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Plain-sense Hermeneutics and Covenant Premillennialism

Someone once asked me, "How can one hold to covenant theology and premillennialism at the same time?" My answer was, "Plain-sense hermeneutics demand it."

Plain-sense or "normal" hermeneutics is very simply that method of interpretation that deals with the Scriptures as God presented them to us. A normal hermeneutic recognizes that God used human means of communication to communicate to humans. Therefore, we must not allegorize the text or leave its plain sense unless there are clear indications that such was the author's intent to communicate his message. Contrary to the typical allegorist's disparaging depiction of the "literalist," those who practice a plain-sense hermeneutic *do* recognize the depth of theology presented by the text. The plain-sense theologian, however, does not feel compelled to go beyond the text in flights of fancy to discover that depth. God gave us the Holy Spirit in order that, among other things, He might be our ultimate Teacher. Since He inspired the text as it is, in normal human communication forms, the plain-sense interpreter resists the temptation to embellish the text with arbitrary, so-called "deeper" meanings obtained by the imaginations of men.

The plain-sense interpreter

relies on the tools provided by historical-grammatical interpretation. Historical-grammatical interpretation is not *letterism*. Letterism is a hyper-literalism practiced by some throughout church history, most recently by extremists in the dispensational camp. Letterism insists on a surface reading of the text and nothing more, and is an error that produces the same kind of arbitrary theology as rampant allegorism. Historical-grammatical, plain-sense interpretation is the method of letting the text speak to us as it will. It takes into account historical context and the grammatical choices made by the author, much as one would approach the interpretation of any other piece of literature written by men, to men. For the Christian interpreter, however, the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit plays a key role as well. The Spirit's ministry leads us to the full impact of the text and applies it to our hearts.

In this issue of *the WRS Journal*, the approach outlined above is abundantly evident. We welcome your comments, and trust this discussion will enrich your ministry and understanding. LP

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to ascend to sit at the right hand of the Majesty on high for an appointed time. And, furthermore, it is necessary for Him yet to come again to reign and to rule with power in the midst of His enemies (as Psalm 110:2 specifies). In the mean time, many of us who had been His enemies are made to become subservient and willing subjects to Him Who is both Lord and Christ. In contrast to Lamentations 2:1, the true Israel of God, the redeemed and the faithful, are the ones who shall make up the ever abiding footstool of the Lord.



If you are interested in reading the full article by Pastor Crawford, you may contact him in care of the WRS Journal to request a copy.

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witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

What is the significance of this connection between the royal line of David and the terms *Lord* and *Christ*? The significance is just this: the resurrection of the Son of man, "the last Adam," was in order that He should restore the dominion that the first Adam lost. To do this, God chose that out of David's royal line His Anointed One (or His Christ) would come and re-establish that world dominion as MAN on David's throne. God promised that His Son would become the kinsman of men by being born of a woman, in order that He might do all of the works that God required of man, defeat Satan, and reign as man, with restored dominion (Genesis 3:15).

So, Christ, the eternal Son of God, was born into the family of Man in order to be the last Adam and in order to fulfill the covenant of works under which the first man had failed and forfeited dominion. Christ is not only the promised seed and heir of Abraham, He is the Lamb that God Himself provided, Who has been seen on Mt. Moriah (Genesis 22); and He is

also the Redeemer (Restorer) King of that royal dynasty which was promised to Abraham and which did come out of Abraham's loins. In addition, Christ was "made under the Law" of Moses in order that He might become the Kinsman Redeemer of Israel (of both the land of Israel and the children of Israel). Christ is the only perfectly obedient one of all

Acts

the children of Israel; everyone else is cursed under the Law. Jesus is the only one qualified to inherit the land and to possess all of the blessings which were promised in the Law. Without these qualifications, He could not be the Royal Redeemer to take upon Himself all of the curse, to pay the price, to die "the just for the unjust" and to give what He alone possessed as a gift of inheritance to those whom He has chosen, who live by faith in Him. Without these qualifications, He could not redeem that which had become cursed under the Law. So it is that Jesus the *Nazarene* (*rxn*, the tender branch out of the root of David, Is. 11:1) is the only one of the house of David with the ability to be the Redeemer and to restore David's dynastic line, which had been cut off (Jeremiah 22:30).

This Kinsman King had to defeat the power of sin and death and thus to deliver His people from bondage, so to defeat Satan and to make a show of it openly. To be the redeeming Heir to David's throne, Christ had to rise from the dead; and, also in order to qualify, He had

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KEYNOTE

PREMILLENNIALISM AND COVENANT THEOLOGY

by John Battle

I. What is Covenant Theology?

The Bible contains many covenants and many dispensations. Those who put primary emphasis on the differences between these covenants and dispensations often are referred to as dispensationalists. Those who see a unity in these covenants and dispensations are called covenant theologians.

Covenant theology understands that God has one over-arching purpose in his dealings with our universe--and that is the establishing of his eternal kingdom through the plan of redemption.

Dispensationalists rather see God's plan as manifold, involving one plan and purpose for his earthly people Israel, and a separate plan and purpose for his heavenly people the church. They see a unity only in the common thread of God's glorifying himself in all his plans. The main distinctive of dispensationalism is the belief that Old Testament Israel is totally distinct from the New Testament church. In fact, the church, in their view, did not exist until Pentecost. Covenant

theologians say that the invisible church began with the first saved person (Adam!), and that the visible church as an institution started long before New Testament times, with Abraham. While dispensationalists divide the Bible into dispensations, covenant theologians detect an underlying unity--all these dispensations, and the biblical covenants which define them, are outworkings of one great covenant of grace. The Westminster Confession of Faith defines this covenant of grace as follows:

Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant [the covenant of works made with Adam], the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace: wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe. (7:3)

Reformed theologians often speak of another covenant which undergirds this covenant of grace. *Covenant Theology & Premillennialism*

That is the covenant of redemption, which was made between God the Father and God the Son before the world began. It

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is by this covenant that Jesus Christ was ordained to obey his Father, come into this world, and redeem his people to salvation in himself. This covenant provides for Jesus his eternal kingdom, in which his elect ones will find their place of glory and service forever.

