

# KINGDOM. SUPPLEMENT 19

## [JESUS CHRIST] UNBIBLICAL THEORIES ABOUT THE SECOND COMING

### REFUTING UNBIBLICAL THEORIES ABOUT THE SECOND COMING

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The word millennium<sup>1</sup> refers to “a period of one thousand years”.

The word eschatology means: the theological doctrine about events happening at the end of time.

The word dispensationalism<sup>2</sup> refers to the theology that divides the history of the Bible into several “dispensations” (time-periods), each with a *supposed* divinely ordained religious system.

- The popular dispensationalism of John N. Darby (1800-1882) divided the Bible into seven dispensations: (1) Paradise state to the flood, (2) Noah, (3) Abraham, (4) Israel (the Jews under the law, priests and kings), (5) the Gentiles, (6) the Spirit and (7) the millennial kingdom (the millennium).
- The popular dispensationalism of C.I. Scofield (1843-1921) divided the Bible into seven dispensations: (1) Innocence (before the fall), (2) Conscience (after the fall), (3) Human government (Noah), (4) Promise (Abraham), (5) Law (Israel), (6) Grace (Church) and (7) Kingdom (millennium).
- Many modern dispensationalists only believe in three dispensations before eternity consisting of the new heaven and the new earth: (1) the Old Testament dispensation (Israel), (2) the New Testament dispensation (Church) until the rapture of the Church, (3) the chaos of the Great Tribulation followed by the order of the Millennial Kingdom, both on earth until the final failure of the Millennial Kingdom with the loosening of Satan.
- Ultra-millennialism believes that the dispensation of the Law (Israel) continues into the New Testament to include the Four Gospels, part of the Book of Acts and the whole Book of Revelation. It believes that the dispensation of the Church only includes the events and writings of the apostle Paul.

The word pre-millennialism refers to the belief that Christ would return (the rapture) *before* a literal millennial kingdom (1000 years). The advocates of dispensationalism believe that there are two second comings of Christ: the so-called “coming” (parousia) of Christ *for* the rapture of the Church and the so-called “appearance” of Christ *with* the Church for the millennial kingdom on earth. There are three different views about when the rapture of the Church would take place: before the tribulation, in the middle of the period of tribulation or after the tribulation.

The word post-millennialism refers to the belief that Christ would return *after* the millennial kingdom (1000 years). They believe there will only be one second coming of Christ at the end of the millennium.

The word realized (inaugurated/present) millennialism refers to the belief that the millennium (the 1000 years) is a *symbol* of the whole New Testament period between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ. This is the true biblical teaching about eschatology.

#### A. THE ESCHATOLOGY OF DISPENSATIONALISM

##### 1. Two second comings

The advocates of dispensationalism believe that the second coming of Jesus Christ would take place *in two phases*.

<sup>1</sup> “The meaning of the Millennium, Four Views”, Robert G. Glouse

<sup>2</sup> “Dispensationalism Today”, Charles C. Ryrie (His exposition of Covenant Theology is very wrong!)

### **(1) The first phase of Christ's second coming.**

This so-called "coming" (Greek: parousia) of Christ for the Christians occurs somewhere within the seven years before his "appearance" (Greek: apokalupsis). It is also called "the rapture of the Church". All genuine Christians would suddenly be caught up into heaven and all non-Christians would realise that all Christians have disappeared from the earth! While Christians would celebrate "the wedding of the Lamb" in heaven, the non-Christians would suffer in "the great tribulation" on earth. To escape this suffering during the great tribulation is a great incentive for modern Christians to believe in the theory of two second comings of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

These Christians base their theory on a wrong understanding of two Bible passages: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 says: "We do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming (Greek: parousia) of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise *first*. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be *caught up* together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore, encourage each other with these words." Matthew 24:40-41 says, "Two men will be in the field; *one will be taken and the other left*. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; *one will be taken and the other left*."

### **(2) The second phase of Christ's second coming.**

This would be the so-called "appearance" (Greek: apokalupsis) of Christ with the Christians at the end of the great tribulation, just before the establishment of the so-called millennial kingdom (of peace) on earth.

The belief in two second comings (returns) of Christ is NOT taught in the Bible!

## **2. The so-called invisible and inaudible rapture of the Church.**

Some Christians believe that Christ would suddenly come (i.e. the first phase of his second coming) and rapture<sup>4</sup> (snatch up) the Church into heaven 7 or 3½ years before the second phase of his second coming. All the Christians on earth would be caught up into heaven. The features of this first phase of the second coming would be the following:

- The first phase of the second coming would be imminent. It could happen at any moment, even before the preaching of the gospel on earth to all the nations has been completed (Matthew 24:14).
- The first phase of the second coming would be only for the saints (the Christians). The non-Christians and unbelievers would be left behind.
- The first phase of the second coming would be secret (invisible and inaudible). The rapture would surprise and frighten all the people in the world that are left behind. Some even believe that Christians who are not dedicated would be left behind.
- The first phase of the second coming would be 7 years before the second phase of Christ's second coming. This is the assumption of pre-tribulation pre-millennialism (Revelation 4:1)
- The first phase of the second coming would be 3½ years before the second phase of Christ's second coming. This is the assumption of mid-tribulation pre-millennialism (Revelation 7:1)
- The first phase of the second coming would be just before the second phase of Christ's second coming. This is the assumption of post-tribulation pre-millennialism (Revelation 14:14-16)

These pre-millennialists believe that while all Christians would celebrate with joy "the wedding of the Lamb" in heaven, all non-Christians would pass through the terrible suffering of "the great tribulation" on earth.

Pre-millennialists base their theory on a wrong understanding of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 and Matthew 24:40-41 and on the number "3½" in the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation.

The belief in the invisible and inaudible rapture of the Church (before or in the middle of the great tribulation) CANNOT be proven from the Bible!

## **3. Multiple resurrections.**

Some Christians believe that there will be at least two resurrections of bodies from the dead, separated by at least 1000 years. They base their theory on a wrong understanding of Revelation 20:4-6, which speaks of:

- "the first resurrection" (which implies "a second resurrection")
- and "the second death" (which implies "a first death").

Other Christians even believe in multiple resurrections from the dead:

- the resurrection of Old Testament saints at the crucifixion of Christ (Matthew 27:51-53)
- the resurrection of Christ (Matthew 28:6-7)

<sup>3</sup> The events surrounding the rapture of the Church have become a best-seller in Christian books and DVD series. Serious Christians (1 Thessalonians 5:21) must realise that many books that are advertised, recommended and sold as being "Christian" often go beyond what is written in the Bible (John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16). Christians must refuse to believe in stories that "go beyond what is written" in the Bible (1 Corinthians 4:6; Matthew 24:24; Revelation 22:18-19).

<sup>4</sup> "The Rapture, Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulational?" Gleason L. Archer, Paul D. Feinberg, Douglas J. Moo, Richard R. Reiter

- the resurrection of Christians at the first phase of Christ's second coming (i.e. the rapture of the Church) (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 20:5-6)
- the resurrection of Jews ("the two witnesses") (Revelation 11:7-15) and "the tribulation saints" (Revelation 7:14) at the second phase of Christ's second coming (i.e. the appearance) (Matthew 25:31-33)
- the resurrection of non-Christians and unbelievers at the end of the millennial kingdom (Revelation 20:12-13)

The belief in two (or even more) physical resurrections from the dead separated by 3½, 7 and even 1000 years CANNOT be proven from the Bible!

#### **4. Multiple final judgements.**

Some Christians believe that there will be at least three final judgments for different groups of people. They base this theory on the theory of two phases of the second coming and on the different names<sup>5</sup> given to the one and only final judgment:

- The final judgment of only Christians before "Christ's judgment seat" (2 Corinthians 5:10) after they have been caught up in the air (i.e. the rapture) to meet Christ
- The so-called judgment of all the nations except Israel before "Christ's throne of glory" (Matthew 25:31-32) for how they treated Israel (i.e. the Jews) at the end of the great tribulation period
- The final judgment of all non-Christians (unbelievers) before "the great white throne" (Revelation 20:11-12) more than a thousand years later at the end of the millennial kingdom

Thus these three final judgments are separated by 7 and even 1000 years from each other!

The belief in three (or even more) final judgments separated by 3½, 7 or even 1000 years CANNOT be proven from the Bible!

#### **5. The millennial kingdom.**

Some Christians believe that after the second phase of the second coming of Christ there will still follow a long period of *literally* 1000 years on the old earth, the so-called "millennial kingdom of peace". They believe that before Christ's second coming the kingdom of God is only in heaven (Matthew 3:2) and all the kingdoms on earth belong to Satan. They base this assumption on Luke 4:6, "The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant *all the kingdoms* of the world. And he said to him: I will give you all their authority and splendour, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to".<sup>6</sup> And on 1 John 5:19, "We know ... that *the whole world* is under the control of the evil one."<sup>7</sup>

They moreover believe that at the second phase of Christ's second coming Christ would establish the millennial kingdom and reign for 1000 years over the sinful nations before he finally renews everything! They base this theory on the wrong understanding of Revelation 19:1 to 20:7. They believe that the Book of Revelation is *a linear historical account of future events* and fail to see that Revelation 19:11-21 and Revelation 20:7-15 are parallel accounts of the second coming, the final battle and the final judgement.

They believe the following with respect to the millennial kingdom:

- At the second phase of Christ's second coming all Jews (living in the end-time or all Jews throughout history) would suddenly be resurrected and saved by the majestic appearance of Jesus Christ (Revelation 11:7-15). They base this theory on the wrong understanding of Romans 11:25-26, "Some of the Jews have set themselves against the Gospel now, but this will last only until ... (meaning: temporarily). ... And then (meaning: in the end-time) all Israel will be saved" (the Living Bible 1971, the Good News Bible).<sup>8</sup>
- At the second phase of Christ's second coming Christ (or his representative: king David) would establish the millennial kingdom on earth and would rule together with the resurrected Christians (the Church) by means of the resurrected Jews (Israel) in Jerusalem for a literal period of 1000 years over the whole world. They base this theory on the wrong understanding of Revelation 20:1-6, "I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. ..."

<sup>5</sup> Note against: the One and Only Jesus Christ also has different names: the Angel of the LORD, the Lamb of God, the Shepherd, the Prophet, the High Priest, the King, the Apostle, the Bishop, the Branch, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace, the I AM, the Bread of life, the Light of the world, the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Resurrection, the True Vine, the Holy and Righteous One, the Stone the builders rejected, the Messiah, the Lord of the Sabbath, the Lord of all (Acts 10:36), the Almighty (Revelation 1:8), the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright Morningstar (Rev 22:13,16).

<sup>6</sup> Note against: Already at the beginning of the New Testament period Jesus said concerning everything: "All authority in heaven *and on earth* has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18). And concerning the devil that "he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). The claims of the devil are therefore false!

<sup>7</sup> Note against: The context (1 John 5:18) says, "We know that anyone born of God (i.e. a Christian) does not continue to sin. The One who was born of God (i.e. Jesus Christ) keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him." This is the correct translation from the Greek!"The world that is under the control of the evil one" is only the world of Christ's enemies. "The world which Christ came to save" (John 3:16; 4:42) is the world that acknowledges that it needs a Saviour.

<sup>8</sup> Note against: Both the original Greek text and all good Bible translations in the world say: "Israel has experienced a hardening in part (NOT: temporarily) until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so (NOT: And then) all Israel will be saved"

They came to life (interpreted as: they were physically resurrected)<sup>9</sup> and reigned with Christ a thousand years... This is the first resurrection”

- During the millennial kingdom the Jewish temple would again be erected in Jerusalem. They base this theory on the wrong understanding of Ezekiel chapters 40-48. *Animal sacrifices* would again be sacrificed in this temple *to make atonement for sins* (sic!) They base this theory on the wrong understanding of Ezekiel 43:18-21 and Ezekiel 45:15-20, “The grain offerings, burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to make atonement for the people ... to make atonement for the house of Israel, ... to make atonement for the temple.” This would mean that the blood sacrifices of the Old Testament ceremonial law would replace the completed sacrifice of atonement of Christ on the cross!<sup>10</sup>
- In the millennial kingdom the resurrected Christians and Jews would live in their glorified resurrected bodies and perfect sinless spirits mixed together with all the other people (non-Christians) who still have mortal bodies and degenerate spirits!
- During the millennial kingdom 144000 Jewish missionaries would bring an uncountable number of Gentiles (non-Jews) to faith in Christ. They base this theory on the wrong understanding of Revelation 7:4,9, “The number of those who were sealed: 144000 from all the tribes of Israel. ... After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people and language standing before the throne.” The Christian missions (based on “the gospel of grace” concerning Christ’s work of salvation at his first coming) (Acts 20:24) during the period before Christ’s second coming would nearly be a complete failure! Bt the Jewish mission (based on “the gospel of Christ’s millennial kingdom” concerning Christ’s glorious reign on earth) in the period after Christ’s second coming would nearly be a complete success! This would mean that the completed work of salvation of Christ on the cross at his first coming would be replaced by his future work of liberation during the millennial kingdom! They base this theory on the wrong understanding of Matthew 24:14, “This gospel of the kingdom (interpreted as: “the millennial kingdom”) will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end (of the millennial kingdom and the world) will come.”<sup>11</sup>
- During the millennial kingdom the earth and especially the land of Israel would blossom (Isaiah 27:6; Isaiah 35:1-2), all animals would live at peace with one another and there would be no war (Isaiah 11:6-9)<sup>12</sup>
- But as all the previous historical periods on earth (the so-called “six dispensations” of dispensationalism) ended in failure, likewise the period of the millennial kingdom (in which Christ directly reigns on earth) (the so-called “seventh dispensation”) would end in failure!  
However, in contrast to dispensationalism the Bible describes Jesus Christ as the Conqueror “who rides out as Conqueror bent on conquest” (Revelation 6:1). No part of the history of salvation ends in failure (John 16:33; Revelation 17:14 en 19:11-12)!

The belief in a future literal millennial kingdom of peace on earth is based on Bible texts interpreted out of context and not according to the principles of biblical interpretation! The doctrine of the future literal millennial kingdom of peace and its eventual failure is NOT taught in the Bible!

## B. THE FOUR VIEWS OF THE KINGDOM

Among Christians there are mainly four views on the kingdom of God:

### (1) Historic pre-millennialism.

This viewpoint maintains that the millennial kingdom only begins *after* the second coming of Christ, the resurrection and the last judgement of only believers. It ends with the resurrection and last judgement of only unbelievers.

<sup>9</sup> Note against. The words “came to life” (Greek: *ezézan*) (Revelation 20:4-5) does not refer to the physical resurrection, but to the *spiritual resurrection* or spiritual regeneration (John 5:24-25) (Greek: *zaó*) and to the translation of the human spirit after physical death into the presence of Christ in heaven (Luke 20:37-38; John 11:25; 1 Thessalonians 5:10; see 2 Timothy 4:18)!

<sup>10</sup> Note against: Hebrews 7:27 says, “He sacrificed for their sins *once for all* when he offered himself”. Hebrews 9:26 says, “He has appeared *once for all* at the end of the ages (i.e. at his first coming) to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.” “It is finished and remains finished for ever” (perfect tense) (John 19:30). Dispensationalism replaces the New Testament sacrifice of atonement of Christ with the Old Testament animal sacrifices!

