

Millennialism: A False Hope and Formidable Threat

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The future of this world of ours has always been the subject of much speculation. Is the world eternal? Will it end? If so, how and when? The Christian knows. For Jesus said plainly, "Heaven and earth shall pass away..." (Matt. 24:35). Moreover, the Holy Spirit caused Peter to write: "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare." (II Pet. 3:10). The Christian also knows that on that Day Jesus will return again to judge the living and the dead, and to pronounce the final and eternal sentence on all (Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 17:31).

However, there have always been people, who call themselves Christians, who are not satisfied with the clear statements of Scripture. They want to know more. And the result is more speculation: When will Christ come again? Will the events which He foretells for the end of the world all happen at the same time or at intervals? Out of such dreams was born a hallucination: Millennialism. It is the strange doctrine that our Lord Jesus Christ will reign as King for 1,000 years on this earth. Millennium is the Latin for the number 1,000. Of the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ the Christian Church has from early times confessed in the words of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe...in Jesus Christ...(who) ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." Unfortunately, many who confess these words with us, do not actually believe them as they read. Before His coming to judge the quick and the dead they insert a number of resurrections or raptures, a conversion of all the Jews, a thousand-year reign of Christ here on earth, the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem and David's throne, various judgments, and who knows what else.

The teaching of the Millennium is not a modern theory. Since the early centuries of the Christian era there have been defenders of this theory within the Church. And one of the greatest dangers of this teaching today is that it is not the specific doctrine of some denomination, so that you might know and designate the adherents of this false movement by the name they write on their churches. You find such teachers scattered within numerous denominations of the visible Church—even the Lutheran Church! And the teachings of the Millennium are spread far and wide.

The purpose of this paper will be to show that the Millennium is not fact, but fancy, not God's truth but a satanic lie. I will endeavor to point out the false hopes that Millennialism presents and also show the formidable threats to the Christian faith that these false hopes present.

I. The False Hopes of Millennialism

Millennialism is a teaching that has plagued the Christian Church from the earliest times. In fact, Jesus had to face it already in His day, for the teaching of the millennium was held, in various forms, by the Jews of that time. "The idea of a millennial reign proceeded from Judaism, for among the Jews the representation was current, that the Messiah would reign a thousand years on earth, and then bring to a close the present terrestrial system. This calculation was arrived at, by a literal interpretation of Psalm 110:4, 'A thousand years are in Thy sight as one day.' It was further argued that as the World was created in six days, so it would last six thousand years, the seventh thousand would be a period of repose, a Sabbath on Earth to be followed by the destruction of the World." (Neander's History of Christian Dogmas Vol. I, p.

248). The Jews of Jesus' day expected not a Savior from sin, but a social political liberator, who would throw out the hated Romans, and give the Jews national independence again. And not only independence, but rule over all the other nations. They understood all the Old Testament prophecies in this sense, and were therefore disappointed that Jesus was doing something entirely different. In fact, it led eventually to their rejection and crucifixion of the Son of God!

The same false, notion was even entertained by the disciples of Jesus. You can recall that Peter, and the other disciples, too, didn't want to hear anything about any suffering and dying on the part of Jesus. For this didn't fit into their ideas about an earthly kingdom in which Christ would reign and they would share in his glory. So the Lord had to remind them, "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then shall He reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27). But the disciples continued to cling to this false notion of an earthly reign of Christ on this earth, for just before Jesus' ascension they again asked the question, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). It was only after Pentecost that the Holy Spirit finally was able to cleanse their beliefs of all such false hopes.

But false hopes have a way of not dying out very fast, because Satan doesn't want them to die out. Thus it's not surprising that some of the early teachers in the church, after the time of the apostles, fell again for these Jewish teachings. After all, everyone would like to have a heaven on earth! However, when the Christian Church later formulated it's confessions of faith, all such teachings were rigorously excluded. In the Apostles' Creed, which dates back to about 150 A.D., the Christian Church confesses: "From thence He (Christ) shall come to judge the quick and the dead." There isn't the faintest whisper about a millennium in this creed. Christ's Second Coming coincides with the final judgment. The Nicene Creed (325 A.D.) says about our Lord that "He shall come again with glory to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end." Again, no millennium! The Athanasian Creed echoes the words of Jesus Himself as found in Matthew 25, for it states: "He (Christ) sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty; from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give an account of their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire." Again, no room for a millennium! The Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.) condemned the belief in a future millennium as "a superstitious and Jewish teaching." So the Christian Church, from earliest times, saw the teaching of the millennium not as a truth to be believed, but as an error to be condemned and rejected.

The Lutheran Church also took the same stand against the teaching of a millennium. Article XVII of the Augsburg Confession states: "Also they teach that at the consummation of the world Christ will appear for judgment, and will raise up all the dead; He will give to the godly and elect eternal life and everlasting joys, but ungodly and devils He will condemn to be tormented without end...They condemn also others, who are now spreading certain Jewish opinions, that before the resurrection of the dead the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world, the ungodly being everywhere suppressed." Our own Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod reaffirmed this stand in "This We Believe"—Article IX—which says: "We reject every form of millennialism, since it has no valid Scriptural basis and leads Christians to set their hopes upon the kingdom of Christ as an earthly kingdom. We likewise reject as unscriptural any hopes that the Jews will all be converted in those final days, or that all men will ultimately enjoy eternal bliss." So we see that orthodox Christianity from earliest times had no use for the millennialistic day dreams of religious enthusiasts.

