

Why the Millennial Doctrine Is Not Biblical

BY ALBERT J. KEMPIN

Reason Number One

It Robs Jesus of His Throne and Crown

Teachers of the millennial doctrine say that when Jesus comes again, He will be crowned as King of kings and Lord of lords. Such teachers withhold our Lord's crown and deprive Him of His throne.

Jesus has a kingdom now. We list the following scriptures to prove this point: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder ... Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end" Isaiah 9:6-7. This reign is immediately associated with Christ's birth - "a son is given." Our Lord claimed a kingdom in His first advent to the world: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). That kingdom was to spread over the whole world: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14).

Millennial teachers would have the end come and then the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, but Jesus said the kingdom would be shared through the preaching of the gospel and then the end would come. Those who are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ are members of that kingdom: "The field is the world: the good seed are the children of the kingdom" (Matthew 13:38). In this very same world (which is the field wherein the kingdom of God operates) there is another kingdom whose members are called "the children of the wicked one."

Jesus has a throne now. Because millennial teachers refuse to recognize the kingdom of God in the world today, they rob Jesus of His throne. The prophet Daniel foresaw the time when Jesus would be given His throne or power to reign: "There was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations,

and languages, should serve him” (Daniel 7:14). When did Christ receive this kingdom? The same prophet answers us: “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him” (Daniel 7:13). Daniel saw Jesus ascending to God after having suffered, bled, and died, to begin His great mediatorial reign.

That this is true can be seen by coupling Hebrews 1:3 with the words of Daniel: “When he [Jesus] had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty, on high.” At that very time – the time of Christ’s ascension – the same New Testament writer said of Jesus, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom” (Hebrews 1:8). That throne is described as “the throne of grace” where we “may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

Our Lord wears the crown of His sovereignty now. Jesus is not an uncrowned king. He wears His glorious crown now. “We see Jesus crowned with glory and honor” (Hebrews 2:9). The Revelator described Jesus as having on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS (Revelation 19:16).

Reason Number Two

The Millennium is Centered in an Earthly Jerusalem

The teachers of the millennial doctrine point their followers to Jerusalem as the geographic location of the seat of Christ’s reign. However, our Lord Himself said, “Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! [that is, in Jerusalem, or any other earthly city] for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21). Jesus told the woman of Samaria whom He met at Jacob’s well, “The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain [Mount Gerizim], nor yet at Jerusalem [Mount Zion] worship the Father ... But the

hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him” (John 4:21–23).

Christians have a better rallying point than some famous city of earth. All such cities are vulnerable and subject to overthrow. There is “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10).

That city is described as “Jerusalem which is above is free ... the mother of us all (Galatians 4:26).

All the redeemed have found that eternal city which shall never be thrown down by wicked men. “Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (Hebrews 12:22). In that city are found the holy angels, all the redeemed of all ages, Jesus our Lord and King, His matchless throne, and God our Father.

Reason Number Three

It is Based Upon an Earthly People

The doctrine of a thousand years’ reign with Christ on earth creates anew the problem of race superiority. Jesus came to tear down the middle wall of partition which kept mankind divided into hostile camps – the wall between Jews and Gentile. It is God’s eternal purpose “that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him” (Ephesians 1:10). The fullness of times is located for us by Paul in Galatians 4:4: “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.”

Since that time all national, racial, social, political and economic distinctions between people are lost when men and women accept the mercy of God which He offers through His only begotten Son, our Saviour. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are

all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

A new kind of Israel has come into being since Jesus gave His life as a ransom for sin. The old Israel which was composed of those who were born as Jews physically has, since our Lord’s death on the cross, been removed from special privileges and lowered to the common level of all mankind. Paul says to all who would revive that racial distinction: “There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him” (Romans 10:12).

A mere Jew as such has no standing before God any more than any other sinner, “for God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all” (Romans 11:32). We are told that “he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly ... but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly” (Romans 2:2–29). The new birth through faith in Jesus Christ makes a new creature who with others of like spiritual nature make up the New Testament Israel of God. (Please read Galatians 6:15–16.)

The kingdom of God, therefore, is based upon a spiritual people composed of both Jews and Gentiles who have been saved by the precious blood of Christ. That is the “chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people” (1 Peter 2:9) of whom Peter speaks. Such redeemed people are “lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices.”

Reason Number Four

The millennial Doctrine Ignores the Spiritual Nature of the Kingdom of God

Chiliasts make the kingdom of God an earthly kingdom built not by the love of God, but by force. Such a base idea is invented by a wrenched use of some passages in the book of Revelation. For example, teachers of the millennium take such highly symbolic passages as Revelation 19:11–21 and interpret them literally to mean

that the holy Christ, the spotless Lamb of God who never lifted up His voice in the streets or resorted to retaliation, 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 followers into one of the most bloody battles of all time. Such persons say that Jesus will if necessary wade through a sea of blood so high that it will reach the bridle of His horse. Then, after this awful battle and after having annihilated His enemies, He will set up His kingdom. Such a conception of the establishment of the kingdom of God is certainly no honor to Christ who urged Peter to put up His sword. Jesus Himself said, "All they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword" (Matthew 26:52). If Christ's kingdom was to have been established with the sword, then, according to our Lord's own words, He pronounced the same doom upon His kingdom which has and will befall the kingdoms of earth.

But the kingdom of God was to be an everlasting kingdom which shall have no end. (See Luke 1:33). His kingdom was to be different from all other kingdoms. It was to be different, first, because a spiritual birth would make it a present reality to the believer. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Anyone who experienced the new birth would see the kingdom of God.

Second, Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). That means that our Lord's kingdom is not like earthly kingdoms; the test is that the servants of Christ do not fight with carnal weapons to protect their Ruler. That is how all earthly rulers are protected. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

Third, our Saviour revealed the true nature of the kingdom of God by saying to inquisitive Pharisees who thought Christ's

kingdom would be an earthly, temporal kingdom, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation...the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 11:20). The principle set forth here is that the kingdom of God is setup in the hearts of men and women who have experienced the new birth or who have been saved.

Fourth, the kingdom of God is defined beautifully by Paul from the standpoint of experience: “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17). There are three parts to the kingdom of God which every soul may experience: the righteousness of Christ, the peace which Christ imparts to all who forsake sin and accept Him as their Saviour, and joy which floods the saved soul as the Holy Spirit bears witness that he is indeed the child of God.

Fifth, everything about that kingdom is spiritual. Jesus Christ is its spiritual head, spiritual people serve Him willingly, spiritual laws govern the citizens of that heavenly kingdom, and spiritual food sustains them. Spiritual worship is rendered, spiritual sacrifices are offered, spiritual battles are fought, and a spiritual city is the common rallying point of all the redeemed.

Reason Number Five

It Opens the Door for the Wildest Kind of Speculation

Our generation has more than its share of prophets, but most of them are prophets of gloom. Such prophets of gloom have invented their antichrists, battle of Armageddon, tribulation, the mark of the beast, fanciful rapture, a number of future comings of Christ, at least five judgments, two physical resurrections, and the discovery of the lost tribes of Israel in England and the United States who, according to these prophets of gloom, make up the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. Every event of national or international significance is seized hold of and capitalized by these prophets who fit such events into their scheme of prophecy. The sad part is that such wild speculation finds such a welcome in the

hearts of a gullible public.