<sup>11</sup> Note against: “The kingdom” in the Gospel of the Kingdom does not refer to any geographical kingdom, but to the kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ in the hearts and lives of Christians and is exactly the same as the Gospel of grace (Acts 20:24-25)! Moreover, the gospel (of the kindom/kingship/grace) is proclaimed *before the second coming of Christ*. The second coming of Christ is “the end” of the present dispensation of grace. After the second coming of Christ the door remains closed for all unbelievers (Matthew 25:10)! Dispensationalism replaces the gospel of grace by the gospel of the millennial kingdom and replaces the almighty reign of Christ (Matthew 28:18) with the limited reign of Christ “with an iron rod” (Revelation 19:15)!

<sup>12</sup> Note against: Isaiah 11:1-5 refers to the present earth before the second coming, i.e. the period between the first coming of Christ and the last judgment. But Isaiah 11:6-9 refers rather to the new earth after the second coming of Christ (and NOT: a millennial kingdom of peace on the present earth) after the second coming of Christ. Dispensationalism replaces the new earth by the millennial kingdom!

### **(2) Dispensational pre-millennialism.**

This viewpoint maintains that the kingdom of God begins only *after* the second phase of the return of Jesus Christ (the so-called visible “appearance” of Christ), the resurrection and last judgement of only believers. It ends with the resurrection and last judgement of only unbelievers. The adherents of dispensationalism do not agree among themselves about the time of the first phase of the return of Jesus Christ (the so-called “rapture” of the Church): at the beginning, or the middle, or the end of the so-called “great tribulation”.

### **(3) Post-millennialism.**

This viewpoint maintains that the kingdom of God grows steadily until it merges with the future millennial kingdom at the end of history. The “thousand years” is usually regarded as a *symbol*.

### **(4) Realized (inaugurated or present) millennialism.**

This viewpoint maintains that the kingdom of God existed from eternity and was established visibly on earth *at the first coming of Christ*. The “thousand years” is a *symbol* for the whole New Testament period from the first coming of Christ until the second coming.

## **C. THE THOUSAND YEARS IN ESCHATOLOGY** <sup>13</sup>

### **1. One second coming preceding the millennial kingdom.**

#### **(1) Features of Historic Pre-millennialism.**

Historic pre-millennialism is of the opinion that the millennial kingdom would only be established after the second coming of Christ, the resurrection and the final judgement of only believers. It would end with the resurrection and final judgement of only unbelievers. The millennium would only be established in the future, would last a literal 1000 years and Christ would personally reign from Jerusalem as King over the whole earth.

While dispensational pre-millennialism believes in two future returns of Christ, historic pre-millennialism believes in only one future second coming of Christ. An advocate of historic pre-millennialism, Ladd, says that there will be no two returns of Christ, no rapture.<sup>14</sup> Historic pre-millennialism says that dispensational pre-millennialism distorts the Bible by saying that there is a secret rapture before the final revelation of Christ!

The millennium is regarded as a literal and physical kingdom of peace on earth that only begins at Christ’s second coming. Dispensational millennialism forms its eschatology by a literal interpretation of the prophecies in the Old Testament and then fits the New Testament data into it. Historic millennialism forms its eschatology from the explicit teaching of the New Testament and maintains (against dispensationalists) that they cannot be sure how the Old Testament prophecies about the end-time are to be fulfilled, because:

- the first coming of Christ was accomplished in terms not foreseen by a literal interpretation of the Old Testament, and
- there are unavoidable indications that the Old Testament promises to Israel are fulfilled in the Christian Church.<sup>15</sup> Thus, Israel is continued in the Church and enlarged to include the believers from the Gentile nations!

#### **(2) Remarks against Historic Pre-millennialism.**

**The historic pre-millennial view does not explain the binding of Satan.** Ladd does not explain the binding of Satan! In dispensational pre-millennialism there is no final knockout of evil at Christ’s first return (the rapture) or Christ’s second return (the revelation) before the millennial kingdom. Also in historic pre-millennialism there is no final knockout of evil at Christ’s second coming before the millennial kingdom. In both these millennial views the final destruction of evil would only take place after 1000 years of Christ’s reign on earth at the final battle at the end of the millennial kingdom (Revelation 20:7-10).

**The historic pre-millennial view does not explain the need for a millennial kingdom.** Ladd says that the visible reign of Christ will only appear in the millennial kingdom. But “why, for example, should believers be raised from the dead to live on the earth which is not yet glorified and which is still groaning because of the presence of sin, rebellion and death (see Romans 8:19-22)? Why should the glorified Christ have to come back to earth to rule over his enemies with a rod of iron and thus still have to endure opposition to his sovereignty for a thousand years? Was not this phase of his work completed during his state of humiliation at his first coming? Is Christ not coming back in the fullness of his glory to usher in, *not* an interim period of qualified peace and imperfection (during the millennial kingdom), but the final and eternal state of unqualified peace and perfection (on the new earth)?”<sup>16</sup>

### **2. Two second comings preceding the millennium.**

#### **(1) Dispensational pre-millennialism.**

Dispensational pre-millennialism maintains that the millennial kingdom only comes after two returns of Christ:

<sup>13</sup> Used with permission from “The Last Biblebook” (Revelation) in [www.deltacourse.org](http://www.deltacourse.org)

<sup>14</sup> George E. Ladd in Robert G. Clouse, *The meaning of the Millennium*, 1977, pp. 17-40

<sup>15</sup> George E. Ladd in Robert G. Clouse, *The meaning of the Millennium*, 1977, p 27.

<sup>16</sup> Anthony A. Hoekema in Robert G. Clouse, *The meaning of the Millennium*, 1977, p. 59

- at the first phase of the second coming of Christ, he “comes invisibly and inaudibly for the Church”, i.e. in order to resurrect only Christians from the dead, judge them and snatch them up into heaven.
- at the second phase of the second coming of Christ, he “comes visibly and audibly with the Church”, i.e. in order to resurrect the Jews (and the tribulation saints) from the dead, judge them and then together with the Christians and by means of the Jews rule with a rod of iron in Jerusalem in Israel over all the nations of the world.

The advocates of dispensational pre-millennialism disagree among themselves about the time of the rapture: at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the period of the great tribulation.

The millennial kingdom ends with the resurrection and final judgement of only unbelievers.

The millennial kingdom is to be established:

- not by Christ’s completed work of salvation at his first coming (the realized millennial view),
- also not by the proclamation of the gospel over the long New Testament period (the post-millennial view),
- but suddenly and by overwhelming power by the second return of Christ (i.e. the “appearance” of Christ) (the dispensational pre-millennial view).

Then all Jews are to be converted, not as individuals who believe in the sacrifice of atonement of Jesus Christ (as will those in Gentile groups), but en masse as the nation of Israel will believe at the mere sight of Christ, the glorious Messiah. The Jews are to become the chief rulers in the millennial kingdom. The Jewish temple will be rebuilt and the ceremonial laws (including animal sacrifices as atonement sacrifices) will again be established!

## **(2) Features of dispensational pre-millennialism.**

Dispensationalism emphasises the separation of the Christians and the Jews in God’s plan of redemption. Jews would be saved in a different way than non-Jews (sic!)

Dispensationalism inserts an interim New Testament Church period between God’s programme with Israel in the Old Testament period and God’s continued programme with Israel in the end-time (the book of Revelation).

Dispensationalism employs a literalistic hermeneutic (including a literal 1000 year millennium).

Dispensationalism teaches that the physical nature in the millennium would share in the blessings of the kingdom and the wild animals would be tamed (Isaiah 11:6-9). During the millennium the saints (the Jews and possibly the Christians) in their resurrected and glorified bodies would mingle freely with the other Gentile nations who are still in their mortal and unsanctified bodies!

Dispensationalism teaches that evil would not cease to exist in the millennium and also would not necessarily decrease in amount, but would be held in check by “the rod-of-iron rule” of Christ (Revelation 12:5). Only at the end of the millennium this evil would break out in a terrible rebellion that would almost destroy the saints and the city of Jerusalem (Revelation 20:7-9a).

**The first phase of the second coming of Christ.** Dispensationalists teach that at the first phase of the second coming of Christ, he would return secretly for Christians, that is, return in the clouds together with the (spirits of previous dead) saints in order to resurrect them from the dead (Revelation 20:4-5) and to transform in a flash the Christians who are still living on the earth (1 Corinthians 15:50-55) and to snatch all these resurrected and transformed Christians up to meet him in the air (Matthew 24:40a,41a; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17). He will bring them into heaven where they for 7 years (Daniel 7:25) would celebrate the Wedding of the Lamb in heaven (Revelation 19:6-9) while all non-Christians would suffer terribly in the Great Tribulation on the earth (Matthew 24:21).

**The second phase of the second coming of Christ.** Dispensationalists teach that at his second return, Christ’s feet would touch the Mount of Olives, probably cause earthquakes and volcanic action (Micah 1:3-4) and split the mountain into two halves that would move towards the north and south (Zechariah 14:4). Changes in nature would reshape the land of Israel (Ezekiel 47). Christ would return visibly together with Christians (the Church) to the old earth. Christ would first bind Satan and then establish the millennial kingdom of peace on this present earth (Revelation 20:4-6). The seventh dispensation, dispensation of the millennium would be God’s final test for mankind under the most favourable circumstances (i.e. Christ’s immediate presence)! In the millennial kingdom Satan would be bound totally in the sense that he can do no evil at all (Revelation 20:1-3), Christ would rule the nations visibly with an iron rod in the direct presence of Christians and Jews. All the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit would be available.

And yet, the seventh dispensation of the millennial kingdom would end in complete failure just like the other six dispensations, because it would lead to rebellion and the final war (Revelation 20:7-10)!

**The government of the future millennial kingdom.** Dispensationalists teach that after the Gentiles (the non-Jews) had trodden down Jerusalem for centuries (Luke 21:24), Jerusalem would be rebuilt and become the seat of government of the millennial kingdom<sup>17</sup>. Christ would set up the long expected “stone kingdom” (Daniel 2:44) on earth. This would be the kingdom for which Christians prayed for in the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:10) and the kingdom that was

<sup>17</sup> Note against: “The present city of Jerusalem (the earthly Jerusalem) is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above (the heavenly Jerusalem) is free and she is our mother (i.e. the mother of Christians)” (Galatians 4:25-26).

promised to “the sheep nations” who treated Christ’s “brothers” (interpreted as “the Jews”)<sup>18</sup> well (Matthew 25:34)<sup>19</sup>. This kingdom would be the millennial kingdom, a theocracy. God would rule in Christ on the throne of David in Jerusalem (Luke 1:30-33). Dispensationalists disagree about whether Christ himself would sit in person on the throne in Jerusalem (Isaiah 24:23) or whether he would rule through king David (Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34:24; 37:24-25; Hosea 3:5).

He would rule through the martyred tribulation saints who have been resurrected (Revelation 20:4-6)<sup>20</sup>, that is, the Jews would become the chief rulers in the millennial kingdom.

**The future millennial temple.** Dispensationalists teach that the Jews would build the future “millennial temple.”<sup>21</sup>, not in Jerusalem, but in the middle of the sacred portion (Ezekiel 48:8-9), located at or near Shiloh where the tabernacle once stood (Jozua 18:1). A highway would lead from the temple to Jerusalem (Isaiah 35:8); it would be a magnificent boulevard, nearly 20 kilometres long, lined with beautiful shade trees. A life-giving spring would flow under the temple in two directions (Ezekiel 47:8-12). There would be no ark (no pot of Manna, no Aaron’s rod, no tables of the Law, no cherubim, no mercy seat), no golden candlestick, no showbread, no altar of incense and no veil<sup>22</sup>. The glory of God, which departed at the time of the Babylonian exile, would return (Ezekiel 43:1-5). Dispensationalists teach that the Old Testament (Jewish) priesthood would be re-established (Ezekiel 44:15-31)<sup>23</sup> and that the Old Testament blood sacrifices would be resumed (Ezekiel 42:13; Ezekiel 45:17; Ezekiel 46:13-15)<sup>24</sup>. However, dispensationalists change the meaning of these words and interpret these sacrifices as only being “remembrance offerings” and not “atonement sacrifices”! The Old Testament feast of the Passover (Ezekiel 45:21-24) and the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16-19) would be re-established.

**The Jews in the future millennial kingdom.** Dispensationalists teach that the whole Jewish nation would be converted (Ezekiel 37:1-28; Romans 11:26)<sup>25</sup>, not by hearing the gospel, but suddenly and by the mere sight of Christ’s appearance (the so-called second phase of his second coming<sup>26</sup>! Their conversion would be sealed with a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:25-27; Joel 2:28-29). Whether this outpouring of the Holy Spirit would be universal or only upon Israel, is not clear for dispensationalists. Dispensationalists argue that this promise was given to Israel and was only partially fulfilled to Israel at Pentecost!<sup>27</sup> The result of this outpouring of the Spirit on the Jews would be that the Gentile nations would want to share in the blessing of the Jews and would want to go with the Jews (Zechariah 8:22-23). There would be only one universal religion in that day<sup>28</sup>. “My name will be great among the nations from the rising to the setting of the sun” (Malachi 1:11). Israel would be “the head” of all the nations in the millennial kingdom (Deuteronomy 28:13). The Gentile nations that do not serve Israel would perish (Isaiah 60:12). Ezekiel 48:1-35 allegedly gives a detailed description of the restored land of Israel and restored city of Jerusalem.

**The nature of the future millennial kingdom.** Dispensationalists teach that there would only be peace on earth. No one would stir up hate, passion, strife or turmoil. The nations would “beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore” (Micah 4:3-4). The land of Israel would be restored to its former fertility (Isaiah 55:13; Ezekiel 47:7-12; Joel 2:24-26; 3:18; Amos 9:13). Animals would be tame like in the Garden of Eden (Isaiah 11:6-9). Human life would be prolonged (Isaiah 65:20; Zechariah 8:4-5) so that men would live as long as before the flood, probably due to the river of life flowing from the temple and the trees of life that line its banks and its leaves that would function as medicines (Ezekiel 47:12). Christ’s reign would be one of peace (Isaiah 11:3-9; 65:21-22), because the Gentile nations would be kept in line with Christ’s rod of iron (Revelation 3:26-27; Psalm 2:8-9).

However, the peace of dispensationalism would be superficial, feigned obedience, more the result of fear than of love. Hal Lindsey and other pre-millennialists admit that evil people would still occupy the earth during the literal 1000 year

<sup>18</sup> Note against: Christ’s “brothers” are not ethnic Jews, but those who receive him and do God’s will (Matthew 10:40-42; Mark 3:35).

<sup>19</sup> Note against: “The kingdom of God will be taken away from you (i.e. the religious Jews) and given to a people who will produce its fruit.” (Read Matthew 21:33-44).