Yet there are many today, and their number is rapidly growing, who hold, tenaciously to the teaching of the millennium. For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses firmly believe that a new kingdom will come here on earth under the rule of Jehovah, after Jesus had led the forces of good to a stunning victory over Satan and his forces at Armageddon. The Mormons, likewise, believe that Christ, in the millennium, will reign personally on earth, which will eventually become the eternal abode of the righteous. Now we can expect such millennialistic dreams to be found among such religious sects which are known for their rejection of the Christian Gospel and their distortion of countless other clearly revealed doctrines in the Bible. But what is disturbing to many believers today is the fact that even many conservative Christians are also falling for this strange doctrine and satanic lie. While Billy Graham often preaches the name of Christ powerfully, he is also a thoroughgoing millennialist. In his book, *World Aflame*, published in 1965, he writes: "A new world will be born, A new social order will emerge. Swords will be turned into pruning hooks, and the lion will lie down with the lamb...The second coming of Christ will be so revolutionary that it will change every aspect of life on this planet...It will be the prophesied fulfillment of redemption applied to every phase of human life and national existence. Christ will reign with complete righteousness. Disease will be arrested. Death will be modified. War will be abolished. Nature will be changed. Man will live as it was originally intended he should live...When Christ came the first time, He dealt with evil as individual and hereditary. When He comes again, Christ will deal with evil as a practice. He will institute an age of such benevolence that evil cannot reign; and cruelty, oppression, and slavery will no longer exist. All this will come to pass as a result of the personal reign of Christ following His return...The Christian has tomorrow. It is the Kingdom of God on earth."

Many other Fundamentalists today would shout a loud "Amen" to what Billy Graham writes in his book. A rash of paper-back books is flooding the religious market these days written by Fundamentalists who advocate the well-worn theory of millennialism which is directed to Palestine and to weird and wonderful events dreamed up by prophetic prognosticators. Perhaps the most prominent among them is the book entitled: *The Late Great Planet Earth*. This book is authored by Hal Lindsey, a graduate of the School of Theology at the Dallas Theological Seminary. Hal Lindsey is now a columnist and free-lance writer whose articles have appeared in a number of newspapers and magazines. He has also served as a traveling speaker for the Campus Crusade for Christ. His book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, has sold more than 6 million copies, been translated into 25 languages, and recently was made into a movie that is presently circulating in our country. The thrust of the book is two fold: (1) To espouse the millennial theory of Christ's second coming, and: (2) To interpret present world political trends as signs of the imminent return of Jesus Christ. Here are some of Hal Lindsey's sensational fantasies—often mixed with half-truths and shrewd observations about church-life and politics found in his book: A new ten-nation Roman Empire will arise in Europe, under a dictator, who will make a miraculous recovery—"not an actual resurrection, but it will be a situation in which this person has a mortal wound. Before he has actually lost life, however, he will be brought back from this critical wounded state. This is something which will cause tremendous amazement throughout the world" (p.108). The Jews will rebuild a literal Temple in Jerusalem, for the convenience of the Antichrist-dictator (p. 109). All members of the Christian church will be whisked off to heaven, after which "God is going to reveal Himself in a special way to 144,000 physical, literal Jews who are going to believe with a vengeance that Jesus is the Messiah. They are going to be 144,000 Jewish Billy Gramhams turned loose on this earth..." (p. 111). (This is supposed to reproduce the thought of Rev. 7:9-14). The final battle of Armageddon, after which Christ will

rule for 1,000 years on earth, from Jerusalem, will involve nuclear war between Russia and China, centering in Palestine. The Red Chinese will contribute “this incredible Oriental army of 200 million soldiers”, and the result will be that “blood will stand to the horses’ bridles for a total distance of 200 miles northward and southward of Jerusalem” (pp. 162-166)! Enough! One doesn’t know whether to laugh or cry. Such silly literalistic hocus-pocus with Biblical prophecies only tends to make a laughingstock of the Bible among thinking, but often religiously illiterate people today.

I personally believe that the one book that has done the most to revive the theory of millennialism to the religious life of America during the 20th century is the book known as *The Scofield Bible*. This book consists of the King James Version with numerous notes and chain references, invented and prepared by Dr. Cyrus Scofield, a Congregationalist and, later, a Southern Presbyterian minister. This work was first published in 1909, but it soon became the chief text-book to be used in numerous Fundamentalist “Bible Schools”. Periodicals like the “Sunday School Times” and the “Moody Bible Institute Monthly” frequently refer to it, and for many, the notes of the *Scofield Bible* offer the final word. While Dr. Scofield upholds many of the great doctrines of the Christian Church in his “notes”, it is especially in his teachings on the various dispensations and eschatology that he goes far astray from anything the church has ever believed. While there were groups here and there in the 1800’s, particularly among non-Christian sects, who still held to the millennialistic theory, yet it was the publishing of the *Scofield Bible*, which revived and popularized the theory among many fundamentalist Christians, and, I believe, has caused it to become the dangerous threat that it is today to the Christian faith. Hal Lindsey, who I spoke of before, himself has said that he owed much to the *Scofield Bible* in the formulating of his own theology on the millennium.