There is strong Scriptural support for the covenant of redemption. While Scripture does not name the covenant of redemption as such, it does expressly teach its essential features:

1. God chose the elect to salvation before He created the world. (Eph. 1:4)
2. God chose the elect to be saved in Christ, as their atoning sacrifice. (Eph. 1:4, 5, 6, 7, 11)
3. Christ's death for the salvation of the elect thus was determined before the foundation of the world--a conclusion which Scripture itself supports. (1 Pet. 1:19-20; Rev. 13:8)
4. Christ willingly undertook His humiliation, obedience, sufferings, and sacrifice in response to his Father's will. (John 10:11-18; 17:4, 8, 18, 23, 25)
This submission involved a difficult decision for his human nature, as seen in Lk. 12:50 and John 12:27, and in the Garden of Gethsemane.
5. In obeying this command of the Father, Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the suffering of the Messiah. (esp. Isa. 53 and NT quotations; Zech. 12:10 and Rev. 1:7)

6. As the Messiah was to receive an eternal kingdom, so Jesus expected to receive it. (Lk. 22:29-30)
7. As a part of this kingdom, Jesus Christ would receive as his own an elect seed, to be saved and glorified, and to be with him forever. (Isa. 53:10-11; Jn. 17:2, 9, 24; Eph. 5:25-27)

This covenant of redemption is the basis for the covenant of grace. God now offers to sinners a way of salvation apart from our own works. We can be saved by faith in God's Messiah. Jesus Christ perfectly obeyed God, and died in our place, so that we can be saved by grace.

The covenant of grace, in operation since the time of Adam, was first revealed in detail to Abraham. It forms the basis of all the major subsequent covenants--those with Moses, David, and the new covenant of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Jesus and Paul. The true believers of the Old Testament dispensation are one people with the believers in the New Testament period. All are *Covenant Theology & Premillennialism* included in the covenant of grace, and thus all are spiritual children of Abraham, sharing his faith and his blessings.

A practical result of covenant theology is infant baptism. If we are one people with Abraham, then we receive the same promises as Abraham. And since those promises were directed to him and his children, Christians today

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visible return of Jesus from heaven.... [*Lexicon*, pp.474-475]

So, both the nature of the language and the preceding context of the narrative indicate that the Lord has not yet restored the kingdom unto Israel, but that He will certainly do so at an appointed time in the future. The time is not for us to know, for the Father has reserved that information under His own authority. In the mean time, the Lord's servants will be witnesses of their coming King and His dominion.

The Premise of the Book of the Acts

The question "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" together with the Lord's response, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own authority. But ye shall receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:6-8), constitute the premise statement, the proposition and the purpose of the Book of the Acts. There is a great difference between telling Jews and Gentiles of a realized and present kingdom and telling them of a King Who shall come and sit on David's throne in the future. Either to ignore or to set aside the foregoing context of the continuing divine narrative, or to ignore the implications of the precise language of Holy Scripture, as

antimillennarians do, in order that they might substitute an *a priori* assumption for the actual proposition of the divine book is an error which can give rise to many even more serious errors. To say that the very proposition of the Acts is merely an ignorant and unwarranted question which did not receive a straight answer from the Lord is a most dreadful way, if not unconscionable way, for anyone to begin to be Christ's witness to the uttermost parts of *Acts*

the earth.

Did the apostles and the faithful witnesses with them, whose messages and statements are recorded in the Acts, preach and maintain that there shall be a future restoration of the kingdom to Israel? Did they say that this restoration is to take place after the return of the Lord Jesus Christ? Peter, in his message on the day of Pentecost, demonstrated that the future restoration of the kingdom to Israel is integral to the apostles' witness and to their preaching of Christ's gospel of the Kingdom when he spoke candidly of David in the Book of the Acts 2:30-36:

Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne: he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are

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had not yet come. For, if the kingdom had indeed come, in the way that amillennarians assert, Christ's partaking of the fruit of the vine would have been an obvious and incontrovertible proof of such a realized and present kingdom. If it had happened, could the narrator have failed to include it? Luke could not have been allowed to omit such a specifically prophesied and earnestly desired and expected event from the divine narrative. But the most obvious implication of this is that, if the Lord Jesus had been partaking of the fruit of the vine with His disciples after the resurrection, the disciples could never have ask the question, "Wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?".

If Luke's narrative is properly considered, the disciples' question about the time of the restoration of the kingdom is perfectly consistent with Christ's words on the night of His last supper and arrest. He had said to His apostles, "Ye are they that continued with me in my temptation. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:28-30). It cannot be said that the apostles are going to be judging the twelve tribes of Israel in the everlasting estate when God shall "be all in all" (I Cor. 15:28), for it is obvious that there will be no judging in the perfection of the everlasting estate. And, the apostles are not at this time sitting on thrones in judgment over the twelve tribes of Israel, for

the time when the saints shall judge is not yet come (I Cor. 6).

Therefore, the time when the apostles will be dining at the Lord's table with Him and when they will be judging the twelve tribes of Israel is in an era which is about to come. It is not for us to know when that time will come. But, since the Lord made this reference to His future table as He reclined with His Apostles at the table of the last supper, He clearly did refer to that time when He shall be partaking of both the supper and the fruit of vine with them.

A parallel to this reference in Luke 22:28-30 appears in Matthew 19:28: "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the *Acts*

regeneration when (o'tan, at what time) the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Here the word translated *regeneration* is *palingenesi/a* (pronounced *palingenesia*), the common usage of which "denotes the restoration of a thing to its pristine state, its renovation" (Thayer). And J. H. Thayer adds the following note concerning the use of this word in Matthew 19:28:

that signal and glorious change of all things (in heaven and earth) for the better, that restoration of the primal and perfect condition of things which existed before the fall of our first parents, which the Jews looked for in connection with the advent of the Messiah, and which the primitive Christians expected in connection with the

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recognize God's claims on their own children. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant placed on the children of believers in the Old Testament; it symbolized their submission to God's covenant, including its threats and rewards. Baptism is the sign of the covenant in the New Testament; it has the same symbolism as circumcision. When we baptize our children, we recognize God's interest in them and their place in his covenant people. Just as circumcision did not guarantee salvation then, baptism does not guarantee salvation now. But it does symbolize the new covenant and its blessings. When we practice infant baptism, we recognize the unity of the covenant of grace throughout the various dispensations.

II. What is Premillennialism?

There are many passages in the Bible which speak of a time when Christ rules over the earth, the earth is filled with peace and righteousness, and people recognize Jesus as their Lord. Yet at the same time there still is death and judgment on the earth. In Revelation 20, the apostle John says this period lasts a thousand years. The word "millennium" comes from the Latin word for a thousand (the related word "chiliast" comes from the Greek word for a thousand). The premillennialist believes that Jesus will return to the earth and raise the righteous dead before this golden age of prophecy is fulfilled.

Postmillennialists believe that Jesus will come after this millennium; and amillennialists believe that this millennium already exists, either in the church on earth, or at the present time in heaven.

All dispensationalists are also premillennialists. They see the millennium as adapted for the earthly people of God, the Jews. In their view the New Testament church will have little to do with the millennium; the church will be enjoying fellowship with God in the heavenly Jerusalem, apart from the earth.

