies are yet to be fulfilled. Gaebelin, the late editor of 'Our Hope' magazine interprets the kingdom prophecies to mean the restoration of the Jewish kingdom: "Ezekiel develops the ends and ages. He has nothing to say of the first Advent...He speaks not only of Israel's spiritual regeneration by means of the New Covenant, but also of Israel's final restoration as a people, their political reunion and national conversion, and independence, their blessedness and glory, in the land promised to their fathers, God's sanctuary in their midst, God their God, and David their Shepherd-Prince forevermore."⁶⁷ Dr. Seiss leaves no doubt in anyone's mind that the Premillennialists believe that God will set up the throne, the house, and the temple of David. He speaks of this theory in his writing on Revelation: "It appears...there is again to be a true and divinely acknowledged temple of God upon earth, with an altar and worshippers set apart and marked off as the Lord's."⁶⁸ These theories, which are in concept one, would seem to indicate that in the millennial kingdom, the old Levitical services will be restored. But were not these practices abrogated when Christ came to redeem the world? Scripture knows of no other service to God than that through and by faith in God's Son, now and for all time. If the Premillennialists insist on a literal fulfillment of prophecy concerning the restoration of David's temple and altar services, then surely it would seem that the

66. Barnhouse D.G, op. cit. p. 170

67. Gaebelin, "Our Hope" Vol. 40, no. 10, p.602

68. Seiss, op. cit. Vol. II, p.164

Premillennialists deny the literal meaning of Hebrew, chapters 8,9,10 - that through the sacrifice of the Son of God on Calvary all sacrifices for the atonement of sin have been abolished.

The problem the Premillennialists do have, or ought to have, is that Scripture itself rejects the literalistic interpretation of the kingdom prophecies. Scripture itself plainly teaches that the kingdom promised to David and Israel is a spiritual kingdom and that these prophecies have their fulfillment in the Church, in the spiritual reign of Christ - Acts 2,16 ff; Acts 15,14; Heb. 12,22. God's word also denies the premillennial doctrine that when Jesus comes again He will be crowned as an earthly King of kings and secular Lord of Lords. The Premillennialists withhold our Lord's crown and deprive Him of His throne, for Scripture plainly teaches that Jesus has a kingdom now: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder...Is. 9,6.7. This reign is immediately associated with Christ's birth, "a son is given." Jesus claimed that His kingdom was not of this world, but that His kingdom was to be spread over the whole world: "The gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Matt. 24,14. The King of Kings reigns now: "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church", Eph. 1,22. However, we must distinguish between the three-fold kingdom of Christ - the Kingdom of Power, the Kingdom of Grace, and the Kingdom of Glory. The Kingdom of power is Christ's rule over all things, all creatures; the Kingdom of Grace is His rule over the Church; and the Kingdom of Glory is the final culmination in heaven of Christ's kingdom of Grace on earth. The point

we wish to establish is that Christ even now rules and governs the whole world, we need not wait for that time when He will rule in another earthly kingdom. "To point out the inestimable blessings of Christ's Kingdom of Grace and the ineffable bliss of His Kingdom of Glory (heaven) is the real burden of Christian preaching, the purpose of which is not only to make sinners partake of eternal life, but also to fill them with an ardent longing for heaven, 1 Cor. 1,7; Rom. 8,25; Titus 21,5; 2 Peter 3,13; Phil. 3, 20.⁶⁹ And the bringing of members into this kingdom is done through Christ's Word and Sacraments, Matt. 28, 19.20. There is much comfort in this for a member of Christ's kingdom, the Church, to know that Jesus is His King even now. For He is the universal, supreme, absolute, meek, merciful, victorious, and immortal King, who sits in glory at the Father's right hand, and His enemies are a footstool for Him. The Church need not fear that she will be destroyed while under the protection of her King.