The scheme for “the last times” presented in the *Scofield Bible* is as follows: (1) At any time there may take place the “Rapture,” the sudden, noiseless, and invisible removal from the world of all true Christians, to meet the Lord in the air. Simultaneously will take place the resurrection of all the redeemed who shall have died by that time, of all the past ages. But of all this the unbelieving world will hear nothing, and see nothing, except that the people in question have disappeared. (2) Although there is then not a single true believer left in the world, this event will have such a remarkable effect that many hitherto unbelieving, or only nominal Christians, will turn to the Lord. These form the group called “the tribulation saints”. They will begin to preach “the gospel of the kingdom”, which is not the old Gospel of grace, but an announcement of the imminence of the “kingdom”. (3) Immediately now appears the “Beast” of Revelation, the Antichrist, who will bear rule both in church and state, throughout the world. (4) At about this time, also, will take place the re-gathering of Israel, including the Ten Tribes, who, Dr. Scofield teaches, are still preserved somewhere as an independent unit, known to God. To these, together with the Jews still living, the land of Palestine will be restored. (5) With these restored Israelites and Jews the Antichrist will make a “Seven-year covenant” for the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, and the re-institution of the Levitical sacrifices. (6) In the midst of the seven year period, (3 and one-half years), the Antichrist will repudiate his promise, and will demand for himself divine worship. (7) All the “tribulation saints” and many faithful Jews not yet Christians will refuse, to render such blasphemous and idolatrous worship, and they will therefore be subject to a terrible persecution called “the great tribulation.” (8) At the end of this period, all nations will come up against Jerusalem to battle, and will almost win. They will take part of the city, but a great earthquake shall cleave the Mount of Olives and a remnant will flee into the cleft for safety. (9) This will be the “Battle of Armageddon”. Christ will come down at this point with

a heavenly army and will overthrow the hostile forces. This appearance of Christ will be visible to the world, and is called “The Revelation”, in contrast with His coming seven years before, which is “The Rapture.” (10) Now occurs the judgment of Matthew 25, that of “the sheep and the goats” which according to Scofield, is not an individual judgment, but of nations, to determine which of them shall be allowed to survive and to have part in the millennial blessings. (11) Thereupon is to follow the conversion of the remaining Jews, who then will become missionaries to the rest of the world. (12) At last comes the establishment of the millennial kingdom. This will be carried out by force. Christ will rule over the Jews, who, in turn, will rule over the rest of the world. (13) During this period the temple foreseen by Ezekiel is to be built, and the sacrifices prescribed by him will be offered. The Sermon on the Mount will be the law of that Kingdom and that period. (14) After 1,000 years of such rule, there will occur a revolt of Gog and Magog led by Satan who has been set free for a little while, the resurrection of the wicked, the last judgment, and the beginning of eternal life for the believers in heaven.

This, of course, leads us to ask: What basically are the teachings of the millennialists? I have found in my study of this subject that there are perhaps as many different views about the millennium as there are millennialists. However, we may classify all of them roughly into two groups, those that hold the extreme views (called: Premillennialists), and those that hold the moderate views (Postmillennialists).

The Postmillennialists do not insist strongly on the material side of the millennial kingdom and the physical appearance of Christ, but they believe that there will be a time when the Christian religion will dominate the world and the Sermon on the Mount and the Ten Commandments will be the law observed by all the world. This in turn will bring about political peace and welfare among all nations. But after 1,000 years of such Christian peace there will be brief apostasy, a falling away from the Christian faith, followed by a dreadful conflict between Christians and evil forces. Finally Christ will come visibly to put an end to this conflict, to raise the dead, to judge all men, and to take the believers to heaven. The Postmillennialists, you see, accept only one visible reappearance of Christ, namely, at the end of the millennium.

The premillennial theory contains several facets and for that reason, the following quotations are introduced to bring the main points into focus. “It is held that the Old Testament prophets predicted the re-establishment of David’s kingdom and that Christ Himself intended to bring this about. It is alleged, however, that because the Jews refused his person and work He postponed the establishment of His kingdom until the time of His return. Meanwhile, it is argued, the Lord gathered together ‘the church’ as a kind of interim measure” (Baker’s Dictionary of Theology, page 352.) “For centuries the Jews have been scattered among many nations. In preparation for the return of Christ and the beginning of the millennium, they are being gathered back to their own land, according to prophecy, in national restoration. David’s throne will be re-established at Jerusalem, and through these restored people as a nucleus Christ will reign with his immortal saints over the whole world” (James Nichols, Christian Doctrine—A Presentation of Biblical Theology, page 279). “Generally, premillennialists believe that shortly before the second coming the world will be marked by extraordinary tribulation and evil and the appearance of the Anti-Christ. At his coming, Christ will destroy this Anti-Christ and the believers who are living will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (the rapture), while the dead believers will be raised from the dead. Then will follow a millennium of peace and order when Christ will reign in Jerusalem. The Jews will all be converted and go out to win the rest of the world for Christ. At the close of the 1,000 years Satan will be loosed and the forces of evil will once again be rampant. The wicked will then be raised, and the final judgment will take place in which Satan

and all evil ones will be consigned to hell.” (Van A. Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological Terms*, p.151.)

To summarize, the premillennial view asserts that Christ came to this earth for the purpose of setting up His kingdom, He was, however, surprisingly rejected by the Jews. Hence, He postponed the kingdom plans, and setup the church instead, as sort of an emergency measure. When He returns, He will raise up all believers (living and dead), restore national Israel, sit upon David’s literal throne in Jerusalem and then reign for a span of 1,000 years. During this time the Jews will all be converted, and there will be peace and prosperity over all the earth. At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan will again be loosed from his chains and go out to deceive the whole world, again turning them against Christ. Then Christ, who meanwhile had returned to heaven, will appear a second time for the final judgment. It is truly difficult to imagine how a view could contain more errors than is inherent in this doctrine. But such are the false hopes of the millennialists.

