

CHAPTER 2 - PRE-MILLENNIALISM

The time of the Second Coming of Christ is the key that unlocks all "Dispensational Truth." The vast majority of Christians believe in the personal return of the Lord, but they differ as to the time. They are divided into 'two schools, the "Pre-Millennialists" and the "Post-Millennialists." The "Pre-Millennialists" believe that Christ will return before the Millennium, the "Post-Millennialists" that He will not come until after. By the "Millennium" is meant the period of 1000 years mentioned in Rev.- 20:1-7. It is a common, but wholly erroneous impression, that Pre-Millennialists base their belief mainly, if not solely, on this passage in the Apocalypse. The fact is, the question of whether Christ's return will precede or follow the Millennium antedates the Apocalypse. The Old Testament prophets in plain language, and in glowing terms, foretold an era or age of universal righteousness and peace on this earth, under the reign of "Messiah the Prince." That the disciples were not mistaken in their belief in such an "Earthly Kingdom, " ruled over by their promised Messiah, is evident from the fact that Jesus never reproved them for holding such a belief. And after His resurrection, and previous to His Ascension, when they asked Him if He would "at that time restore the Kingdom to Israel" ([Acts 1:6](#)). He did not say - "You are mistaken in your idea of an 'Earthly Kingdom, the Kingdom I came to set up, and that was meant by the prophets, is a 'Spiritual Kingdom, "' but He said - "It is not for you to know the 'Times' and 'Seasons.'" That is, when it shall be set up.

The whole teaching of the Old Testament as to the "Coming of the Messiah" is Pre-Millennial. The only use that Premillennialites have for the "Thousand Year" passage in [Rev. 20:1-7](#) is to fix the length of that "Age of Righteousness and Peace." In fact Jewish tradition, based on the "Sabbatic Rest" of [Gen. 2:1-3](#), taught that the "Seventh Thousand Years" from Creation was to be a period of "Sabbatic Rest, " or what we call the Millennium. The passage in Revelation simply confirms this tradition. Expunge the passage and you do not weaken the argument; you only leave as uncertain the **length of time** that Age shall last.

The Apostolic Church was Pre-Millennial, and for over 200 years no other view was entertained. The writings of the "Church Fathers" abound in evidence of the fact. But about A. D. 250, Origen, one of the Church Fathers, conceived the idea that the words of scripture were but the "husk" in which was hid the 'kernel" of scripture truth. At once he began to "Allegorize" and "Spiritualize" the Scriptures, and thus founded that school of "Allegorizing" and "Spiritualizing" interpreters of Scripture, from which the Church and the Bible have suffered so much. The result was that the Church largely ceased to look for the Lord to return and set up an earthly kingdom.

When Constantine became sole Emperor of Rome in A. D. 323, being favorable to Christianity, he united Church and State. A new difficulty now arose in the interpretation of scripture. If, as was at that time believed, Rome was to be the seat of Antichrist, the question arose, or rather was suspiciously whispered-- 'Is Constantine the Antichrist?' Such a notion was unpalatable to the Roman Emperor, and so a convenient explanation was discovered and adopted, that Antichrist was "Pagan Rome, " and that the Millennium commenced when Constantine ascended the throne. This was given color by the great gifts and privileges bestowed on the Church by Constantine, and led to the claim that the Millennial blessings of the Old Testament had been transferred from the Jews to the Christian Church.

But the claim that the "Papal Church" was the Antichrist would not down. When it was found impossible to expunge the Book of Revelation from the sacred canon, it was decided to lock up the Scriptures, and the Bible became a sealed book, and the gloom of night settled down upon all Christendom. The result was the "Dark Ages." But amid the gloom God was not without witnesses to the truth. The Paulicians, Albigeneses, Waldenses, and other sects, bore testimony to the Premillennial return of the Lord.

But the darkness was not eternal. When the fullness of time was come the "Morning Star" of the Reformation, John Wycliffe, arose, and was soon followed by the "Sun, " Martin Luther, the brightness of whose light dispelled the darkness. The doctrine of the Premillennial Return of the Lord was revived, but the

Reformers did not go far enough. The period was one of religious strife and the formation of new religious sects. The result was an ebb of Spirituality and the growth of Rationalism, which refused to believe that the world was fast ripening for judgment, and a new interpretation of the Millennial Reign of Christ was demanded. This interpretation was furnished by the Rev. Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), a clergyman of the Church of England, who claimed that in reading the promises made to the Jews in the Old Testament of their restoration as a nation, and the re-establishment of the Throne of David, he was led to see that these promises were spiritual and applied to the Church. This view he called a "New Hypothesis."

He claimed that Israel and Mount Zion represented the Church. That the promised submission of the Gentiles to the Jews was simply prophetic of the conversion of the Gentiles and their entrance into the Church. That the lying down of the lion and the lamb together typified the reconciliation of the Old and New natures, and that the establishment of an outward and visible kingdom at Jerusalem, over which Christ and the saints should reign, was gross and carnal, and contrary to reason, as it implied the mingling together of human and spiritual beings on the earth.

His "New Hypothesis" was that by the preaching of the Gospel Mohammedanism would be overthrown, the Jews converted, the Papal Church with the Pope (Antichrist) would be destroyed, and there would follow a 1000 years of righteousness and peace known as the Millennium; at the close of which there would be a short period of Apostasy, ending in the return of Christ. There would then be a general resurrection of the dead, followed by a general judgment, the earth would be destroyed by fire and eternity would begin.