On the other hand, many covenant theologians are amillennialists. They believe that the Old Testament promises of the coming kingdom speak in spiritual terms of the New Testament blessings we receive in the church. If so, there is no need for a future Jewish kingdom to be established before the final judgment and the eternal state. *Covenant Theology & Premillennialism*

Can a covenant theologian also be a premillennialist? We say, "Yes!" The future millennium is not a step back into Judaism, as dispensationalists would believe. Rather, it is progress toward the future perfect eternal state, the "coming ages," in which the Lord rules over his people and in which "his servants will serve him." The kingdom of God is eternal; it is not limited to the thousand years of the millennium. The millennium is only the first stage

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of Christ's eternal kingdom. Only in covenant theology can the millennium attain its true significance.

III. Relation of Covenant Theology to Biblical Covenants and Dispensations

Covenant theologians understand that there are several biblical covenants and dispensations. At different times God directed his activities among us in different ways. From the time of Adam's fall until Abraham God dealt especially with individuals and individual families. Certain godly individuals stand out: Enoch, Noah, Job, and Melchizedek are examples. With Abraham God established a chosen family and nation, and instituted circumcision as his covenant sign. Reformed theologians have seen in the covenant with Abraham the beginning of the visible, organized church on the earth, with its possession of the word of God, the sacraments, and the means of discipline. When God revealed his law to Moses a new dispensation began, with an established priesthood, the tabernacle and temple system, and the national structure of civil laws. Finally, when Christ came, we entered a new dispensation, with the breaking down of the barrier between Jew and Gentile, the abrogation of the Mosaic ceremonial laws, the dissolution of Israel's civil structure, and the new sacraments of the New Testament.

The Westminster Confession of Faith recognizes these dispensations when it says that the Old and New Testaments are not "two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations" (7:6). Yet, as can be seen, the Confession places all these dispensations under the one covenant of grace. This is the key for covenant theology. The biblical covenants, and the dispensations that come from them, are all related to the covenant of grace, which in turn brings in the promised kingdom, the rule of Christ over his redeemed people.

IV. The Place of the Resurrection

The biblical covenants promised that the Old Testament *Covenant Theology & Premillennialism* patriarchs would personally take part in the possession of the land of Canaan and in the enjoyment of God's covenant blessings. God promised this particularly to Abraham (Gen. 17:8), to Isaac (Gen. 26:3), and to Jacob (Gen. 28:13). Centuries later God called Moses to bring back his people to the promised land, and he referred those promises at the burning bush (Ex. 3:6). Moses and Joshua led the children of the patriarchs into Canaan, but not the patriarchs themselves; they had already died. When Jesus defended the resurrection against the unbelieving Sadducees, he gave

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from among the dead. If those Sadducees had indeed known Moses, they should have known the specific terms of the covenant promise given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; because, as Moses wrote, the Lord promised each of these three men that they personally would possess the Land, saying, "to thee will I give it..." (Genesis 13:15, 17:8, 26:3, 28:13).

The point is that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all died without inheriting, without yet possessing, any of the land. They were only strangers and pilgrims in it. But they must yet inherit the land and possess it, and they must do so together with their seed (which is Christ) in the resurrection. They must become heirs and possessors of the land together with all of their covenant children of promise after the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14), which is the resurrection out from among the dead. Otherwise, God would be a covenant breaker and a liar. Dead men do not inherit and possess land. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must all rise and live in order that the covenant can be fulfilled. Thus, the covenant keeping God can only be the God of the living (Luke 20:37-38).

The very construction of words employed by our Lord in saying that the children of the resurrection are those who "shall be counted worthy to obtain that age, and the resurrection which is out from among the dead..." is incompatible with the amillennarian assumption that

there shall be but one future resurrection including both the redeemed and the damned. Furthermore, if the Lord's reference in Moses to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were to be taken out of context and not in relation to "the resurrection which is out from among the dead," then the Lord's words constitute no proof of resurrection at all. What the Lord answers concerning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would only serve to say that there is some sort of life after death without the necessity of resurrection. Such a shallow examination of the construction of the original language would reduce the Lord's response to nonsense and would prove nothing from Moses.

Also, in this larger context, it was at the last supper when the Lord Jesus took the cup, gave *Acts*

thanks, and said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." (Luke 22:17 and 18). In the course of the several meetings of our Lord with his apostles during the forty days after His resurrection, though Christ made a point of eating with his beloved disciples, He conspicuously did not drink of the fruit of the vine with them. Yet, Christ's very utmost desire to do that very thing was clearly expressed in His words at the last supper (Luke 22:15-18). The reason why He did not do so could only be because the kingdom of God

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more than ten days prior to His death, Christ departed from Jericho and made His final ascent to Jerusalem. It was at that time that Jesus told the parable of the pounds, "because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear" (Luke 19:11). "He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (vs.12). In Christ's parable, the kingdom does not appear and those servants who are the faithful stewards of their master's deposits do not receive authority over their jurisdictions until after the master's returns. When the nobleman does return in the full manifestation of his title and kingdom, then the power of judgment is given also to His servants, even to slay their master's enemies. It is after all these things that the faithful servants then continue to rule over the cities of their master's realm.

The principle is that the future appearance of the kingdom (visible even to enemies) is certain, but that the kingdom's appearance was not to accompany those things (passion, crucifixion, resurrection, and pentecost) which were about to transpire when the Lord came up to Jerusalem. Rather, the parable's portrayal of a long journey and a long awaited return of the heir to the throne depict a considerable lapse of time, enough to bring long investments to fruition before the kingdom appeared. Nevertheless, amillennarians maintain that the kingdom did appear in conjunction

with those events that transpired immediately subsequent to Christ's final ascent to Jerusalem.

During this same time period, Christ sets forth specific teaching on the resurrection of the just. The resurrection of Abraham and Isaac, together with Jacob, in a restored land and inheritance, is an essential theme of Christ's Gospel of the Kingdom. Two days before His death, the Sadducees confronted Christ to test Him claiming Moses for their authority as they tried to demonstrate that Christ's doctrine of the resurrection was absurd. Christ answered them from Moses and declared: "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who shall be counted worthy to attain that age, and (or *even*) the resurrection which is out from among the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage..." (Luke 20:34-35). The form of the original language employed here is neither pliable nor imprecise: just as Christ's own resurrection was *e'k nekrow^an*, out from among the

Acts

dead, so those who shall be accounted worthy to attain that age shall experience the resurrection *th^v e'k nekrow^an*, which is out from among the dead. The only way that there can be such a resurrection out from among the dead is if certain ones are still dead while others are raised to life out from among those still dead (cf. Phil. 3:11). Christ immediately referred to Moses to prove the necessity of this future resurrection of certain ones out

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this verse from Exodus as proof that there would be a resurrection (Mt. 22:31-32). Note this--Jesus claimed that God's words to Moses proved not that Abraham's, Isaac's, and Jacob's souls were alive, but that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be raised from the dead. Only by a physical resurrection could they attain the promise made by God in his covenant.