Now on what do the millennialists base these false hopes? There are those among the millennialists who take Old Testament passages such as Isaiah 11:7 (“The lion shall eat straw with the ox”), or Isaiah 65:25 (“The wolf and the lamb shall feed together”), or Isaiah 2:4 (“They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore”), in literal sense, believing that during the millennium there will be peace, not only among men, but also among animals, so that they will neither kill nor hurt one another. Or they point to Micah 4:1-8 as proof that Christ will reign again in Jerusalem and that under His reign there will be peace all over the world. Now while these passages do speak of peace under Christ’s kingdom, they are not intended to teach a worldly or political peace but rather that wonderful peace that Christ would establish between God and man through His life and sacrifice on the cross, and in turn, the peace that Christians would find in their fellowship with each other.

When Jesus, the Lamb of God, sacrificed Himself, He broke down the partition wall, not only between Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:14-17), but also between God and man. Yes, “He made peace through the blood of His cross” between God and man and established the everlasting “covenant of peace” (Col.1:20-24). God is no longer our enemy. Peace has been established “by righteousness”, the righteousness which Christ has merited for the whole world (Ps. 72:3; Is. 53:4-5). This “peace on earth” was proclaimed already by the angels at the birth of the Peacemaker. Of this peace the Lord says to His believers: “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you”; that is, My peace is not a worldly peace. Jesus also said: “These things have I spoken unto you that in Me ye might have peace; in the world ye shall have tribulation” (John 16:33). Through faith in the Gospel the believers enjoy a state of peace unsurpassed in this world. A peace such as the millennialists dream about Christ expressly forbids His followers to look for, when He says to them in Matthew 10: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.”

Time doesn’t permit us to discuss each Old Testament passage which the millennialists like to use to support their theory of an earthly and political peace under Christ, but let us just look at the passage in Isaiah 11. Here the Messiah is presented as “the Rod out of the stem of Jesse and a Branch out of his roots... With (His) righteousness shall He judge, the poor (the poor in spirit, the penitent) and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked.” Every

reader must admit that this is figurative language. Therefore certainly also the following: “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb...and the lion eat straw like the ox...They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord...And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek...And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria and from Egypt,” etc., vv. 6-11. Since we have here a description of Christ’s kingdom, which is not composed of beasts, wolves, serpents, lions, etc., but of men, we must understand that “in all My holy mountain”, that is, the Church of Christ (Zion), the peace that is to reign is of such a nature that those people who formerly were like ravenous wolves, bloodthirsty lions, and insidious adders will by the grace of God put off their old nature, cease to harm one another, and peacefully dwell together as the lambs of Christ and feed on the green pasture of the Gospel. St. Paul speaks of this change in II Cor. 5:16 when he says: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

The remaining part of this prophetic description in Isaiah 11 is a promise that the Lord will gather His sheep from the Gentiles and that also the remnant of Israel will, by the help of the Gentiles, be brought to His flock. In fact, St. Paul quotes this section in Romans 15:12 and shows that it applied for his day to the reception of the Gentile nations into the church. To suggest that it applies to some future millennialistic age is to totally disregard the inspired interpretation of this prophecy and at the same time to question the credibility of St. Paul!

The millennialists will also often turn to Amos 9:11-15 or various other passages in Jeremiah and Ezekiel to argue that in the millennial kingdom the temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt and national Judaism with its Levitical laws will again be restored. The December 1971 issue of *The Baptist Bible Tribune* reported in a front page article titled: “The Temple Will Be Rebuilt”: “The basic requirement of a valid Jewish state are Palestine (“the land”), Jerusalem as the capital, and the Temple (Cf. Amos 9:11-15). After 2,000 years of wandering over the face of the earth, the Jews have the land. At Tel Aviv, at 4 p.m. on May 14, 1948, after the British High Commissioner and the last of his staff had left Palestine, David Ben Gurion declared the establishment of a Jewish state to be known as the State of Israel. During the Six Day War, the Jewish captured Old Jerusalem. And so, after ages of dispersion, the Jews have the land and have the city. But they don’t have the Temple. They are going to have it. The Temple in the center of the city is as necessary to the validity and continuity of the Jewish state as the land and the city...”

The “tabernacle of David” in Amos 9, however, refers not to a rebuilt temple in “old Jerusalem” but rather to the New Testament Church. In Acts 15 a question was raised among the early disciples as to whether Gentiles were obligated to be circumcised, Peter, who had preached first to the Gentiles, denied this. James also agreed with him, and in connection, cited the words of Amos concerning the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David. He spoke of the rebuilding of David’s tabernacle as the enthronement of Christ and the establishment of his church! And a part of this design was that the Gentiles might have the privilege of seeking the Lord. It would thus follow, if the tabernacle of David is yet in the future, as millennialists contend, then all Gentiles are still lost! (Acts 15:16-17). Also the claim that Judaism will someday be restored, in view of the books of Galatians and Hebrews, is absolutely incredible! We should note that whenever the Old Testament speaks of the restoration of the temple it is merely referring to the establishment of the Christian Church. St. Paul reminded the Ephesian Christians of that when he told them: “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and

of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an *holy temple in the Lord.*" (Eph. 2:20-21).