When the NRA was in vogue in the United States it was called the “mark of the beast” by many of these prophets. Others made the sickle and hammer of Russia the “mark of the beast”; still others said, and now say, that the swastika of Germany is that mark. The dictators of earth are feverishly used as the answer to the antichrist. I heard one man argue for almost an hour that Mussolini is the antichrist and after that lengthy effort he wound up his speech by saying, “Well, if Mussolini is not the antichrist, who is?” These prophets of gloom doubt their own message, but poor unsuspecting people who are ignorant of God’s Word accept such theories and believe them as though they were gospel truth.

This millennial doctrine has caused people to put on white garments, sell their household goods, give up their jobs, climb some high mountain, and there wait for the second coming of Christ, only to be bitterly disappointed. Even though the Lord Jesus said plainly that no one knows the day nor the hour of His coming, yet such prophets of gloom have fixed and continue to fix, dates for the end of the world and Christ’s second coming.

Zealots rush around repeating in parrotlike form, “He’s coming soon; he’s coming soon,” and after a while they die and still the Lord has not come. Some lose their faith entirely and backslide, becoming bitter in their hearts toward God because He did not allow things to happen according to their homespun ideas about the kingdom of God. Peter warned everybody that “the Lord is not slack concerning his promises, as some men count slackness...But the day of the Lord will come” (2 Peter 3:9–10).

The millennial doctrine has given rise to groups who say that Christ will setup His kingdom in Salt Lake City, Zion City, Illinois, in London, etc. No one needs to speculate, the New Testament is plain. Jesus came to tell us to “repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17) The Lord Jesus is not looking for any earthly city in which to set up His kingdom. He is looking for

precious hearts which are hungering and thirsting after God. In such He would establish His glorious reign (See Luke 17:20–21).

Every child of God may have a share in spreading the kingdom of God by praying, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

Reason Number Six

It Perpetuates the Old Covenant Which was Abrogated

Teachers of the thousand-year reign theory refer to the Jews as “the covenant people of God.” One would suppose that they are still bound to the Lord by the covenant which was given to them at Sinai. Such teachers fail to see that the Hebrews broke that covenant. Since they broke it, the conditions stipulated within that covenant were rendered void. It was for this reason that God Himself removed this contract between Himself and the people of Israel according to the flesh. Let us consider some Bible proof on this point: “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Colossians 2:14). (Please see also Hebrews 10:7–10).

The Old Testament covenant was called the “first covenant,” “old,” “the first testament” which was dedicated with the blood of bulls and goats, “the ministration of condemnation,” “the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones,” “that which is done away,” and “that which is abolished.” [That which was shadowed forth in the old covenant was fulfilled in Christ.]

The Christian lives under the new covenant – one dedicated with the precious blood of Christ. This is the New Testament which brings to the believer the glorious blessing of eternal salvation.

Therefore, the only covenant people whom God recognizes today are those who are saved through faith in Jesus Christ.

Reason Number Seven

The Millennial doctrine Holds Out False Hopes to Both Jews and Gentiles

In this day when the hopes of people are being dashed to pieces, it is a tragedy to deal with fainting hearts with anything but the truth. Everyone is aware of how the Jews have been made to suffer on the European continent. This same prejudice is reaching the shores of America. Millennial teachers are doing the Jews the greatest kind of injustice by raising their hopes through their teaching that they shall once more be the center of a universal empire – that when Christ comes again they will be the nation upon which Jesus will build His millennial kingdom. The poor Jews have suffered enough – why hold out such a bubble to them? It will only burst before their very eyes to plunge them into deeper misery.

Jesus came to destroy this race consciousness, this class rule. Jesus came to build a universal brotherhood. The Jews may find their place in this New Testament commonwealth by doing what all Christians have done: humbly confessing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God to the glory of the Father. There is salvation in no other name. They may reign with Christ right now over sin, the flesh and the devil. This is their only hope – let Christians declare it to them in meekness and with love.

This fanciful doctrine also tends to hold out false hopes to the Gentiles. Some millennial camps have “a second chance” attached to the supposed coming reign on earth. Such teachers say that if you are not saved in this life you will have another chance when Jesus comes. That is most destructive and misleading. Some mothers are consoling themselves with the thought that if their children are not saved now they will be during the tribulation, and even during the millennium. The New Testament emphatically declares that now is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation. There is no hope for either Jew or Gentile after death. “As a tree falleth, so shall it lie.” Dear reader, do not put off your

salvation. Be saved today.

Reason Number Eight It Discourages Present Victory in Salvation Work

This false doctrine is based upon the worst kind of pessimism. It discourages revival work by saying that it is impossible to have real Holy Ghost revivals because we are drawing toward the close of this age. Missionaries and evangelists are sent out to tell the people that a Saviour has come and in this manner they hope to hasten the end and usher in the second coming of Christ. This doctrine rests upon the assumption that the world is getting worse and worse and that righteousness is getting weaker and weaker – that when Jesus does come He will find very few who are saved.

Such leaders fail to understand the import of our Lord's teaching when He gave the parable of the wheat and the tares. It is true that tares will grow and keep on multiplying, but we must also remember that the wheat is growing all the time, too. In other words, as righteousness spreads, wickedness is also spreading, and vice versa. If Christ is rejected in one community, He is being accepted elsewhere. When one door closes, another opens where the gospel may be preached.

When Jesus comes, His bride, the church, will have made herself ready. This process of getting the church ready for Christ's coming is going on all the time. While the world will be astonished at His coming, the church will rejoice.

These futurists pass over the church lightly as being of little importance and focus their attention on the coming millennial age. Such say that the church is an incident in the scheme of redemption and that the prophets looked over this parenthetical incident to the millennium. Charts by millennial teachers nearly always show the church in a valley and the millennial age on a high elevation.

But the reader must remember that the church is of such

importance in the divine scheme of redemption that the prophets foretold its glory and that Jesus shed His blood to make it possible. John the Revelator describes the fortunes of the church of God in the book of Revelation and shows that at Christ's coming it will come forth triumphant over all its foes. Through all eternity the church will be the marvel of all heaven. The saints of all ages will sing the song of deliverance through Jesus Christ.

If the church is failing in some places, it is due to the fact that some preachers and teachers are dealing with such theories and not with the gospel of salvation from sin. When Christ is made central, the church marches on to victory. Man-made doctrines and prophetic speculation obscure the church and hinder its success. Let the churches begin to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified and see how quickly the fires of evangelism will be rekindled. The church can be a success in the midst of a sinful world. It is the only agency designed for the salvation of the world. Jesus said, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." These words send a ray of hope through the gloom created by millennialism.

Reason Number Nine **Chiliasm Turns the Stream of Spiritual Development** **Backwards**

The order of development according to the divine scheme is from the natural to the spiritual, from the earthly to the heavenly, from types and shadows to the substance. However, millennial teachers would reverse the biblical order.

They turn from the heavenly Jerusalem to earthly Jerusalem. As stated before, the whole millennial theory centers in a restoration of Jerusalem as the center of a Christocracy. Their argument rests upon a misconception of Isaiah 11:11, which reads: "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, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from

Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.”

The common interpretation of this verse by millennialists is that this second effort on the part of the Lord to recover His people will take place at the second coming of Christ. However, two things must be borne in mind.