In the New Testament the resurrection is something to be gained (Lk. 20:35). John calls it the "resurrection of life" or the "first resurrection" (Jn. 5:29; Rev. 20:6). It is in the resurrection that we find the Christian's hope. The blessings of this life, even being with Christ in our death, are wonderful in themselves; but it is the resurrection that brings us our joy and fulfillment. It is the goal to which we strive; it is the revelation in us of the power and glory of God. It is in the resurrection that we find fellowship with Christ and all the saints, our final contentment.

If the covenant promises are fulfilled in the resurrection, the consequence is premillennialism. The other major systems, amillennialism and postmillennialism, require the covenant promises to be fulfilled prior to the resurrection. Premillennialism is not only consistent with covenant theology, it also is most consistent with biblical theology.

V. The Covenant of Grace and the Promised Kingdom

If this covenant of grace really is true, then those biblical covenants which lead to the messianic kingdom are all a part of this overarching covenant. The covenants with Abraham, Moses, and David, and the new covenant, are just steps to bring in the promised messianic kingdom, involving the salvation of all God's elect. This prophesied kingdom of God is not a segmented part of God's purpose in Scripture; it is the goal of Scripture. The first words of Jesus' preaching in the gospels and the last words of Paul's in Acts are about the kingdom of God.

The covenant of grace provides the unifying center for the biblical covenants and dispensations. While there is progress through the different dispensations, they *Covenant Theology & Premillennialism*
Covenant Theology & Premillennialism

point to a common goal. The old covenant sacraments of circumcision and the Passover sacrifice are replaced by the new covenant sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, but the significance of these is the same. They are all sacraments of the covenant of grace.

VI. Charity and Theology

As one reads the discussions on these doctrines, he quickly becomes aware that theologians from all the major orthodox positions are seeking to follow the truth of Scripture as they understand it. The doctrines of the church, the covenants, and the last days are woven all through

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PERSPECTIVES

A SURVEY OF EARLY PREMILLENNIALISM

By Eric Frank

The last two centuries have witnessed intensified study in the eschatological portions of the Bible. This interest has prompted the majority of the Church to embrace a pre-millennial hope in the return of Christ (i.e., Christ will come at the end of the tribulation and will rule for a thousand years in Jerusalem).

However, many believers today would be shocked to discover that a different millennial persuasion has dominated much of the Church's history. For over 1500 years Amillennialism (the belief that Christ's 1000 year reign is exercised spiritually through the Church) was the prevailing dogma.

Eusebius, Augustine, Jerome, and even sixteenth century reformers like Martin Luther all upheld amillennialism as the only orthodox position. Concerning the Anabaptists the Augsburg Confession condemningly states, "Who now scatter Jewish opinions that before the resurrection of the dead, the godly shall occupy the kingdom of the world, the wicked being everywhere suppressed" (Art. XVII).

At first glance it seems amillennialism has an unbeatable heritage. However, a thorough survey of the first 2 1/2 centuries of Christian history proves that pre-millennialism, or chiliasm as it

was then called, has a heritage all its own.

The apologists who looked forward to the thousand year reign of Christ not only were godly men and scholars in their own rite, but also were contemporaries of those who studied under the Apostle John. One would think that men like Polycarp and Papias had a fairly accurate understanding of what their teacher was conveying in Revelation chapter 20!

No one should ignore the prominence of chiliasm in this early period. Writings from the second and third centuries, in retrospect, attest that pre-millennialism, and not amillennialism, was the viable hope of a persecuted Church.

Barnabas

The earliest Christian witness to chiliasm is the epistle of Barnabas. This document was written in Alexandria sometime during the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian (ca. A.D. 100) or possibly earlier (ca. A.D. 70-79).¹ Barnabas, who was a layman and not the Apostle, wrote to encourage a church that was undergoing tribulation;

"But I, not as though I were a teacher, but as one of *Early Church Premillennialism*

yourselves, will show forth a few things, whereby ye shall be

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to give back, to put back, or to reclaim (what is lacking or owing) back to its former or proper place. (cf. Moulton and Milligan, Bauer, Thayer, et. al.) Reclaiming or restoring a kingdom ordinarily (if not necessarily) entails three things: 1. the placing of the entitled royal heir and qualified living successor on the throne of that kingdom; 2. the submission of all loyal subjects to that heir; and 3. the restoration of the stated lands and territories of that enthroned sovereign. The Apostles, when they ask the question, obviously had this idea of restoration in mind with universal implications.

Amillennialists teach that in spite of the fact that the Lord had given the Apostles' the ability to understand the Scriptures, and in spite of the fact that He had added to their new understanding His own instruction concerning the kingdom, nevertheless, at the conclusion of those forty days none of the Apostles yet understand the Scriptures concerning the kingdom. For, according to amillennialists, if the Apostles had understood the Scriptures, they would not have asked such an ill-founded question concerning a future event that was never to take place.

This is because amillennialists insist that Christ, either by His very presence with His disciples or by His act of rising from the dead, had already restored the kingdom to Israel. They maintain that the kingdom was and thus is immediately present in this present era. They also maintain that because it is a spiritual kingdom it

is only perceivable by those who have been regenerated and spiritually enlightened. (Albeit, if this were the case, it seems peculiar that the presence of Israel's restored kingdom was not perceived by Christ's regenerated and enlightened disciples.) Nevertheless, according to amillennialists, the Apostles really should have known from the Scriptures that the kingdom had already been restored to Israel spiritually and actually, i.e. to the extent that it was intended to be restored to Israel.

Of course, if this were true, it would mean that this event, the future restoration of the kingdom to Israel to which the Apostles specifically referred in their question, was never going to happen. But Jesus certainly did not tell them that it was not. The Lord definitely left them to conclude that it was going to happen at a designated time in the future. Albeit, the time was not to be revealed to them. Now, if it were true that Jesus deliberately left his Apostles with a false impression after such a question, this would mean that Jesus violated the ninth commandment (cf. Larger & Shorter Catechisms of the *Acts*

Westminster Standards).

A Matter of Context

What had Christ been saying about the time of the coming of His kingdom, and in what context had He been speaking concerning the appearance of the kingdom? Not

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approach to the original plan for mankind. Rather, it was rooted in the original design of creation: perfect fellowship with God in paradise. This is the fullest meaning of the Immanuel doctrine.

Genesis shows where mankind went wrong. It also graciously reveals where God is leading His people. In the covenants God promises a future inheritance achieved through the resurrection of the saints. Ultimately, Genesis teaches that God is leading us to a new creation "in which righteousness dwells."

