

AN EXAMINATION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF PRIMILLENNIALISM IN THE LIGHT OF BIBLICAL TEACHING

James Edo Ikwulono

School of Biblical Studies, Jos,
Plateau State

Abstract

Several theories have been acclaimed with respect to the Second Coming of Christ. These are all based on how biblical prophecies are being interpreted. One of these theories is premillennialism. Premillennialism is that system of doctrine which teaches that Jesus Christ will return to this earth before He begins His one thousand year reign on earth. The purpose of this study is to examine the fundamental beliefs of premillennialism in the light of Biblical teaching. The method used for this study is exegetical. In this study it is found out that while the Bible talks of Messianic kingdom, it does not talk of any earthly political millennial reign. And that the Bible teaches that the kingdom of Christ does not belong to this world. Further, it finds out that the doctrine of premillennialism does not fit with biblical teachings. It is recommended that Christians investigate every supposed doctrine to understand the theological issues that are at stake. This can be done by searching “the Scriptures daily to see whether those things are so” (Acts 17.11).

Keywords: Premillennialism, millennium, kingdom

Introduction

Several theories and positions have been acclaimed with respect to the Second Coming of Christ. These are all based on how Biblical prophecies are being interpreted. The common name attached to these theories is *millennium*. There are three clearly defined views of millennium. These relate to the “timing of the return of Christ regarding the 1,000 years and what is the precise nature of the millennium.”¹ “Amillennialism” literally means “no millennium.” This view denies a

¹. Alan, S. Bandy, Views of the Millennium, (Gospel Coalition, 2023), par. 2.

literal reign of Christ upon the earth.² “Postmillennialism” holds that the second coming of Christ will be after the thousand-year period referenced in Revelation 20:1-6. The third view, which is the focus of this article is “Premillennialism.”

Premillennialism is a word which is derived from two Latin words: *pre* (before) and *millennium* (one thousand). The two most central convictions of premillennialists can be stated in relation to the word *premillennial*. The foremost conviction is that Jesus is coming back but His coming will be *pre-*, that is, *before* or *prior to*, a millennial kingdom. The second central conviction has to do with the *millennial*. This is the belief that after Jesus comes, He will establish and rule over a kingdom on this earth for a thousand years. Thus, “Premillennialism” is that system of doctrine which teaches that Jesus Christ will return to this earth before He begins His one thousand year reign on earth.³

Trying to make a definitive statement about what premillennialism is can present some interesting problems. This is because premillennialism is a very complex and involved doctrine. Although, there is a very basic shell that most premillennialists hold to, the details and particulars of the various theories differ. Premillennialists themselves are divided because of their differing views of the order of events that will occur associated with Christ's return.

The two major and distinct groups of premillennialism are historical (also called posttribulational) and dispensational (also called classical). The historical premillennialists anticipate a time of tribulation directed against the church, climaxed by Christ's coming to rescue the church from the forces of evil. They believe that the rapture and the Second Coming are not distinguishable, but that both will occur in the “one event of Christ's second coming, which will transpire at the end of the

² cf. William E. Cox, *Amillennialism Today* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972), 1.

³ cf. John McCort. “Premillennialism Defined.” *A Study of Premillennialism*, (Fairmount, IN: Guardian of Truth, 1982), 1.

Tribulation.”⁴ On the other hand, dispensational premillennialism holds to a pretribulational rapture of the church (First Second Coming), then after the tribulation will be the visible Second Coming of Christ for the commencement of the millennial era (Second Second Coming). Because there are great varieties of differences between the premillennial groups, this paper attempts to consider only their fundamental beliefs in the light of Biblical teaching.

