

Premillennialism: “Then and Now”

Holger Neubauer

The concept of a future reign of Christ in which wolves will lay down with lambs and swords that will be beaten into plowshares comes from a result of disregarding the time statements of scripture and forcing literalistic interpretations that God never intended for anyone to make. Those holding to a future “thousand-year reign” (Revelation 20:4-7) and a future kingdom ask, “when did the wolf lay down with a lamb, and when were the swords beaten into plowshares” (Isaiah 2:1-4: 65:25)? We respond by saying that the kingdom was “at hand” in Jesus' own day (Matthew 4:17). These teachings were merely symbols of the peaceful nature of the kingdom that Jesus established in the lifetime of the disciples (Mark 9:1). Old covenant Israel used physical instruments of war to defend the physical piece of land called Palestine. The kingdom today is a spiritual kingdom that is occupied in the hearts of those that love and obey Christ. Our weapons are not carnal but never the less powerful (2 Corinthians 10:4,5). Jesus said, “the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21).

Many in the church today are totally unaware that the majority opinion among us for nearly eighty years was this false doctrine of Pre-millennialism. Before the Civil War a preacher by the name of J.T. Barclay promoted a coming kingdom. Barclay was a prominent man in the church and in society at large. Barclay at one time received an appointment by President Pierce to do research at the Philadelphia mint for the prevention of deterioration of metallic currency. Barclay, later taught natural sciences at Bethany College. Barclay put forward his ideas in Alexander Campbell's paper entitled the Millennial Harbinger. The name of Campbell's paper is sufficient proof for his pre-millennial persuasions. In a series of articles, Barclay taught with Campbell's approval, a time that was near then, that would bring forth an age in which ravenous animals would be gentle, that the law of Moses would go forth to higher sense than it ever had and Jerusalem would be rebuilt. Not until the work of W.L. Oliphant and Foy E. Wallace of the 1930-40 era was pre-millennialism defeated.

Foy E. Wallace was also one of the first prominent preachers among us to take the early date on the book of Revelation, although a lesser known preacher in the church by name of Cyrus Jeffries took our position of realized eschatology in the 1850's. **Now the early date of the Revelation is a common view in the church.** Gene West of the West Virginia School of Preaching and Art Ogden who sides with anti-cooperation brethren both have written works espousing the early date. Unless he has changed his mind again, Ben Vick Jr. of the church of Christ at Shelbyville Road in Indianapolis, Indiana holds to the early date of the Revelation. The early date is a relatively new understanding among us. However, when one sees the early date, and the early date is proven by the internal evidence of the book (Revelation 11:1-8; 17:10), it is a very small step to see the true message of the Revelation. Let us not resist the truth because of what previous generations failed to see! What was then should not keep us from what we can see now. When it comes to eschatology, we have been weaning ourselves off pre-millennialism for generations.

The revealing of Christ took place when Jerusalem fell. That is exactly the language that Jesus himself used in Luke 17:30 wherein He said, “Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.” The very next verse says, “In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away” (Luke 17:31). Jesus taught that His revealing would take place when Jerusalem fell. The word “revealed” is the Greek “apokaluptetai”, the very word from which we have title

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of the book of Revelation. Together with the “at hand” statements of Revelation 1:3 and 22:10, why would we resist the wonderful truth that Jesus has fulfilled His promise and returned as He said He would? Jesus promised He would return in that very generation in which He was living (Matthew 10:23; 16:27,28; James 5:8; Hebrews 10:37)! **There is no third coming of Christ!** His second coming took place when He was revealed!