<sup>20</sup> Note against: *The souls* of believers who were martyred to death are *translated into heaven* (the meaning of “lived”). The word “lived” does not refer to physical resurrection, but to *spiritual* regeneration (John 14:6; Romans 8:13b) and to translation of *the spirit* into the presence of Christ in heaven (John 11:25; 2 Timothy 4:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:10; Luke 20:37-38)! Christians who have died are translated into Christ’s presence in heaven, where they reign with him until the second coming – how they reign with him is not elaborated.

<sup>21</sup> Note against: “However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men. As the prophet says: Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me?” (Acts 7:48-49). “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples (churches, mosques) build by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.” (Acts 17:24-25).

<sup>22</sup> Thus not a literal fulfilment!

<sup>23</sup> Note against: At the first coming of Christ there was a change of priesthood (from the order of Aaron to the order of Melchizedek, namely Christ). After the first coming of Christ, Jesus Christ is the only High Priest (Hebrews 7:11-28) and all Christians together are “a royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9).

<sup>24</sup> Note against: “He (Christ) did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place (i.e. heaven) once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption” (Read Hebrews 9:11-14).

<sup>25</sup> Note against: “Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, *only the remnant will be saved*.... Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah” (Romans 9:27-29).

<sup>26</sup> Note against: “The gospel (since the first coming of Christ) ... is the power of God for the salvation for everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile” (Romans 1:16-17).

<sup>27</sup> Note against: The promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit by the prophet Joel *has already taken place* at Pentecost (Acts 2:17-18).

<sup>28</sup> Namely the religion that builds around the nation of Israel and Jews (i.e. dispensationalism)!

reign of Christ<sup>29</sup>. They also admit that people in the millennial kingdom would have unbelieving and rebellious offspring (Zechariah 14:17-19). Even after 1000 years of this direct reign of Christ, this persistence of evil would lead to the massive revolt and a complete failure of the millennial kingdom (Revelation 20:7-8)!

**The purpose of the future millennial kingdom.** The dispensationalist, Tenney, teaches that Revelation chapters 4 to 16 describe the whole process of judgement and Revelation chapters 17 to 20 describe the climax of judgement. Thus in his view the book of Revelation is a book of judgement. The purpose of the future millennial kingdom is that the reigning Christ disposes of his foes, trains his people and gives opportunity to surviving peoples to live under his own perfect government in the millennial kingdom.

Note against pre-millennialism. If the millennial kingdom were perfect, why are there still unbelievers and evildoers in it and why does it end in failure?

According to pre-millennialists, the millennial kingdom would have a dual purpose:

- the fulfilment of God's promises for the restoration of Israel and Israel's deliverance from Gentile oppression
- the demonstration of God's sovereignty over the Gentile nations in the temporal affairs of earth.

In dispensationalism everything revolves ultimately around Israel and the Jews!

Finally, after Christ would have completed this administrative task that takes 1000 years, he would transfer the perfected kingdom to the new heaven and the new earth.<sup>30</sup>

**The relation of the Christian Church to the millennial kingdom.** Tenney also says that the relation of the Church to the millennial kingdom has long been a difficult question (for dispensationalists) in their eschatology. Tenney is a dispensational millennialist. He contends that the (predominantly Christian) Church and the (predominantly Jewish) kingdom are not synonymous, but yet he admits that the Church cannot be completely separated from the kingdom!

Tenney thinks (rightly so) that the book of Revelation is addressed to the Church (symbolised by the seven historical congregations) (Revelation chapter 1 to 3) (Revelation 1:4). These seven congregations are definitely included in the words: Christ "made us (the Church) to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father", because he (Christ) loves Christians and freed them from their sins by his blood" (Revelation 1:5-6).

However, Tenney argues (without any warrant) that this "kingdom":

- does not refer to the present kingdom of God/kingdom of heaven in heaven (that consists predominantly of non-Jews) during the present New Testament period
- also does not refer to the future millennial kingdom on earth (that consists predominantly of Jews) after the second coming
- but to the future eternal kingdom of God that follows the millennial kingdom. He says, "Ultimately the (Church consisting of) congregations will be absorbed into the all-embracing kingdom when Christ hands over the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24). The eternal kingdom would then be called "the city of God".<sup>31</sup>

**The failure of the future millennial kingdom.** Dispensationalists teach that God's test (during the so-called 7<sup>th</sup> dispensation) would last 1000 literal years. During that period of probation the Satan would be completely bound, so that he can do no evil at all, people would live in the visible presence of God on the earth and would possess all the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit!

But there would also be many unbelievers and evildoers. Generally uninformed pre-millennialists believe that the millennial kingdom would be perfect and without sin! But well informed pre-millennialists choose to neglect or minimize this fifth column of evil people within the millennial kingdom, because it is embarrassing for pre-millennialists!

Nevertheless, all pre-millennialists believe that the millennial kingdom will NOT be the end, because the millennial kingdom will ultimately fail. They believe that the millennial kingdom would be displaced (replaced) by the eternal kingdom that follows the millennial kingdom. They imply that the millennial kingdom would fail, because Satan would be released in the end, deceive the Gentile nations and gather them in the final war, a final effort to destroy Israel (the Jews and Jerusalem). In this final battle of Gog and Magog the Gentile nations would be defeated (Revelation 20:7-10). Only after that all unbelievers and wicked dead would be resurrected, judged before "the great white throne" and cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15).

Larkin says, "The millennial dispensation, like all the six dispensations before it, would end in failure!"

Then the seven periods of testing of man by God would be passed:

- The dispensation of innocence (before the fall into sin)
- The dispensation of conscience (after the fall into sin)
- The dispensation of self-government
- The dispensation of the headship of the family

<sup>29</sup> Hal Lindsey, The Rapture, pp. 65,143

<sup>30</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, Interpreting Revelation, 1957, 1978, p. 89, 159

<sup>31</sup> Tenney, pp. 169-170. He poses too many different kinds of "kingdoms" (the present kingdom of heaven, the future millennial kingdom and the eternal kingdom), while the Bible only knows of "one kingdom or kingship of God"!

- The dispensation of the law (after the adding of the Mosaic Law)
- The dispensation of grace (after the first coming of Christ)
- The dispensation of the Holy Spirit in the millennial kingdom, free from satanic influences (after the second coming of Christ)

Under all seven dispensations man will prove himself to be hopelessly, incurably and incorrigibly bad.” Therefore God will purge the earth with fire.<sup>32</sup>

**The new earth after the millennial kingdom.** Dispensationalists teach that after the future millennial kingdom Christ would renew the earth and the eternal state would commence (Revelation chapters 21-22). Larkin says that the final so-called “omega” age would begin with the future millennial kingdom, but the future millennial kingdom would not yet be a perfect kingdom. Only after the renewal of the earth by fire would the perfect kingdom come into being (Revelation chapters 21-22).<sup>33</sup>

### (3) Remarks against dispensational pre-millennialism.

#### The three cardinal assumptions of pre-millennialism.

- The absolute separation between Israel and the Church
- The interim period of the Church sandwiched in the middle between God’s programme with Israel in the Old Testament before the first coming of Christ and God’s continued programme with Israel after the second coming of Christ. In dispensationalism everything revolves around Israel and the Jews!
- The literal hermeneutic by which dispensationalists interpret the Bible

These three assumptions of dispensational pre-millennialists lead them to interpret “the 1000 years” in Revelation 20:4-7 as “a literal millennial kingdom”.

The dispensational pre-millennial view regards their doctrine of the millennial kingdom in Revelation 20:1-7 as “the proof of Christian orthodoxy”. But because their theory about the literal and physical future millennial kingdom on earth fails, their eschatological theology as a whole fails. The futurist view (the view of a literal future millennial kingdom) proves that it has not taken the Bible seriously enough!<sup>34</sup>

Genuine Christians do believe in “a millennium” (a 1000 year period), but NOT in the millennium of pre-millennialists or dispensationalists!

**The dispensational pre-millennial view assumes that the Book of Revelation is a linear-chronological account of future history.** The dispensationalists must assume this, because only in this way can they say that the future millennial kingdom (Revelation 20:1-6) would *follow* the future second return of Christ (Revelation 19:11-21)<sup>35</sup>. In this way pre-millennialists have forced the Apocalypse (the book of Revelation) into a historic mode (i.e. a history book).

But the Book of Revelation is not “a historic prophecy that predicts the future”, but rather “an Apocalypse (a revelation or unveiling, usually by way of symbols) of God’s plan for all of the Messianic Age (the New Testament period) and thereafter” (Revelation 1:1). The Book of Revelation is not a linear chronological account of future history, but depicts in seven parallel sections the struggle between Christ (and his Church) on the one hand and Satan (and his antichristian world) on the other hand. Each section covers the whole period between Christ’s first coming and Christ’s second coming. And each section reveals progressively more about the end-time tribulation, the final war, the final judgement and the new earth.<sup>36</sup>

**The dispensational pre-millennial view assumes that Satan has not yet been bound.** Dispensationalists make this *assumption* in order to explain evil in the present world. They assume that Satan has not yet been bound and maintain that the millennial kingdom would only come after the second coming of Christ (Revelation 20:1-3).

However, the New Testament clearly teaches that Satan has been bound at Christ’s first coming. “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (1 John 3:8)! (Also read: Matthew 12:28-30; Luke 10:18-20; John 12:31-32; Ephesians 1:19-22; Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 1:13; Colossians 2:13-15; Hebrews 2:14; 1 Peter 3:22; cf. Revelation 12:5-11 and Revelation 20:1-3)!

Dispensationalists also *assume* that Satan must be *totally* bound, so that he would not be able to do any evil.

However Revelation 12:7-11 (actually Revelation 12:7 to 13:18) shows that *after* the binding of Satan or the hurling down of the Satan, he still wages war! After he was bound and cast down upon the earth, Satan continues to pursue and persecute the Church (Revelation 12:6,13-17; cf. James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9; Romans 16:20). Nevertheless, Christians overcome him by the completed work of salvation of Christ and their testimony (Revelation 12:10-12,17).

<sup>32</sup> Clarence Larkin, The Book of Revelation, 1919, p.192

<sup>33</sup> Clarence Larkin, The Greatest Book on Dispensational Truth in the World, 1920 pp. 20-21

<sup>34</sup> John Gilmore, Probing Heaven, 1989, p. 367

<sup>35</sup> Tenney, p. 89

<sup>36</sup> Delta course [www.deltacourse.org](http://www.deltacourse.org), study 19

And Revelation 20:1-7 teaches that Satan has been bound at the first coming of Christ “to keep him from deceiving the nations any more.” After he has been bound, he can no longer keep people from all the nations on earth to become Christians (Matthew 12:29; Matthew 28:18; John 12:31-32; Revelation 20:3; Revelation 12:7-12).

**The dispensational pre-millennial view assumes that the number 1000 must be literal.**

However, like the other numbers in the book of Revelation (2, 3½, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 24, 42, 666, 1260, 144000), the number 1000 is *symbolic*! The number 1000 is a symbol for the whole New Testament period between Christ’s first coming and Christ’s second coming. The period of “thousand years” with respect to the earth *begins* with the binding of Satan (Revelation 20:1-3) and *ends* with the final war, the resurrection from the dead, the last judgement and the renewal of all things (Revelation 20:7 to 22:5).

Dispensationalists *assume* that the 1000 years refers to a *literal earthly kingdom* in which Christians would reign together with Christ (Revelation 20:4a).

However, the “1000 years” refers:

- not to a *literal* millennial kingdom on earth
- but to a *symbolic* interim period in heaven.

The period of “thousand years” with respect to earth begins with the binding of Satan so that he cannot keep the nations on earth away from Christ (Revelation 20:1-3).

The period of “thousand years” with respect to heaven *begins* with the physical death of Christians (Revelation 20:4a) and *ends* with the physical resurrection (Revelation 20:12-14). During this interim period the living *souls* of the dead bodies of Christians reign together with Christ *in heaven* (cf. Philippians 1:23). Christians, who die, have a part in this “first resurrection” (i.e. the translation of their soul or spirit to heaven after the death of their body). “The second death” (i.e. damnation in hell) has no power over them (Revelation 20:4-5). But during this interim period “the non-Christians and unbelievers who die physically, have no part in the “first resurrection” (i.e. they are not translated into heaven). Not only “the first death” (physical death), but also “the second death” (eternal damnation in hell) has power over them (Revelation 20:5-6; Matthew 25:46)!

**The dispensational pre-millennial view imports ideas into the millennium that cannot be found in Revelation 20:1-7.** Dispensationalists *assume* that God would fulfil all his so-called “unfulfilled promises to Israel” in the Old Testament during the millennium.

However, in Revelation 20:1-7 there is no mention of Jews. There is also no mention of the city of Jerusalem, of animals being tamed, of peaceful dwelling on the earth and of Christ perfecting his reign on earth. “According to dispensational teaching, the restoration of Israel is the central purpose of the millennium! It is therefore all the more significant that nothing of this alleged central purpose (namely, the restoration of Israel) is mentioned in the only biblical passage which deals directly with Christ’s millennial reign, Revelation 20:4-6.”<sup>37</sup>

**The dispensational pre-millennial view is confronted with numerous inconsistencies and contradictions, because it adopted a literalistic method of interpretation to explain the Bible.** Different passages in the Bible or different words for the same event are interpreted as chronologically different events!

The dispensational view cannot maintain the literal hermeneutic without gross inconsistencies! The book of Revelation very clearly points to the symbolic method of interpretation (Revelation 1:20; 4:5; 5:6,8; 6:8; 7:14; 11:8; 12:9,17; 14:3-5,19; 15:7-8; 16:14,19; 17:9,12,15,18; 19:8,15; 20:2,14; 21:6,8,22,23; 22:1,15.)

- There is no biblical warrant to split Christ’s second coming into two chronological separate events that are 7 or 3½ years apart: namely:
  - the so-called first return of Christ: “the coming” (Greek: *parousia*), a coming for Christians in order to take them to heaven
  - and the so-called second return of Christ: “the appearance or revelation” (Greek: *apokalupsis*), a coming with Christians in order to establish the millennial kingdom.

The word “*parousia*” (coming) (Matthew 24:37-41; 2 Thessalonians 2:8) refers to exactly the same event as the word “*apokalupsis*” (appearance) (Luke 17:28-30; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)!

- There is no biblical warrant to assume that Christians would secretly, i.e. invisibly and inaudibly, be taken into heaven at the so-called first return of Christ (also called “the rapture”).

In the Bible the one and only second coming of Christ will be very visible (Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:27,30) and very audible (Matthew 24:31; John 5:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:16)!

- Everyone in the world will see and hear his second coming!
- Then Christians and non-Christians will together be resurrected from the dead (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15)
- Christians that are still alive on earth will be changed/transformed in a flash (1 Corinthians 15:50-55)

<sup>37</sup> Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, p. 222

- All resurrected and transformed Christians will be separated from the non-Christians (Matthew 13:30,41) and will be “snatched up” or “caught up” (Greek: harpazó) (1 Thessalonians 4:17; cf. Revelation 12:5) by angels (Matthew 24:31) in the clouds to meet (Greek: apantésis) (cf. Acts 28:15) and welcome Christ and marvel at him (2 Thessalonians 1:10).
- On the very same day all non-Christians that remained behind will be taken before the judgement seat of Christ by angels for the last judgement.
- Christ will separate the non-Christians (“the weeds” or “the goats”) from the Christians (“the wheat” or “the sheep”) (Matthew 13:30,41; Matthew 25:32), judge them (Matthew 25:41-46) and cast them into eternal damnation (Matthew 3:11-12; Matthew 25:46).
- He will also judge the Christians (Matthew 25:34-40,46; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15) and then descend with them as “the New Jerusalem” onto “the new earth” (Revelation 21:1-2,9-10) where they will live in the presence of God /Christ forever (Revelation 21:4).