Establishment of Earthly Millennial Kingdom

Central to the doctrine of premillennialism is the establishment of an eschatological millennial kingdom. It is thought that when Christ comes again, during His Second Coming, He will set up a physical or material kingdom, which will last for one thousand years and the headquarters will be in literal Jerusalem. John F. Walvoord asserts,

Premillennarians hold to a literal, bodily, visible, and glorious return of Christ to the earth, fulfilling the many prophecies of this event. They hold that this event is the occasion for the deliverance and judgment of Israel, the downfall and judgment of the Gentiles, the inauguration of the kingdom of righteousness on earth. . . . Jerusalem becomes the capital for the whole world.”⁵

Similarly, Craig A. Blaising holds, “A key feature in Old Testament eschatology concerns a future kingdom that God will establish upon this earth. . . . Promises found throughout the prophets regarding the future restoration of Israel are coterminous with this expectation of a worldwide kingdom.”⁶ Several Scriptural passages are strung together to form this argument.⁷ This position is held because it is believed that at His first coming, Christ came to this earth intending to establish an earthly kingdom and restore the Jews to their promised land. Had the

⁴. Craig A. Blaising, “Premillennialism” *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 158.

⁵. John F. Walvoord, “The Theological Context of Premillennialism” *Bibliotheca Sacra*. Vol. 150 (1993), 395.

⁶. Blaising, “Premillennialism,” 193.

⁷. cf. Blaising, “Premillennialism,” 193.

Jews accepted Jesus, He would have reigned over them. But they did not accept Him and so He did not establish the kingdom. W. E. Blackstone contends:

This Kingdom was at hand, that is, it came nigh . . . when Jesus, the King, came. So much so, that the three favored disciples witnessed a foretaste of its glory and power on the Mount of Transfiguration. But the Jews rejected it and slew their King. They were not willing to have this man reign over them, and therefore the Kingdom did not immediately appear.⁸

Blackstone further writes, “The apostles went out preaching the good news of the Kingdom to the Jews first, but they rejected it, and the disciples turned to the Gentiles. Thus, the Kingdom came nigh unto the Jews, who spurned it, and while it waits, God visits 'the Gentiles, to take out a people for his name.’”⁹ Blackstone concludes, “This we believe is the true explanation of this subject. The Kingdom did come 'nigh' when Christ came, and had they received Him, it would have been manifested, but now it is in abeyance, or waiting until He comes again.”¹⁰ Thus, premillennarians hold that since Jesus was not able to establish His kingdom because of the Jewish rejection, He then decided to establish the church. Blackstone writes, “Thus the church came in as a mystery, and was but rarely, if at all, spoken of in the Old Testament prophecies”¹¹ In other words, the church was established as an afterthought. In their own words, the church is “a parenthesis in the divine program of God.”¹²

The first question to ask as one deals with this issue is, “Do the Old Testament prophecies concerning the rulership of the Messiah teach an earthly millennial kingdom?” It is important, therefore, to consider what the Bible says about this. David writes, “All your works shall praise You,

⁸. W. E. Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming*, (Chicago, Fleming H. Revell, 1908), 83-84.

⁹. Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming*. 88.

¹⁰. Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming*, 88.

¹¹. Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming*, 89

¹². John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), 23.

O LORD, and Your saints shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of Your Kingdom and talk of Your power. . . . Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations” (Ps. 145:10-13).¹³ Similarly, prophet Isaiah writes:

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. (Isa. 9: 6-7)

The prophets here references that the kingdom of Messiah will be an everlasting one. Furthermore, in the interpretation of the dream of king Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel says, “And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Dan. 2.44).¹⁴

Daniel also says these about his own vision,

I was watching in the night visions and behold One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed. (Dan. 7:13-14)

Uniformly it can be observed that the Old Testament prophets speak of the Messiah's everlasting kingdom. It is not a millennial kingdom but an everlasting kingdom. It is also argued that the material kingdom was necessary so that the prophecies concerning the Messiah sitting upon the throne of David be fulfilled. But the promise for the kingdom of David's

^{13.} All Scriptural references are from NKJV unless otherwise stated.

^{14.} Read Daniel 2.1-44 for the complete picture and interpretation of the dream.

seed is for an everlasting kingdom. The LORD sent Prophet Nathan to tell David these words, “When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. . . . And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever (2 Sam. 7:12, 16).