Pre-millennialists today will not accept that kingdom prophecies have now been fulfilled because they do not believe the language of scripture has been satisfied and will not honor the time statements of scripture. Traditionalists resist the truth on the consummation of the kingdom because they do not believe the language of scripture has been satisfied and also resist the time statements of scripture. Revelation 12:10 says, “Now is come SALVATION, and STRENGTH and the KINGDOM of our God.” The kingdom that started on Pentecost was completed when Jerusalem fell. Jesus, in the midst of the Olivet discourse, said, “So likewise ye, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that the KINGDOM of God is nigh at hand” (Luke 21:31). Can anyone see a train coming? Can anyone not connect the dots? The kingdom was completed when Jerusalem fell. Surely, we can see the church/kingdom was not complete on Pentecost. The Gentiles would not come into the church/kingdom for another 10-12 years (Acts 10:28). Why don't we admit that the church simply has not seen the truth on last things? Whatever “at hand” means in Matthew 4:17 regarding the beginning of the kingdom, the same phrase “at hand” means in regard to the completion of the kingdom in Revelation 1:3 and 12:10. Like the pre-millennialists who ask, “when did the wolf lie down with the lamb,” and “why are we still bitten by animals,” Rusty Stark, a futurist asks “when was death destroyed” and “why do we still go to funerals”? When **Jesus said, “whosoever that liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:26), Jesus promised spiritual not physical life.** The last enemy destroyed was not physical death (1 Corinthians 15:26). Physical death is not the enemy of a Christian. Physical death has never been the enemy of the faithful. Paul said, “to depart and be with Christ: which is far better” (Philippians 1:23). The death that was abolished by the cross (2 Timothy 1:10) was completed upon the return of Christ in Jerusalem. Jesus came with the “keys to death and hades” (Revelation 1:18). What Jesus started on the cross was finished upon His return (Hebrews 9:28).

Salvation was accomplished just as the Revelation 12:10 affirms! When? When Jerusalem fell! Proven by the “at hand” statements of the message. The return of Christ brought salvation because when Jesus returned God the Father opened Heaven. Revelation 11 is a text that predicts the fall of Jerusalem. The temple was to be measured and the Gentiles were to trod it down (11:1,2). Then, the dead witnesses would lie in the streets of the city where Jesus was crucified (11:8). After that, the dead are judged and reward is given to the righteous (11:18). Now notice, Revelation 11:19 which says, “And the temple of God was opened in Heaven.” This is the opening of heaven to the dead saints. Revelation 15:8 repeats the same theme. The text says, “no man was able to enter into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.” This is the salvation that Jesus brought at His return. Listen again to Revelation 12:10, “Now is come SALVATION, and STRENGTH, and the KINGDOM OF OUR GOD.” Heaven is now opened and the dead saints can go where the saints under the law could not! We now can go directly to Heaven! But the futurist position says the saints now are no better off than those under the law. Pshaw! Christ fulfilled the law and full salvation has arrived!

Pre-millennialists and the Traditional view have much in common. Both believe in a future return of Christ. Both say that there was a sense in which Jesus came in Jerusalem. Both look forward to the burning of the planet. Both look forward to a future realization of the kingdom. Both are wrong. Let us step back and look again with honest hearts and consistency in interpretation and accept the fact that Jesus has fulfilled what he promised and what was promised is fulfilled. Jesus said, “these be days of vengeance when all things that are written may be fulfilled” (Luke 21:22). Let us not rely on what others believed then, but let us concern ourselves on what we should believe now. May God bless our studies in this wonderful theme. *[HN]*

Q&A: Can We Marry Today?

Holger W. Neubauer

Question: *Doesn't Luke 20:34-36 teach that when the resurrection takes place there will be no marriage? If the resurrection took place in A.D. 70, then why do we have marriage today?*

Answer: This objection to our views is heard quite often. Many of our opponents believe that Luke 20:34-36 actually refutes our teaching that resurrection life consummated when Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70. But this text is no friend of the traditional view. In fact, this text actually affirms our teaching if we will simply read the text carefully.

Luke 20:34-36 says, "And Jesus answering said unto them, the children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."