¹Conspicuously absent in the biblical theology of the Pentateuch is any development of the Genesis 1:28 theme of mankind "subduing and ruling" creation. Many modern Reformed students have a penchant for imposing this theme, the so-called "cultural mandate," as a creation model for understanding man's present God-given role in creation. Biblical theology shows that, struggle as he might, man is unable to fulfill this mandate. Genesis 9:7 implies that the mandate was removed from the shoulders of corporate mankind. Instead, the perfect Man, Christ Jesus, will fulfill this original design as the last Adam (Phil. 3:21).

²See my review of Dumbrell's *Covenant and Creation* in this issue of the *WRS Journal* to see the unity of God's one covenant first made with Adam and then Noah and Abraham.

³At Sarah's death, the pilgrim Abraham bought a burial ground since he owned none of the promised land.

⁴Incidentally, Jesus again implies the same understanding when arguing for the resurrection against the Sadducees: "God is not the God of the dead but of the living" (Matt. 22:31,32). In effect He argues that the patriarchs were alive in the days of the burning bush as well as in His own day. God will fulfill His covenant oath when resurrection bodies are given to the

patriarchs. Then they will inherit the material kingdom promises that were also promised to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:8). 

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Israel?' for, to the Apostles, that was not subject to question. The question simply regarded the time when this was to take place.

The words "restore again" in the Apostle's question are a translation of the original Greek word *a'pokaqi/sthmi*, *Acts*

(pronounced *apokathistemi*) which means to restore with the idea of

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EXEGETIS

ESCHATOLOGY IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS

by Christopher Lensch

Introduction

When we think of the Old Testament's teaching on the end times, our attention generally turns to the writing prophets. Isaiah, Zechariah, and Daniel first come to mind, not to mention other prophets.

But eschatology in Genesis? A general assumption is that Genesis is all about beginnings, not endings. After all, the name Genesis means "origins."

Approach

In considering the eschatology of Genesis, it will be helpful to look at two areas. Often overlooked is the book's literary construction; structure indicates certain emphases within the message. For example, how often are themes repeated? In what place within the book's framework are they introduced or resolved? These questions will help reveal the literary scheme of Genesis.

Next, the message itself must be considered. What are the themes and sub-themes that underlie the narrative of the book?

THE IMPORTANCE OF LITERARY STRUCTURE

Genesis

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THE CONTEXT AND MEANING OF THE PREMISE AND PURPOSE STATEMENT OF THE BOOK OF THE ACTS

An Excerpt
by Edward Crawford

After Christ's resurrection, "He showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs, being seen of "the Apostles forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). Jesus Himself, at the very beginning of those forty days, had opened the Apostles' understanding, enabling them to "understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45). On the day of Christ's ascension, at the conclusion of the forty days, the Apostles, having understood the Scriptures through divine assistance, and having received Christ's particular instruction concerning the things of His kingdom during the forty days, yet felt that they lacked one essential piece of information: the time. Therefore they ask this question: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?" (Acts 1:6). To this the Lord replied, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in his own authority" (vs.7). The question was not, 'Wilt thou *Acts*

restore again the kingdom to

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BOOKS

Review by Christopher Lensch

W.J. Dumbrell: *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of OT Covenants*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984.

Introduction

A major development in modern biblical study has been the discovery of ancient Near Eastern covenants. Ancient Hittite and Canaanite covenants have shown interesting parallels with the covenants of the Old Testament.

New insights into the meaning and use of biblical covenants have now come to light. Ancient covenant forms have also confirmed the integrity and Mosaic dating of many parts of the Pentateuch—a tremendous boon in answering the attacks of modernism. Contrary to tired old higher criticism that speculated a seventh century b.c. date, Deuteronomy is now recognized as a "treaty document" that could only issue from the time of Moses and Joshua.

Thesis

W.J. Dumbrell's work is an important contribution to the study of the covenants. His book examines the main covenants of the Old Testament along with their deliberate interrelation.

This interrelation of covenants in sacred history, according to his thesis, grows out of God's plan to bring mankind back to the original design of creation. Thus the title, *Covenant and Creation*. Paradise was lost through man's rebellion but will be restored through God's grace.

Dumbrell says there clearly was a covenant relationship between God and Adam in the garden. God promised life for obedience and threatened death for disobedience. When Adam broke the covenant (Hosea 6:7), God purposed to reestablish his original covenant from creation with select representatives of the race who would be custodians of his truth and grace to mankind.

God unfolded His enduring promise of life in paradise through the covenants—the Noahic, Abrahamic, Sinaitic, Davidic, and New covenants. Dumbrell makes a good case that each of these successive covenants is not an isolated divine scheme, but rather the reestablishment of the original creation covenant. He bases this on the details of the covenant texts and on the language of covenant making. As early as the days of Noah God speaks in terms of "confirming My covenant" (Gen. 6:18; 9:9). In similar passages (Abraham in Gen. 17:2 and Israel in Ex. 19:5), an already existing covenant is implied; the usual formula for making a fresh covenant is not generally used.

According to Dumbrell, each of the biblical covenants grows out of the previous one. They dove-tail because they are unified in God's plan to return to

Books

the design of creation. It is not surprising, therefore, to find

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While faithful Bible students do not doubt the surety of God's promises, some still believe that the covenant promise of the land was conditional or that it has already been fulfilled. This school of thought rejects a realized Messianic kingdom on the earth. Though too limited in scope to answer objections against a future Messianic kingdom, the thesis of this article is to show the connection between paradise lost and paradise regained. What was promised to Abraham and his children is nothing less than what was given to Adam and Eve in paradise.² God gives the same promises to the spiritual children of Abraham (Rom. 4; Gal. 3).

Restoration and the Resurrection

The biblical teaching of the resurrection is tied up in the covenant promises. The resurrection is a cardinal doctrine of every eschatological system. Abraham himself believed in the resurrection; his expectation of returning together with Isaac after sacrificing his son implies this hope (Gen. 22:5; cf. Heb. 11:17-19).

Only by believing in the resurrection could Abraham understand how and when God would deliver the covenant promises of paradise. Genesis 15 is a key passage here. Immediately after rescuing Lot who had chosen the well-watered plain for his herds, a discouraged Abraham is met by God. God reaffirms His pledge to His servant to *multiply*

him (15:5,6) and to give him the promised *land* (15:7). In response to his request for assurance about the land (15:8), God swears it to Abraham in covenant ritual.