• There is no biblical warrant to split the final resurrection of the dead into two or three separate events 1000 years apart, namely:

- into the physical resurrection of Christians at Christ’s first return (e.g. the so-called “rapture”)
- the physical resurrection of the Jews and the tribulation saints (the result of Jewish missionary work) at Christ’s second return
- and the physical resurrection of unbelievers and non-Christians at the end of the millennial kingdom

Revelation 20:1-7 teaches a spiritual resurrection of only Christian “souls” when they are translated into heaven at the time of their physical death (Revelation 20:4-5; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9). This spiritual resurrection or “first resurrection” refers to the interim condition between the death of the body and the resurrection of the body. Revelation 20:11-15 teaches only one general physical resurrection of the bodies of all believers and unbelievers together at Christ’s second coming (John 5:28-29; John 6:39; John 11:24; Acts 24:15).

• There is no biblical warrant to split the final judgement into two or three separate events 1000 years apart, namely:

- the judgement of Christians before “the judgement seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:10) at the first phase of his second coming (the “rapture”) for the things done in the body, whether good or bad
- the judgement of the Gentile nations before “Christ’s heavenly throne in glory” (Matthew 25:31) at the second phase of Christ’s second coming (7 years later) for how they have treated “the brothers of Christ” (interpreted as the Jews)
- and the judgement of unbelievers and non-Christians before “the great white throne” (Revelation 20:11) at the end of the millennial kingdom (a 1000 years later) in accordance to what they have done.

In the Bible the final judgement of believers and unbelievers always take place together at Christ’s second coming (Matthew 13:39-43; Matthew 16:27; Matthew 24:39-41; Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jude 14-15; Revelation 20:11-15; Revelation 22:12)!

• There is no biblical warrant to assume the existence of a millennial kingdom (a kingdom on earth lasting only 1000 years).

Matthew 25:31-46 does not teach who would enter the millennial kingdom and who would not, because according to the historic pre-millennialist, George Eldon Ladd, the text says that “the unrighteous will go to *eternal* punishment and the righteous to *eternal* life.” Eternal punishment and eternal life do not merely last 1000 years – they last for ever! He continues to say, “I can find no trace of the idea of either an interim earthly kingdom or of a millennium in the Gospels.”<sup>38</sup>

• There is no biblical warrant to assume that the king in the millennial kingdom would bring animal sacrifices to make atonement for his sins (Ezekiel 45:22). The blood sacrifices in the book of Ezekiel were definitely atonement sacrifices (Ezekiel 43:18-27; 45:15-20; 45:22)! If Ezekiel chapter 40 to 48 is regarded as a description of the millennial kingdom, then this king (whether Christ or David) can never be regarded as perfect, because atonement sacrifices had to be brought for his sins!

Then we must also regard the atonement sacrifice of Jesus on the cross at his first coming to be insufficient! The dispensational pre-millennialists completely ignore the fact that Christ at his first coming fulfilled the Old Testament Law and abolished all animal sacrifices (Hebrews 9:1 to 10:18)! In their explanation of the millennial kingdom, the pre-millennialists turn backwards to the Old Testament law. The dispensational view replaces the atonement sacrifice of Jesus Christ with the Old Testament animal sacrifices!

• There is no biblical warrant to assume that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit promised in Joel 2:28-32 would be fulfilled in Israel in the future. The New Testament teaches clearly that the Holy Spirit has already been poured out in the past at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21 is a quotation of Joel 2:28-32 by the apostle Peter who spoke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) (see Luke 24:25-27,44-45)!

<sup>38</sup> George E. Ladd in Robert G. Clouse, The meaning of the Millennium, 1977, pp. 38

- There is no biblical warrant to assume that Christians with their glorified resurrected bodies would live in the millennial kingdom in the midst of non-Christians with their depraved human spirits and mortal bodies. The dispensationalist, Ryrie, tries to make it plausible by saying: “The heavenly Jerusalem (the Church) will hover above the earthly Jerusalem (Israel) in the millennial kingdom!”

Such teachings bend the Bible to fit certain preconceived ideas. Note what the Bible says about people twisting God’s Word (2 Corinthians 2:17; 2 Corinthians 4:2)!

**The dispensational pre-millennial view has grossly overestimated the free will of man as the condition for God’s tests during the different dispensations.** According to dispensationalism “a dispensation” is a period of time in the Bible during which God tests people with their free will by means of a certain condition to see whether they would obey him or not. For example:

- During the 5<sup>th</sup> dispensation of the law man is tested to see whether he would keep the law or not. The special condition is the law!
- During the 6<sup>th</sup> dispensation of grace man is tested to see whether he would believe and obey the gospel or not. The special condition is the gospel.
- During the 7<sup>th</sup> dispensation of the millennial kingdom man is tested to see whether he would obey under the most favourable condition. The special condition is the direct reign of Christ on earth.

According to dispensationalism all seven dispensations end in failure! In this way man (with a free will) proves that he is hopelessly, incurably and incorrigibly sinful and bad!

However, the seven invented dispensations of dispensationalism are completely unnecessary, because the doctrine of the sinfulness of man (Job 14:4; Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:10-12,23) and his inability to save himself in any way (Isaiah 43:11; Acts 4:12) has already been clearly taught in the whole Bible without having to revert to dispensational teaching and to seven long periods to experiment with it. Therefore “the doctrine of the free will of sinful man” has been grossly overestimated by the adherents of dispensationalism. A dispensation is a futile point of departure for God to put man to the test!

The Bible teaches that after the fall of man in solidarity with Adam (Romans 5:12;15-19) the so-called free will of man COULD NEVER AGAIN justify man. “The sinful mind ... does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so” (Romans 8:7-8). “Therefore, it does not depend on man’s desire or effort” (Romans 9:10-18; cf. Ephesians 2:8-9)!

**The dispensational pre-millennial view has grossly underestimated and undervalued the first coming of Jesus Christ and his absolutely completed work of salvation (justification and sanctification).** The dispensational view has grossly underestimated Christ’s completed work of salvation at his first coming, when they say that Christ would only conquer Satan and establish his millennial kingdom at his second coming!

Already at his first coming, Christ had bound Satan and had established the kingdom of God. “If I drive out demons (i.e. the strong man or Satan) by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matthew 12:28-29). Already at his first coming Jesus said, “It is finished *and will remain finished/accomplished for ever!*” (perfect tense) (John 18:19:30)<sup>39</sup>.

**The dispensational pre-millennial view has grossly underestimated and undervalued the second coming of Jesus Christ.** The dispensational view asserts that Christ would need 1000 years after his second coming to defeat and destroy Satan and his allies (the antichrist, the false prophet, the great whore Babylon and all the evil kings and their armies)! The millennial kingdom of the dispensationalists and other pre-millennialists is described as a kingdom of peace, but this peace is superficial and pretence (a sham), because Jesus Christ would suppress the nations with the violence of an iron rod! And still after 1000 years his reign seems *ineffective* and ends (like all the previous dispensations) in complete failure!

How would Christ allow the nations to turn their ploughshares back into swords and their pruning hooks back into spears (cf. Micah 4:3-4) in order to fight “the final battle” against him at the end of the millennium? The dispensational view depicts Jesus Christ as a weak king! His victory and power in the so-called millennial kingdom seems to be very poor in comparison to what the book of Revelation really teaches about Christ.

In the Bible Jesus Christ is at his first coming is “the Conqueror who goes forth to conquer” (Revelation 1:5; Revelation 6:1-2; Revelation 17:14). And at his second coming he is “the King of kings” (Revelation 19:16) who demolishes all opposition with one great earthquake (Revelation 6:12; Revelation 11:13; Revelation 16:18), with one slash of his sickle (Revelation 14:16) and with one blast of fire from heaven (Revelation 20:9)! Christ “will overthrow his enemies with the breath of his mouth and destroy them with the splendour of his (second) coming (Greek: parousia)” (2 Thessalonians 2:8)!

At his first coming Jesus Christ has bound Satan: i.e. curbed/curtailed/limited his power, but had not yet removed him from the earth (Revelation 20:1-3)! Only at his second coming will he destroy Satan and conquer his enemies completely with a single knockout blow (Revelation 19:11-21; 20:7-10)!

<sup>39</sup> Greek: τετελεσται

### **3. Seven objections to the second coming preceding the millennium.**

#### **(1) Remarks against the literalistic interpretation of the millennium by pre-millennialists.**

Both historic pre-millennialists and dispensational pre-millennialists base their theories on a *literalistic interpretation* of the millennium (i.e. the words “a thousand years”). “Pre-millennialists are pre-millennialists because they are literalists. They allow literalism to be their hermeneutical tool in prying open the meaning of the text. But in apocalyptic writing this leads to both absurdities and aberrations”<sup>40</sup> “A growing number of evangelical scholars are challenging the dogmatism of (pre- and post-) millennialists and doubting their hermeneutic assumptions”<sup>41</sup>.

“That a spiritual interpretation of the millennium is preferable to a literal interpretation becomes clear when note is taken of the exegetical difficulties which a literal interpretation faces. Especially is this true of those who are obliged to postulate two stages for the parousia (a secret return of Christ at the “rapture” before or in the middle of the great tribulation and a public return of Christ after the great tribulation), and various resurrections and judgements. The intention is no doubt to clarify, but in point of fact the result tends to be not only more confusing, but also more difficult to support from other New Testament statements.”<sup>42</sup>

**The millennium (the 1000 years) is only found in one Bible passage.** The strongest warning against building a particular theory about the millennium as for example the physical millennium of literally a 1000 years is that the expression “a 1000 years” is found in only one Scripture passage (Revelation 20:1-7) and then in an apocalyptic book and not in a historical book!<sup>43</sup> A good rule of interpretation is that a difficult or obscure passage in the Bible must be interpreted by a clear passage in the Bible and not the other way round. New Testament eschatology must not be build around Revelation 20:1-7, but Revelation 20:1-7 must rather be interpreted in the light of all the clear teachings in the New Testament!

**The millennium does not require a literal interpretation.** Pre-millennialists maintain that nothing short of a literal interpretation and fulfilment will satisfy the requirements of these prophetic forecasts. But (long before Revelation 20:1-7) the Old Testament Prophets themselves already contain indications that point to a spiritual and not a literal fulfilment.

- God would give the remnant of his Old Testament people many spiritual children coming from the Gentile nations and they will be taught by God and receive his righteousness (Isaiah 54:1-3,13-14).
- They will be called “priests of the Lord”, “ministers of God” (Isaiah 61:6).
- The Ark of the Covenant (the literal symbol of God’s presence in the Most Holy Place in the temple) will not be remembered, missed or made again (Jeremiah 3:16).
- God would make “a new covenant” with his people, characterised by the following: God’s laws will be written internally on the heart instead of externally in a Book<sup>44</sup>. God’s people will have a personal knowledge instead of hearsay knowledge of God and a personal relationship instead of a national relationship with God. God’s people will really experience forgiveness of sins and complete acceptance instead of performing repeated atonement sacrifices which give no assurance of forgiveness (Jeremiah 31:31-34).
- God would no longer require the keeping of the ceremonial law (e.g. worship in a temple building, dependent on mortal priests, bringing animal sacrifices), but would require his people to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:6-8).

**The words “Zion” and “Jerusalem” do not require a literal interpretation.** Pre-millennialists maintain that the name “Zion” always refers to the literal mountain and the name “Jerusalem” always refers to the literal city. But the books of the prophets already show that “Zion” and “Jerusalem” are symbols of God’s Old Testament people that were not forgotten in exile (Isaiah 49:14-16) and would be redeemed from exile (Isaiah 52:1-3). The Old Testament names for God’s people pass right over into the New Testament to designate God’s New Testament people (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 3:12; 21:9).

**The kingdom of Israel does not require a literal interpretation.** Pre-millennialists maintain that God would *literally* re-establish the Old Testament theocratic kingdom of David. They base their assumption on a wrong interpretation of Acts 1:6-7.

In the context of Acts 1:6-7 Jesus spoke about the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The disciples should not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit in a few days. The disciples asked, “Lord, are you at this time (Greek: *chronos*) restoring or about to restore (Greek: *apokathistanó*) (present tense) the kingdom to Israel (Dative) (not: of Israel) (Genitive)?” What is expressed in these words is the idea of restoration to a previous state that has been lost or has been broken off, namely, the revival of the Old Testament theocracy. The disciples had reason to expect the restoration of the kingdom of Israel on the ground of certain Old Testament passages (Isaiah 1:26; 9:6; Jeremiah 23:6;

<sup>40</sup> John Gilmore, Probing Heaven, p. 372

<sup>41</sup> John Gilmore, Probing Heaven, p. 392

<sup>42</sup> Donald Guthrie, New Testament Theology, p. 871

<sup>43</sup> An Apocalypse is a book making use of symbols and numbers to describe God’s salvation history. Cf. The symbolism of numbers in Revelation in study 19 in [www.deltacourse.org](http://www.deltacourse.org) and also in [www.last-biblebook.org](http://www.last-biblebook.org)

<sup>44</sup> A prophecy against the veneration of a spiritual book!

33:15,17; Daniel 7:13-14; Hosea 3:4-5; Amos 9:11; Zachariah 9:9). Also because they expected that Elijah would first come to restore everything (Malachi 4:5-6; Mark 9:12). But Jesus had given much teaching about “the kingdom of God” (not: the past theocracy of Israel) (cf. all the parables of Jesus about the kingdom of God)! And the question of the disciples does not show that they had completely misunderstood the nature of the kingdom and also not that they had a perfectly just view of it. The Jews and the disciples of Jesus were wrong only in their expectation that the kingdom of God about which Jesus was speaking would be restored to the nation of Israel and return in its Old Testament form, namely: the past Old Testament theocracy (note: not a future millennial kingdom)!

Jesus answered, “It is not for you to know the times (Greek: chronous) or dates (points of time) (Greek: kairous) the Father has once and for all time (aorist tense) set (determined, decided) (Greek: tithémi) (cf. Acts 19:21) by his own authority”. The answer of Jesus shows that their question was not about what they had rightly or wrongly understood about “the kingdom”, but was about the words: “at this time”. Jesus said nothing about the nature of the kingdom, but spoke about the time-periods and points of time of events in Gods history of salvation! He rejected the excessive curiosity of his disciples in reference to “times and seasons in Gods history of salvation” that had not been explicitly revealed or that cannot be ascertained by ordinary means. Jesus repeated what the Spirit of God said during the Old Testament period: “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 29:29)!