First, notice that Jesus said, "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage." Jesus affirmed that those who were worthy to "obtain" that world neither marry or are given in marriage. If the "world" to come is "heaven," then all marriage must be dissolved now, because they that wish to obtain the "world" to come, neither marry or are given in marriage. Jesus was living in the Jewish "world" or the Jewish age. The word for "world" here is the Greek "aion"-which simply means age. Remember, the sacrifice of Christ took place in the "end of the world" (Hebrews 9:26).

Second, Jesus was answering the Sadducees who alluded the Jewish levirate or "brother law" concerning marriage and inheritance in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. If a man died without an heir, his brother was to marry his wife so that "his name not be put out of Israel." This was the Jewish inheritance! It was to possess the land. But the "world" or age to come was not based upon a fleshly land inheritance. The better and enduring substance would be in heaven (Hebrews 10:34). So, those who obtained the next world, or the Christian age would no longer practice the levirate law of marriage.

Third, when Jesus said, "Neither can they die anymore: for they are equal unto the angels," he was not teaching about physical death. Jesus was simply reiterating the same promise of John 11:26, where he said, "he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Neither was Jesus teaching the impossibility of apostasy. Remember the angels that sinned were "cast down to hell" (2 Peter 2:4). Short of rebellion, the Christian age provides eternal life so that we never have to die! The Old law was the "ministration of death" (2 Corinthians 3:7), but Jesus offers eternal life (John 14:6). This text is no enemy of ours, but is an embraced friend. Its enemy is in reality our opponents. [HN]

For the Love of the Church

Steve Baisden

I was brought up in a family that was firmly dedicated and committed to the church of Christ. Not because of a former tradition, not because it was the most popular, not because all of our relatives were a part of it (for surely most were not) but because my parents believed and taught me the value of knowing and proving what is true, just, and right, and anything less than that could not be acceptable. For if we had something other than the pure truth of God's word then it could not be right because it would have come from man. We were dedicated to the church of Christ because the church of Christ represented the truth.

The undeniable, objective, provable, powerful, truth!

As a young boy, I was brought up hearing about all the great debates we had won. I heard the stories and knew some of the men that debated and never lost a debate because simply put, the truth could not be

beaten. I knew and appreciated how whole congregations of denominations had been converted from denominationalism to the church of Christ.

One great example of this happened in a small town in West Virginia not far from where we lived. The debate was scheduled, it was to be the "know all end all" discussion where only the truth could prevail and no one would accept being "second best". Only the truth would reign supreme and acceptable. A preacher of the church of Christ was meeting a "Pastor" of the Baptist church in public debate, both men settled and comfortable in their positions. Both men confident that the truth would win the day and by the end of the debate, those in opposition would surely see the truth and be converted to it. By the end of the debate, the Baptist congregation repented, all except one family, and was baptized for the remission of sins and added to the Lord's church, the church of Christ. The next day the sign came off their building and the new sign went up; **"Church of Christ meets here"**.

Yes, I was convinced as a boy, and even more so as a man, that God's word was the authority and no one could be in opposition to the word of God and still be 'right'. If two people were in religious disagreement, the Bible had the answer and there was not many ways or truths, not even two ways and truths. The Bible was clear, the church was the pillar and ground of the truth, and there was only one (Eph 4:4-6, 2 Tim 2:15).

My motto was simple I am a member of the church of Christ because that is the church we read of in the Bible, that is the one that could prove all things and that was holding fast to that which was good. Everything we did, unlike our religious friends around us, was established with Bible truths. Everything (Col 3:17)! I would always say, prove me wrong and I will change, and I meant it! If I was wrong, then I was committed to getting right, no matter what the cost.

