

Words of Life

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church of Christ

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"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

John 6:68

Premillennialism and Realized Eschatology

Daniel H. King



One thing which becomes very obvious after some study of the premillennial theory, is that the theory itself is the hermeneutical principle by which its advocates measure most everything else. The person who believes sincerely that Revelation 20 teaches a literal one-thousand-year reign of Christ on earth at the end of time has a tendency to interpret all, or most all, prophecy in the light of this conviction. If you expend much energy and time on the prophets then you know it can prove a real frustration to see a passage which has a fairly obvious meaning be given an obviously forced interpretation in order to make it fit into the millennialist's "master plan" of eschatology. Clearly the text of the Bible is made to serve the needs of the theory instead of the reverse.

Some interpreters are so enamored of this way of viewing the "time of the end" that they write and speak about it and almost nothing else. Instead of getting the richly deserved name of "heretical fanatic" or some such designation, they are given by their admiring public the title of "prophecy expert." No title could be further from the truth. The messages of the prophets are not proclaimed by these men. They merely use what there is in the prophets that can be forced into the mold of their speculative hypothesis. Simple, candidly figurative language and straightforward use of simile, hyperbole, metaphor and other similar literary phenomena, come to spell out literal events, persons, and even numbers. It would not be legitimate to read the newspaper this way, but it is considered acceptable when the Word of God is thus read. This approach is taken in spite of the fact that the book of Revelation itself, said to be the theory's inspiration, claims (in the author's own words) to be written in signs and symbols (Rev. 1: 3)!

Premillennialism has been around quite some time now, has even threatened the unity of the church and the purity of her doctrine for a number of years. Most brethren are no longer amenable to the pollutions of this error at present, though, for enough preaching, teaching and writing has been done to head off a large-scale threat to the church. Many of our brethren have given credit to Foy Wallace for making preachers and elders cross the country aware that there was danger from a small element of premillennialists and a considerable number of sympathizers in our midst. Brother Wallace did a great deal of writing on the subject, as well as making it a persistent topic in his preaching. Whether he ought to be given credit for heading off a sizeable division or not may be a matter of dispute, but it is certain that he

Trends

A 2007 study of charitable giving shows that some population groups were more likely than others to have given away at least ten percent of their income. Among the most generous segments were evangelicals (24% of whom gave 10% of their income); conservatives (12%); people who had prayed, read the Bible and attended a church service during the past week (12%); and charismatic or Pentecostal Christians (11%). Several groups also stood out as highly unlikely to be generous in charitable giving: people under the age of 25, atheists and agnostics, single adults who have never been married, and liberals. One percent or less of the people in each of those segments gave 10% of their income in 2007.

-via The Barna Group

2 Corinthians 9:6-7: "But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."

Sentence Sermons

"Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see."
—Mark Twain

News & Notes

Please pray for those mentioned in the announcements after services and others listed on the bulletin board in the foyer of the church building.

Pray for all the members at Westside! Please pray for Susan Ferrell and her family as she continues to recover from a brain tumor. Please pray for her and her family.

Please pray for Alan Jones. He underwent deep brain stimulation to hopefully relieve severe facial pain. Alan held a gospel meeting for us in October 2014. He's been unable to preach for several months due to his affliction. Pray for him and his family.

Sister Virginia Brown's hip replacement surgery was a success! She is now back home and doing well! Keep praying for a fast and complete recovery!

Pray for Larry Halley as he recovers from major surgery to replace a heart valve.

Pray for the all of our students: elementary, secondary and college. Our young people face many temptations in today's school environment.

Please keep sister Wilma in your prayers! She gives all of us so much encouragement! God bless her and Virginia! Remember both of them in your prayers.

There are many needy saints! Can you help?! Let me know.

If you know of any in need of our prayers please let us know!

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aroused the interest and concern of enough brethren in positions of influence to awaken them from their lethargy.

The result was that Christians across the country closed ranks and shut out those who were set upon spreading these speculative views. Today there is almost no fellowship and little communication between those that hold this view in the church and those who do not.

Some have questioned this state of affairs from time to time. I can recall that in the Bible course at David Lipscomb College, for example, brother Batsell Barrett Baxter expressed his own opinion that brethren should never have divided over an issue which is purely speculative like this one. But the fact is that no denominational headquarters handed down the decree for this to be done. It was carried out by local elders and their congregations out of sincere concern at the spread of an error which they were convinced was both false and dangerous, and moreover, their action proved very effective. Except for those churches which proclaim themselves openly sympathetic to the premillennial cause, premillennialists or even sympathizers to their cause are as scarce as “hen’s teeth” in most churches of the Lord. If any preaching is done on the subject of eschatology (“last things”) at all, it inevitably includes some discussion of the theory and a refutation of its major tenets.