The millennialists hold that Christ will return to earth to be seated upon the literal throne of David in Jerusalem. They base their false hope on Jeremiah 6:12 which says: "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: and he shall grow up out of his place; and he shall build the temple of Jehovah; even he shall build the temple of Jehovah; and he shall bear the glory, and he shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne..." That Christ will be heir to David's throne is true. Isaiah prophesied: "Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even forever." (Isaiah 9:7). The Kingship of Jesus upon this throne was announced already at His birth. The angel Gabriel informed Mary of her expected Son, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord shall give unto him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:32-33). The question is not whether Christ was to sit on the throne of David; the controversy is concerning the *nature* of that throne, that is, is it the physical throne? Or is it the spiritual throne of David?

That Christ's reign on the throne of David is not a worldly, political reign, but rather of a spiritual nature is evident from the following considerations. The last king to reign on the throne of David in the Old Testament era was Jehoiachin (also known as Coniah). In Jeremiah 22:24-30 it was prophesied that he and his seed (Judah) would be delivered into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar and cast into a foreign land (Babylon). Specifically concerning Coniah it was said: "Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no more shall a man of his seed prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling in Judah." The issue is clear—no descendant of Coniah would ever again prosper, ruling from the literal throne of David. Now the fact is, Christ was of the "seed" of Jehoiachin, both from the legal standpoint through Joseph and from a physical consideration through Mary. It thus follows that Christ could never reign on David's earthly throne and prosper!

King David was informed by the prophet Nathan: "When the days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, that shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his Kingdom...and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever:" (II Sam. 7:12-13) That this is a prediction of the reign of Christ upon David's throne is beyond question. In view of this promise David was told: "Thy throne shall be established forever." (II Sam. 7:16). It is extremely significant to note in this connection that Christ is to be seated on David's throne while this illustrious Old Testament king is still asleep with the fathers (i.e. in the grave)! In glaring contrast to this is the millennial notion which contends that Christ will sit upon David's throne after the resurrection of all the righteous (including David)! In harmony with this passage is Peter's declaration on that first Pentecost: "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised with an oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ" (Acts 2:29ff—NIV). Here very clearly Peter shows that Christ's reign on David's throne is not some future millennialistic earthly rule, but that it is spiritual in nature—consisting of His triumph over sin, Satan and death in His resurrection and glorious reign now at the right hand of God in heaven (Heb. 1:3, Rev. 3:21). The underlying fallacy of the millennialistic view is its materialistic approach to the reign of Christ. The Lord's kingdom is not a worldly, political economy, as was

David's, for Jesus Himself plainly said: "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation (external show) (Luke 17:20 ff) "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Remarkably the millennialists contend that it will come with observation and will be of this world.

The doctrine of millennialism dogmatically asserts that God unconditionally promised Canaan's land to the descendants of Abraham. Further, it is contended that the promise has never been completely granted, hence, the claim is made that the Jews will eventually be restored to Palestine in order that this promise to Abraham might be fulfilled. Indeed, many are declaring without hesitation that, with the establishment of Israel in 1948, the Jewish restoration has begun, and the millennial kingdom should be around the corner. But again, the antiscritural errors involved in this are plenteous and pathetic.

Concerning Canaan, God promised Abraham, "Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. 12:7). The land covenant with the patriarch involved all that land "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Gen. 15:18), and it was pledged to his seed "forever" (Gen. 13:15). Two questions are of great concern here: (1) Was the promise ever totally fulfilled? (2) Was the promise in any sense conditional? An understanding of these questions devastates the millennial theory.

First of all, when the Law of Moses was given, provision was made for the establishment of cities of refuge where the manslayer who had killed without premeditation might flee for the preservation of his life. Initially, three cities were to be set aside for this purpose. Moses declared, however, that "if Jehovah thy God enlarge thy border, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, and give thee *all the land which he promised to give unto thy fathers...* then shalt thou add three cities more..." (Deut. 19:7-9). Thus six cities of refuge would be evidence of the fulfillment of the land promised to Abraham's seed. A reading of Joshua 20:7-8 reveals that six cities were assigned as havens of refuge—*six cities*—thus, "all the land" had been given; the land covenant had been fulfilled! This is further demonstrated by Joshua 21:43; "So the Lord gave unto Israel *all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers*; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. Additionally, it is specifically stated in Solomon's time: "And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt..." (I Kings 4:21). Thus the promise made to Abraham was fulfilled by the Lord.

Millennialists contend, however, that Palestine was promised to Israel "forever" (Gen. 13:15). This fails to recognize that the term "forever" is not always used in the Bible in a completely unlimited sense. For example, circumcision was an everlasting covenant" (Gen. 17:13); the Passover was an ordinance "forever" (Ex. 12:15), and the Levitical system had an "everlasting priesthood" (Num. 25:13). These Old Testament institutions, however, passed away with the end of the Levitical Law, thus demonstrating that "forever" sometimes has a temporary significance.

The truth of the matter is, the Old Testament clearly indicates that Israel's possession of Palestine was conditioned upon their faithfulness to God—a condition which they repeatedly violated, and thus it was foretold: "When ye transgress the covenant of Jehovah your God, which He commanded you, and go and serve other gods, and bow down yourselves to them; then will the anger of Jehovah be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which He hath given unto you." (Joshua 23:16). And God never promised that one day Israel would again be reunited as a nation and rule in Palestine. In fact Moses prophesied: "The Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth even to another...and among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the soul of thy feet any rest, but the Lord shalt give thee there trembling of heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind." (Deut. 2:65-67). This is

the sad plight of the Jewish people in this hour in which we live. That time eventually came and the Jews lost their “deed” to the Promised Land! Thus the land of Palestine was to be only a temporal earthly home for God’s people. The heavenly Canaan and the new Jerusalem are now the land promised to Abraham’s spiritual descendants. What a tragedy that some have confused this magnificent blessing with a small piece of real estate and geography over in the Middle East!