First, remember that Isaiah 11 is a glowing description of the gospel dispensation made possible by the coming of the One who is described prophetically as “a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch.” The Spirit of the Lord was to rest upon him and he would “judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.” A great transformation was to be wrought in the lives of people who are symbolized by a wolf, a lamb, leopard, kid, cow, bear, lion and ox. Through the righteousness of Christ, the fierce, the merciless, the vain, the devourer would be so changed that only love would prompt their actions and love would help otherwise incompatible people to dwell together in holy, tranquil concord. This does not apply to some future age in which the animals themselves shall have their natures changed; it applies only to beast-like people who through salvation are made new creatures in Christ Jesus. The animals as such will always be just what God made them to be. When they die they perish and are no more, but the spirit of man lives on eternally. Man is the creature for which Christ died.

The second thing to remember about Isaiah 11:11 is that the burden of the prophet in particular concerned the welfare and salvation of the Gentiles. This can be seen from the fact that the prophetic declaration takes in even the isles of the sea – not only the mainland. The Gentiles were the other portion of the human family which was to be a recipient of God’s mercy through Jesus Christ. They are described as ‘the remnant of his people.’ That this was so can be proved by reading Acts 15:17 in which James says

“that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles.”

Those who accept the proffered salvation become, with the saved Jews, a people taken out of the world for His name. In behalf of the Gentile world, God “set” his mighty hand (Isaiah 11:11) in two mighty deliverances – the first when he commanded Noah to build the ark (which was a type of the second deliverance through Him who today is the ark of our salvation), the second when Jesus went to the cross to become sin for us. It was then that the whole world was included in God’s salvation.

If someone would like to apply this passage in Isaiah to the Jews, then a better interpretation can be found for it than the millennial interpretation. Instead of making that second deliverance still future, we can show that this deliverance has been taking place since the birth of Jesus. The first deliverance of the Jews took place when God with a strong hand led the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. The second deliverance of the Hebrews was included in the sacrifice of Christ. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, pointed to it when he said, “That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life” (Luke 1:74–75).

Millennial teachers turn from the spiritual temple back to the earthly, literal temple at Jerusalem. The actual restoration of the temple in Jerusalem at some future time is included in the program of the millennial teachers. Such say that when this happens all the people will turn again to Jerusalem as in ancient days.

But the world has come up through the kindergarten state of types and shadows. God’s will is that the Christian go from glory to glory. Since Jesus came into the world, the old temple built out of wood and stone has given way to a universal temple built out of redeemed men and women. Peter said, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5). The writer to the

Hebrews describes the New Testament temple as “the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Hebrews 8:2). This temple is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20).

James revealed this spiritual progression which goes from the temporal to the spiritual by summing up the council at Jerusalem as follows: “After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up” (Acts 15:16). This was all based upon the fact that the Gentiles were accepting Christ. God was building the eternal temple against which the gates of hell would not prevail. That temple would never be supplanted by another.

To go back to a literal temple in an earthly city would be like turning the clock of time backward to the pre-Christian era.

Millennial teachers turn from spiritual sacrifices back to animal sacrifices. With the supposed re-establishment of the Palestinian Jerusalem and the restoration of the Jewish temple, we are told that the ancient sacrifices of animals will be resumed. Such teachers turn deliberately from the blood of Christ, which alone can cleanse from sin, and point us back to the blood of bulls and goats for the remission of sins. That is going backwards! That is truth in reverse! Is it not terrible to what extremities the world is driven to uphold its theories?

The Christian is no longer to come before God with the blood of some animal or bird; he is “to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). The Christian is urged to “offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. But to do good, and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Hebrews 13:15–16). And, God will not be pleased with any other kind of sacrifices.

Millennial teachers would reinstate the Aaronic priesthood.

This naturally follows in the wake of their carnal teaching. If the city of Jerusalem with its temple is to be restored, then we must create a priesthood to perpetuate the duties of that temple. This is what these men and women do; they turn away from Jesus Christ as the High Priest and from the New Testament priesthood and go back to the Old Testament regime with its vested priests and carnal ordinances.

Jesus is our High Priest who abides forever. He will always be the Lamb of God, slain from before the foundation of the world. Like Melchizedek, he is a priest forever. Our Lord's priesthood is unchangeable.

Every believer in Christ is made a priest in this dispensation so that he may freely enter the presence of God to offer up his sacrifices. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). Daniel said that this kingdom of priests would never be supplanted by another people: "The kingdom shall not be left to other people" (Daniel 2:44). To this agree the words of the Revelator. "Unto him that loved us...and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 1:6).

Reason Number Ten

The Millennial Theory Mutilates the Word of God

Most of us have either read after or have heard some teacher who parcels out the sayings of our Lord according to his theory. For example, some millennial teachers put off the fulfillment of certain portions of the Sermon on the Mount until the millennium begins; this passage is for the "church age" and that passage is for the "kingdom age," etc.

Prophecies which, like Isaiah 11, 35, 60, 65; Ezekiel 37-40; Daniel 2, 7, 9, portray the first advent of our Lord are used to describe the second coming of Jesus.

Victory over sin and the devil is put off until the millennium

and a defeatist attitude is adopted for the present. However, a careful reading of both the Old and New Testaments will show that Jesus was to usher in glorious rest and peace through the gospel. These blessings are set forth as obtainable right now.

Reason Number Eleven

The Doctrine of the Millennium Misapplies the Period of the Great Tribulation

The finger of Christian scholarship through the ages has pointed to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish state as the fulfillment of the passages in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. History points to A.D. 70 for the great tribulation which millennial teachers refuse to accept, pointing all the while to the future for such a tribulation. A little independent research in some library will convince any reasonable, unbiased heart of the truth of this position. Let the reader consult such authors as Josephus, Adam Clarke, Matthew Henry, and Philip Mauro for a safe and sane interpretation of the portions of scripture cited.

If the reader will turn in his Bible to the following passages he will find what Jesus said about “the great tribulation”: Matthew 24:21–22; Mark 13:19–20; and Luke 21:20–24. Also Daniel’s picture of this awful event in Daniel 12:1.

The tribulation period foretold by Daniel the prophet was not to follow Christ’s second coming, but was to come shortly after our Lord’s first advent. Jesus said it would reach its complete fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem, the ruin of the Jewish State, and the desolation of their land. Our Lord referred to this very event as a tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world, “no, nor ever shall be.” This utterly refutes the modern idea of another and greater tribulation time yet to come. Jesus plainly told us there will be no tribulation after the destruction of Jerusalem that will ever equal it; and I am inclined to believe His statement rather than that of modern speculators.

If anyone will take time to read the description of that awful calamity which befell the Jews as portrayed in the works of Josephus, he cannot help but see that the prophecy of Daniel was fulfilled at that time. Even Moses foretold the “days of vengeance” which came upon the Jewish nation. I invite the reader to get his Bible and carefully read Deuteronomy 28:49–57. Here is foretold to the very letter what happened to the Jews, to some extent, in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, and in the fullest extent when the Roman armies desolated Jerusalem and Judea at the time referred to here.