In recent years another movement has grown up among us which has many very clear-cut similarities to the premillennial view. This is not to suggest that this theory is the same as the premillennial one—in fact it represents an almost precisely opposite extreme. Whereas premillennialists desire to make just about everything literal that rightly should be seen as figurative and thus interpreted, so this new band of “realized eschatology” fanatics tend to make that which properly deserved to be seen as literal into mere symbolism, with the practical result of robbing the New Testament of any doctrine of last things.

Those who have followed this line of reasoning have generally fallen into the trap of their premillennialist precursors by feeling the need to reinterpret all of Sacred Scripture with this plan in mind. The result is an entirely new and different way of viewing much of the Bible, and in particular, its teaching on the end of time. Many of its preacher-adherents have become full-time apologists for the theory (in times past they would have been referred to as “hobby-riders”).

They are producing books, tracts, and pamphlets at a rapid pace—all with the promotion of this theory as the immediate business at hand. Informed readers will know the name of Max King (no relation to the present writer) in this connection. King has been quite outspoken, engaging several capable men in debate and writing on the subject as well. *Studies In Bible Prophecy*, a journal now in its eighth volume, is mailed out by the West Avenue Church of Christ in Ashtabula, Ohio. Its editor is Charles Geiser, with staff writers C.D. Beagle, Tim James, and Terry Siverd. The masthead of this paper reveals the creed of these writers: “The holy Scriptures teach that the second coming of Christ, including the establishment of the eternal kingdom, the day of judgment, the end of the world and the resurrection of the dead, occurred with the fall of Judaism in 70 A.D.”

The reader would do well to read and reread the statements contained in this credo. Perhaps it is the epitome of understatement to say that these views are quite far-reaching in their implications. These people are saying that the only return of Christ that there will ever be happened in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70! They are saying that the only last judgment that there will ever be happened in 70! They are also saying that the only resurrection of the dead that there will ever be happened in 70!

Have you gotten the full force of this view now? Surely you can see that this theory represents far more than a different-but-benign position on the second portion of Matthew 24. Like the premillennial doctrine, the views of these people on the 21st chapter of Luke (primarily) pervade all their interpretive efforts. It is the interpretive principle of their system. Every passage in the New Testament having to do with the destruction and judgment of the world suddenly requires to be interpreted in the light of the symbolism of those texts prophetically pointing to the fall and judgment of Jerusalem. They are as wed to this hermeneutical prejudice as are the premillennialists to theirs.

Until recently, conservative brethren have done almost no writing at all on this error. This likely also represents the amount of preaching and teaching that has been done during the same time period. Most conservative Christians consider this false doctrine to be the problem of liberal brethren, and of course, in large measure it still is. But the old saying, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” is surely applicable here. In my own work around the country I have been recently surprised to find that there are those convinced of the validity of these ideas worshipping and working with congregations standing in opposition to liberalism. I am not a prophet or a prophet’s son, but I think the ramifications of this are rather plain to see. We may not currently have a problem on this point, but if the growth of this tumor is not stopped, then we will surely have difficulties on up the road.

Let me encourage all who read this article, especially preachers and elders, to do some serious study of this question. And then some serious teaching and preaching on it. This is no doubt the reason that as little teaching and preaching has been done on it as has been up to now. Like premillennialism it is a doctrine that covers a wide range of Scriptures and requires a good bit of preparation to speak and write about. Over time brethren in places of responsibility have seen the need to become informed about the premillennial error and have read about it, written on it, and generally fitted themselves to deal with this system in a decisive way. We are going to have to do the same with this system of “realized eschatology.” Several printed debates are available on the market and may be obtained from *Guardian of Truth* bookstore. At present there is a crying need for more literature written in defense of truth and against this new heresy. More of our good writers need to turn some of their attention and at least some of their writing time toward this problem. I do not want to sound like an alarmist, but I genuinely fear that most of those who worship with conservative churches do not even know that this false doctrine exists.

In most places today we can freely and easily preach and teach on this issue without the slightest disturbance. The time to inform our people on this subject is now, while it is a simple matter of teaching them the issues involved. But if we wait, then we may awake one of these days to find ourselves fighting this issue in our own backyards, and with some of the very people whom we could easily have grounded in the truth!

[*Guardian of Truth* XXX: 4 (February 20, 1986), pp. 114-115]

Examining Realized Eschatology

The editor of *Words of Life* has written a tract refuting the AD 70 (Realized Eschatology) error. The tract is available in pdf format. If you would like a copy, just send me an e-mail (craigthomas82000@gmail.com) requesting it. The tract is not a complete refutation of the heresy, but it does refute its five major tenets in some detail.