I have always been very comfortable in my conversations with others... prove me wrong and I will change, but if I prove you wrong then I expect the same from you. I have had several public debates, two even on live TV and radio and never could my opponents prove me wrong. In fact, I was always the one that could biblically prove why I taught and believed what I did. There is NO better feeling than knowing you are right and NO one can defeat you because you are on the truth! In fact, one of the 'old time' gospel preachers I loved so much would say that very thing; "If we are on the truth, then NO ONE can defeat us, NO ONE! They could no more defeat God Himself than they could us as long as we are on the truth of His word"! And I would always say, AMEN! No one was as honored or as happy to be a part of the church of Christ as I was, NO ONE!

For love of the church I earnestly contended for the faith. I helped in planting two new congregations, I preached at lectures, wrote articles in brotherhood publications, held gospel meetings, debated error publicly, have three live Radio broadcasts, one live TV broadcast, and a live Internet broadcast every week. And for love of the church I continue to study and grow in knowledge and grace of the Lord.

Then I started losing a debate on one particular subject, The Coming of The Lord. But who was the one that kept beating me in this debate? ME! I kept studying certain passages and kept coming up with something different than what I had been taught and previously believed. As I kept studying this topic and discussing it with others it was clear, it was obvious, not two men in the church agreed on every element of that topic. There was NO unity in the church regarding every element of this discussion!

As I came out and started publicly saying what I believed to be true, it became all the more real and profound; I was once again winning the debates. I was on the truth and the truth could not be defeated! I now, for the first time in my life found preachers of the church of Christ running and fleeing from debate. I found them twisting and misrepresenting what the scriptures were actually saying. I found blatant hypocrisy and dishonesty in places and people I never thought it could be! I found, "few there be that find it" was far more profound and true than I had ever thought before!

I am still as staunch and bold for the truth as I have always been. I am still a part of that glorious church we read of in the Bible, the church of Christ. I am still a faithful gospel preacher, and I am still

converting people to the truth through belief, repentance, confession, and baptism for the remission of sins. I still practice and contend for the acts of worship, the government, and all the tenets of the church that I long ago recognized as truth. The fact is I never left the church, I simply continued to grow as we are all commanded to do (2Pet 3:18).

For Love of the Church, I will continue to be who I have always claimed to be... A member of the church of Christ added by the Lord Himself, a faithful, honest man who will always put God first in everything. **I am a Christian and for love of the church, for love of the truth, for love of God, Jesus, the Spirit, for love of family, friends and neighbors, and lastly for love of self, I will remain one (a Christian) forever! [SB]**

“Did He, or Didn’t He?”: The False Dichotomy of Literal vs. Spiritual

Scott Klaft

Early in our being introduced to Christianity, we learn there is a great deal of information we have to handle honestly if we are going to learn God’s divine will for us. Things we thought we once knew would have to be scrutinized; and, whatever does not fit God’s word would have to be dismissed. We do not have the luxury of assuming what we presently believe *must be right* and therefore anything to the contrary *must be wrong*. The honest student of the Bible will always be checking, testing, and reexamining the things he believes, regardless how obvious the subject matter may seem.

It would be difficult to find a single page in the New Testament that did not address, in some form or fashion, the idea that Jesus, since His resurrection and ascension into Heaven, is said to come again to accomplish a number of purposes. What those purposes are – and when they are to be accomplished – are matters of deep study in the scripture which must be examined from the perspective of that first generation of Christians to whom the inspired record was first given.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that Jesus made a promise to His disciples and others that “the Son of man” would, indeed, “come” (e.g. Matthew 10:23; 16:27, 28; 24:27, 30, 37, 39; 26:64; et. al.). It is the studied opinions of each of the authors of this publication that the scriptures teach Jesus’ “coming” (as spoken of in the above cited passages) took place in the A.D. 70 destruction of the Jewish economy.

In desiring to make that case to friends, but before ever having the chance to do so, it is too often dismissed with a sneer and this objection: “That was not the literal coming of Christ; that was a ‘spiritual’ coming in judgment by the Roman armies” – or some variation of that objection. This may be a sincerely offered sentiment, but it is a severe error in terminology that has the objector contradicting Jesus’ own words.