The New Testament also attests to the fact that the throne of David that Christ will reign over will be eternal (Lk. 1:30-31). George Eldon Ladd a premillennarian, was right when he writes, “A millennial doctrine cannot be based on the Old Testament prophecies.”¹⁵ If this be so, where then does the doctrine of an earthly millennial reign of Christ comes from? Ladd believes that, “The only place in the Bible that speaks of an actual millennium is the passage of Revelation 20:1-6. Any millennial doctrine must be based upon the most natural exegesis of this passage”¹⁶ In another place Ladd argues, “Even if the rest of the Bible were entirely silent on this point, that fact would not militate against the belief in a millennium if the exegesis of the Apocalypse required it.”¹⁷ It is therefore, important to consider Revelation 20:1-6. Note first that the passage divides itself into two parts. Verses 1-3 describe the binding of Satan; and verses 4-6 describe the thousand-year reign of souls with Christ. We shall first consider the second part.

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is

¹⁵. George Eldon Ladd. “Historic Premillennialism.” *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*. Ed. Robert G. Clouse, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1977), 32.

¹⁶. Ladd, *Historic*, 32.

¹⁷. Ladd, *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 181.

he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Rev. 20:4-6)

To approach this text, one needs to consider how this passage of Revelation should be interpreted. Admittedly this is a difficult passage, but does it teach what has been claimed it taught? It is important to remember the genre of Revelation in approaching chapter 20:1-6. It is evident that the context of Revelation 20 is not historical narrative but apocalyptic prophecy. G. K. Beale writes, “That this vision is full of symbol is apparent merely from the obvious symbolic nature of such words 'chain,' 'abyss,' 'dragon' and 'serpent.’”¹⁸ Beale further observes that because the object John sees and what he hears were seen and heard in a vision, they are not first to be understood literally but viewed as symbolically portrayed and communicated.¹⁹

It is noted that John sees thrones and those who have been given authority to judge sitting upon those thrones. The first question we must ask is, “Where are these thrones?” Except for thrones mentioned in Revelation 2:13; 13:2 and 16:10, the rest seems to be in heaven. Further, the fact that John sees “the souls of those who had been beheaded,” cannot be a reference to an event on the earth.

But who are these that sat on the thrones? John says, it was “the souls of those who have been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and whoever had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands.” How could John see the souls of those who had died? The answer is, he saw all these in a vision. John then says these people “lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” Note, John did not say that the reign of Christ is for a thousand years but that the saints “lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” This passage does not mention the beginning or the end of Christ's reign. There is no

¹⁸. G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 974.

¹⁹. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 974.

indication in these verses that John is describing a future earthly millennial reign. Anthony A. Hoekema observes, “The scene, as we saw, is set in heaven. Nothing is said in verses 4-6 about the earth, about Palestine as the center of this reign or about the Jews.”²⁰ In the same way, these verses do not mention the establishment of Christ's kingdom, Christ coming to sit on David's throne or an earthly reign of Christ. Furthermore, John says those he saw “lived and reigned.” He did not say, “we would reign.” John uses the past tense, while the premillennarians are using the future tense. The two are not the same. That “we will reign” is not in the text. Loraine Boettner writes, “We insist that the idea of an earth-centered divine kingdom is wrong in principle.”²¹

We are told that these saints lived and reigned “for a thousand years.” There are only two ways by which the phrase “a thousand years” can be understood: literally or figuratively. If taken literally, the period will not exceed a thousand years. On the other hand, figuratively, the phrase would mean “a long period of human time.”²² The most likely way to understand the phrase “a thousand years” is figurative because Revelation is symbolic. “It is inconsistent to interpret symbolically most numbers in the book and all of a sudden get very literal when it comes to the '1000 years.’”²³

There are three reasons why the “thousand years” in Revelation 20 seems to function symbolically. First, this is clearly a vision in that it opens: “and I saw” (Rev. 20:1a); secondly, the perfectly rounded and exact numerical value seems more compatible with figurative interpretation; thirdly, the first event in the vision is the binding of Satan with chain, which surely is not literal.²⁴ It is clear that the doctrine of a future earthly

^{20.} Anthony A. Hoekema, “Amillennialism.” *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*. Ed. Robert G. Clouse. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1977), 169.