The binding of Satan

According to the Premillennial view, when Christ comes in glory to reign on earth, one of the first things to take place will be the binding of Satan. Rev. 20,1-5 presents this picture of the angel imprisoning Satan. Interpreting these verses, Dr. Seiss comments: "This Angel possesses the Key of the Abyss, and carries a great chain. He lays hold on the Dragon, the Old Serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, binds him with the chain, casts him into the Abyss, and locks and seals him in, that he may no more delude the nations for a thousand years."⁷⁰ Dr. Seiss

69. Mueller J.T., op. cit. p.316

70. Seiss J.A., op. cit. p. 298. Vol. III.

reasons that this is a literal transaction. The battle is literal, the taking of the Beast and False prophet is literal, and now Satan is literal. But the chain is of divine making, it is a figurative chain. It is a chain of a character than can bind spirit and fetter angels. Yet, it is to be fastened on the limbs of the old monster. He will not be able to resist it, nor shake it off. Then for a thousand years he will remain in the bottomless pit until he is loosed again for a 'little while.' Surely, no student of the Bible will deny that Satan is a real being; no one says he must be taken figuratively. But it is difficult to explain the Premillennial line of thinking, other than that they have a theory and will go to great lengths to substantiate their theory. In the matter of the binding of Satan even Seiss admits that Rev. 20,1-3 contains very figurative language. Yet he confuses the entire picture of the binding of Satan by refusing to submit to figurative interpretation. Why do the Premillennialists not read the clear passages of Scripture before they read a theory into Rev. 20? Some, like Seiss, do admit that Rev. 20 contains figurative language and means that Satan is deprived of his power. Even other passages of the Bible express in plain words what here in Rev. 20 is indicated by a figure of speech - Jesus, the Son of God, was sent to this earth by the Father "to destroy the works of the devil, 1 John 3,8; to crush the serpent's head, Gen. 3,15; and He, the stronger one, came over the strong one, Satan, and bound him, Matt. 12,29. This binding of Satan is not to happen in a millennial kingdom. Christ's kingdom means that Christ has conquered all His enemies when by His vicarious death for for all sins the power of the devil was taken from him, Heb. 2,14,15,

and the "prince of this world was judged and cast out," John 12,31; 16,11; compare Luke 10,18.⁷¹ Satan no longer has any power over men or a claim against them, Rev. 12,10. All men are called by the Gospel to "turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God," Acts 26,18; and every man who accepts this call of God cannot be held by Satan, but is "delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son," Col. 1,13. Even now Satan is bound, also in so far as for a "Thousand years" he cannot "deceive the nations" by hindering or stopping the victorious course of the Gospel of Christ's Kingdom of Grace; it will be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come," Matt. 24,14.

The Antichrist

It will be sometime during this millennial kingdom, say the Premillennialists, that Antichrist will rule. Without this kingdom, their doctrine would fall.⁷² As we review their doctrine concerning Antichrist and his destruction we are inclined to believe that the Premillennialists teach that Christ is compelled to set up a visible kingdom, that He must appear in person to destroy this deadly foe, for the world of believers cannot fight him with the Word of God. They teach: that at the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth "The Armies of Antichrist and those opposed to the King of Kings will be destroyed according to Rev. 19, 19-21."⁷³ In Rev. 19,19-21 the Beast will be taken captive. The Premillennialists believe the Beast is Antichrist. Antichrist and the False Prophet who is to be prominent at the same time will be taken

71. Heerboth, L.A., op. cit. p.30

72. "There must, therefore, be a true temple of God on earth, one which God acknowledges and claims as His, during the time of Antichrist." Seiss, op. cit. Vol. III, p.165