No other epoch in history parallels the calamities and miseries of the Hebrew people: rapine, murder, famine, and pestilence within; fire and sword, and all the horrors of war without. Our Lord wept at the foresight of those calamities; and it is almost impossible for any humane person to read them, as recorded by the Jewish historian, without weeping also. These were the “days of vengeance, that all things which were written might be fulfilled.” All the calamities predicted by Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, and other prophets, as well as those predicted by our Saviour, met in one common center and were fulfilled in the most terrible manner on that generation. God sent vengeance and wrath upon that people for the blood they had shed. Josephus computes the numbers of those who perished in the siege at eleven hundred thousand. In the entire war, about 1,357,660 were slaughtered. If it had continued much longer no flesh would have been saved. The whole Jewish nation would have been wiped out of existence. But Jesus had said “this generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.” The generation of the Jews was to be preserved till the end. For this reason “those days were shortened.”

The Christians of the first century had been forewarned by Jesus to flee from Jerusalem when they saw some of the first signs of the siege of that city by the Roman armies. Please take time to read Luke 21:20–21, which contains our Lord’s warning to the Christians in Jerusalem. “Thy people shall be delivered, every one that

shall be found written in the book (Daniel 12:1).

Just as soon as the Roman armies appeared, that was a sure sign for the disciples of Christ to flee. This counsel was remembered by the Christians. Eusebius tells us that “all who believed in Christ left Jerusalem and fled to Pella, and other places beyond the river Jordan: and so they all marvelously escaped the general shipwreck of their country; not one of them perished.”

So you see that instead of looking for the fulfillment of these things in literal Jerusalem subsequent to Christ’s second advent, we know that they have already been fulfilled to the letter.

Reason Number Twelve It Invents a Fanciful Rapture

According to this supposed secret coming of Christ to snatch away His bride (the church), the world will be unaware of the fact that Christ has come. 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.

It is true that the world of sinners will be taken by surprise because they are in darkness. Our Lord’s coming will overtake such persons as a thief in the night. Christ will come when they least expect Him. But, Paul says the Christian will not be surprised like that: “Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief” (1 Thessalonians 5:4). The Christian is looking for the Lord and will be ready to welcome Christ when He does come.

Paul points out the fact that at one and the same time Jesus will come “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not

God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” At the same time Jesus “shall come to be glorified in his saints” (2 Thessalonians 1:7–10). Let the reader notice every word of that passage.

At one and the same time our Lord will punish with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord those who know not God and have not obeyed the gospel, and he will be also glorified in his saints. That is why John said, “Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him” (Revelation 1:7).

Our dear brethren who teach a secret rapture wrest 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17 to suit their position. They seek to relate this passage 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. Then, after that excursion into the clouds, the saints, with the Lord, will return to the earth, which supposedly has been cleansed by the tribulation fires, to reign for one thousand years.

A careful reading of the passage in Thessalonians will reveal that Paul was writing to Christians who were troubled about the future welfare of the church. The apostle is not addressing himself to the unsaved, wicked people. He says to Christians, that when the Lord returns in His second advent there will be saints living on the earth ready to meet their Lord. These living saints shall be “changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.” Those who are alive 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 we the living, who survive, will be caught up along with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (Moffatt). The King James Version adds, “And so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Only in that sense can the word “rapture” be used. That meeting with Christ and with our loved ones will indeed be a rapturous experience.

Reason Number Thirteen

The Millennial doctrine Breaks the Continuity of Daniel's Seventy Weeks

This time prophecy is found in Daniel 9:24–27. Every impartial scholar construes and interprets these weeks as seventy consecutive weeks. Millennial teachers, however, in order to make room for the rapture and the supposed coming tribulation, say that the first sixty-nine weeks are consecutive, but the seventieth is detached from the sixty-ninth and held off until the millennium is set up. In other words, such teachers admit that this time prophecy takes us up to Christ's first advent with the sixty-nine weeks, and then "the church age" intervenes, covering something like two thousand years. After that the seventieth week meets its fulfillment.

This is like telling a man who sets out on a journey of seventy miles that he will find the first sixty-nine miles consecutive miles, but after the Sixty-ninth mile he will find a sign telling him that the seventieth, or last mile, is two thousand miles away. Such interpretation is ridiculous. Those seventy weeks are to be interpreted as seventy consecutive weeks which take us from the command to rebuild Jerusalem to the destruction of the Jewish State.

Reason Number Fourteen

It Contradicts Paul's Verdict that "Flesh and blood Cannot Inherit the Kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50)

Premillennial teachers associate the establishment of the kingdom of God with the second coming of Christ. Paul shows clearly in this chapter that when Jesus comes those who have died will be resurrected, and those who are alive when Jesus comes will be changed from mortality to immortality. Millennial teachers ignore this fact and say that after Jesus has come and established His earthly kingdom, life will go on much the same as it goes on now. This is due to a literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecies and the

putting off of their fulfillment to the second coming of Christ. Such teachers say that in the millennium people will be married, rear children and die. They will ride trolley cars, sit under fig trees, raise vineyards, and carry on missionary work. That is a carnal conception of the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is primarily a reign of righteousness in which redeemed, spiritual people who are in the world and yet not of it reign in this life by one Christ Jesus. See Romans 14:17 and 5:17.

Reason Number Fifteen

The Millennial Doctrine Ignores the Kingdom of God as a Present Reality

Men and women, very often sincere, cannot see the fact that Jesus is King of kings now, or that there is such a thing as the kingdom of God. They say that Jesus was a prophet, is priest now, and is our coming king. Such leaders fail to notice that Zechariah said, “He shall build the temple of the Lord; and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both” (Zechariah 6:13). Two New Testament passages answer this prophecy: Acts 15:15–17, which associates the inclusion of the Gentiles with the building of the New Testament temple or church, and the picture of Christ seated at the right hand of God the Father making intercession for his saints (Hebrews 7:25). As we have pointed out before, that throne upon which Christ is seated is the throne of grace (4:16).

The fact that the kingdom of God is a present reality is summed up beautifully by Paul when he says: “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Colossians 1:13). This is too plain to need any comment. Every person who is born again sees that kingdom (John 3:3).

When Jesus comes again, He will be the judge of all mankind

and His redemptive reign will be ended: “He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). “He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:2–26). Paul states that death is destroyed “at his coming” at the resurrection, at “the end.” Hence, if we are to reign with Christ, we ought to do it now. When He comes again, the redeemed will enter the realm of endless praise and adoration.

Reason Number Sixteen

The Millennial Doctrine with its Many Comings and Many Judgments Renders Ineffective the Actual Second Coming and the Judgment Day

The minds of men have been beclouded and confused by the strange twists which millennial teachers give to God’s holy Word. The plain teaching of Jesus concerning His second coming is, “I will come again” (John 14:3). The writer to the Hebrews said, “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28).

Millennial teachers disregard these plain teachings on one future coming and have Jesus coming secretly in a supposed rapture, then coming with His saints, and, after the millennium, coming for the last or White Throne Judgment. That does not sound like one future coming; it sounds like many comings.

We might note that Jesus comes with His saints for His saints, because all who have died in the faith are said to be with the Lord. Since the church or the family of God is composed of all true believers, both in heaven and on earth, it is easy to see how Jesus can come with His saints (those who have died before His second coming) for His saints (those who are alive when Jesus does come

again). No, these saints with whom Jesus is seen coming are not “the tribulation saints.”

The New Testament points to only one great judgment which is still future—a judgment in which both the righteous and the unrighteous are brought before the great tribunal of God. The fancied introduction of judgments for sin, for nations, for saints, and for sinners is not only unscriptural, but confusing. Such interpretation takes the spotlight of conscience and of truth from that one great event toward which all creation is moving. 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 Corinthians 5:10).

