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Premillennialism Examined

by Jefferson David Tant

One of the popular doctrines among some denominations is the idea that Christ came to the earth with the view of establishing a kingdom on the earth. But this was prevented when Satan caused Christ to be crucified, thus thwarting God's plan. The church was then set up as a temporary solution until Christ returned to set up the kingdom over which he would reign for 1,000 years.

There are several problems with this doctrine, and a few of them will be discussed in this article.

The first matter has to do with prophecy and fulfillment. We remember that Daniel had a vision that depicted a statue made up of four parts — a head of gold, breast, and arms of silver, belly, and thigh of brass, and legs and feet of iron and clay. Then a great stone rolled down and struck the image's feet so that it fell and was destroyed. The four parts of the image represented the Babylonian kingdom in Daniel's time, followed by the Medo-Persian Empire, then the Greek, and finally the Roman Empire. God then explains to Daniel the meaning of the vision with respect to the legs and feet of the statue. *"In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever"* (Daniel 2:44).

It is interesting to note that since the days of the Roman Empire there has never been any kingdom or empire that has ruled over the known world as in those centuries. What happened in the 1st Century, A.D? Christ came to set up or establish God's spiritual kingdom. Notice the words of Christ himself in Mark 9:1: *"And Jesus was saying to them, 'Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.'"*

Note what Christ was preaching: *"From that time Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'"* (Matthew 4:17). What does the phrase *"at hand"* mean? That means near, close, and does not mean "thousands of years in the future."

Daniel was told that in the days of the Roman Empire God's spiritual kingdom would be set up. Christ said that within the lifetime of some who were then living the kingdom of God would come with power. If this did not happen, then we have a problem with Satan having more power than God. Who can believe it? And where are these 2,000-year-old people? Does anyone know where they are? Christ said some then living would not die before the kingdom came. Well, it did come a short time later on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when the church was established.

Consider a promise God made to Abraham concerning the dwelling place of his descendants. *"And it came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, [there appeared] a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates'"* (Genesis 15:17-18).

Now read what Allen Ross, a professor at the Dallas Theological Seminary, wrote about this prophecy. "Israel has never possessed this land in its entirety, but she will when Christ returns to reign as Messiah."

Let's compare that with what God has said. *"Now Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt; they brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life"* (I Kings 4:21). *"Now Solomon had 4,000 stalls for horses and chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities"*

and with the king in Jerusalem. And he was the ruler over all the kings from the Euphrates River even to the land of the Philistines, and as far as the border of Egypt” (II Chronicles 9:25-26).

So, just what is this kingdom that God said was coming to the world? The kingdom is the church. The image of the kingdom refers to Christ’s reign, and we are citizens of this kingdom. The image of the church refers to us individuals who have been called together out of the world of darkness to be a body of people, the spiritual body of Christ. In fact, the Greek word for “church” is “*ekklesia*,” which literally means “called out.” The church is a body of people who have been “called out” of the world to be citizens of the kingdom of God.

Christ occupies two positions. He is our high priest, and he is our spiritual king. Notice a prophecy concerning this in Zechariah 6:13: *“Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.”* Notice that it said that Christ “sit and rule on His throne,” and that “he will be a priest on His throne.” That prophecy says that he will sit and rule on His throne, which is describing a king. And at the same time, he is a priest. This does not say he is a priest now and will be a king later.

We are in the kingdom now. *“For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son”* (Colossians 1:13) That’s present tense, not future tense. There is a future that is associated with the kingdom, as Paul explained in I Corinthians 15:24: *“then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.”* That’s not on the earth but in heaven.

This doctrine is very prominent among the Jehovah’s Witnesses and is also a tenet of Baptist churches and other denominations. While the scriptures clearly refute this idea, one of the strongest arguments against this false doctrine is that it means that Satan has more power than God. If Satan prevented God and Christ from fulfilling the intent and promise to establish the kingdom when Christ came in the first century, what will prevent Satan from thwarting God’s purpose the second time, or the third time, or whenever? That would make Satan the ruler of the universe rather than God. Who can believe it?
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“He Often Refreshed Me”

- by Frank Himmel

Paul, in recounting to Timothy his imprisonment in Rome, wrote, “The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me — the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day — and you well know what services he rendered at Ephesus” (2 Timothy 1:16-18).

What brought Onesiphorus to Rome is unknown. Was he there on business? Was he a tourist? Whatever it was, Onesiphorus was not just focused on himself. While in Rome, he made considerable effort to locate Paul, and he kept trying until he succeeded. (Someone less dedicated might have made a minimal effort and said, “Oh well, I tried!”) He came again and again. These visits refreshed Paul, both the company itself as well as any needed provisions he may have received.

It is easy to get caught up in our own busy lives and fail to remember those who could use some encouragement. Stop. Take a moment to think about someone you could refresh. Then act. It likely won’t take you nearly as long or be as hard as it was for Onesiphorus. Be such that others can say of you, “He often refreshed me.”