The millennialists further believe that eventually “all Jews will be saved. They base their belief on the words of Paul in Romans 11:25-27: “I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in and so all Israel shall be saved.” The millennialist believe that the Jews will return to the Holy Land—either before or after their conversion to the Christian faith, where they will establish themselves as a Christian nation and become the worship center of nations with their rebuilt temple. Many today see the beginning of the fulfillment of “this prophecy” in the establishment of the state of Israel in Palestine today. A general conversion of the Jews, they say, is imminent because of the apostle’s words: “And so all Israel shall be saved.” But before we can point to these words of the apostle and say that “all Israel” means “all Jews who ever lived”, or “all Jews living at the end of time”, we must show proof that this is what the apostle meant to say.

What did the apostle mean to say? Did he have in mind “all Jews” when he wrote “all Israel”? If that were the case then every Jew that ever lived from Abraham on to the last day, including Caiaphas, Judas Iscariot, and all the ungodly kings and idolatrous people of the old Testament time as well as all the hardened and unbelieving Jews of the New Testament time that have ever lived and died, would have to be raised from the dead—come to life again in this world, hear the Gospel and believe in Christ as the Savior from sin! On the other hand, if it be said that “all Israel” means only “all Jews” who will be living on earth at the end of time, then we must answer that all Jews living at any given time in history can never be “all Israel”, but only a fraction of the total number of the Jewish people.

To understand whom the apostle had in mind when he wrote “all Israel”, it is not enough to merely look at the bare words themselves, we must look at the context in which these words were spoken. We must go back and study what the apostle is talking about; we must understand his whole line of thought from the preceding chapter in which these words “all Israel” occur. If we read these chapters carefully, we will find that the apostle is arguing against a total hardening and rejection of the whole Jewish nation. He tells the Gentile Christians in Rome, who were in danger of self exaltation in looking upon the Jews as being rejected by God, that the Jews were not altogether hardened and rejected by God, but only in part. There was and there always would be a remnant from among the Jews that would be saved. The apostle states plainly that “blindness *in part* happened to Israel until (uptil) the fulness of the Gentiles be come in,”—“and so (not “and then”, but “in this way”—many make the mistake of making this an adverb of time instead of an adverb of manner) all Israel shall be saved.” The thought of the apostle is plainly this: during all the time of the New Testament when Gentiles will come into the kingdom of God, Jews will also be converted and come into the kingdom of God—they are not entirely excluded from grace, but only in part. This, knowledge, that during the time of the Gentiles, Jews, a remnant, from the people who rejected and reject Christ—will also come to faith in Christ and be saved, the apostle calls a mystery or secret, because it was something that no one could know except by divine revelation. This is what the apostle means to say, no more and no less.

“And *so* (in this manner, this way) all Israel shall be saved.” Who is “all Israel”? Not “all Jews”, for the apostle had stated in Romans 2:28-29: “He is not a Jew which is one outwardly;...but he is a Jew which is one inwardly.” He also said in chapter 9: “They are not all Israel that are of Israel.” In the light of these clear words we are compelled to take the phrase “all Israel” to mean only those who are the genuine children of Abraham by faith in Christ Jesus. (Cf. Gal. 3:29, John 8:39). Moreover, in the seventh verse of this same chapter (11) Paul says categorically: “What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others became hardened...”(NIV). How in the face of these words can the apostle mean that all Jews will be saved when he writes “all Israel” shall be saved? The “all Israel” Paul had in mind is all the Jews to the end of time who are not blinded and hardened. Just as the “fulness of the Gentiles” does not mean “all the Gentiles” who ever lived or will live, but the total number of those from among the heathen nations to the end of time who will be called and believe in Jesus as Savior, so “all Israel” refers to all the elect among the Jews. What the apostle teaches and wishes to impress upon all Gentile Christians is this: God has neither totally rejected the Jews, nor has He promised to convert and save the Jews enmasse, but God has promised that as long as heathen will be converted and saved, so long Jews shall be converted and saved, that is, to the end of time. This is what the apostle says and means to say. Thus the question: Will there be a general conversion of the Jews at the end of time? must be answered with an emphatic *no!*

Millennialists urge that there will be two resurrections from the dead. The first will occur at the time of Christ’s coming and will consist of the righteous only. Many millennialist also connect this first resurrection with “the rapture”, when the Christians still living at the time of Christ’s return will also be carried off to heaven. Following this, it is contended, will be the thousand year reign of Christ on earth. Terminating this will be the second resurrection (of the wicked) and the judgment. They based this teaching primarily on Revelation 20:1-6 (to be discussed later) and I Thessalonians 4:12-18 where St. Paul says, “The dead in Christ shall rise first.” A study of the context of these words, however, reveals that Paul is not teaching two resurrections but that he is merely comforting the believers with the assurance that on Judgment Day their loved ones who died trusting in Jesus will also be resurrected. And this resurrection will precede the ascent of the living believers when they meet the Lord in the air. The Apostle Paul spoke of this same event in I Cor. 15:51-52: “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” No millennialist can deny that St. Paul is here speaking of those things that will happen on the Last Day, “at the *last* trump.”