Our Lord Himself assured 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). We should so live that we will be found dressed in God’s righteousness when we stand before His throne.

Reason Number Seventeen

Millennial Teachers Invent Another Physical Resurrection

According to such teachers, there are two physical resurrections yet future. One resurrection will be for the righteous just before the millennium, and the second resurrection, for the wicked, will be after the millennium. The New Testament is very plain on this matter. Let the reader read John 5:22–29 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 to see that only one general resurrection is still future.

Advocates of such doctrine fail to see that the first resurrection is spiritual and the second one is literal. This is where all the confusion originates. All will admit that sin causes a spiritual death: “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” “She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.” Only a spiritual resurrection can recover such persons from that spiritual death. That is exactly what the

New Testament teaches. Let us see if it does. “This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found” (Luke 15:24).

John describes the spiritual resurrection which takes place now as a result of believing on Jesus as Saviour: ‘Verily, verily 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’ (John 5:25). Note that Jesus speaks of both the spiritual and physical resurrections in this fifth chapter of John.

Paul 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” (Colossians 3:1). Other scriptures could be cited to prove this point, but lack of space will not permit doing so. The reader can trace this teaching through the New Testament himself, having been given this start.

Reason Number Eighteen

The Millennium is Based Upon an Erroneous Interpretation of the Twentieth Chapter of Revelation

The passage in question is found in Revelation 20:1–10. The language of this section, and in fact the whole book of Revelation, is highly figurative and symbolic and so it must be interpreted in harmony with the plain teaching of the Bible. A symbolical or allegorical passage must not determine the sense of the clear and literal passage, but rather, a clear and literal passage will help us to determine the sense of an enigmatical passage.

First of all, we find the dragon bound with a chain and cast into the abyss. The reader will please turn to Revelation 12:7–9 and there see that the same dragon is there introduced. It was the dragon who was being bound and not the devil himself. The word “devil” is an epithet of the dragon, as is also “serpent” and “Satan.”

This dragon was as cunning as a serpent, as cruel in its

opposition as Satan, and as relentless in accusing the saints as is the devil. This dragon-power represented pagan Rome which persecuted the woman, or the church of God. The overthrow of paganism in the Roman Empire by the mighty power of Christianity was the struggle which the Revelator described in chapter twenty. The result of this struggle was the limitation of the power of idolatry and paganism.

The chain which bound the dragon was the preaching of the gospel; nothing else can defeat the powers of wickedness.

During the thousand years (which are a symbolic expression for a long period), the departed martyrs who “were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands,” lived and reigned with Christ. This presents forcibly the fact that human personality survives the death of the body. The body may be killed, but the spirit of man lives on eternally. While the Christian life may be wiped out on earth, it goes on in eternity. This is one of the strongest arguments in the Bible for personal immortality. Men may kill the body but they cannot kill the soul. Even though the kingdom of God seems to be defeated on earth, yet its hosts are shouting victory on the other side of this vale of tears. One must remember that the kingdom of God includes all the redeemed both in heaven and on earth. It is this heavenly phase of the kingdom which John portrays symbolically.

[Chapter 20 of Revelation is a history of the Gospel Day. It opens with the early morning church fighting the dragon of Paganism. It ends with the final White Throne Judgment. The thousand years covers the long history wherein were martyrs and the saved who reigned with Christ, having experienced the first resurrection despite this dark and cloudy time. They triumphed over all false religion – whether they lived or died, for “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” The thousand years ends

with the sixth trumpet time – the 1880 Reformation of the church of God.]

Note that there are two kinds of “dead” and two kinds of “life.” The Revelator shows that the gospel has power to effect a resurrection in the person who is “dead in trespasses and sins.” When the gospel is adulterated or “another gospel” is substituted for it, it loses its life-giving power and deals out death rather than life. “The letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life.”

So there are those who, while alive physically, are dead spiritually, and there are those who are alive physically and spiritually also. A person may die a spiritual death which severs him from all that is good and holy in this life, and then he will some day die physically to face the Judge of the universe who will consign all who have died without Christ to what John calls “the second death,” or eternal banishment from the presence of God. However, all who hear the call of Christ to repentance and are truly converted from the error of their ways, receive life eternal now and reign in life, for “he that hath the Son hath life.” Jesus said that the believer who “believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). This life in Christ is called symbolically “the first resurrection” because of its priority, importance and superiority over the resurrection of the body. All of the martyrs had part in that first resurrection because they had been saved from all sin by faith in Jesus Christ.

John says that the rest of the dead (those who were in sin) lived not again until the thousand years were finished – or until the time of [the sounding of the seventh trumpet – wherein God restored His church. From that time on, people began to live again because men and women could more readily find salvation.

Those who are saved by faith in Jesus Christ are assured that the second death will have no power over them. Instead of being banished eternally from the presence of Christ, the redeemed of

all time will hear words of welcome from the Saviour and will then be ushered into the presence of God where, through all eternity, they shall praise Him who loved them and gave Himself for them.

Reason Number Nineteen

It Limits the Duration of the Kingdom of God to a Literal Thousand Years

The writers of both the Old and New Testaments agree that the kingdom of God is not so limited. Isaiah said, “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end” (Isaiah 9:7). Daniel said, “The kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44). “His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (7:14). “He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever: and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:33). “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

Reason Number Twenty

It Points Christians to This Earth as Their Future Home

Our Lord always pointed His followers away from this earth to that heavenly realm to which He ascended. He promised to return to take His redeemed to the place He has gone to prepare for us. If this would not have been so Jesus would have informed us.

All the writers of the New Testament point to heaven as the eternal abode of the righteous. This is the place wherein dwelleth righteousness. This is the “new heavens and the new earth.”

The hope of millennialists for a reign on earth after Christ comes is dealt a death-blow by the writers of the New Testament who declare by inspiration: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the 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.”

Reason Number Twenty-One

It Accomplishes No More than Can Now be Accomplished Through Jesus Christ

Every heart may now enjoy righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. No one need wait for a better day because “now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). The presence of Christ can be made real through the Holy Spirit. Peace which passeth all understanding may be the heritage of every ransomed soul. The heart full of sin and like a desert may blossom like a rose. Let no one be deceived into believing that a better day than the gospel day will ever dawn upon the earth. When that day is ended there will be no more time, but eternity will roll on endlessly.

Reason Number Twenty-Two

The Whole Millennial Theory is Based upon Guesswork

When one reads millennial literature he is amazed at the many interpretations given to the theory. There are the two main camps: pre and postmillennarians. Some would make the millennial kingdom come to the American continent, others to Asia. Some would like to set the time (and have done so) for the second coming of Christ and the establishment of the millennial reign. Others deny such attempts but fix dates of their own. From the days of Nero till Adolph Hitler such teachers have labored earnestly to tag their “man of sin.” Every generation has its “scholars” who shout with glee that they have discovered the antichrist, or the superman who will lead the nations in a great dictatorship which will clash with the forces led by Christ. But just as surely as the years pass by, such teachers are exposed as false and every “man of sin” and every humanly tagged antichrist passes from the scene of action to give way to some other spectacular person who commands the attention of

prophetic speculators. Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm, Mussolini, Stalin, and now Adolph Hitler form the characters who have, and are, being made the subjects of prophetic fulfillment.

It is high time that men and women stop guessing and cling to the simple, plain, beautiful truth about the kingdom of God as a present reality through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. "The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it" (Luke 16:16).