^{21.} Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), 288.

^{22.} Albert Gardner and Sam Hester, *The Millennium and the End of the World*, (Henderson, TN: Hester, 2002), 58.

^{23.} Gardner and Hester, *Millennium*, 58.

^{24.} cf. Kenneth L. Gentry Jr. “Postmillennialism.” *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*. Ed. Darrell L. Bock. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 51-55.

and political millennial reign of Christ cannot be proved from Revelation 20:1-6. After presenting an exposition of Revelation 20 in defense of premillennialism, Ladd confesses, "There are admittedly serious theological problems with the doctrine of a millennium."²⁵ Boettner decries that premillennialism "implements a vain hope of earthly dominance and glory in the hearts of its adherents, and particularly in the hearts of Jewish people, inspiring in them false hopes that can never be realized."²⁶

While the Bible talks of a Messianic kingdom, it does not talk of any earthly millennial kingdom. Jesus says, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). When Paul treated the second coming of Christ, he made no mention of an earthly political rule. Paul said at the second coming of Christ, the dead in Christ will rise first and then we who are alive will be "caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

That Christ is king and reigning over his kingdom at the present is attested by the New Testament. This began after the resurrection. The apostle Peter says, "Therefore, being a prophet [David], and knowing that God has sworn with an oath to him [David] that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of Christ . . ." (Acts 2:30-31). By defeating His enemies through His cross and resurrection, Jesus established His kingship over all things. No wonder He declares, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). Since the resurrection, God has highly exalted Christ (Phil. 2:9). Peter says, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Paul said of Jesus, "He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15; see Rev. 17:14; 19:16). As a king, Jesus is said to have a kingdom (Col. 1:13); and that He is reigning (1 Cor. 15:25). Paul writes that God seated Christ

²⁵. Ladd, *Historic*, 40.

²⁶. Boettner, *Millennium*, 287.

at “His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church” (Eph. 1:20-22). The resurrection therefore, inaugurates the kingdom of Christ.

The New Testament also attests to the fact that the church fulfills the kingdom prophecies. The church is said to be in the eternal purpose of God (Eph. 3:3-10). Hence it is not an afterthought nor is it a parenthesis in the program of God. In Daniel we have the prophecy of the kingdom to be established in the days of the fourth kings (Dan. 2:40-44). History shows that this was the period of the Roman Empire. The church was established during the period of the Roman Empire (Acts 2). Isaiah prophesies of the house of God in the latter days and that all nations shall flow into it (Isa. 2:2-3). Jesus commissioned the apostles to go preach to all nations (Matt. 28:19); and Paul says that the church is the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15). People of all nations are found in the church (Eph. 2:14-18). Jesus says that He will build His church and that the church is the kingdom (Matt. 16:18-19). He taught that some who heard Him will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God come with power (Mark 9:1); this was fulfilled on the Pentecost day, the birthday of the church (Acts 2). When on trial before king Agrippa, Paul defended his work in the church and declared emphatically that he had said “no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come” (Acts 26:22). In the midst of his defense, Paul turned to his judge and said, “King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets?” (Acts 26:27). It is clear that Paul understands the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ and the church with its works as the fulfillment of the things foretold by the Old Testament prophets. The church is the new age or kingdom to which the prophets had looked forward, and Paul justifies his work in the church as being just that which had been predicted. Thus, throughout his ministry, Paul preaches the kingdom of God as manifested in the church and as the very thing that had been prophesied by the prophets (cf. Acts 28.23, 30, 31). Similarly, John says the church is a kingdom (Rev. 1:4, 6); and that he was in the kingdom (Rev. 1:9). The Christians at Colossae were said to

be in the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13). Christians are part of a kingdom which cannot be shaken (Heb.12:28). We have shown that the church is the same as the kingdom. Christ is said to be the head of the church (Eph.1:22; Col. 1:18). In other words, He is king over His kingdom. That means He has been reigning over His kingdom since the establishment of the church. "He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:25-26). Death will only be destroyed at His second coming and that is when the end is, and that is when He will deliver the kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:23-24). Therefore, it is not to establish His kingdom that Christ will come again but to deliver the kingdom to the Father.