Another favorite text of some millennialists is Matt. 24:40-41 which says: “Then shall two be in the field, the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left.” But the context clearly shows that Christ is here speaking of His second coming at the end of the world (verses 3,27,36). These verses simply teach that the guilty cannot escape, even if they are associated outwardly with believers. One will be saved as a believer in Christ, the other will be rejected because of his unbelief. Moreover, there are many clear passages in Scripture that plainly speak of only *one* resurrection of the believing and unbelieving at the *same* time on Judgment Day. Our Savior Himself, who will be, the Judge of the living and the dead, said in John 5:28: “For the hour is coming in the which *all* that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” Note the words “*all* that are in the graves...” Note the two all inclusive classes: “They that have done

good...they that have done evil.” In His defense before governor Felix, Paul said: “And I have hope toward God...that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15). “A resurrection,” not two resurrections! Likewise in John 6:40, Jesus says: “And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth in Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the *last day*.” In other words every *believer* will be raised up at the *last day* and not 1,000 years *before* the Last Day as the millennialists who believe in “the rapture” claim. That is why Christians the world over confess in the Apostles’ Creed: “I believe in the resurrection of the body,” and *not*: “I believe in the resurrection of the believer’s body followed by the resurrection of the unbeliever’s body a thousand years later.”

Rapturists believe that all living believers will be taken from this earth to heaven by Jesus before Judgment Day so that they will be able to escape a period of great suffering and affliction called the Great Tribulation. But here, too, their interpretations vary greatly. Some say that the rapture has *already* begun. Douglas J. Clark, speaker for “Amazing Prophecy”, claims that “heads of state, leaders, people from all walks of life *are* leaving. Headlines will blatantly blare the shocking news—‘Millions Missing!’”. Some Rapturists even warn that it is dangerous to fly in a plane if the pilot is a Christian, for he may be raptured away and leave the plane to fly pilotless with the resulting blood bath when it crashes. Several years ago a 2,000 member Assembly of God congregation in North Hollywood, California, believing the rapture of the saints to be soon, changed the church’s bylaws to provide continued leadership if its officers are suddenly taken to heaven. Mr. Sanders, the pastor said, “The chairman was empowered to call for a new church council to oversee operations of the \$1.5 million property.” Oh, what confusion results and what time is wasted when men follow doctrines that have been spun out of thin air! Going along with this false Rapture theory for a moment, that North Hollywood Assembly of God congregation, after the rapture, would be composed only of unconverted members and so would be run only by unbelievers who could only do the will of Satan!

But millennialists will say: “What about Revelation 20:1-6? Doesn’t this speak of two resurrections and of the reign of Christ here on earth for 1,000 years?” There can be no doubt that this chapter of the last book of the Bible is the very heart and soul of the theory of millennialism. It is what George Murray calls “the very citadel and bulwark of premillennial eschatology.” (Millennial Studies—page 175). So let us look briefly at this 20th chapter of Revelation to see if it does indeed support the millennialistic fantasy.

Preliminary to this discussion, however, a few observations must be made concerning the purpose and form of the Book of Revelation. The church of the apostolic age was being severely persecuted, indeed, in the following years, it was subjected to a veritable blood-bath. The design of Revelation is thus to show: (1) The relatively young church would be subject to much persecution and suffering; (2) The saints must persevere and by faith overcome these trials; and (3) Christ and His believers would ultimately triumph over all enemies.

That the Book of Revelation, is highly symbolic is evidenced not only by its content, but also by its introduction in chapter one. Christ “signified” the message by His angel unto John (1:1). The question naturally arises as to why the Lord chose symbols to be the vehicles of His truth. Symbolism frequently serves a two-fold purpose, to reveal and to conceal. Occasionally, the Lord’s parables functioned in this capacity, that is, they portrayed certain truths to the disciples, while withholding the same from those who were spiritually dull. (Cf. Matt. 13:1-15). The message of victory within the Book of Revelation, much of which was in the imagery that adorned the Old Testament, would be grasped by the believers. At the same time, the defeat of the persecuting powers was veiled to those not knowing their meaning. One can well imagine,

for example, how trials for the Christians might have been intensified had they been discovered circulating a document which literally predicted the overthrow of their persecutors. And so, in the Book of Revelation symbolism was used to outline the course of history without employing historical and literal names. It is thus a gross error to literalize this Book, and this is precisely what the millennialists have done with the first six verses of chapter 20.

Now an examination of these six verses shows the following symbols: a key, a chain, a dragon or serpent, an abyss, a thousand years, thrones, a beast, marks on the foreheads and hands, and a resurrection. It is certainly a strange interpretation which contends that a figurative serpent was bound with a figurative chain and thrown into a figurative abyss which was locked with a figurative key, to be confined for a *literal* thousand years! It ought to be clear that no literal reign of Christ upon the earth is here alluded to. Even if one does not understand the specific design of the symbols, he can see the *symbolic* import of the thousand years. We understand the 1,000 years to represent the New Testament era during which time Satan is bound, that is, deprived of his power, so that he cannot “deceive the nations” by hindering or stopping the victorious course of the Gospel. Thus the “Gospel of the Kingdom” according to the will and command of Christ can and “shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” (Matt. 24:14) Satan therefore will not be bound in some future time, but *has been bound already*. Jesus, the Son of God, was sent to this earth “to destroy the works of the devil.” (I John 3:8) This was fully accomplished when by the vicarious death of Christ for our sins the power of the devil was taken from him (Heb. 2:14-15), and the “prince of this world was judged and cast out.” (John 12:31; 16:11)

But perhaps this context is even more devastating to the millennial theory for what it does not say, but which, if the theory were true, it surely would have mentioned. Nothing is said of: (1) the establishment of an earthly kingdom by Christ; (2) a bodily reigning; (3) the throne of David; or (4) the Jews being regathered to Palestine. Now all of these elements, as we have seen, are vitally important to the millennial view, yet they are conspicuously absent from this chapter!