"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12). This force is not carnal force made possible by the use of armaments, but is the force which every sincere, penitent soul manifests when he cries to God for mercy. Such earnestness brings the pardon of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Reason Number Twenty-three Millennialism is Rooted in Man's Quest Through the Ages for a Golden Age

The pleasant hope of a renovated earth entirely free from sin and suffering has always created in the thoughtful minds of ancient nations a longing for the dawn of a "second golden age."

Hesiod, the famous poet of ancient Greece, like the ancient sages of India, sought to bridge the chasm between the degenerate men and their gods by supposing that in the golden age man was pure and good and lived in happiness upon the abundant supply of the earth. But as sin increased, the lot of man became harder in the subsequent ages, so after the silver and the brazen age, the iron or the present sinful age came upon the earth.

The Hindus believed that the last incarnation of their god will appear on earth to bring back the golden age. In the West the same tune was sung by Vergil, the celebrated Roman poet, who testified that "the return of the golden age was the goal and the ideal of

human hope.”

The duration of this blissful period was estimated by many to be “a thousand years.” Plato in his *Republic* (x, 615–21 and Vergil in his *Aeneid* (vi, 749) mentioned this period as the duration of happiness or suffering for the soul, according to its deeds.

“It was later Zoroastrian belief that time consisted of a series of twelve millenniums, the last of which should be marked by a wonderful, progressive amelioration of the lot of the human race. Before the end of the twelfth millennium, Saoshyant, the Triumphant Benefactor ... would be born. During the space of fifty-seven years, all evil would be destroyed, and, at the end of this period, Ahriman, the fiend, would be annihilated and the renovation for the future existence would occur.”

The foregoing view, prevalent in Persia and Babylonia whither the Jews were carried captive, seems to have influenced the later Jewish eschatology a great deal. The scriptural doctrine of the Messianic kingdom as predicted in the Old Testament has always depicted it as of eternal duration. Isaiah said: “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder ... Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever” (Isaiah 9:-7). The same idea is conveyed in Ezekiel 37:25; Daniel 2:44; 6:26; Joel 3:20.

But in later Jewish apocryphal and apocalyptic writings this reign of righteousness is conceived as more or less limited in duration. Moreover, the purely spiritual conception of the Messianic reign of righteousness in the earlier scriptures became colored more or less by gross materialistic ideas which bear the impress of heathen influence rather than of divine revelation.

It is important also to notice that these materialistic conceptions of the Messianic kingdom of limited duration occur more clearly in certain noncanonical and apocryphal writings of the

post-Alexandrian period. When the Jewish nations were chafing under the galling yoke of their Greek conquerors and pious Israelites were disgusted with the inroads of Hellenic ideas and civilization in Palestine, their Messianic expectation became the strongest and their imagination of it ran the wildest. Any picture of a national revival and future prosperity, however gross, was welcomed with eager enthusiasm and cherished as divine revelation.

In the apocalyptic book of Ethiopic Enoch (104–95 B.C.), after describing that the world will have already passed through seven weeks of its existence at the advent of the Messiah (xciii, 3:10), it is stated “And after that there will be another week, the eighth, that of righteousness, and a sword will be given to it that judgments and righteousness may be executed on those who commit oppression, and sinners will be delivered into the hands of the righteous. And at its close they will acquire houses through their righteousness and the house of the Great King will be built in glory forever. After that in the ninth week righteous judgments will be revealed to the whole world and all the works of the godless will vanish from the whole earth ... after this in the tenth week, there will be great eternal judgment” (xci, 12:15).

The same writer also tells us that God Himself will set up the new Jerusalem as the center of the Messianic kingdom (xc, 28, 29, xxv, 5), the surviving non-Jewish nations will be converted and serve Israel (xc, 30) and the dispersion will be brought back, and the righteous dead will be raised to take part in the kingdom (xc, 33). The righteous will eat of the tree of life, enjoy patriarchal lives (v, 9; xxv, 6), and every material blessing (v, 7; x, 18, 19; xi, 2), each begetting one thousand children (x, 17).

In the Testaments of the Twelve patriarchs, we read about the restoration of Jerusalem (Lev. v) and the kingdom of the Messiah, and his binding of Belial and opening of the gates of paradise and giving his saints to eat of the tree of life (Lev. xviii). To share in the Messianic kingdom on earth all the righteous patriarchs will rise

(Sim. vi; Zeb. x Jud. xxv). The surviving Gentiles are to be converted. According to Benjamin x there will be a resurrection first of the Old Testament heroes and patriarchs, and next of the righteous and of the wicked. Thereupon the Judgment is to follow.

Some passages in 2 Maccabees indirectly refer to the hope of a righteous reign when the scattered tribes will be restored and gathered in the holy city (1:27; 2:18).

In the Book of Jubilees we find the expectation of a Messianic kingdom of peace: “The days of the children of men will begin to grow many, and increase from generation to generation and day to day, till their days draw nigh to a thousand years. And there will be no old man, nor one that is not satisfied with his days; for all will be as children and youths. And all their days they will complete in peace and in joy, and they will live, and there will be no Satan nor any evil destroyer; for their days will be days of blessing and healing (xxiii, 27–29). The day of the great Judgment comes at the close of the Messianic kingdom of peace and happiness (xxiii, 2).

In the Assumption of Moses we read of the reign of righteousness again – the day when the scattered tribes will be brought back and the eternal God will punish the Gentiles (Hymn X).

In the Slavonic Enoch we find an interesting account of the last things. As regards the duration of the world, we read that since the world was created in six days it will last six thousand years, for “each day with the Lord is one thousand years.” And as there was a day of rest after the six days, so there will be a rest for one thousand years after the six thousand years of the world. This time of rest and blessedness is the period of the Messianic kingdom. At the termination of this millennium (thousand years) of righteousness and peace, the final judgment is to be held.

In the Apocalypse of Baruch we find this kingdom mentioned as terminating with the present world. The character of this kingdom is described in the most extravagant terms: “The earth will yield its fruits ten thousand fold, and on each vine there will be a

thousand branches, and each branch will produce a thousand clusters, and each cluster will produce a thousand grapes, each grape will produce a kor (90 gallons) of wine, and those that have hungered will rejoice” (xxix, 4–6). It also says that women will bear children without pain (lxxiii).

In 2 Esdras we read, “My son, the Messiah, shall be revealed with those that are with him, and shall rejoice with them that remain four hundred years” (vii, 28). The final judgment follows the period of peace and happiness (vii, 29, 30).

The duration of the Messianic kingdom is more sharply defined in the Talmud and later books. The following calculations are given in the Jewish literature:

1. Three generations
2. Forty years (corresponding to forty years in the wilderness)
3. Seventy years (from Babylonian captivity)
4. One hundred years
5. Three hundred and sixty-five years
6. Four hundred years (from Egyptian bondage)
7. Six hundred years
8. One thousand years
9. Two thousand years
10. Seven thousand years (see Hasting’s Dictionary of the Bible).

This variety of reckoning only exposes the fanciful ground on which such reckoning is founded and also proves the figurative nature of its origin. In the Gemara (the second part of the Talmud) we read, “Rabbi Ketina hath said, In the last of the thousand years of the world’s continuance, the world shall be destroyed, and tradition agrees with Rabbi Ketina, for even as every seventh year is a year of release, so of the seven thousand years of the world, the seventh thousand shall be the thousand of release. Rabbi Manassa says, It is pronounced in the school of Elias that the world will continue six thousand years. After six thousand years the world shall be destroyed on a certain day, the orb in heaven shall stand as

immovable and all by resurrection shall be renovated and return to better conditions.”