73. Milligan, op. cit. p.320

prisoners and both cast alive into a lake of brimstone. Thus the Premillennialists read into the Book of Revelation a period of time, after the Church has been taken out of the world through the rapture, during which Antichrist will rule. But Scripture applies this all to our present kingdom. Scripture speaks of the 'man of sin.' We believe Scripture means here the Antichrist. (2 Thess. 2) Antichrist will dwell, not in a structure, a building, but within the Church itself, and the great apostasy which Antichrist causes is a falling away within the external Church, within the kingdom of Christ. How can the Antichrist be an enemy of the Church and work in the Church, as 2 Thess. 2 reveals, if the Church is no longer present, if it has been 'raptured?' The Antichrist of Scripture will work as long as the Church is present on earth. Yes, Scripture does teach, as do the Premillennialists that Antichrist will rule, that the Church will obey neither Christ nor His Gospel, but do only what Antichrist by his alleged divine authority demands. But Scripture also teaches that his appearance is represented as a sign of the last times.⁷⁴ But Scripture does not teach that after the destruction of the enemy, or any other time, will there be a 1000 years peace for the Church. When Antichrist is destroyed, that will be the end of time. He will be destroyed, 2 Thess. 3,8 with the brightness of His coming. He will be revealed and consumed through the preaching of God's Word here in this kingdom and when Christ finally comes to Judgment - Antichrist will utterly be destroyed.

The loosing of Satan for a little while

According to the Premillennial theory, when Antichrist is destroyed,

74. Mueller J.T., op. cit. p.581

Christ will be ruling with His saints, and Israel will be inheriting its own land. Before the thousand years are finished, however, Satan must be loosed for a short time, and he will go out "to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle. Christ and his forces must war again to subdue the unbelieving nations, who revolt just before the end of the age."⁷⁵ A right understanding of the character of Christ's kingdom, its members, and their destiny will help to understand what Scripture means by the loosing of Satan for 'a little while.' "The Church is not a physical Armageddon. Her warfare is spiritual also in the sense that today her foes are in the field of false philosophy without and apostate Modernism within, a condition which prevails in all lands."⁷⁶ Evidently this is what Scripture means by the 'loosing of Satan.' All the foes of the Church of Christ, including Antichrist are warring against her, to take from her the precious promises of eternal life with Christ, in an attempt to destroy the foundation of the city of God, Ps. 11,3; compare also 1 Tim. 4,1; 2 Tim. 3,1-5 and Titus 4,3.4.

The judgments

In matters where Scripture speaks of only one future event of its kind, the Premillennial system teaches two events. For example, in the future coming of Christ, Christ would come to gather His saints and later would come to rule; in the resurrection first the believers would rise, then after the thousand years the rest of the dead; here concerning the final judgment the situation is somewhat different. Not two, but four, and sometimes Premillennialists speak of seven judgments. Gaebelin's

⁷⁵ Milligan, op. cit. p.530

⁷⁶ Graebner Theo., "War in the Light of Prophecy", p. 140

theory is that there is a judgment before the millennium and one after: "The Millennium is bounded by two distinct judgments, one at the opening, one at the close of the Millennial Age; the opening being that of the nations, and of all powers, terrestrial and super-terrestrial, opposed to Christ and His reign, as also by a judgment upon Israel and Jerusalem, ending in the redemption of both."⁷⁷ Feinberg does not hesitate to admit that the Premillennialists differentiate in the matter of judgment. They find four eschatological judgments; that of the believers, that of Israel; that of the nations, and that of the Great White Throne.⁷⁸ The believers are to be judged during the Rapture; Israel after the Great Tribulation; the nations during the Tribulation, the dead at the Great White Throne. Carrying out the Premillennialist principle of literal interpretation, Milligan has a judgment for every one of the seven trumpet sounds of which St. John speaks in Revelation.⁷⁹

The fancied introduction of judgments for sin, for nations, for saints and for sinners is not only unscriptural, but confusing. St. Paul assures us that "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." 2 Cor. 5,10. Our Lord Himself assures us that "all that are in the graves 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 damnation, John 5,28,29. Christ does not speak of any earthly kingdom separating the resurrection and a number of judgments. He mentions only one resurrection and only one

77. Gaebelin, op. cit. Vol. 40 p.541

78. Milligan, op. cit. Chapter 24 p. 272

79. Feinberg Chas., op. cit. -.259

judgment. "On that Last Day the Lord will be revealed from heaven," 2 Thess. 1,7, but if that is true, then He was not visible as a king on earth before the Last Day."⁸⁰ If, as we have already shown the dead in Christ will rise first and then we who are still alive shall be caught up together with them, then they certainly will not rise a thousand years earlier than we who still will be alive at the coming of the Lord - we shall be caught up together with them - at the same time to stand before the throne of God, clothed in Christ's righteousness. The New Testament points to only one judgment which is still future, a judgment in which both the righteous and the unrighteous are brought before the great tribunal of God. That day of the Lord "will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." The Gospel of Christ's kingdom prepared men for that day, that by looking in faith to their Savior, they receive the everlasting promises of eternal life.