The wonder of this passage, however, is that God thereupon informs Abraham that much of his posterity, co-heirs of the land, will never even live in the land (15:13). Abraham himself will die (15:15), apparently without having received the land promised by God's covenant.³

God's better plan is that none of the Old Testament saints inherit the covenant promises separate from all the saints who will stand at the resurrection (Heb. 11:13-16; 39,40). In Genesis 15 God caused Abraham to understand that the land was his, but that he would not possess it till after the resurrection *Genesis*

in the kingdom (cf. Lk. 13:28,29).⁴ This helps us understand the hopes of the patriarchs, especially Jacob and Joseph, who insisted on being buried in the land that God had promised.

Conclusion

What mankind lost in Adam's rebellion, God planned to restore through the seed of faithful Abraham. The covenant themes of blessing, fruitfulness, and land are creation themes (Gen. 1:28). They are a bridge of hope that crosses over the curse and chaos described in the early chapters of Genesis.

The covenant made with Abraham was not a novel, alternate

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In the context of the rest of revelation, the first message of the Bible shows remarkable harmony with the last message of the Bible. Images of paradise in Revelation 21 & 22 and a new heaven and earth with a tree of life close out the canon. The future God portrays is an amplified reflection of the first creation.

The Book of Revelation may focus on endings and Genesis on beginnings, but these two are amazingly harmonious in their image of the way things ought to be and will be.

IMPORTANT THEMES

Paradise Lost

Genesis, as a book of origins, describes the beginnings of creation as "good." When man debuts in paradise he has unbroken harmony with God. Then Moses describes the corruption of God's creation design: the origin and consequences of sin are introduced.

Still, sin and death are not the end of the original story. Paradise and fellowship with God were God's design for mankind. This is why, in the midst of pronouncing judgment, God also pronounces the "protevangeli-um" in Genesis 3:15. The Bible's "first gospel" statement is found early in this book, a book that is the watershed of divine truth. The protevangeli-um promises a Deliverer to defeat man's enemy.

A question arises about the nature of Adam and Eve's hope. When the Deliverer would come to crush man's enemy, the Serpent, would God restore the blessing of

peace with God in paradise as well? In other words, what is the nature of the gospel hope? Is it one-sided, only an emancipation from sin and death, or does it ensure the positive hope of reopening the gate of paradise as well? Of course, the latter blessing is included also. "Blessing" was a major element of the Lord's creation design (Gen. 1:28).

Restoration through the Covenants

Genesis 1:28 introduces two other major themes in the

Pentateuch.¹ With regard to God's design for man, the ideas of the "earth/land" and "fruitfulness" are seminal issues when it comes to the creation of mankind. Significantly, these three creation themes of "blessing," "land," and "fruitfulness" reappear in God's covenants with Noah (Gen. 9:1), *Genesis*

Abraham (Gen. 12:2,3; 13:14-17), and Israel (Num. 6:24-26; Deut. 6:1-3).

Something deadly lies in between the creation design of "blessing, fruitfulness, and land" (Gen. 1:28) and the next mention of these themes in the covenants. It is sin and rebellion. That Moses still reiterates these creation themes even after man's fall is most significant. His message from God is that the Creator intends to reestablish His original design for mankind. He will do this through His gracious covenants.

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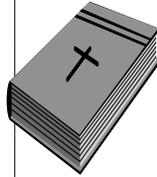
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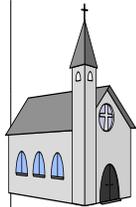
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message of everything in between.

In other words, the major theme of Genesis is that autonomous man intends evil, while God intends good. Humans may think they are free in making moral choices between good and evil, but they will always choose evil (Gen. 6:5) when the God of goodness is left out of the decision. The lesson of the Joseph narrative is that God sovereignly "works all things together for good" for those who walk with him (Rom. 8:28).

Finally, what does the theme of good and evil have to do with eschatology? In general terms the future of human history is bleak without the intervention of God. In specific terms God does overrule and will bring about His originally intended good. An examination of the outworking of His plans in the covenants leads to this conclusion.

The Beginning and End of Genesis: the Complementary Theme

Genesis speaks of beginnings, and beginnings anticipate conclusions. Not surprisingly, the end of Genesis does speak of future developments. One of several crucial junctures in the Pentateuch, Genesis 49 records Jacob's prophecies about the "latter days." This passage about the future deliberately balances the book's early account of beginnings.

Genesis 49 holds a messianic prediction in verse 10. It is the "Shiloh" promise. The tribe of Judah will be the royal tribe of

Israel, and out of Judah will come One Who bears the ruling scepter. All people will obey this One called Shiloh. In the light of the rest of the Bible, it is very easy to understand Shiloh as the Lord Jesus ruling at His second coming.

Jacob's descent into Egypt teaches one other eschatological note at the end of Genesis. Not incidentally is his family numbered at 70 souls going into Egypt. The numerical symbolism is a picture of fullness. The interpretation principle of first mention leads our minds back to Genesis 10. There, too, 70 souls that constitute the family of Adam are mentioned.

As Jacob's family goes into Goshen to incubate into a great nation, his seventy descendants represent all the posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Through this new nation God will work with the rest of the nations represented by the 70 families in Genesis 10. It seems that Moses is portraying Israel as the new humanity and Abraham as a new Adam. God's future blessing to the nations will come through the *Genesis*

family of Abraham.

The Beginning and End of the Bible: a Canonical Consideration

Finally, Genesis and the Book of Revelation help interpret the other. Together they give us a snapshot of God's direction. His plan of redemption is moving toward the goal of His original design of creation.

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From Beginning to End

Genesis is a book of origins. Beginnings, nonetheless, may indicate something about endings. This is because beginnings show direction, and possibly purpose and design. God did not create the heavens and the earth and call all things good just to have sin derail his cosmic plans. While we may be thwarted in our own personal plans, God is able to carry through on His purposes (Rom. 4:21). The origins that God established may be a picture of the destination He has always intended.

Genesis lays the foundation for the rest of the Bible. Remember that Moses gave this revelation to God's people perhaps while they were still in Egypt, or at least while sin's oppression was still fresh in mind. Its message of an initial paradise in God's creation taught the Hebrews that God had a good purpose for mankind. A short life of drudgery and an untimely death in a brick pit were not part of His original plan. This picture of paradise also teaches modern man that sin and misery are not God's ultimate desire for him.

Consider also the opening phrase of Genesis, "In the beginning God . . ." Instant focus on beginnings anticipates the latter days of the world. These opening words of Genesis teach that creation is not eternal from ages past. The next step in the author's chain of logic is the implication that creation will not last eternally. Creation had a beginning. Human history will not continue in a sin-

cursed world but will have a conclusion as surely as it had a beginning.

The Beginning and End of Genesis Thematic Structure

If we can read the conclusion of an account as well as its beginning, then an even clearer picture of design is painted. It is like reading the introduction and conclusion of a mystery novel to know the design of the author. This approach is especially helpful in interpreting a book like Ecclesiastes.