Rabbi Solomon writes: “It is fixed that the world shall stand for six thousand years, according to the number of the days of the week; but on the seventh day is the Sabbath, and during the seventh millennium the world has rest.”

From these fanciful ideas of Jewish origin the doctrine of the millennium grew up in the early Christian community, whose first members were from Judaism. Along with other Jewish traditional ideas this apocryphal doctrine also made its way into a section of the Christian society.

This notion was taken up by some of the Jewish Christians. Jesus had not yet appeared as an earthly king, as they thought He would according to a mistaken interpretation of scriptures as well as the current apocalyptic teaching prevalent among the Jews. They were not willing to part with these national ideas which had some charm to them, and therefore they formulated the theory that Christ would set up this earthly kingdom when He comes the second time. They thus transferred to the second advent what they expected, in their unconverted state, to have belonged to the first.

The Jewish conception of a millennial reign of the Messiah was fully reflected in the heretical system of the Ebionites (first century) – a sect who held the Mosaic Law binding upon Christians, rejected Paul as an apostle, and denied the miraculous birth of our Lord. Neander says that by this erroneous notion of a millennium, as well as by some others which this group held, the church was injuriously affected. Cerinthus, who is styled as the chief heretic (heresiarch) by the early writers, taught this theory of the millennium together with other false doctrines of his (Eusebius Eccles. History, 111:28)

Toward the close of the second century a man of Phrygia named Montanus began to claim the role of a prophet and taught (in company with his two female associates) wild fanaticism. The

coming of Christ to establish a millennial reign upon earth was one of their favorite themes. They started a heretical sect and selected Papuza (a city of Phrygia) as the center of their propaganda. They supposed that their city would be the site of the new Jerusalem and the center of the millennial kingdom.

Tertullian (A.D. 160–220) was won over to this heresy, and traces of a millennial reign on earth are found in his montanistic writings, although his former teachings are entirely free from such elements. He says, “We do confess that a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth ... only in another state of existence; inasmuch as it will be after the resurrection for a thousand years in the divinely built city of Jerusalem” (Adv. Marc, iii:25).

Thus, this notion of a millennium was introduced among the early Christians. And it was not only propagated by the heretical teachers, but some others also shared in their belief.

Papias (second century) of Hierapolis (a city of Phrygia) taught “that the days will come in which vines shall grow, having each ten thousand branches, and in each branch ten thousand twigs, and in each true twig ten thousand shoots and in every one of the twigs ten thousand clusters and every one of the clusters ten thousand grapes, and every grape when pressed will give five and twenty metretes of wine. And when any one of the saints shall lay hold of a cluster, another will cry out, ‘I am a better cluster, take me; bless the Lord through me!’ In like manner, he said that a grain of wheat would produce ten thousand ears, and that every ear would have ten thousand grains, and every grain would yield ten pounds of clear, pure, fine flour; and that apples, and seeds and grass would produce in similar proportion” (Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1:154).

It is quite evident that this is nothing but an adoption of the similar description of Baruch, a Jewish apocryphal account previously mentioned. It also bears a very close resemblance to the Mohammedan description of paradise.

Irenaeus (second century), a native of Asia Minor and

afterwards Bishop of Lyons, was the next man who believed in this theory (millennium), but plainly by the influence of Papias, for his account is almost a verbatim quotation of Papias, whom he cites as his authority (*Adv. Haer.*, V:33).

Justin Martyr, who flourished in the second century, was also an advocate of this doctrine. He believed that there would be a resurrection of the dead and a thousand years' reign in Jerusalem, which would then be built, adorned, and enlarged; although, on the other hand, he knew that many who belonged to the pure and pious faith and were true Christians thought otherwise (*Dialogue with Trypho*, chap. 80).

This latter admission clearly shows that the doctrine of the millennium was never accepted as a doctrine of the church of God, nor was it an article of faith binding upon all believers. Not only that, but it was so foreign to the system of Christian doctrine that the very book from which such notions were derived (*Revelation of John*), though by misapplication and misinterpretation, was doubted as to its authenticity and authority.

Caius, the learned presbyter of Rome (A.D. 180–217) an orthodox writer, assailed this doctrine of a millennial kingdom. He says in his dialogue or disputation against Phoelus: “But Cerinthus...brings before us marvelous things which he pretends were shown him by angels alleging that after the resurrection the kingdom of Christ is to be on earth, and that the flesh (men) dwelling in Jerusalem is again to be subject to desires and pleasures. And being an enemy of the scriptures of God, wishing to deceive men, he says that there is to be a space of one thousand years for marriage festivals” (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I, p. 601).

Origen, the distinguished author and scholar (A.D. 155–254) of Alexandria, next directed his attention against this heresy. “Certain persons,” he says, “refusing the labor of thinking, and adopting a superficial view of the letter of the law, and yielding rather in some measure to the indulgence of their own desires and lusts,

being disciples of the letter alone, are of the opinion that the fulfillment of the promises of the future are to be looked for in bodily pleasure and luxury; and therefore they especially desire to have again, after the resurrection, such bodily structure (flesh) as may never be without the power of eating and drinking and performing all the functions of the flesh and blood, not following the opinion of the apostle Paul regarding the resurrection of a spiritual body. And consequently they say that after the resurrection there will be marriages, and begetting of children, imagining to themselves that the earthly city of Jerusalem is to be rebuilt, its foundations laid in precious stones, and its walls constructed of Jasper ... Moreover, they think that the natives of other countries are to be given them as ministers of their pleasures whom they are to employ, either as tillers of the field or builders of walls, and by whom their ruined and fallen city is again to be raised up, and they think that they are to receive the wealth of the nations to live on, and that they will have control over their riches ... And these views they think to establish on the authority of the prophets by those promises which are written regarding Jerusalem ... Such are the views of those who, while believing in Christ, understand the divine scriptures in a sort of Jewish sense, drawing from them nothing worthy of the divine promises" (De Principis, xi.2).

Nepos of Arsinoe, an Egyptian bishop, taught that promises given to holy men in the scriptures should be understood more as the Jews understood them and supposed that there would be a certain millennium of sensual luxury on this earth. (Eus. Eccles. Hist., vii:24). But he was opposed by Dionysius (A.D. 200–265), bishop of Alexandria, who refused the arguments of his book, Refutation of the Allegorists, and convinced his followers that Nepos was wrong. The discussion took place in Arsinoe, where this doctrine was afloat and caused schism and apostasy, and as a result, Coracio, the founder and leader of this doctrine, in the hearing of all the brethren present, confessed and avowed that he would no

longer adhere to it or discuss it, that he would neither mention nor teach it, as he had been fully convinced by the opposite arguments (Eus. Eccles. Hist., vii:24).

The last echo of chiliasm (millennarianism) in the Eastern church was given by the young Apollinaris, the heresiarch (A.D. 370), who went so far in his Jewish sympathies that he thought the temple ought to be rebuilt and the entire Jewish worship restored and the Mosaic Law observed. In support of his millennial views he cited the Apocalypse of John which, however, he admits was understood in a spiritual sense by the greatest number of pious Christians (See Epiphanius. Haer., lxxvii:26).