The New Testament contains not a single undisputed positive prediction about the restoration of the Old Testament kingdom of Israel (the theocracy)! On the contrary, the New Testament contains abundant references to the spiritual (note: not literal) fulfilment of the promises given to Israel.<sup>45</sup>

- People from the east and the west will come and inherit the kingdom of God about which Jesus was speaking, but the kingdom of God (the reign of God/the true theocracy through prophets, priests and kings) would be taken away from the nation of Israel and given to a people (believers in Jesus Christ from all nations, including from the nation of Israel) who would produce its fruit (Psalm 107:2-3; Isaiah 49:6,12; Daniel 7:14; Malachi 1:11) (cf. Matthew 8:11-12; Matthew 21:43). What the Jews in the time of Jesus were expecting, namely, a throwing off of the yoke of Rome and a restoration of the Old Testament theocracy with for example king David on the throne, would never happen!<sup>46</sup>
- King David remains dead in his grave, but he prophesied the resurrection of one of his descendants, Jesus Christ, who would sit as King on the throne in heaven (not a throne in Israel on earth) until he has conquered all his enemies (Psalm 16:8-11; Acts 2:29-36).
- All the Old Testament prophets agreed that God’s way “to rebuild the fallen tent of David” was “to take from the Gentiles (note: not the Jews) a people for himself”. What God promised to Israel (God’s people) in the Old Testament (Amos 9:11-12) is fulfilled to Gentiles (God’s people) in the New Testament (Acts 15:14-18)! (Sic!)
- God would effectively call Jews and Gentiles (formerly: “no longer loved”) “his loved one” (Hosea 1:6) and (formerly: “not his people”) “his people” (Hosea 1:10). What God said to Israel in the Old Testament (Hosea 1:6,10; cf. Hosea 2:23) is fulfilled to Gentiles in the New Testament (Romans 9:24-26). (Sic!)
- God would establish “the new covenant” promised to Israel (Jeremiah 31:31-34) with non-Jewish believers in Christ (Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:6-13).
- God’s prophets already prophesied in the Old Testament about the grace and salvation which would come to Gentile believers through the preaching of the gospel (1 Peter 1:9-12).

**The literalism of pre-millennialists is not consistently literal.** Pre-millennialists are not consistently literal when they interpret words.

- The pre-millennialists interpret the word “chain” and consequently the word “binding” of Satan *figuratively*, but the words “the 1000 years” *literally* (Revelation 20:1-2).
- They interpret the words “the souls lived” as a resurrection of *bodies* (Revelation 20:4-6) *literally on earth*, while the book of Revelation clearly teaches that “the souls are still under the altar” *in heaven* (Revelation 6:9).
- They interpret the word “reigned” as a rule on *earth* (Revelation 20:4), while “the throne” is *in heaven* (Revelation 4:4).

**The literalism of pre-millennialists causes them to believe in absurdities.** The literal interpretation makes it necessary that the historical conditions of the antique world in the past must all return in the future!

- The ancient great world empires (Egypt, Assyria and Babylon), the old neighbouring nations of Israel (the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites and Philistines) and the Old Testament northern kingdom Israel and southern kingdom of Judah would all have to appear again on the historical scene (Isaiah 11:13-16; Amos 9:12; Micah 5:5-6; Revelation chapter 18).
- The temple would have to be rebuilt (Isaiah 2:2-3; Ezekiel chapter 40-48; Micah 4:1-2; Zechariah 14:16-22).
- The sons of Zadok would again have to be priests (Ezekiel 44:15-41; 48:11-14).
- Even animal sacrifices as atonement sacrifices for sins would have to be brought and the atonement sacrifice of Christ would be set aside (Ezekiel 42:13; 43:18-27).

<sup>45</sup> Details about the spiritualization found in the Bible, consult Dr. Wijngaarden, The Future of the Kingdom

<sup>46</sup> Also what dispensationalists in modern times are expecting, will never happen!

- And all the Gentile nations in the world would have to go on a pilgrimage up to Jerusalem every year to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16) and even to worship before the LORD (in Jerusalem) every week (Isaiah 66:23).

**(2) Remarks against the importation of Israel (the Jews) into the millennium of the pre-millennialists.**

Pre-millennialists import (assume, add) material to their interpretation of the 1000 years period of Revelation 20:1-7, for example. “Israel” (the Jews), “Jerusalem”, “the temple”, “animal sacrifices”, “peace”, “tamed animals”, etc. in order to make propaganda for their view of the millennium.

A careful comparison of Revelation 20:1-6 shows that there is no mention of Jews, of the real city of Jerusalem, or of a kingdom of peace! There is no Scriptural warrant to turn a distinctly Christian approach to the future in the book of Revelation into a rehash of Jewish nationalistic expectations as pre-millennialists as Tenney do.<sup>47</sup>

**Israel is not mentioned in Revelation 20:1-7.** It is noteworthy that Revelation 20:1-7 makes no mention of the natural citizens of a Jewish millennial kingdom, the Jews. It is not said that “the thousand years” represent “a kingdom” or “a millennial kingdom of peace”! There is no mention of “king David”, “the land of Israel”, “Jerusalem”, “the temple”, “the priests” or “the animal sacrifices”! There is no mention of Jews ruling over the Gentiles! There is no mention of the Church hovering as the heavenly Jerusalem over the earthly Jerusalem in Israel! There is no mention of wild animals that live fully tamed in the millennial kingdom! These are all assumptions that are added to their interpretation of Revelation 20:1-7.

Read Christ’s warning about people who add things to the Book of Revelation or who take away from the Book of Revelation words that are clearly taught (Revelation 22:18-19)! “If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life” (Revelation 22:18-19). God had often warned the Jews in the past not to do this, because that was what the Jews tended to do: they added to God’s Word or subtracted from God’s Word (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6)!

Pre-millennialists have forced unfounded conclusions on limited and highly symbolic verses (namely on Revelation 20:1-7). “According to dispensational teaching, the restoration of (the theocracy of) Israel is the central purpose of the millennium! It is therefore all the more significant that nothing of this alleged central purpose is mentioned in the only biblical passage which deals directly with Christ’s millennial reign (namely Revelation 20:4-6)”<sup>48</sup>

**Israel cannot be imported into New Testament eschatology,** because the true Israel (i.e. all the believers in the Messiah/Jesus Christ within Israel during the Old Testament period) is already *continued* in the New Testament period in the Church and has already been *extended* to include all the believers in Jesus Christ in all the nations on the earth.

Dispensationalists:

- first *assume (suppose)* that God *postponed* his plan with Israel (they assume the *export or exclusion of* Israel from God’s plan)
- then they accuse non-dispensationalists of *replacing* Israel with the Church
- finally they *devise* the future millennial kingdom by *importing or including* Israel again into God’s plan!

It is rather the supporters of dispensationalism who REPLACE the truth of the Bible with their own theories!

The truth is that God’s Old Testament people (Israel) has NOT been TERMINATED or REPLACED by God’s New Testament people (the Church)<sup>49</sup>, but is CONTINUED on a higher level (of realities in stead of shadows) (Colossians 2:-16-17; Hebrews 9:7-10) and ENLARGED (EXTENDED) to include all believers in Jesus Christ from all the other nations in the world!

God *continued* his plan of salvation with “the remnant” (Romans 9:27; 11:4) of believers in Israel in the apostles (all Jews) and Christians among the Jews in the New Testament period (Acts 2:41; 2:47; 4:4; 5:14; 5:28; 6:7; 8:4). “The power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jews” (Romans 1:16a). Then God *extended (enlarged)* his people by including the believers from among the non-Jews (Gentiles). “Then for the Gentiles” (Romans 1:16b). “At the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace” (Romans 11:5). “The whole world has gone after him/Christ” (John 12:19). “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here” (Acts 17:6)!

<sup>47</sup> Tenney, pp. 159-160. He teaches: The millennium with a theocratic government over the nations can be the fulfilment of a dual purpose: (1) the completion of God’s promises for the restoration of Israel (Zechariah 12 to 14; Isaiah 10:33 to 12:6) and her deliverance from Gentile oppression; and (2) the demonstration of his sovereignty over the nations in the temporal affairs of earth. This lies in the implied meaning in the opening theme of Revelation (1:7). Jerusalem will be besieged by Gentile armies (Zechariah 12:3; Zechariah 14:2); a revival shall come to Israel through the visible appearance of “me whom they have pierced” (Zechariah 12:10); the siege shall be lifted by the appearance of “Jehovah my God” (Zechariah 14:5). The shoot out of the stock of Jesse would bear fruit (Isaiah 11:1); the royal line would be renewed and would inherit the kingdom; restoration from exile for Israel and universal knowledge of God for the nations would follow (Isaiah 11:11,9).

<sup>48</sup> Anthony Hoekema, “The Bible and the Future”, p 222

<sup>49</sup> Israel has never been *excluded* from God’s plan and therefore do not need to be *imported* again into the future history of God’s salvation plan (eschatology)!

**THAT IS WHY GOD'S OLD TESTAMENT PEOPLE, ISRAEL, (God's chosen remnant in the Old Testament period) AND GOD'S NEW TESTAMENT PEOPLE, THE CHURCH, (God's chosen remnant in the New Testament period) ARE CALLED BY THE SAME NAMES IN THE BIBLE!**

- God's firstborn son (Exodus 4:22; Jeremiah 31:9; Hebrews 12:23)
- God's sons and daughters (Isaiah 43:6-7; 2 Corinthians 6:18)
- The city of Jerusalem (a symbol for God's people) is called a woman or bride or wife (Isaiah 54:1,11-12; Revelation 21:9-10).
- The twelve tribes (Genesis 49:28; James 1:1; Revelation 7:4; Revelation 21:12)
- A kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; Revelation 5:10)
- A holy people (Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9)
- God's chosen people (Deuteronomy 7:6; 1 Peter 2:9)
- A people that is God's treasured possession (Exodus 19:5; Titus 2:14, a people belonging to God (1 Peter 2:9)
- God's covenant people (Leviticus 26:12; 2 Corinthians 6:16)
- A dispersed, scattered wandering people, strangers (Deuteronomy 30:1; Psalm 105:10-13; Ezekiel 12:15; Esther 3:8; 1 Peter 1:1)
- The first fruits of his harvest (Jeremiah 2:3; James 1:18)
- Sheep (one flock) of the sheep pen of Israel and of the sheep pens of the other nations (Ezekiel ch. 34; John 10:16)
- Israel (1 Samuel 7:23; Galatians 6:14-16)
- Jews (Zechariah 8:22-23; Romans 2:28-29)
- Zion (also a symbol for God's people) (Isaiah 51:16; Isaiah 52:7; Hebrews 12:22-24)
- In contrast to "the present Jerusalem (that is below)", the Church is called "the Jerusalem that is above" (Galatians 4:25-26), the Heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22), the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2) or the Holy Jerusalem (Revelation 21:10)
- Temple of God (also a symbol for God's people) (2 Corinthians 6:16)
- God called his Church to himself by the proclamation of the gospel<sup>50</sup> during the Old Testament period (Isaiah 52:7; Romans 10:18-21; Galatians 3:8; Hebrews 4:1-3) and during the New Testament period (Matthew 24:14; Acts 13:44-49; Acts 20:24-25; Romans 1:6-7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Colossians 1:6).
- Believers from among the Jews and from among the non-Jews (the Gentiles) are being baptised by<sup>51</sup> one Spirit into one body (also a symbol for God's people). They were all given one Spirit to drink (1 Corinthians 12:13).
- Both are called "the Church/congregation/meeting" (Hebrew: qahal; Greek: ekklésia) (Psalm 107:32; Judges 20:2; Psalm 22:22; 2 Chronicles 29:28; Matthew 16:18; Matthew 18:17; Acts 8:2; Acts 9:1) with "a council of elders" (Hebrew: moshab zekenim; Greek: presbuterion) as leadership (Psalm 107:32; 1 Timothy 4:14).
- Christians (anointed people) (Hebrews: meshichi; Greek: christoi) (Psalm 105:15), (christianous) (Acts 11:26) living in the midst of non-Christians in the world!
- Both are members together of one Body (Ephesians 3:6)
- Both are heirs (with God's people, Israel) of the same future new heaven and new earth) (Ephesians 3:6; Galatians 3:29; cf. Romans 4:13)
- Both are sharers together on equal terms of God's promises in Christ (Ephesians 3:6; 2 Corinthians 1:20)

The Jews and non-Jews who believe in Jesus Christ form *one organism* that is symbolised as follows by:

- one flock (John 10:16)
- one family that are children of God (Galatians 3:26-29)
- one new man, one household of God, one dwelling of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:11-22)
- one Body (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 3:6)
- one olive tree (Jeremiah 11:16-17; 11:17-24)
- one chosen people, one holy nation, a people belonging to God (1 Pet 2:9-10).
- one New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:9-14, see Hebrews 12:22-24 for Jews and Galatians 4:21-31 for non-Jews).

"The Church" in the New Testament is called "the Israel of God" (i.e. spiritual Israel) (Galatians 6:14-16; see Romans 9:6) in contrast to "the Israel according to the flesh" (i.e. natural Israel) (1 Corinthians 10:18 in the Greek) (see Galatians 4:24-25). The Israel of God consists of believers who glory/boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the sinful world has been crucified to Christians, and Christians to the world (Galatians 6:14; see Romans 2:28-29 and 1 Corinthians 1:22-26)! "Israel" in this sense is definitely limited to *the believers in Jesus Christ* from among Jews *and* non-Jews in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

While natural Israel was unfaithful to God and his Messiah (John 1:11), spiritual Israel has never rejected God and his Christ (Romans 9:6)! Spiritual Israel remains forever God's covenant people. God has never rejected Israel, that is, spiritual Israel or *the believers in Israel* (Romans 11:1-6). Spiritual Israel or the Church remains God's chosen people

<sup>50</sup> Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint): ευαγγελιζομενος αγαθα (good news)

<sup>51</sup> Greek: εν (instrumental)

forever (*Read* Romans 8:29-30,33; Romans 9:6-18; Romans 11:1-5,28-29; Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:9-10; cf. John 6:44,37; John 17:3,12).

Therefore, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile” (Romans 10:12; Acts 15:9) (cf. Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11; Revelation 21:9-14)! Both are sinful and lost (Romans 3:23). Both are only saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 10:12-13). Christians from both belong to the same one covenant people: “the flock of Jesus” (Luke 12:32; John 10:16).

**(3) Remarks against the view of pre-millennialists who claim that history would culminate in the millennial kingdom.**

Pre-millennialists teach that God deals with people in the world on the basis of *several different covenants* and according to the principles of *seven distinct dispensations*. Each dispensation represents a different test of natural man. But because man fails every single test, each dispensation ends in failure and is consequently judged by God!

**The fifth dispensation.** Pre-millennialists teach that the theocracy of Israel was founded with the giving of the Mosaic Law (about 1446 B.C.). The outward appearance of the kingdom of God had its golden age in the days of the kings David and Solomon. Dispensationalists say that if Israel and its kings had remained obedient, the kingdom of Israel would have grown in strength. But because of disobedience the royal house was terminated and Israel was carried into exile. The prophets had predicted this overthrow, but had also given messages of hope that raised the expectation that in the days of the Messiah Israel would turn to God and the *literal* throne of David would be re-established in unsurpassed glory<sup>52</sup>. They believed that even the Gentiles would share in the blessings of Israel’s future kingdom.