The times were favorable for the "New Theory." A reaction had set in from the open infidelity of those days. All England was in a religious fervor. The "Great Awakening" followed under Whitefield and Wesley, and it looked, as Whitby claimed, that the Millennium was about to be ushered in. That he was mistaken the events of history since that time have shown. It is evident that we are not in the Millennium now.

Nevertheless his "Theory" was favorably received everywhere, and spread with great rapidity and became an established doctrine of the Church, and is what is known today as the "Post-Millennial" view of the Second Coming of Christ, and supposed to be the orthodox faith of the Church. In short, "Post-Millennialism," as advocated in our day, is barely 200 years old, while "Pre-Millennialism" dates back to the days of Isaiah and Daniel.

The sad thing is that this "false doctrine" of Post-Millennialism is taught in our Bibles by the headings of the chapters in the Old Testament. For illustration the headings of chapters forty-three and four of Isaiah read-"The Lord comforteth **The Church** with His promises, " whereas the chapters are not addressed to the Church at all, but to **Jacob** and **Israel**, as we see by reading them. The ordinary reader overlooks the fact that the chapter headings of the Bible are put there by the publisher and should be omitted, as they are misleading, as for illustration the title to the Book of Revelation, which is called-

"The Revelation of **St. John the Divine**, " whereas it should be called-

"THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST."

[Rev. 1:1.](#)

Premillennialists are divided into three different "Schools of Interpretation, " which are fundamentally antagonistic, known as the "Preterist, " "Historical" and "Futurist" Schools.

The "Preterist School"-originated with the Jesuit Alcazar. His view was first put forth as a complete scheme in his work on the Apocalypse, published in A. D. 1614. It limits the scope of the Apocalypse to the events of the Apostle John's life, and affirms that the whole prophecy was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and the subsequent fall of the persecuting Roman Empire, thus making the Emperor Nero the "Antichrist." The purpose of the scheme was transparent, it was to relieve the Papal Church from the stigma

of being called the "Harlot Church" and the Pope from being called the "Antichrist." It is a view that is now but little advocated.

The "Historical School," sometimes spoken of as the "Presentist" scheme, interprets the Apocalypse as a series of prophecies predicting the events that were to happen in the world and in the Church from John's day to the end of time. The advocates of this School interpret the symbols of the Book of Revelation as referring to certain historical events that have and are happening in the world. They claim that "Antichrist" is a "System" rather than a "Person," and is represented by the Harlot Church of Rome. They interpret the "Time Element" in the Book on the "Year Day Scale." This School has had some very able and ingenious advocates. This view, like the preceding was unknown to the early church. It appeared about the middle of the Twelfth Century, and was systematized in the beginning of the Thirteenth Century by the Abbot Joachim. Subsequently it was adopted and applied to the Pope by the forerunners and leaders of the Reformation, and may be said to have reached its zenith in Mr. Ellicott's "Horae Apocalypticae." It is frequently called the Protestant interpretation because it regards Popery as exhausting all that has been predicted of the Antichristian power. It was a powerful and formidable weapon in the hands of the leaders of the Reformation, and the conviction of its truthfulness nerved them to "love not their lives unto the death." It was the secret of the martyr heroism of the Sixteenth Century.

The "Futurist School" interprets the language of the Apocalypse "literally," except such symbols as are named as such, and holds that the whole of the Book, from the end of the third chapter, is yet "future" and unfulfilled, and that the greater part of the Book, from the beginning of chapter six to the end of chapter nineteen, describes what shall come to pass during the last week of "Daniel's Seventy Weeks." This view, while it dates in modern times only from the close of the Sixteenth Century, is really the most ancient of the three. It was held in many of its prominent features by the primitive Fathers of the Church, and is one of the early interpretations of scripture truth that sunk into oblivion with the growth of Papacy, and that has been restored to the Church in these last times. In its present form it may be said to have originated at the end of the Sixteenth Century, with the Jesuit Ribera, who, actuated by the same motive as the Jesuit Alcazar, sought to rid the Papacy of the stigma of being called the "Antichrist," and so referred the prophecies of the Apocalypse to the distant future. This view was accepted by the Roman Catholic Church and was for a long time confined to it, but, strange to say, it has wonderfully revived since the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, and that among Protestants. It is the most largely accepted of the three views., It has been charged with ignoring the Papal and Mohammedan systems, but this is far from the truth, for it looks upon them as foreshadowed in the scriptures, and sees in them the "Type" of those great "Anti-Types" yet future, the "-Beast" and the "False Prophet." The "Futurist" interpretation of scripture is the one employed in this book.

The Second and Premillennial Coming of Christ is the "Key" to the Scriptures. All of the prophetic writings make it their terminal end. This is a dark world and the "Sure Word of Prophecy" is given as a light to show us the way over the stormy sea of time? [2Pet. 1:19](#). Prophecy is not a haphazard guess, like our weather probabilities, it is

History Written in Advance.

The moment we grasp this idea of prophecy and clearly see the relation of Christ's Premillennial Coming to scripture truth, the Bible becomes a new book, and doctrinal and prophetic truths at once fall into their proper place, and our theological system is no longer a chaos but an orderly plan.