Read the end of Genesis in the light of its introduction. The Joseph narrative in the closing chapters may seem to have little to do with the creation account of the book's first two chapters. This narrative does have everything to do with the fall of man in Genesis 3. Joseph summarizes that his brothers' intentions and actions were to choose evil (Gen. 50:20, the key verse of the book). Choosing evil is the heart of the fall of mankind at the beginning of the book. Apart from total dependence upon God, Joseph's brothers at the end of the book characteristically choose sin.

To walk with God as Joseph did, however, means to seek goodness. Goodness is inextricably connected *Genesis*

to God. Especially in His work of creation God creates and sees all things "good." When the sacred author deliberately concludes Genesis on the theme of "good and evil," this repeated idea serves as dual book ends to color the

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Scripture, and it is possible to make convincing cases for differing viewpoints in these matters. For this reason, it is important that we carry on these investigations and discussions in a spirit of Christian charity and with a willingness to change when shown to be in error in any particular point. Eschatology should not become a battleground in our churches.

On the other hand, it is comforting to us who are premillennialists to know that this understanding of the millennium is consistent with both the promises of the biblical covenants, and the tenants of covenant theology. 

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Edenic images in statements of the covenants. For example, the Sinaitic covenant held out a land flowing with milk and honey (Dt. 6), and the Davidic and New Covenants picture a renewed creation (Is. 55:3,13; 65:17ff.; Hosea 2:18ff.; 3:5; Ezk. 36:35ff.).

Significance

Dumbrell's development of the biblical theology of the covenants has far-reaching implications for enlarging our understanding of God's revelation in the Bible.

First, this approach helps unlock the message of the Old Testament. God did not intend this part of revelation simply to teach morality or merely to serve as a source of object lessons.

Second, a study of the biblical covenants will always confirm the essence of Reformed theology. With the covenant at its core, Reformed theology has given the key to understanding God's dealings with mankind. On the other hand, God's unified plan is contrary to classic dispensational theology. God did not keep bringing abortive plans from the heavenly drawing board to deal with humanity during different eras. On the contrary, God has only one gracious purpose.

Third, Dumbrell's careful study of the individual covenants and their interrelation affirms a realized, Messianic kingdom. His approach has strong millennial implications. He does not glean a few random proof texts to support his conclusions. Rather, he works through the warp and woof of the covenants to show God's design—specifically, paradise restored.

Conclusion

Reformed, pre-millennial believers have sort of been in a theological "no-man's land." They look for Christ to reign upon the earth, but they do not follow the essence of dispensationalism. They see the unity of God's covenant, but they do not follow the allegorical hermeneutic that Reformed theology historically has employed for eschatology. *Covenant and Creation* bridges the gap by returning to a fresh study of the covenants.

Although it is somewhat technical for a popular audience, pastors and serious Bible students will find that Dumbrell's up-to-date scholarship provides a valuable resource for all who "... are looking for a new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" (II Peter 3:13). 

Book Questions?

If you would like to see a book reviewed in this section, or have questions about current titles on the subjects we cover, please contact Mr. Lensch in care of *the WRS Journal*.

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law."⁷

Although the Church later condemned Origen's methodology, remnants of his approach to Scripture have been preserved in amillennialism.

Third, the apparent delay of Christ's coming and the triumph of his Church over the Roman empire were the final blows against pre-millennialism. The raging persecutions had ended and the time of prosperity described in the Prophets and Revelation would be fulfilled by a spiritual reign of Christ through the Church.

Although the three reasons listed above seemed plausible at the time of their inception, history has shown them to be insubstantial. What cult has not taken promises from the Bible (as Cerinthus did) and perverted them for their own advantage? How many errors have been propagated because people have broken the canons of correct biblical interpretation? And by no means can the tyrannical rule of the Roman Catholic Church be interpreted as Christ reigning through his Church; even Origen would not have read this interpretation into Revelation 20.

Therefore, using the hindsight that history has afforded us, let us wholeheartedly embrace a pre-millennial hope that is both biblical and historical. Let us find strength through the testimony of these early saints to watch for the blessed hope; the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.



¹ The allusion to a recent destruction of the Jerusalem temple has led some to prefer an earlier date (Lightfoot's, *Apostolic Fathers*). The author's extensive use of the OT and not the NT may also indicate an early composition.

² The Latin text states, "the adversary," the Ante-Nicene Fathers, "Satan," the Greek text, "and he who works holds the authority." This phrase is similar to 2 Thess. 2:7-8.

³ The word "approaches" in Greek is in the perfect tense. This sentence could be translated, "The complete or ultimate stumbling block is at hand or has come near" (i.e. the man of lawlessness).

⁴ For further study see "Dialogue with Trypho," chapters 32, 51, 80, 81, 110, 113.

⁵ Irenaeus even gives some possible meanings for the number of the beast (ch. 30).

⁶ See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*; III. 28

⁷ This superficial view is another way of saying "literal interpretation." Origen's "labor of thinking" meant reading between the lines looking for a hidden meaning. See Origen, *De Principiis*, II. 11.

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In his "Against Heresies" (ch. 23-36) Irenaeus delineated an extremely thorough eschatology. Because he drew from the entire Bible (Genesis through Revelation), only a brief sketch can be given here.

Irenaeus outlined his millennial expectation in the final chapters of "Against Heresies." Like his contemporary Justin, Irenaeus endorsed the literal fulfillment of the OT promises. In his summation of John's Revelation (which could almost pass as a commentary on the book), Irenaeus cited the Church father Papias; Christ's thousand year rule will follow the great tribulation and the persecutions of Anti-christ. After this time of unlimited prosperity Satan will be loosed for a short time and then condemned and the final resurrection and judgment will take place.

The testimony of this western father has strong validation because of his intensive study and exposition of the Scriptures and his personal link to Johannian interpretation.

After Irenaeus came other men who had the same hope: Tertullian, Commodian, Lactantius, Methodius, and Apollinaris of Laodicea all advocated premillennial doctrine; doing so, however, under increasing opposition.

By the beginning of the fourth century millennial teaching was, for the most part, extinguished throughout the Roman empire. For the next 1500 years premillen-

nalism was rejected as heresy. This stimulates an important question; Why was this doctrine, that was so well attested to in the first centuries, subsequently rejected and classified as heretical? There seem to be three reasons for this abrupt transition.

First, certain heretical individuals and sects taught a form of pre-millennialism. Cerinthus the arch-heretic and enemy of the Apostle John believed that Christ would reign in an earthly kingdom and the saints would pass their time indulging in every appetite and lust: eating, drinking and marrying. Some even suggested that John's Revelation was a forgery composed by Cerinthus.