**The sixth dispensation.** Pre-millennialists teach that when the Messiah came, he offered to establish the kingdom<sup>53</sup>, but the Jews failed to repent. The result was that the King (Jesus Christ) did NOT establish (restore) the kingdom, but withdrew from Israel<sup>54</sup> and went to a far country (cf. Matthew 21:33; 25:14).

By withdrawing from Israel, he postponed the establishment of the kingdom (a Jewish theocratic kingdom) until his second coming.<sup>55</sup> Pre-millennialists assume without warrant that “the kingdom” always refer to “the theocratic kingdom of Israel” and that “the kingdom of God” is limited to a “kingdom in heaven”.

Pre-millennialists teach that before he left the earth, Christ founded the Church. Pre-millennialists believe that the Church has nothing in common with the kingdom<sup>56</sup> and that the prophets of the Old Testament never spoke of the Church<sup>57</sup>.

Thus pre-millennialists teach that the fifth dispensation of (Old Testament) Israel and the law made way for the sixth dispensation of the (New Testament) Church and grace, which is gathered out of Jews *and Gentiles*. Pre-millennialists maintain that the (New Testament) Church does not replace the theocratic kingdom of Israel. They maintain that God’s New Testament people (the Church) is not a continuation and extension (enlargement) of God’s Old Testament people (Israel), because God relates in a different way to Jews than to Gentiles! They say that Jesus tested the Jews in the fifth dispensation by means of keeping the law and he is testing the non-Jews (Gentiles) now in the sixth dispensation by means of grace. Pre-millennialists argue that the (New Testament) Church and Christians must remain strictly separated from (the theocratic kingdom of) Israel and the Jews in God’s history of salvation. They maintain that Jesus Christ is not the King of the Church (!)<sup>58</sup>, but only the Head of this Body. They say that the Church has the glorious task to proclaim “the gospel of grace” (and therefore not “the gospel of the kingdom”) to all nations on earth. However, pre-millennialists teach that the preaching of “the gospel of grace” to all the nations on the earth would also end in a failure, because it does not lead to conversions on a massive scale!

**The seventh dispensation.** Pre-millennialists teach that “the seventh dispensation” is the millennial kingdom and that it begins with the first phase of the second coming” “the coming” (Greek: the parousia) (Larkin) or the second phase of the second coming: “the appearance” (Greek: apokalupsis) (Scofield). The end will only come after “the gospel of the kingdom” (Matthew 24:14) has been preached to all the nations. Pre-millennialists believe this is a reference to the preaching of the millennial kingdom especially by the 144000 Jews after the New Testament Church has been raptured (Revelation 7:3-8). They believe that this would lead to conversions on a massive scale among the non-Jews (the heathen nations).

<sup>52</sup> This is an assumption of pre-millennialists.

<sup>53</sup> Jesus did not offer to establish the Jewish theocratic kingdom! Nor did he give the Jews a choice in this matter! He actually established the kingdom of God in a complete sovereign way!

<sup>54</sup> Also this is an unbiblical statement. Jesus never withdrew from Israel! On the contrary, Jesus said that he had not lost one of those God the Father had given him (John 17:12; 18:9)!

<sup>55</sup> The Bible does not speak of the establishment of a future Jewish theocratic kingdom, nor of a postponement of such a Jewish theocratic kingdom during his first coming! In all his preaching (Mark 1:14-15) teachings and parables, Jesus Christ established the kingdom of God, that is, the kingship or reign of God in the hearts and lives of those who believe in him (Luke 17:21).

<sup>56</sup> Also this is an unbiblical statement. The Church which Jesus Christ established is one of the visible manifestations of the kingdom of God (cf. Matthew 16:18-19)! One becomes a member of the Church (the Body of Christ) by being born-again (1 Corinthians 12:13) and being born-again is the same as entering into the kingdom of God (John 3:3-8)! Entering the kingdom is the same as being saved (Mark 10:23-26).

<sup>57</sup> The following spoke about “the assembly of Israel” (Hebrew: qahal; Greek: ekklésia = Church) (1) one of the early prophets (Judges 20:2), (2) Psalmists (Psalm 20:22; Psalm 107:32) and (3) one inspired by a latter prophet (Ezekiel) (1 Chronicles 29:28)

<sup>58</sup> Jesus Christ is the King of the Church (Revelation 1:5; 17:14; 19:16).

Nevertheless, the teaching about dispensations is NOT BIBLICAL!

**There is no biblical evidence that the Old Testament prophets knew nothing about the New Testament Church.** The Old Testament prophets knew about “the Seed in whom all the nations in the world would be blessed” (Genesis 22:18; cf. Galatians 3:16). In the New Testament these Gentile believers are called with the same names as the Old Testament believers (see point 2 above) (1 Peter 1:9-12).

What the Old Testament prophets did not know (what remained “a mystery” during the Old Testament period) was:

- that the New Testament believers would become heirs together with the Old Testament believers of all God’s Old Testament promises (2 Corinthians 1:20) on complete equal terms<sup>59</sup>
- and that the Gentile and Jewish believers would be members together of one Body (the Church) without any distinction between them (Ephesians 2:1-22; Ephesians 3:2-6; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; John 10:16)!

**There is no biblical evidence that Christ came to establish the Jewish theocratic kingdom at his first coming.** The teaching of Jesus Christ was not about “the kingdom of Israel”, but about “the kingdom of God”.

The kingdom of God (or kingdom of heaven)<sup>60</sup> was taken away from unbelieving and disobedient Jews in Israel:

- in the days of Joshua (1497-1387 B.C.) (Hebrews 4:1-11),
- in the days of Elijah (874- 845 B.C.) (1 Kings 19:17-18; cf. Romans 11:4)
- in the days of Amos (788 – 737 B.C.) (Amos 9:11-12; cf. Acts 15:14-17)
- in the days of Hosea (754- 714 B.C.) (Hosea 1:6-10; cf. Romans 9:25-26)
- in the days of Isaiah (740-680 B.C.) (Isaiah 1:2-9; cf. Romans 9:28-29)
- and would be taken away from the Jews who rejected and killed Jesus Christ (Matthew 8:11-12)
- and from the jealous Jews who rejected the Word of God in Asia Minor in the time of Paul (Acts 13:14-48).

The kingdom of God would be given to believing and obedient Jews and non-Jews in all the nations (Matthew 21:42-44)

- The kingdom of God is *the kingship* of God through Jesus Christ in the hearts and lives of believers from among the Jews and the non-Jews (Luke 17:20-21)
- that results in their salvation from beginning to end (Mark 10:23,26; John 3:3-8; Acts 10:44-48; Acts 11:14-18; Romans 1:16)
- that results in their establishment as the Church (from among Jews and non-Jews) (Matthew 16:18-19; Romans 10:9-13; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26-29; Ephesians 2:11-22; Colossians 3:11)
- that results in their influence in society as the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16) and in their service with righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).
- and finally culminates in the final and perfect phase of the kingdom of God, namely, the new heaven and new earth (Matthew 25:34) on which both believing Jews and non-Jews will live (Revelation 21:12-14).

**There is no biblical evidence that Christ did not establish the kingdom of God at his first coming.** The New Testament history begins with the establishment of the visible kingdom of God (or kingdom of Christ).

- Jesus Christ proclaimed the gospel saying, “The time has been fulfilled and is here (Greek: pléroó) (perfect tense). The kingdom of God has drawn near and is present” (Greek: eggizó) (perfect tense) (Mark 1:15). Thus, Jesus Christ established the kingdom of God on earth at his first coming!
- Jesus Christ said, “If I *time and again* drive out (Greek: ekbálló) (present continuous time, active) demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has once for all time arrived/come upon you (Greek: fthanó) (aorist active) (Matthew 12:28). By doing this, he definitely bound (Greek: deó) (aorist, active) “the strong man” (i.e. Satan) (Matthew 12:29).
- And he said, “Now is (Greek: present tense) the time for judgement (Greek: krisis) on the world. Now the prince of this world will *certainly* be driven out (Greek: ekbálló) (future tense, passive). When I am *once for all* lifted up (Greek: hupsóó) (subjunctive, aorist tense) from the earth, I will *certainly* draw (Greek: helkusóó) (subjunctive, future tense, active) all to myself” (John 12:31-32). Thus, throughout the whole New Testament period Jesus Christ is drawing people from all nations to himself.
- “God has *once for all* rescued (Greek: ruomai) (aorist medium, active) us from the dominion of darkness and has *once for all* transferred (Greek: methistémi) (aorist, active) us into the kingdom of the Son he loves” (Colossians 1:13). Throughout the whole New Testament period God transfers Christians from every tribe, language, people or nation (Revelation 5:9-10) from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of Jesus Christ.
- The kingdom of God began very small, but grows to become the greatest reality the world and in history (Matthew 13:31-33).
- Throughout the whole New Testament period Jesus Christ is sowing “the sons of the kingdom” in the world (but also the Satan is sowing the sons of the evil one)” (Matthew 13:38-39).

<sup>59</sup> During the Old Testament, God already included believers into his people who were not Jews. But these believing non-Jews would be included into the nation of Israel and the temple would be a house of prayer “for all nations” (Isaiah 56:3-8). Yet the Jews never regarded these believers from the other nations as “equals”!

<sup>60</sup> Matthew wrote his Gospel especially to Jews who believe that one may not use the Name of God in vain. That is why Matthew uses the expression “kingdom of heaven” in stead of “kingdom of God”. Compare Matthew 13:31-32 with Mark 4:30-32!

- The New Testament history ends with the kingdom of God arriving in its final, perfect phase at the second coming of Christ (Matthew 25:34; 1 Corinthians 15:28; Revelation 11:15).

**There is no biblical evidence that Christ is not the King of the Church.** Christ is not just the Head of the Church. He is also the Head of the whole universe (Ephesians 1:20-23). Throughout the New Testament period Christ is “the King of the sheep” (i.e. Christians) (Matthew 25:34,40) and “the King of kings and Lord of lords” (Matthew 21:4-10; 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 1:5-6; Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:16). All authority and power in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18; John 13:3).

**There is no biblical evidence that “the gospel of the kingdom” is different from “the gospel of grace”.**

“The gospel of the kingdom” is not a message about the coming millennial kingdom of Jews, but nothing less than “the gospel of grace” (Acts 20:24-25; Acts 28:23,31). It is the message that through his completed work of salvation, Jesus Christ now reigns as the Sovereign King on the throne in heaven (Ephesians 1:21-22) and in the hearts and lives of Christians (Luke 17:21). This gospel will be preached to Jews and Gentiles without distinction throughout the whole New Testament period (Matthew 24:14; Romans 10:12-21).

**There is no biblical evidence that the Bible history is to be divided into seven dispensations.**<sup>61</sup> The Bible does not teach the existence of “dispensations in the sense of periods in which God tests man under different principles”. The Bible certainly does not teach that God’s plan failed in any period of time (Isaiah 14:24,27; Ephesians 1:10,19-23)!

The Bible may be divided into:

- the Old Testament period in which “the first covenant” functioned. The first covenant is the ceremonial law that was added to the covenant of grace (Galatians 3:15-17)
- the New Testament period in which “the second covenant” functioned. The second covenant is the new covenant or the realisation of the covenant of grace (Hebrews 8-13)
- and finally the perfect eternity (the new heaven and the new earth) (2 Peter 3:11-14).

None of these periods will fail!

**There is no biblical evidence that the ministry of Jesus Christ from his first coming to his second coming ended in failure!** On the contrary, the Old Testament prophets proclaimed that Jesus Christ would be the Conqueror from the time of his death and resurrection (Isaiah 52:13-15; Isaiah 53:11) and that his kingdom would increase until it has conquered everyone and everything (Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 2:44).

The New Testament teaches that Christ’s work of salvation at his first coming “was finished and remains finished/completed for ever” (Greek; teleó) (perfect tense) (John 19:30).<sup>62</sup>

And the New Testament teaches that Christ’s work of judgment “was done and remains done” (“has come to pass”) (Greek: ginomai) (perfect tense) at his second coming (Revelation 16:17; 21:6). He would not need to struggle for another 1000 years to conquer Satan and the disobedient Gentile nations. At his one and only second coming to finally save his people and conquer his enemies, his work “will have come to pass” and “will remain done” (Revelation 16:17; 21:6).<sup>63</sup> At the second coming of Jesus Christ “every knee in heaven and on earth and under the earth will bow (willingly or unwillingly)” before Jesus Christ and “every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is (indeed) the Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Isaiah 45:23; Philippians 2:9-11).

**There is no biblical evidence that the New Testament history will culminate in the Jewish millennial kingdom.** Instead the teachings in the Bible tell us that the New Testament history will culminate in:

- the one and only second coming of Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:30-31)
- the resurrection of all the dead at the same time (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15)
- the last judgement of all people at the same time (2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27)
- the renewal of all things (Acts 3:21; Romans 8:21), i.e. the dawn of the kingdom of God in its final, perfect and everlasting phase as “the new heaven and the new earth” (2 Peter 3:13).

**(4) Remarks against pre-millennialists inserting an interim Church period between the kingdom of Israel in the Old Testament and the kingdom of Israel in the millennium.**

Pre-millennialists believe in a so-called “postponement (of the kingdom) theory”. According to them John the Baptist and Jesus proclaimed that the kingdom, that is, *the Jewish theocratic kingdom of Israel* was at hand. But because the Jews did not repent and believe, Jesus postponed the establishment of this (Jewish theocratic) kingdom until his second coming.

C.I. Scofield marks the change in the plans of Jesus occurred at Matthew 11:20, because after that Jesus began to rebuke the Jewish cities for not repenting. Other pre-millennialists mark the change in Matthew chapter 12, when the Pharisees plotted to kill Jesus and blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. Pre-millennialists say that before that point Jesus did not

<sup>61</sup> Study supplement 4, Dispensational or Covenant Theology in [www.last-biblebook.org](http://www.last-biblebook.org)

<sup>62</sup> τετελεσται > τελεω (to bring to an end, to finish, to complete) (indicative, perfect, passive). The perfect tense stresses the fact that nothing remains unfinished. The whole New Testament history after the first coming of Christ is the outworking of his completed work of salvation and his victory!

<sup>63</sup> γεγονεν > γινομαι (to happen, to take place) (perfect tense, passive voice). The perfect tense stresses the fact that after his second coming nothing remains to be done!

concern himself with non-Jews (Gentiles)<sup>64</sup>, but preached the gospel of the (Jewish theocratic) kingdom only to Israel. After that point Jesus only predicted the future coming of the (Jewish theocratic) kingdom and offered rest (that is, the gospel of grace) to the weary people in Israel and in the Gentile nations.

**There is no biblical evidence that Jesus came at his first coming to re-establish the Old Testament (theocratic) kingdom of Israel.** Jesus Christ never had in mind to re-establish the Old Testament Jewish theocracy! He came to fulfil the spiritual reality of the Old Testament shadows (Colossians 2:17) and the Old Testament theocratic kingdom of Israel was merely a type of the Old Testament shadows (Matthew 8:11-12; Matthew 13:31-33; Matthew 21:43; Luke 17:21; John 3:3; John 18:36-37). John the Baptist as well as Jesus Christ proclaimed “the (present) kingdom of God” and not the (future millennial) kingdom of Israel!