Doctrine of Two Bodily Resurrections

Central to premillennial position is the doctrine of two resurrections. Milliard J. Erickson notes, the linchpin of premillennialism is the doctrine of two bodily resurrections.²⁷ Ladd asserts, there are two resurrections of the dead, one preceding and one following the thousand year reign of Christ. Those who are raised before the thousand years share Christ's reign over the earth. The rest of the dead are not raised until the termination of this millennial reign of Christ.²⁸

Since this doctrine is adopted from the interpretation of Revelation 20:4-6, it deserves close scrutiny. Already we have established that the context of Revelation 20 is symbolic, therefore, any exegesis of this passage must take this into consideration. John says those he saw "lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power. . ." (Rev. 20:4-6). That John is speaking of a kind of resurrection here is apparent. The text holds that the coming to life (v. 4) is the first resurrection. This implies there is a second resurrection. But anyone who does not experience the first resurrection will experience the second. Those who have part in the first resurrection

^{27.} Millard J. Erickson, *Basic Guide to Eschatology*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 97.

^{28.} Ladd, *Crucial Questions*, 141-142.

will escape the power of the second death (v. 6). The second death is described as “the lake of fire” (21:8). There seems then, to be a redemptive power in the first resurrection that is not present in the second.

Since there are two resurrections implied in this passage, does it mean the two are bodily? The answer to this question will require comparing Scripture with Scripture. Other passages of the Scripture seem to speak of one bodily resurrection event which includes both the righteous and the wicked. In His teaching Jesus says, “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28-29). This bodily resurrection of the righteous and the wicked says Jesus is to occur simultaneously and is to take place at the end of time. On the other hand, Jesus also seems to teach another kind of resurrection. He says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in Him who sent me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the son of God; and those who hear will live” (John 5:24-25). Obviously, this is a reference to a spiritual resurrection that takes place only in the soul. This teaching of Jesus seems to parallel in every way with Revelation 20:4-6. There are two resurrections, one is spiritual of the soul (only for some) while the other is bodily (involves everybody).

Similarly, Paul seems to teach the two resurrections when he says, “If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom. 8:10-11). Paul agrees with Jesus that the first resurrection is spiritual (Rom. 8:10) while the second is bodily (Rom. 8:11). What then is the first resurrection in Revelation 20:4-6? Comparing with the teachings of Jesus and Paul, the first resurrection is evidently, a spiritual resurrection,

not a bodily one. Several Scriptural passages attest to the fact that Christians experience a first resurrection which is spiritual (Eph. 2:1, 5, 6; Col. 2:12-13; 3.1; Rom. 6:3-4); this occurs at conversion, at the time of baptism (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:37-40; Rom. 6:1-4; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21). Having been spiritually resurrected, the saints (whether in heaven or on earth) are spiritually enthroned. Revelation 20:4-6 speaks of the saints living and reigning with Christ, which elsewhere refers to a spiritual reality in the present experience of God's people. Paul says while we were dead in trespasses, God “made us alive together with Christ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 2:5-6). The first resurrection has been going on since the beginning of the church and will continue until the second coming of Christ when the second (bodily) resurrection will occur.

Literal Binding of Satan

Crucial to premillennialism is the literal binding of Satan for a thousand years. It is held that this binding will occur at the second coming of Christ, prior to the millennium.²⁹ This position is said to be an interpretation from Revelation 20:1-3. In Revelation 20:1-3, John says,

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

That the event described in this passage is figurative needs no proof because Satan, a spirit being cannot be bound by a literal chain. Therefore, the premillennarian hermeneutics of literal interpretation³⁰ will not work. John says, the angel he saw laid hold of Satan and bound him. This binding restricts him from deceiving the nations. The

^{29.} cf. Ladd, *Crucial Questions*, p. 141 and Walvoord, *Theological*, p. 395)

^{30.} Charles Caldwell Ryrie. *Dispensationalism Today*. (Chicago: Moody, 1965), 86-87.

important question here is not whether or not Satan is bound, but when does this occur?