80. Heerboth L.A., op. cit. p.28

VI. Refutation

The aim of this paper has been to show that Premillennialism is contrary to Scripture. Scripture teaches that the Kingdom of Christ is a spiritual kingdom, which is nothing else but God's gracious rule in the hearts of believers. This Scripture teaching is not the teaching of the Premillennialists. That the Premillennialists do not arrive at the same teachings as Scripture might be readily explained. When interpreting Scripture passages that are not clear, the Premillennialists fail to keep in mind four factors that are very essential to Bible interpretation. There are many prophetic passages and many symbolical passages in Scripture that can only be interpreted correctly if these factors are born in mind. They are, Scripture interprets Scripture; The Gospel dispensation is the same for all men of all ages; Soteriology, not eschatology is the theme of Scripture; and the Christians' hope is heaven.

No Premillennialist will deny that any of these principles are correct, but in practice all depart from sound principles and read into the text some preconceived idea; or they will try to harmonize passages to suit their theory; or perhaps they will even speculate in advancing their theory.⁸¹ The principle which the Premillennialists fail to use when Scripture absolutely demands its use, is the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture. Scripture is God's Word. He Himself is Truth and therefore cannot contradict Himself. It follows from this that whatever He says in clear, unmistakeable passages He does not deny or contradict in other passages. Consequently all those sayings of the Lord which are to some extent diffi-

81. Engelder Theo. "Note on Chiliasm," in Concordia Theological Monthly Vol. VI, p.324.

cult must be compared with those which are so plain and simple that they cannot be misunderstood and must be interpreted in accordance with them. To this must be added that whatever God says in symbolical, or figurative language must be interpreted in agreement with such passages in which He employs plain terms, using every word in its proper, literal sense. This is the proper principle, because in symbols and figurative speech God does not teach the reverse of what He teaches in ordinary, plain, simple language.⁸² According to these fundamental rules of interpretation we must read Scripture. They will contribute to a right understanding of what God says in His Word concerning the kingdom of Christ. In the previous sections of this paper we arrived at the conclusion that Christ's kingdom is spiritual, that the church and the kingdom are in reality one and the same, that there is only one resurrection and that of all men on Judgment Day when there will be but one judgment. When Christ spoke of His second Advent, or when the apostles wrote of Christ's second coming, there was not one word mentioned about a thousand years' reign of Christ on earth in His person. Instead, many of the epistles were written to counteract the Judaizing tendencies of Jewish converts, and one of those Judaistic tendencies was to spread about the false hopes of a temporal ruler who would relieve the Jews from Roman oppression. There is not one text in the whole Bible that speaks of a thousand years' personal, visible reign of our Lord in a temporal world power. But where there are difficult passages that speak of a kingdom that is to be established, we must look to Scripture to clear the matter

82. Heerboth L.A., op. cit. p.6

for us. Following this rule we arrive at the doctrine of the spiritual kingdom of Christ, into which a man is brought, in which he is kept by the power of God's Word.

And yet, the Premillennialists arrive at a different teaching. They do so by using entirely different principles, their own. They wish to explain every prophecy of the Old Testament, every symbol of both the Old and New Testaments, and they try to interpret every number regarding times, years, weeks and days. Forgetting every sound principle of interpretation, they wish to prove their theory of a millennial kingdom on earth, by any means at all. One example of Premillennialistic principle of interpretation that illustrates how theirs differ from sound principles is that given by Blackstone and Scofield. They wish to prove that a period of time exists between the 69th and 70th week prophesied in Daniel. Each week, according to their theory, represents a period of history, and the interval sought for is the millennial age. This is their conclusion. Isaiah 61 speaks of Christ's office of "proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God." This prophecy in the King James Version of the Bible has a comma, separating the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance. This comma should denote the period of time God does not reckon with the Jews.⁸³ No Bible interpretation can ever rest on such a naive principle. The only correct principle is