It is not the intent of this article to make the case regarding the timing of Jesus’ coming again. Rather, I want to plead with the reader to think a bit more about the meaning of words and make the necessary corrections of *thought* that will lead to a correction of *use*. It is not denied that Jesus’ coming in judgment against the Jews in A.D. 70 is a “spiritual” coming of Christ. What is denied is that the conception of His coming in a spiritual manner is somehow opposite to His “literal” coming.

Think about what Paul meant when he wrote, “...the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2nd Corinthians 4:18). Then, he continues on with that contrast by comparing the “earthly tabernacle” of the physical body with that which is “eternal in the heavens” (5:1). It is the contrast of the *physical* with the *spiritual*. He said the physical, material things of this world are temporal (Greek: *proskaira* – enduring only for a little while). But of that which is spiritual, the unseen things, he said they are eternal.

There is no leap in logic, therefore, to say that which is eternal has more presence in reality than the things of a physical, material nature. Something that is spiritual, such as Jesus’ coming again, is not only a real event but also an actual, literal “coming”. That is what Jesus called it.

“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:27)

Why would we contradict Him and say His coming in the judgment of the Jews in A.D. 70 was not literal – as though the spiritual nature of it somehow made it less real? If anything, it made it *more* real.

"The use of figurative language to describe an event does not mean the event being described did not take place."

Admittedly, people often mean “figurative” rather than “spiritual.” But, even were we to grant that as what they mean, it does not change what Jesus said. *If*, by saying it was “figurative,” it is meant that Jesus did not actually come in judgment of the Jews, *then* all of the biblical record as well as secular history stands opposed to such a statement. In fact, most people who will engage in the discussion with this objection (at least those who are members of a church of Christ, as well as many who are not), already admit that everything said in Matthew 24:4 – 34 pertains to Jesus’ judgment coming upon the Jews in A.D. 70. To say that Jesus did not actually “come” because it was a “figurative coming” is to contradict both Jesus and one’s self.

Moreover, when saying His coming was somehow “figurative,” no explanation is given for what it is supposed to be a “figure” of. Figurative language borrows from things that are commonly known in order to comparatively describe some other thing.

There is an opportunity here – if the objectors will use it – to assert their belief that the figure is symbolic of Jesus’ future coming to judge the world, destroy the material universe, and resurrect the dead. If this is what is believed, it is a worthy subject for conversation and sincere study – to find whether that is what the Bible teaches or not, honestly putting it to the test of scripture.

But, it must be said: If for the sake of discussion, it might be granted that the destruction of Jerusalem and the ending of the Jewish nation were figures of some future coming of the Lord, does that somehow mean Jesus did not, in fact, in reality, literally, spiritually come in A.D. 70? Seriously, friend – did He say He was coming at that time for that purpose, or didn’t He?

The use of figurative language to describe an event does not mean the event being described did not take place. The truth of the matter is: Jesus came just as He promised He would in A.D. 70. Now it is up to the student of scripture to determine whether or not those other elements attached to the idea of His coming occurred at the same time. No hedging about the spiritual nature or what it might figuratively symbolize can prevent the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise.

Admitting the reality of Jesus’ coming in judgment, we must move forward and pose other questions. What evidence is there that Jesus promised multiple comings after His resurrection and ascension? How many comings in His Kingdom did the Lord say there would be? How long would His reign in His kingdom last? Is there any indication that nearly 2000 years (and counting) would separate the promises of His coming again as they were given to the first generation of Christians?

All of those things we thought “everyone knows” need to be put to the test. No – similar terminology does not always demand identical meanings, but similar terminology in the *same context and subject matter* does call for an examination of that possibility. And please remember the meanings of those terms “physical” and “spiritual” are not synonyms, or even parallel, to the terms “literal” and “figurative.”

It’s especially important when Jesus promised to do something that we come up with the right answer to the question, “*Did He, or Didn’t He?*” [SK]