Before the first coming of Christ, all nations beyond the borders of Israel were under the dominion of Satan (2 Kgs. 17:29; Psa. 96:5). This is confirmed by Satan himself at the temptation of Jesus: “And the Devil said to Him, 'all this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish'” (Luke 4:6). But the New Testament teaches that Christ came to deal with the devil. John says, “The Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). Satan's works include falsehood and death (John 8:44; Heb. 2:14), but Jesus came “to bear witness to the truth” (John 18:37; cf. John 8:40-46). Jesus has also abolished death (2 Tim. 1:10). Not only that, Jesus also came to destroy Satan himself. Hebrews 2:14 says Jesus came the first time, “that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil.” Since all nations were under the dominion of Satan, for them to be freed, Satan has to be bound. Jesus says, “How can Satan cast out Satan? . . . No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house” (Mark 3:23-27; cf. Matt. 12:29; Luke 11:21-22).

But by His death, Christ “disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” (Col. 2:15). As a result, all nations could be won over to Him (Matt. 28:19). Paul told the Colossians, “And you who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled” (Col. 1:21). Robert B. Strimple writes, “The New Testament emphasizes two climatic points in Christ's victory over Satan: victory at the cross, and victory at his second coming.”³¹ At the cross Satan is bound. He is bound to “keep him from deceiving the nations anymore” (Rev. 20:3). Now the nations can have the Gospel of peace preached to them. Paul was sent to the Gentiles “To open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from

³¹. Robert B. Strimple “Amillennialism.” *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*. Ed. Darrell L. Bock. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 123.

the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith” (Acts 26:18). With the coming of Christ and the spread of the “Gospel of the kingdom” (Matt. 24:14) into all the nations (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8), Satan began losing his dominion over the Gentiles. But someone may ask, If Satan is bound at the event of the cross, why do we still witness his activity in the world? That Satan is bound means that his activity is within the scope of God's permission and that his final destiny is assured. Jack Cottrell observes, “Revelation 20:1-3 thus symbolically represents Christ's present control over Satan and his works, and the consequent limitations of his power” (497). Because, Satan's power has been put under control, Christians are now able to wrestle with him and win over him (Eph. 6:11-18). It is clear from every indication that premillennial doctrines are inconsistent with Biblical teachings.

Literal Interpretation of Old Testament Prophecies

Characteristic to premillennialism is the hermeneutics of literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecies. Ladd writes, “The Old Testament prophecies must be understood literally and cannot be interpreted spiritually.”³² The argument therefore, is that since the prophecies already fulfilled were fulfilled in rather literal fashion, prophecies not yet fulfilled will be fulfilled in the same manner.³³ The problem with this hermeneutics is that some fulfilled prophecies, were not fulfilled very literally. The following illustrations will help: The prophecy that Elijah would precede the coming of the Messiah (Mal. 4:5-6) was fulfilled by John the Baptist (Matt. 11:13-14; 17:10-13; Mark 9:11-13), not the actual, literal, Old Testament character. Peter argues that the promise to David that the Messiah would sit upon his throne (2 Sam. 7:12, 16) was fulfilled when Jesus was raised from the dead and exalted at the right hand of God (Acts 2:29-36). The early church saw the persecution of Peter and John by the Jewish officials (Acts 4:21-28) as a

^{32.} Ladd, *Crucial Questions*, 136.

^{33.} cf. Walvoord, *Millennial*, 133 and Ramesh P. Richard, “The Premillennial Interpretation of History.” in *Vital Prophetic Issues: Examining Promises and Problems in Eschatology*. Ed. Roy B. Zuck, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995), 25.

fulfillment of the prophecy by David (Ps. 2). In trying to resolve the issue of circumcision in Acts 15, James declares that Prophet Amos, in speaking of the restoration of the fallen tabernacle of David, had referred to the spiritual establishment of the kingdom and the ingathering of the Gentiles (cf. Amos 9:11-12; Acts 15:13-17). Several other passages seem to handle prophetic fulfillment similarly. The premillennial hermeneutics, therefore, is a weak approach to prophetic Scriptures.