In order to enter the kingdom of God, people had to be born again by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8), repent (i.e. change their thinking) (Greek: metanoéō) and believe the Gospel (Mark 1:14-15)! Jesus certainly did not postpone the task for which he came at his first coming, but established the kingdom (kingship) of God over all people and everything else. Jesus Christ refers to the kingdom of God as a present reality and not as a future reality (Matthew 11:12; Matthew 12:28; Luke 17:21; John 18:36-37; cf. Ephesians 1:19-23; Colossians 1:13).

**There is no biblical evidence that the New Testament teaches “the postponement of the kingdom” theory.** This “parenthetic (gap) theory about the postponement of the (theocratic) kingdom (of Israel)” is a human invented theory devoid of biblical truth.

**There is no biblical evidence that Jesus only occupied himself with the Jews before this alleged turning point.** Jesus concerned himself also with Gentiles before the supposed turning point (Matthew 4:15-16,23-25; 8:5-13; John 4:1-42).

**There is no biblical evidence that Jesus did not preach the kingdom after this alleged turning point.** Jesus preached the kingdom also after the supposed turning point (Matthew 13; Luke 10:1-11 and his parables about the kingdom).

**There is no biblical evidence that Jesus preached two different gospels.** There is absolutely no proof that Jesus preached two different gospels: initially “the gospel of the (Jewish theocratic) kingdom” to only Jews and thereafter “the gospel of grace” to everybody, especially to non-Jews (Gentiles) (as pre-millennialists assert).

Jesus Christ preached the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15 and in all his parables). Also Christians preached the kingdom of God (and not the theocratic kingdom of Israel) (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:24-25; 28:23,31). The Old Testament message (“the Law and the prophets”) was proclaimed until John (the Baptist). Since that time the New Testament message (“the good news of the kingdom of God”) is being preached and everyone is forcing his way into it (Luke 16:16)!

**There is no biblical evidence to split Israel and the Church.** The theory about the postponement of the (theocratic) kingdom (of Israel) is a fairly recent invented idea and reprehensible, because it destroys the unity of the Bible, the unity of the biblical message and the unity of Gods people in the Bible. Pre-millennialists believe that while the New Testament was intended to fulfil the Old Testament, it became something quite different. They say that the Jewish theocratic kingdom that was predicted was not fulfilled, but the Church that was not predicted, was established. In other words: God’s initial plan was frustrated by the Jews!

Pre-millennialists make an absolute separation between Israel and the Church and this in turn leads to splitting the Bible into “a Book about the kingdom of the Jews: and “a Book about the Church of Christians”. Pre-millennialists regard Israel as “Gods natural and earthly people”, but the Church as “God’s spiritual and heavenly people”.

But:

- Jesus Christ teaches very emphatically that he is the Shepherd of one flock of sheep that consists of sheep belonging to the Jewish fold and sheep belonging to the Gentile folds (John 10:16)!
- The apostle Paul teaches clearly that the branches originating from the wild olive tree (i.e. the heathen nations) were grafted together with the branches originating from the natural olive tree (the nation of Israel) into the root (i.e. Christ, the Seed of the patriarchs) or stem (i.e. God’s people, consisting only of genuine believers) (Romans 11:17-24)!
- The apostle Peter declares that not only believing Jews, but also believing Gentiles are “God’s chosen people” (1 Peter 2:9-10; cf. 1 Peter 1:9-12).
- And the apostle John recorded that the New Jerusalem consists of the believers from the Old Testament period as well as the New Testament period (Revelation 21:10-14)

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<sup>64</sup> Also this is an unbiblical statement. From the beginning of his ministry Jesus Christ moved from Nazareth to Capernaum in “the Galilee of the Gentiles” (Isaiah 9:1). There “the people walking in darkness have seen a great light” (Matthew 3:15-16). There he preached: “Repent, for the kingdom of God is near (has arrived)” (Mark 1:15). Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom (Matthew 4:23). Gentiles, who have become Jewish proselytes, attended synagogues (Acts 6:9). News about him spread all over Syria and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases (Matthew 4:24) ... Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, ... and the region across the Jordan followed him”(Matthew 4:25)!

##### **(5) Remarks against the optimism or pessimism generated by pre-millennialism.**

Both post-millennialists and pre-millennialists hold on to “a golden age” theory. They base their theories on the conviction that through Christ’s provision of redemption, a greater part of the human race would be saved. They interpret the “absolute authority” of Christ (Matthew 28:18) during the millennial kingdom only in terms of evangelisation and Christianisation of the world.

**The optimism of post-millennialists.** Postmillennialists say that Christ is exercising his absolute authority before his second coming. Before the second coming more and more people in this present world would be saved until finally Christ would return to a thoroughly Christianised world and usher in the millennium. After Christ’s second coming nothing would remain to be done (Revelation 16:17; Revelation 21:6). Then an uncountable great multitude from every nation on earth would be Christian (Revelation 7:9)!

Post-millennialists tend to be too optimistic about this present world and tend to think only about the advance of the Church and not about the opposition to the Church. Christ builds his Church on the rock and the gates of hell cannot overcome it (Matthew 16:18). The Church would take the offensive, advance continually and nothing in the world would be able to resist its onward march. This was especially true during the time of the apostles (during the first century) and also in the history of world missions (especially in the nineteenth century).

**Remarks about the optimism of the post-millennialists.** The Bible not only teaches that there will be great advances, but also that there will be great resistance. Throughout the whole New Testament period there will be many antichrists (1 John 2:18) and much tribulation (John 16:33; 2 Timothy 3:12). There will be the great apostasy (from the faith), the great tribulation and the coming of the terrible final antichrist, “the man of lawlessness, the man doomed to destruction, who opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4).

And Matthew 24:14 clearly teaches that the gospel will be preached as a testimony to all nations before Christ’s second coming. The Bible does not say whether the world would be totally evangelised or Christianised (the postmillennial view)! Therefore it is far more realistic to say that as the kingdom of God advances in this present world, there is a corresponding advance of the kingdom of evil (Matthew 13:24-30,36-43,47-50).

**The pessimism of pre-millennialists.** Pre-millennialists say that Jesus Christ would exercise his absolute authority only after his second coming. In this present world the greater part of humanity is lost. But after the first phase of Christ’s return (during the future tribulation period under the most adverse conditions) and also after the second phase of Christ’s return (during the future millennial kingdom under the most favourable conditions) the greatest part of humanity would be saved.

Because Christ is not exercising his absolute power in the present dispensation (the sixth dispensation “of the Church” and “of grace”) (that is, because Christ is alleged not to be the King), this present dispensation will certainly end in failure! Thus, dispensational pre-millennialists tend to be too pessimistic about this present world. They discourage involvement in social action and foster a supernatural social ethic that supports the status quo. Many evangelicals, heavily influenced by pre-millennialism, do not wish to see a social change that would improve the lot of their fellow men. Despite the clear teaching of the Bible that Christians are to love their neighbours (Matthew 22:37-40), be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16) and help their neighbour physically, socially and spiritually (Matthew 25:34-40; Romans 12:20; James 1:27; James 2:14-17,22; 1 John 3:16-18), many Christians narrow their mission to an attempt to only win souls for Christ. While liberals tend to treat the Church as a social club, fundamentalists try to create a counter cultural group that engages in propaganda for the Lord’s sake. Pre-millennialists often take an extremely separatist position with regard to culture. They tend to emphasise Bible schools and seminaries that train people for “full-time” Christian service.

Rather than working for some sort of synthesis between Christ and culture: embracing both the great missionary commission (Matthew 28:19) and the great cultural commission (Genesis 1:28), many ardent advocates of the millennium preach a message that consists largely of sub cultural denial of the prevailing forms of art and expression.

In contrast to this attitude, the Bible teaches that the Christian Church is a healing community amidst the society in the world.

**Remarks against the pessimism of the pre-millennialists.** The Bible not only teaches that there will be tribulation in the world, but also that Jesus Christ had overcome this world and that his victory will be lasting (John 16:33)<sup>65</sup>. Christ had received all authority (power) in heaven and on earth and is now exercising all his authority (Matthew 28:18). He will not have more authority (power) at his second coming (or in an alleged future millennium) than he presently has for the completion of his eternal plan!

Realized (inaugurated or present) millennialists and post-millennialists have a much greater appreciation of the Church as the community of God that transcends time and space than do many pre-millennialists. Therefore it is far more

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<sup>65</sup> Greek: νενικηκα (perfect tense)

realistic to say that as the kingdom of evil advances in this present world, there is a corresponding advance of the kingdom of God (John 13:3; Ephesians 1:20-23; 1 Peter 3:22).

#### **(6) Remarks against the seeking of signs for the coming millennial kingdom.**

Pre-millennialists make efforts to identify the signs of the times. Often such occurrences as natural disasters (earthquakes, draughts, tsunamis, epidemics), wars (in the Middle East), apostasy in the churches, scientific and technological advancements and the rise of authoritarian and extremist political leaders are cited as proof that “the end is near” and that “Christ’s second coming is imminent” (i.e. can occur at any moment).

But the seeking of signs lead people:

- to set dates of future events (a blind alley)
- to identify God’s cause with Zionism (Judaism)
- to support the modern state of Israel that can lead to support policies which do not make for peace on earth.

C. S Lewis warns that an eschatology must never preclude “sober work for the future within the limits of ordinary morality and prudence ... For what comes is judgement (“God will give to each person according to what he has done”) (Romans 2:6). Happy are those whom it (Christ, the Judge) finds labouring at their vocations (cf. Matthew 24:45-46), whether they were merely going out to feed the pigs or laying good plans to deliver humanity a hundred years hence from some great evil. When the curtain falls now, those pigs will in fact never be fed and the great campaign against slavery or governmental tyranny will in fact never proceed in victory. No matter; you were at your post when the inspection came.”

#### **(7) Remarks against the limitation of Christ’s kingship by pre-millennialists.**

Although the rule of Christ is now mostly invisible and Christians look forward to the total visible expression of his rule on the new earth after his second coming, there is no reason revealed in the Bible why this visible expression of his rule should be limited to a future “millennial kingdom”. Why should this visible expression of Christ’s rule (the alleged millennial kingdom) still have to occur in the world as we know it now in distinction to his future rule over the new earth? Why should Christians have to be raised from the dead to live on an earth that is still groaning because of the presence of sin, rebellion and death (Romans 8:19-22)? Why should the glorified Christ have to come back to this present earth to rule over his enemies with a rod of iron and thus still have to endure the opposition to his sovereignty?

At his first coming, Jesus Christ visibly conquered sin, sickness, death, evil spirits, Satan and his human enemies. No one and nothing can hinder the fulfilment of God’s eternal plan.

- “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of God is continuously pressing forward vigorously (forcing/breaking through/forcefully enter/triumphantly blazes a trail) (Greek: biazómai) (present continuous tense) and vigorous (eager, enthusiastic, passionate) (Greek: biastai) men are *continuously* eagerly taking possession Greek: harpazó) (present continuous tense) of it (the kingdom)” (Matthew 11:4-5,12).
- “If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you/has arrived” (Matthew 12:28).
- “In this world you will have (present continuous tense) tribulation. But take heart! I have overcome the world” *and the world will remain overcome by me*<sup>66</sup> (perfect tense that remains present) (John 16:33)!
- Concerning his work of salvation during his first coming, Jesus said, “It is finished” and it remains finished forever”<sup>67</sup> (perfect tense that remains present) (John 19:30)!

At his second coming, he will come in the fullness of his glory to usher in the final and absolute complete and perfect phase of the kingdom of God (i.e. the new heaven on the new earth) and not simply an interim period of a thousand years of very limited peace, righteousness and blessing!

## **4. The second coming following the earthly millennium (post-millennialism).**

### **(1) Post-millennialism.**

Post-millennialism is that view of the last things which holds that the kingdom of God is established gradually until it merges into the millennial age at the end of this present age.

The kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit in people. The universal proclamation of the gospel and the ultimate conversion of the large majority of people in all the nations of the world during this present age were the express command, meaning and promise of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. Post-millennialists maintain that the gospel will not simply be preached as “a witness” to the nations (the pre-millennial and realized millennial view), but all the nations will be truly and effectually evangelised and Christianized and the lives of people will be truly transformed by it. The gospel age gradually merges into the millennial age of post-millennialists as more and more people are converted and the world is being Christianized. Thus the world is gradually Christianised so that it develops into a golden age called “the millennium”.

<sup>66</sup> εν τω κοσμω θλιψιν εχετε (vira), αλλα θαρσειτε (vira), εγω νενικηκα >νικαω (vira) τον κοσμον

<sup>67</sup> τετελεσται > τελεω (vira)

Post-millennialists believe that the millennium will be a period in which this present world will enjoy *almost* complete and perfect righteousness. Evil in its many forms will be reduced to negligible proportions. Christian principles will be the rule. And the majority of people in all the nations will be converted.<sup>68</sup> The millennium will be a spiritual kingdom in the hearts and lives of the people on earth. The millennium is symbolic (!) and will last an indefinite long period of time, perhaps much longer than a literal 1000 years. It will be characterised by an uplifted social, economic, political and cultural life on earth. The whole world will enjoy a state of righteousness that hitherto has only been seen in relatively small and isolated groups: for example, some family circles and some congregations. Christian principles of belief and conduct will be the accepted standard. The Church will be then, as now, the outward and visible manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth. And Christ will return to a truly Christianised world.

Post-millennialists believe that the millennium is followed by the second coming of Christ, the general resurrection of the dead, the general final judgement of all people and the introduction of heaven and hell in their fullness. Thus post-millennialists believe (rightfully) in only one second coming of Christ at the end of the millennium.

Post-millennialism places a strong emphasis on the universality of Christ's work of redemption. Hope is held out for the salvation of an incredible large number of the race of mankind. This does not mean that every single individual will be saved, but that the human race as such would be saved. The kingdom of God will fill the earth (Zechariah 9:10). In the Bible "heaven" is pictured as a large place: as "a kingdom", "a country" or "a city", while "hell" is pictured as a comparatively small place: "a prison", "a lake (of fire and brimstone)" or "a pit". Hell is only a corner of the universe. The names not written in the book of life seem to be the exception or rare cases (Revelation 20:15). "The kingdom of darkness" is insignificant in contrast to "the kingdom of Christ" (Colossians 1:13).

## (2) Remarks against post-millennialism.

**The post-millennial view ignores the corresponding advance of evil in the present time.** As the kingdom of God advances in this world, there is a corresponding advance of the kingdom of evil (Matthew 13:36-43). The world in which there will be perfect righteousness cannot be the millennial kingdom on the present earth, but can only be the kingdom of God on the new earth (2 Peter 3:13)!