From this admission we gather that millennarianism was far from being the universal doctrine of the church. In fact, the famous church historians all testify that after the second century the doctrine fell into disrepute and was revived only from time to time by heretics (Mosheim, Vol. I, ii, 3:12).

Augustine is said to have given a decisive blow to this doctrine in the West just as Dionysius did in the East. His interpretation of the apocalyptic vision became the prevalent view on the subject in the Western churches, and by the influence of his teaching the doctrine of millennarianism was banished from the realm of dogmatics.

Philastrius (A.D. 380) reckoned the carnal belief in the millennium a heresy, and so it was regarded in orthodox theology. "It still lives on," says Harnack, "however, in the lower strata of Christian society and in certain undercurrents of tradition it was transmitted from century to century."

That the sentiment of Jerome was against the doctrine of millennarianism is evident from his writings. This great man opposed chiliasm with great enthusiasm, although in his own conciliatory manner. "If," says he, "we understand the revelation literally, we must Judaize; if spiritually, as it is written, we seem to contradict many of the ancients ... especially Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons,

against whom Dionysius, bishop of the church of Alexandria, wrote a curious piece deriding the fable of a thousand years, the terrestrial Jerusalem adorned with gold and precious stones, rebuilding the temple, bloody sacrifices, sabbatical sect, circumcision, marriages, lyings-in, nursing of children, dainty feasts, and servitude of the nations; and again, after this, wars, armies, triumphs and slaughters of conquered enemies and the death of a sinner a hundred years old” (Hieron. In. Es., ii:18).

After this we do not read of millenarianism for a long time. “At various periods of the history of the Middle Ages,” say Harnack, “we encounter sudden out-breaks of millenarianism, sometimes as the tenet of a small sect, sometimes as a far-reaching movement” (Enc. Brit., Vol. XVI).

During the Reformation, men’s minds were in a great ferment and wild fanaticism prevailed in both Germany and England. “Among the wild imaginations of the time, the Anabaptists embraced millenarianism in its grossest forms, and used this belief as a plea for lawlessness and crime, desiring to establish the earthly kingdom of Christ by fire and sword.” Munster in Germany was their “Mount Zion,” and they claimed to be the elect people of God. Luther and Melanchthon were desperately against the doctrine. Both the Augsburg Confession (art. viii) and the Swiss Confession (art. xi) condemn millenarianism.

It was expressly condemned in the original articles of the Church of England: “They that go about to renew the fables of heretics called Millinnarii be repugnant to holy scriptures, and cast then themselves headlong into a Jewish dotage” (art. xli).

The doctrine was finally revived by the interpretations of Bengel in 1740, and since then several protestant denominations have embraced and propagated it.

From the foregoing sketch it is abundantly evident that the idea of a Christian millennium is nothing but a plain adoption of the Jewish doctrine, transplanted from the Judaistic soil to the early

Christian community. The similarity between the two is too plain to admit of any other explanation. This becomes all the more clear when we consider that the doctrine of a millennium never thrived in Hellenistic (Greek) Christian soil, where the book of Revelation had to struggle for a long time to find a place in the canon of scripture simply because millennarians made use of the book (although wrongfully) as a plea for the propagation of this fanciful notion which came from Jewish origin. Wherever Jewish Christianity (the belief of the party against whom Paul fought so strenuously) did not hold ground, the book of Revelation was always spiritually understood and interpreted, a fact well worth our notice, for it proves that the idea of a millennial reign of Christ upon earth could not, to a mind not associated with the Jewish apocryphal ideas and pre-possessed with their later apocalyptic views, be intelligible as forming a part of the Christian system. Apart from a Jewish mind, it could not gain any foothold.

Reason Number Twenty-four

This Fanciful Age Ends in Failure and Defeat for Christ and His People

All the exponents of the millennium agree on one thing: after this supposed glorious age, or just before it closes, the dragon, who had been bound at the beginning of the millennium, will be loosed again. The peace and righteousness of this golden age will be spoiled by the wars which the dragon and his forces will wage against the kingdom of Christ.

This is the conclusion one would come to if a literal interpretation of Revelation 20 were adopted. Such a literal view, when carried out to its conclusion, would cause one to interpret the section in Revelation 20:7-9 to mean that after our Lord's reign on earth for a thousand years, Satan, who was bound, is loosed out of his prison, and goes forth to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth. Satan gathers together the forces of evil

which must have been lurking somewhere in the millennial earth to do battle against Christ and His saints. These wicked people could not have sprung up overnight, for we are told that their number is as the sand of the sea. The supposed fires of judgment which were to have cleansed and renovated the earth for the millennium must not have been so hot, because the Gog and Magog forces seemingly escaped those fires. They kept on multiplying in numbers while the millennium was going on.

The picture that follows is indeed both embarrassing and humiliating, not only for Jesus, but for all saints also. The omnipotent, holy Son of God hears that Satan is loose again and proceeds to shut Himself in with His saints in the city of Jerusalem. The forces of righteousness feel they are safe even though the devil is loose. However, before very long the news spreads that Satan is marching on that fair city, the millennial Jerusalem, which was supposed to have been the joy of the whole millennial earth. The Lamb of God who was humiliated and shamefully treated in His first advent is again exposed to the wrath of wicked men who threaten Him with destruction. These wicked men led by Satan lay siege to the camp of the saints and are determined to wipe them off the face of the earth.

No picture can be blacker if one adopts a literal interpretation of Revelation. All of the wishes, hopes, and dreams of sincere men for a golden age are spoiled by the awful flood of evil and persecution let loose by Satan. The golden age ends in terrible rebellion – much worse than the indifference of the age which such teachers style “the church age.” The lukewarmness and godlessness of the “church age” is eclipsed a thousand times by the open and daring attack launched against the Son of God.

So helpless is the Son of God, and so defeated are His people at the end of this “golden age,” that God has to intervene and save the day for Jesus and His saints by pouring fire from heaven upon Satan and his hosts. This fire devours the wicked people who dare

to rebel against the millennial Christ.

Our Lord will never be subject to such shame again. He suffered, bled, and died once, but will never do so again. Ever since His glorious triumph over death and His resurrection, He reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords. Instead of His kingdom ending so disgracefully, which the millennial theory necessitates, it will go on gloriously, majestically, triumphantly, not only as long as time will endure, but also throughout all eternity.

The millennial theory, if properly understood, would make pessimists out of every person who believes it because of its sad failure in the end.

However, the beautiful, spiritual picture which the New Testament gives of the kingdom of God is destined to make out of us all eternal optimists. The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Christ. He shall reign forever and ever. Evil is fighting a losing battle; righteousness will be exalted. Truth crushed to earth will rise again. All who believe in Jesus Christ will reign with Him now and through all eternity in unbroken and ever-growing victorious splendor.

Millennialists would have Christ do what He urged Peter not to do – use His millennial kingdom. The whole millennial theory is defeated right here. Our Lord said, “Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword” (Matthew 26:52). Since the millennial kingdom is established with force and the sword it must perish. Such a kingdom is not one whit better than other earthly kingdoms, which have been established by force. Is it any wonder that one comes to such a sad conclusion if Revelation 20 is interpreted literally?

The glorious, spiritual, eternal kingdom of God was established by the matchless love of the Son of God who laid down His life for a world of sinners. Such a kingdom will never end; it is eternal.