Findings and Recommendations

This paper finds out that the doctrine of premillennialism does not fit with biblical teachings. The strongest doctrine of premillennialism is that of the establishment of earthly millennial kingdom by Jesus Christ. It is believed that Christ came to the earth at the first time to establish an earthly kingdom and restore the Jews to their promised land. But because the Jews rejected Him, He could not establish the Kingdom but establish the church instead. Hence when He comes the second time, He will establish an earthly millennial kingdom with the headquarters in Jerusalem. But this paper finds out that Bible teaching is clear that Christ's kingdom does not belong to this world (John 18:36). It also finds out that since the resurrection, Christ has been reigning as king. Further, it finds out that while the Bible talks of Messianic kingdom, it does not talk of any earthly political millennial reign. It is recommended that Christians investigate every supposed teaching or position to understand the theological issues that are at stake. This can be done by searching "the Scriptures daily to see whether those things are so" (Acts 17:11).

Conclusion

This paper has examined some fundamental beliefs of premillennialism in the light of biblical teaching. It is believed that our view of eschatology has a great impact in our relationship with God and on our views of mission. While the Bible talks of a Messianic kingdom, reference is not made to any earthly political millennial kingdom. The church of Christ fulfills the prophecies and the promise of the "kingdom of God is at hand." This was accomplished at the first advent of Christ. The second coming of Christ will mark the beginning of eternity. The Scripture

teaches that Christ is now king over his kingdom. He must rule until He puts all enemies under his feet. When the last enemy (death) is destroyed, Christ will hand over the kingdom to God, the Father.

Bibliography

- Bandy, Alan S. *Views of the Millennium*. Gospel Coalition, 2023.
- Beale, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Blackstone, W. E. *Jesus is Coming*. Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1908.
- Blaising, Craig A. "Premillennialism." *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*. Ed. Darrell L. Bock. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.
- Boettner, Loraine. *The Millennium*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958.
- Cottrell, Jack. *The Faith Once for All*. Joplin: College, 2004.
- Cox, William E. *Amillennialism Today*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972.
- Erickson, Millard J. *Basic Guide to Eschatology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.
- Gardner, Albert and Sam Hester. *The Millennium and the End of the World*. Henderson, TN: Hester, 2002.
- Gentry, Kenneth L. Jr. "Postmillennialism." *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*. Ed. Darrell L. Bock. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.
- Grenz, Stanley J. *The Millennial Maze: Sorting Out Evangelical Options*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992.
- . *Theology for the Community of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.
- Hoekema, Anthony A. "Amillennialism." *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*. Ed. Robert G. Clouse. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1977.
- Holy Bible. *New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988.
- Ladd, George Eldon. *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961.
- . "Historic Premillennialism." *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*. Ed. Robert G. Clouse. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1977.
- McCort, John. "Premillennialism Defined." *A Study of Premillennialism*. Fairmount, IN: Guardian of Truth, 1982.
- Poythress, Vern S. *Understanding Dispensationalists*. Grand Rapids: Academie, 1987.
- Richard, Ramesh P. "The Premillennial Interpretation of History." *Vital Prophetic Issues: Examining Promises and Problems in Eschatology*. Ed. Roy B. Zuck. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995.
- Ryrie, Charles Caldwell. *Dispensationalism Today*. Chicago: Moody, 1965.
- Strimple, Robert B. "Amillennialism." *Three Views on the Millennium and*

Beyond. Ed. Darrell L. Bock. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.

Walvoord, John F. *The Millennial Kingdom*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959.

---. *The Rapture Question*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964.

---. "The Theological Context of Premillennialism." *Bibliotheca Sacra*. Vol. 150 (1993). ATLASERIALS.