83. Blackstone Wm., op. cit. p. 65. This is known as the "Stop-Clock" Theory. This theory teaches that during the New Testament era God's clock stops ticking for the Jews until the Millennial Age, until the 'day of vengeance.' Scofield gives the reason in a footnote on p. 766 in his Bible, "Observe that Jesus suspended the reading of this passage in the synagogue at Nazareth (Lk. 4,16-21) at the comma in the middle of Isa. 61,2. The first advent, therefore, opened the day of 'grace,' 'the acceptable year of Jehovah,' but does not fulfil the day of vengeance. That will be taken up when Messiah returns."

that Scripture interprets itself. That means Scripture alone can tell us what method to use in interpreting words and phrases, or thoughts. We dare not go to the extreme in symbolizing where Scripture demands a literal interpretation, nor dare we interpret literally when Scripture gives every evidence that the passage must be interpreted figuratively. Barnhouse insists on the very literal interpretation. He goes even farther than that; he tries to harmonize passages with no connection at all, in order to establish his theories. The result is an almost fantastic doctrine. In 1 Cor. 6,2 St. Paul says "the saints will judge the world." With a very literal interpretation, and no consideration of the context, Barnhouse arrives at the doctrine that the saints will rule over the world, each will have his own little domain. He claims that there is proof for this in Luke 19,17: "Because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities."⁸⁴ One is overwhelmed at such interpretation. Reading into the text leaves no proof at all that Scripture distinguishes between a kingdom of God and a kingdom of Christ. In the light of clear passages Scripture teaches that the kingdom of Christ, of God, of heaven, are one and means the gracious rule of God in the hearts of believers. In arriving at this teaching of Scripture we have used the principle, Scripture interprets Scripture.

Another hermeneutical rule that must be followed when interpreting Scripture is, the Gospel dispensation is the same for all men of all ages. And so it will ever be. But the Premillennialists teach differently. In a previous chapter we have shown that they teach that Christ will use force to establish His kingdom; He will not bring them to Himself through the Gospel. Another means of grace, according to the Premillennialists,

84. Barnhouse D.G., op. cit. p.75

is that the Jews will see the wounds of Christ and recognize Him as their Savior. Thus the Premillennialists teach various means of grace instead of the only means of which Scripture teach- the Word of God. Premillennialism holds that the Jews will accept the Gospel before Christ comes to set up His earthly kingdom; but Dispensationalism teaches contrary to God's Word that the Jews will be received into God's grace in the millennial kingdom by their sacrifices and by recognizing the authority of Christ. They have overlooked all those passages of Scripture which teach that man is saved by grace through faith. "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name, under heaven, given among men whereby we must be saved," Acts 4,12. Peter spoke these words in his sermon and indicated that Christ was the Savior of all the world, for the Jews also; and Jesus will be the Savior of the world until Judgment Day. The Gospel dispensation is the same for all men of all ages. God clearly told the children of Israel that He was dealing with them through His grace, "Not for thy righteousness or for the uprightness of thine heart dost thou go to possess their (the heathen nations) land... Understand therefore that the Lord, thy God, giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people," Deut. 9,5.6.⁸⁵ This doctrine of election impresses this thought upon the believer in the New Testament, "God hath saved us...not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace." 2 Tim. 1,9. It is only when we keep this important truth in mind that we are able to understand Chapters 9-11 of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans correctly. "In these

85. Mueller, J.T., op. cit. p. 602 ff.

chapters the apostle indeed affirms the universal grace of God; but condemns arrogance and pride of the self-righteous, who, when comparing themselves with those who are lost, regard themselves as better than they and so ascribe their salvation to their own worthiness."⁸⁶ Thus salvation is by the grace of God through His Word for all men of all ages. The Premillennialists teach differently in this matter because they misinterpret those prophecies of the Old Testament which speak of a restoration of the Levitical practices. They are easily explained. Old Testament prophecy points to either of two periods. First, they point to the restoration of Israel after the Babylonian captivity. Or, they point to the New Testament Church. Certainly all the types and figures of the Old Testament point to Christ, (ad) when He came St. Paul told the Colossians, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." Col. 2,16. By remembering that salvation is alone by grace through faith in Christ, no false doctrine of a different means of attaining God's grace can be established. Scripture does not speak of a millennial kingdom when the Jews will be restored to their promised land, but it speaks of a reign of Christ in the hearts of believers when all the old ceremonies will be abrogated and full trust in Christ is the requisite.