The Montanists also stringently subscribed to chiliasm. However, according to their teaching Christ would not reign in Jerusalem but in Pepuza, Phryia. The Church father Caius of Rome condemned *Early Church Premillennialism*

both of these groups and pre-millennialism along with them.

Second, the Alexandrian school of interpretation fostered an allegorical approach to Revelation 20, just as it did to the rest of Scripture. Both Origen and his disciple Dionysius harshly objected to "the promises of the future looked for in bodily pleasure and luxury." As Origen describes the chiliasts, "Certain persons, then, refusing the labor of thinking, and adopting a superficial view of the letter of the

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gladdened in the present circumstances. Seeing then that the days are evil, and the Active One himself² has the authority, we ought to give heed to ourselves and to seek out the ordinances of the Lord" (1:8-2:1).

Barnabas viewed the current events of his day as the direct fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy concerning the ten kingdoms and the little horn (Dan. 7:7-8, 24-25). As he states elsewhere;

"And let us hate the error of the present time, that we may set our love on the world to come: let us not give loose reins to our soul, that it should have power to run with sinners and the wicked, lest we become like them. The final stumbling block approaches.³

Although Barnabas reminded the church of its suffering, his ultimate objective was to bring consolation. Using OT typology he disclosed Christ and his kingdom. In chapter fifteen of his epistle Barnabas set forth his millennial hope. The author found in Gen. 2:2 not just a recounting of creation, but God's spiritual projection for his dealings with mankind;

"Attend, my children, to the meaning of this expression, "He finished in six days." This implieth that the Lord will finish all things in six thousand years, for a day is with Him a thousand years. Therefore, my children, in six days, that is, in six thousand years, all things will be finished. "And He rested on the seventh

day," This meaneth: when His Son, coming again, shall destroy the time of the wicked man, and judge the ungodly, and change the sun, and the moon, and the stars, then shall He truly rest on the seventh day."

These passages clearly represent a belief in the millennium. However, Barnabas continued to develop his eschatology. The thousand year rest symbolized by the seventh day will be followed by an eighth day which represents the eternal state; "When giving rest to all things, I shall make a beginning of the eighth day, that is, a beginning of another world" (ch. 15).

The Epistle of Barnabas was such an encouragement to the early believers, that those who complied Codex Sinaiticus deemed it worthy to be placed after the book of Revelation, not as part of the Canon, but possibly as a commentary to the Apocalypse. Although other Church fathers present chiliasm in clearer language, this epistle is a valuable resource for this subject.

Papias

No one wishing to do justice to early chiliasm can subtract Papias from the list of witnesses. This man, who lived sometime between A.D. 70-163, served his church in *Early Church Premillennialism*

Hierapolis as a bishop. The church's location in the Province of Phrygia afforded Papias with many privileges: he had firsthand

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audience with the Apostle John, who resided in nearby Ephesus, he shared intimate fellowship with John's disciple Polycarp, who was bishop in Symrna, and he sought out personal contact with many who had heard the Lord Jesus and his Apostles.

Papias' hunger for the truth caused him to make the most of these opportunities. As he wrote in his "Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord;"

"For I did not, like the multitude, take pleasure in those who spoke much, but in those who taught the truth; nor in those who related strange commandments, but in those who rehearsed the commandments given by the Lord to faith, and proceeding from truth itself. If, then, any one who had attended on the elders came, I asked minutely after their sayings, what Andrew or Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew, or by any other of the Lord's disciples: which things Aristion and the Elder John, the disciples of the Lord, say" (Book I).

Through these inquires many, otherwise, lost traditions have been preserved, however, only in the writings of other men. Students of Church history mourn the fact that no copies of Papias' "Oracles of the Lord" have been discovered to date. All that remain of his exposition are brief quotations found in the writings of Irenaeus and Eusebius.

According to Irenaeus the Oracles of Papias were divided into

five parts (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*; III, 39). In his fourth section Papias documented an oral quotation that supposedly was uttered by the Lord Jesus himself; "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 shoots ten thousand clusters, and on every one of the clusters ten thousand grapes, and every grape when pressed

will give five and twenty metretes of wine..." This citation continues to describe a similar future prosperity for grain, fruit and the animals; the millennium will be a time when the wolf will lie down with the lamb.

Although it is questionable whether the Lord Jesus spoke these exact words, it is obvious that many people unashamedly embraced a pre-millennialism that is rooted in the OT and was affirmed by the Messiah.

Eusebius has also perpetuated Papias' writings. In his *Ecclesiastical History* (book III, ch. 39), the historian recorded traditions concerning miracles and the authorship of certain NT books. Intertwined among them *Early Church Premillennialism*

Eusebius made reference to Papias' millennial belief;

"The same person, moreover, has set down other things as coming to him from unwritten tradition, amongst these some strange parables and instructions of the Savior, and some other things of a

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more fabulous nature. Amongst these he says that there will be a millennium after the resurrection from the dead, when the personal reign of Christ will be established on earth." The "strange parables" Eusebius mentions are probably those that are cited above, and because he was an amillennialist, he viewed Papias' beliefs as "of a more fabulous nature;" in other words, bizarre.

Although Eusebius was not a chiliast, he has left us with an invaluable witness for second century premillennialism.

Justin Martyr

One of the most able men to present a defense for the Christian faith was Justin Martyr. He was born in Samaria sometime around A.D. 110, and was martyred in A.D. 165 during the reign of Marcus Aurelius.

Justin's extensive traveling and his vast exposure to philosophy and religion provided him with a wealth of knowledge. He used the arts of rhetoric that were promoted by the philosophical schools to prove that Christianity was the only true philosophy.

In his "Dialogue with Trypho" the apologist sought to prove from the OT that Jesus was the Messiah and that Christianity was superior to Judaism. It is in this dialogue that Justin elaborated on his millennial expectation.

Because of Justin's extensive witness to Chiliasm, only a few passages can be cited here. In

Chapter 80 Trypho the Jew (probably a hypothetical opponent) questioned Justin's belief in the thousand year reign of Christ. Justin assured him that, not only he, but many others held to the same opinion.

He demonstrated true charity toward many pious Christians who disagreed with his millennial stance, and yet he deemed pre-millennialism as the true orthodox position;

"But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare" (Ch. 80).

In chapter 81 Justin supported his doctrine by appealing to the Prophets and the Apostle John. His eschatology was derived from a literal approach to both Testaments; to him this was more than a Jewish dream, it was a biblical revelation.

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Irenaeus

Probably the greatest apologist and writer of the second century was Irenaeus (A.D. 120-202). He was trained under Polycarp (John's disciple) and eventually became bishop in Lyons. Like no other, Irenaeus threw himself into the apologetic arena with every heretical group that he came in contact with.

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