**The post-millennial view ignores important historical events in the future.** Boettner makes no mention of "the great apostasy (the falling away)", "the great tribulation" or "the appearance of the final antichrist" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). Moreover Christ's words in Luke 18:8 implies that the number of people saved at the second coming of Christ would be small. "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" The Bible does not support the idea that the whole world would be Christianized.<sup>69</sup>

## **5. The second coming will follow the symbolic millennium (realised millennialism). This is the true biblical doctrine about eschatology.**

Realized millennialism (inaugurated or present millennialism) is the view that the kingdom of God

- exists from eternity (Psalm 145:13; Psalm 46:10; Matthew 25:34)
- was visibly established on earth by the completed work of salvation of Christ during his first coming (Matthew 12:28-30)
- is a present reality that grows and extends continually (Matthew 11:12; Matthew 13:31-32,37-43; Mark 1:14-15; Mark 4:26-32) through the preaching of the gospel (Matthew 24:14)
- reaches its final perfect phase at the second coming of Christ (Matthew 13:40-43).

The realized millennium on earth

- begins with the snatching up of the male child to God and his throne (his resurrection, ascension and enthronement (Revelation 5:1-14; Revelation 12:5), the hurling down of the dragon onto the earth and Christians that overcome him (Revelation 12:5-18), that is, the binding of Satan (Revelation 20:1-7)
- is symbolised by "a period of oppression" (as Luke 4:25) that symbolically lasts "3½ times", "42 months" or "1260 days" (Revelation 12:6, 14; 13:5), or that is symbolically "1000 years" (Revelation 20:2)
- and ends at the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of all the dead, the final judgement of all people and the renewal of the universe, including the earth (Revelation 20:11 to 22:5).

Therefore, people today live in the millennium! The realized millennium emphasizes the sovereign reign of Jesus Christ in the hearts and lives of Christians (Luke 17:20-21) that results in:

- the salvation of people from beginning (Mark 10:23-27) to end (Revelation 12:10-11)
- the establishment of the Church in every nation (Matthew 16:18-19)
- the transformation of life on earth (Romans 10:17)
- and finally in the total destruction of evil (Revelation 19:11-21) and the complete renewal of the universe (including the present earth) (1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Acts 3:21; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1-5) with the second coming of Jesus Christ.

<sup>68</sup> Loraine Boettner in Robert G. Clouse, *The meaning of the Millennium*, 1977, pp. 118-141

<sup>69</sup> Anthony A. Hoekema in Robert G. Clouse, *The meaning of the Millennium*, 1977, p. 151

## **6. Four implications of the symbolic thousand years.**

### **(1) Realized millennialism teaches that the Old Testament and New Testament are bound together into a unity by the covenant of grace.**

**God's one and only covenant.** Sacred history is not to be divided into a series of distinct and essentially different so-called "dispensations". There is a single covenant of grace throughout that history that remains effective from the creation to the renewal of the world. That covenant of grace binds the whole Old Testament and the whole New Testament together into a unity.

**The nature of the covenant.** The covenant (Hebrew: berit, Greek: diathéké) is the declaration of God's will. It is not "an agreement" between two (equal) parties as in a contract or compact. God alone takes the initiative in making this covenant, gives the promise and sets the conditions. It is also not "a testament" which requires the death of the testator. God made one covenant with man that says: "I will be your God and you will be my people" (Leviticus 26:12). The covenant is everlasting: "I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and your descendants or "seed" (Hebrew: zera>) after you, for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants (Hebrew: zera>) after you" (Genesis 17:7). This covenant was made with Abraham's "Descendant (singular): that is Christ" (Galatians 3:16).

**The heir of the covenant.** God made his covenant first with Adam and Eve. He promised the first people that "the Seed" (Hebrew: zera>) of the woman would crush the head of the Satan (Genesis 3:15). Jesus Christ did this when he bound Satan at his first coming (1 John 3:8b; Matthew 12:28-29; John 12:31-32; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 12:7-12; Revelation 20:1-3).

God established his covenant officially with Abraham when he declared: "In your Offspring/Seed (Hebrew: zera>) (i.e. "Jesus Christ" and not Israel) all nations on earth will be blessed"<sup>70</sup> (Genesis 12:1-3; 22:18) and confirmed this covenant with Isaac (Genesis 26:4) and with Jacob (Genesis 28:14). This covenant became a reality in Jesus Christ (Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:3,6). By preaching the gospel to all nations (Mark 16:15) and by making them disciples (Matthew 28:19a) people in all nations are being blessed in the Seed, Jesus Christ!

**The repeated reconfirmation of the covenant.** God reconfirmed his covenant with Moses and the Israelites after the Exodus from slavery in Egypt (1447 B.C.): "I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God" (Genesis 6:6) (cf. Exodus 2:24-25; 3:6-17; 6:2-7; 19:3-6). And God added the law to his covenant. The purpose of adding the law (Galatians 3:19) was the following:

- The moral law (Exodus 20:1-17) was added, not to make people into the people of God, because the law has never functioned in the Bible as the means of justification: "Clearly no one is justified before God by the law" (Romans 3:28; Galatians 3:11)! The moral law was added to teach God's people how they ought to live as God's covenant people (Galatians 3:17-19).
- The ceremonial law was added, also not to make people into the people of God, because also the ceremonial law (keeping the Sabbath, circumcision, animal sacrifices, tithing, etc.) never functioned as the means of justification. The ceremonial law was added to teach God's people how they ought to approach, worship and serve God.

God reconfirmed his covenant with the Levites (the priests) and with David (the king) (1011-971 B.C.) (Jeremiah 33:20-22). They expressed "that kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6). God had promised that one of his descendants would become the King of the kingdom of God (1 Chronicles 17:11-14,20-23; Jeremiah 33:14-17). This King would sit on God's throne and rule over everything and would be Priest for ever (Psalm 110:1,4). This covenant with the Levites and king David is the same as God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Jeremia 33:25-26) and as God's covenant with Moses (Exodus 6:2-8). This Descendant (literally: Seed) (1 Chronicles 17:11) of David would build a house for God, would be God's Son and would reign over God's house (i.e. the Church) and God's kingdom forever. This Descendant of David is the Descendant of Abraham (Genesis 22:18; Matthew 1:1) and the Descendant of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15; Luke 3:38).

This covenant with the Levites and with king David was fulfilled in Jesus Christ as High Priest (Hebrews 8:1-2) and as King (Revelation 19:16). Jesus Christ established the kingdom of God on earth at his first coming (Matthew 12:28; Mark 1:14-15), provided purification for sins (Hebrews 1:3) and ascended the heavenly throne as the King of all kings (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:10-23; 1 Peter 3:21b-22; Revelation 5:6; 12:5). The New Testament believers in Jesus Christ together form "a holy and royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5-6,9-10; Revelation 1:5-6; 5:9-10; cf. Exodus 19:6). The kingdom of the LORD is "an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures through all generations" (Psalm 145:13). Christians will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ" (2 Petrus 1:1,11).

**Obedience that comes from faith in the covenant.** God's covenant of grace has certain rules/conditions. Obedience to these rules would bring many blessings, but disobedience to these rules would bring curses. These rules are described in Genesis 17:14, Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 en 29. Everyone who disobeys these rules of the covenant breaks Gods covenant and is cut off from Gods covenant people!

<sup>70</sup> Hebrew: hitbarku bezer>eka kol goije ha<arets.

The blessings that follow faith and obedience: Israel inheriting of the land between the river of Egypt and the great river, the Euphrates (Genesis 15:18) and being numerous as the stars in the sky (Genesis 22:17) already went into fulfilment in the time of Joshua (1367 B.C.) (Joshua 23:14) and Solomon (971-931 B.C.) (1 Kings 4:20, 5:1). All nations being blessed in the Seed of Abraham (Genesis 22:18) would be fulfilled in the new covenant.

But also all curses that follow unbelief and disobedience (the breaking of the covenant) were fulfilled, when both the northern kingdom of Israel (721 B.C.) and the southern kingdom of Judah (586 B.C.) went into exile (Read: Joshua 23:14-16; Jeremiah 11:3-14; 1 Kings 14:15-16; 2 Kings 17:1-41; 2 Kings 23:4-27; 2 Kings 25:8-12,21,26). The unbelieving and disobedient people were no longer “the people of God” (Hosea 1:9)!

**The new covenant.** Because God’s old covenant people (Israel) had broken God’s old or first covenant (in the sense of the law that had been added to the covenant of grace), God made a new covenant with the believers in true Israel (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The old covenant was “the shadow”, but the new covenant is “the reality” (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:5; 9:9-10; 10:1).

Although the word of God’s covenant remains the same from age to age, the one and only covenant of grace received a deeper and new significance at the first coming of Christ. That is why it was called “a *new* covenant” (Hebrews 8:13), “a *better* covenant” (Hebrews 7:22; 8:6) or “the *second* covenant” (Hebrews 10:9). Just like “the original law” in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 received its full significance in “the new law” in John 13:34-35, likewise “the original covenant of grace” received its full significance in “the new covenant” (Matthew 5:17)!

The new covenant is characterised by three clear differences:

- Not laws written in a Book, but inner renewal (regeneration). In the old (first) covenant God’s laws were written externally in a Book. “After Moses finished writing in a book the words of this law ... he gave this command: ... Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD, your God. There it will remain as a witness against you” (Deuteronomy 31:24-26). “Then he took the Book of the covenant and read it to the people. They responded: ‘We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey’” (Exodus 24:7).

But in the new (second) covenant God’s laws are written internally in the mind and heart of people. “I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people” (Hebrews 8:10; cf. 10:16).

- Not a national knowledge about God, but a personal knowing of God (through Jesus Christ). In the old (first) covenant people learned about God through what the prophets said.

But in the new (second) covenant people learn through what God himself (the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Christ) teach them (Hebrews 8:11; John 6:45; 17:3; 1 John 2:20-21).

- Forgiveness not by bringing endless sacrifices of atonement, but by a once for all sacrifice. In the old (first) covenant people continued to feel guilty about their sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Because the law can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshippers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those animal sacrifices were an annual reminder of sins (and their need to receive perfect forgiveness), because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Hebrews 10:1-4).

But in the new (second) covenant believers have absolute assurance of forgiveness of sins through the one sacrifice of atonement which Jesus Christ brought on the cross. They know (and experience) that all their sins are forgiven and God will no more bring their sins into remembrance. “I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (Hebrews 8:12; 10:17).

The new covenant went into fulfilment in the New Testament at the first coming of Christ (Hebrews 8:6-13). The new covenant became a reality when the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Lord’s Supper (30 A.D.) (Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:20). The new covenant is intended for all people from every nation in the world who believe in Jesus Christ, including Israel (2 Corinthians 1:19-20; 6:16; Hebrews 4:1-3). The new covenant is not only for the physical descendants of Abraham who believe (the Jewish believers), but also for *the spiritual descendants of Abraham*, for people from all the nations on earth who believe in Jesus Christ (Genesis 12:2-3; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Galatians 3:6-9,26-29).

**The inheritance of the covenant.** The covenant of grace includes an inheritance. The believers will not just inherit the Promised Land (Genesis 15:13-19), but the whole new earth (Romans 4:13; Revelation 21:1-3)!

**The law and the covenant.** The law (of Moses) never displaced the covenant of grace (with Abraham), but was *added* to the covenant of grace in order to teach God’s covenant people how to live as his saved people (Exodus 20:2-17; Jeremiah 11:1-5; Galatians 3:17; cf. Mark 12:30-31; Romans 13:8). The law was added to curb or keep in check the transgressions of people (1 Timothy 1:8-10) and to lead people to Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:19-25). But these rules of the covenant (i.e. the law) were continually broken by the unbelief and disobedience of Israel (Hebrews 4:2,6). That is

why God made a new (second) covenant with the believers in Israel (Jeremiah 31:31-34: 24:7; 30:21-22<sup>71</sup>; Ezekiel 37:24-27; Malachi 3:1<sup>72</sup>) and with the believers all other nations (Galatians 3:17-18,26-29<sup>73</sup>; Hebrews 8:6-13).

**(2) Realized millennialism teaches that the kingdom of God is central in human history.<sup>74</sup>**

The kingdom of God was predicted and prepared in the Old Testament times (Daniel 2:44), established on earth at the beginning of the New Testament period at Christ's first coming (Matthew 12:28), continually extended throughout the whole New Testament period (Matthew 6:10; Matthew 21:43; 24:14 and the most parables of Jesus) and throughout the subsequent history of the Church and will finally reach its complete and perfect summit in the new heaven on the new earth at the second coming of Christ (Revelation 11:15; Matthew 13:39-43; 25:34; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

**(3) Realized millennialism teaches that Christ is the Lord of human history.**

All history is under the control of Jesus Christ and will ultimately prove to have always been subservient to his purpose. "The LORD Almighty has sworn, "Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand ... For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?" (Isaiah 14:24-27). "Nothing is too hard for you" (Jeremiah 32:17,27). "For nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37; cf. Romans 8:28-39; Ephesians 1:10-11).

Christians not only rejoice in the Saviour of their sins, but joyfully serve their King in every area of their lives. Jesus Christ is "the Ruler of the kings of the earth" (Revelation 1:5). "He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:16). He sits on the throne of the universe "far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come. God placed all things under his feet" (Ephesians 1:21-22)!

**(4) Realized millennialism teaches that all history is moving towards the total renewal of the universe.**

History is not meaningless, but meaningful. Although we are not always able to discern the meaning of each historical event, Christians know that the ultimate outcome will be that all things in the universe will be brought under the Lordship of Christ (Ephesians 1:9-10). Christians look forward to the new earth as part of the renewed universe in which God's good creation will realise finally and totally the purpose for which he called it into existence, namely the glorification of his name (Romans 11:36).

Thus, with regard to world history, realized millennialism adopts *a position of sober and realistic optimism*. Belief in the present rule of Christ, in the presence of God's kingdom (active kingship) and in the movement of history towards its goal is accompanied by a realistic recognition of the presence of sin in this world and of the growing development of the kingdom of evil (Matthew 13:36-43). Realized millennial eschatology expects a culmination of apostasy and tribulation in the final emergence of a personal antichrist before Christ's second coming (2 Thessalonians 2:1-8). Realized millennialists do not expect to see the perfect society realised during this present age *on the present earth and before the second coming* (as postmillennialists do). The perfect kingdom of God will be the final phase of the kingdom of God *after the second coming of Christ and on the new earth!*

The dominant mood of realized millennial eschatology is Christian optimism, because the victory of Christ over evil was decisive and Christ is now and forever on the throne! Christians view no world crisis as totally beyond help or hopeless and no social trend as absolutely irreversible (Matthew 5:14-16). Christians live in hope (or better: in the sure expectation) that is built on faith and that expresses itself in love. Realized millennial eschatology gives us a realistic, yet basic optimistic view of the world and of the events in life. The eschatology of realized millennialism is exciting, exhilarating and challenging, because it gives us an inspiring vision of the lordship of Christ over history and over the events in history and of the ultimate triumph of his kingdom.

<sup>71</sup> Jesus Christ is "the Leader, the Majestic One" (Hebrew: <dir) and "the Ruler" (Hebrew: moshil) of the covenant people, cf. Jeremiah 30:9.

<sup>72</sup> Jesus Christ is "The Messenger (Angel) of the covenant" (Hebrew: mal-cak ha berit)

<sup>73</sup> Jesus Christ is "the Heir" (of the covenant) and Christians are co-heirs (Greek: kléronomoi)

<sup>74</sup> No church denomination is central in human history.