The third principle which the Premillennialists seem to forget is that the central teaching of Scripture, around which all other teachings hinge is soteriology, not eschatology. When one examines the Premillennial

86. Mueller J.T., op. cit. p. 602 ff.

theory of an earthly kingdom, he comes to the conclusion that the Premillennialists believe that only at Christ's second coming can a believer experience unspeakable joys and blessedness. But no, even now in remission of sins a believer receives unspeakable joy at the thought that Jesus died for his sins and forgave them all. It is just that forgiveness which is given a man when he accepts the atonement of Christ. He then becomes a member of Christ's kingdom. For to be a member of the kingdom means to have forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ who died in man's stead, Luke 1,77; Rom. 5,10; 2 Cor. 5,19. All Scripture centers around this one theme - Christ and His vicarious atonement. The Old Testament people, their sacrifices, their government, all were a type of Christ and His Church.⁸⁷ The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost. Christ's coming into the world was foreordained by God so that men might be saved. There is no emphasis upon an earthly kingdom, a kingdom which ultimately leads to eternal life; the whole plan of God was centered in the cross, and the only future promise we have is that when Christ comes a second time, He will take us to Himself in heaven, John 14,5. Even at His coming only those who have trusted in Him, have sought forgiveness at His cross, will be taken with Jesus to heaven. Scripture pictures the end of all temporal things many times and never once mentions any earthly bliss connected with Christ's second coming. Not so the Premillennialists. They are disappointed that God has permitted the world to go on as it has, with all its sorrow and troubles. This carnal attitude is so strong in them that they would take Scripture apart from its context, from the passages that teach otherwise, and apply them to mean such a kingdom as they dream about. J.J. Hunter

87. Mueller J.T., op. cit. p.90

dreams of the time he might be on earth when Christ will rule; there will be roads and travel then as there are now, and with the radio, with television, so that each family sitting in their own home, can see and listen to Jesus, even as did His disciples as they sat on the mountain side or in a boat.⁸⁸ That is not what Scripture reveals when it speaks of the blessedness of the kingdom of Christ. Such blessedness we have by the grace of God through faith in Christ Jesus now and forever.

The Christian is urged by the apostles to direct their thoughts heaven-ward which is the final goal. That is the fourth rule which the Premillennialists lay aside while they theorize about a 1000 years reign of Christ here on earth. Christ at His coming will "deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father" (1 Cor. 15,23.24.) The judgment thrones are there located where Christ now is, in the "heavenlies", (Eph. 1,3; Eph. 6,12). No earthly kingdom is pictured here, the end of man's stay on earth, a most important happening in man's history, but no mention of an earthly kingdom. That can only mean that there is no such kingdom. The believers in Christ will be taken to the 'many mansions' prepared for them by Christ. All the divine promises of future welfare and happiness, Rev. 21,1-4; of rest, Heb. 4,9-11; Rev. 14,13; of reward, Matt. 5,3.12; and of glorification, Ps. 17,15; 1 John 3,2;&Phil. 3,20.21. speak of heaven, not of this present world. Our lively hope is not earthly blessings, but "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven," 1 Pet. 1,3.4; 4,9.13. The whole plan of salvation

88. Hunter J.J., op. cit. p.90

might be summed up in the words of St. Paul, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

Eph. 1, 3-6. Interpreting Scripture, by using sound principles of interpretation will bring us to the truths which it reveals. If the Pre-millennialists would follow those rules, as they claim to, they could never arrive at their doctrine of a millennium. They would realize that Scripture shows God's concern for lost souls and His message by which they are brought to Christ and eternal life.

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