It is true, Revelation chapter 20 does speak of two resurrections as well as a thousand year reign of Christ. But it does not speak of this in the sense that the millennialists believe. The Bible definitely speaks of two resurrections. One is the resurrection of the soul from spiritual death; the other is the resurrection of the body on the Last Day. Every believer has already experienced the first resurrection. It is commonly called conversion. By nature all people are spiritually dead. “But God, who is rich in mercy...even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened (make alive) us together with Christ, and *hath raised us up*.” (Eph. 2:4-6). This is the first resurrection—a spiritual resurrection from spiritual death (unbelief) to spiritual life. Death is separation from life, and the spiritually dead are separated from Christ who *is* the life.

Moreover, in Revelation 20:4 we are told that the *souls* of the dead martyrs “lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” Here God is definitely speaking about the *souls* of the dead martyrs, not their bodies. As soon as a believer dies, his soul at once goes to heaven and is with Jesus, while his body is buried. And so Revelation 20:4 does *not* teach that the departed souls will live and reign with Christ a thousand years *here on earth*. The Kingdom of Christ, as we heard before, is not a kingdom of this world. In unmistakable language Christ told Pilate: “My Kingdom is not of this world,” It was so then. It is so today. To say that bodiless souls will reign with Christ *here on earth* is reading something into Scripture that is not there and which contradicts what Jesus told Pilate. All that this passage says is that the souls of the believers (of those who have been made alive from spiritual death and thus are united with Christ “live and reign with Christ” already during the thousand years, this is, in the New Testament era between

the time of Christ's first Advent and the end of the world. And they reign with Christ in heaven, not on earth. They had part in the first resurrection when they became believers in Christ as their Savior and on them the "second death"(that is, eternal separation from God) has no power (v. 6). The "second death" is described as hell in verses 14-15.

Next we are told in Revelation 20:5: "But the rest of the dead lived not again (the word "again" is not in original text) until the thousand year were finished. This is the first resurrection." These words: "This is the first resurrection," definitely refer to what John had just said in verse 4 of the souls of the martyrs living and reigning with Christ in eternal glory. They had experienced the first resurrection when they were raised from spiritual death to spiritual life. But those who did not die in faith did not live and reign with Christ in heavenly glory, for they had no part in the first spiritual resurrection, but through temporal death passed on to eternal damnation.

So we see Revelation teaches two resurrections: a spiritual resurrection from spiritual death and unbelief (verses 4-5) and a bodily resurrection (verses 11-15) where it is stated that "the dead small and great," that is all the dead, were standing before the great white throne to be judged. This would include believers as well as unbelievers. These verses leave no room for a double, visible coming of Christ or for an interval of a thousand years between the resurrection of the believers and that of the wicked. Yes, read Revelation 20 as it is, without importing ideas that are not in the text, but permitting your understanding to be guided by the rest of Scripture and what Jesus said plainly while He was on earth and we can safely say that the millennium which the millennialists are still looking for is *now*!

II

Now that we have looked briefly at the false hopes of millennialism, let us also see why these false hopes are such a formidable threat to the Christian faith. The implications of millennialism are grave indeed. This heresy strikes treacherously at numerous facets of Biblical truth. In reality it is a subtle form of infidelity which must be vigorously opposed.

First of all, millennialism is a formidable threat because it does not follow Scriptural principles of interpretation. While volumes have been written on the principles by which we understand the Bible, we may state that the chief rules are: (1) Scripture is the Word of God and is understood in its own light. A person must prove the correctness of his teaching solely by and from the Scripture. (2) The central thought of Scripture is to present Jesus Christ as Savior of the world. (3) All doctrines must be based on clear passages. The meaning of obscure or figurative or symbolic passages must be understood in the light of clear passages treating the same subject. Scripture is its own best interpreter. So if there are a number of clear texts on a subject and one or more dark texts; explain the dark texts by the clear texts. (4) No explanation of Scripture is permissible which is contrary to the analogy of harmony of faith, which is the sum total of all the clear passages of Scripture which set forth a doctrine. (5) No Bible passage must be lifted out of context. The verses and sometimes entire chapters that come before and after the text must be carefully considered. Beware of people who: quote only parts of the Bible and ignore the rest. The Tempter in the wilderness was adept at this method. There are also people today, including millennialists, who concoct their own fantasies, and then go through the Bible to find proof for them. This is dishonest and unscriptural. (6) Each passage of Scripture has only one Spirit intended meaning. (7) God is truth. He cannot contradict Himself. He will not say one thing in one place and the exact opposite in another. Thus for example, if Jesus said, "My kingdom is not .of this world", how can He reign for 1,000 years on this earth? (8) We must take the words of

the Bible literally, that is, in their clear, plain meaning unless we are forced by Scripture itself to understand the passage figuratively.

Now it should be evident that millennialists do not follow the above principles of interpretation. They often take certain portions of Scripture that are figurative, particularly the Book of Revelation, explain them literally, and end up with interpretations that contradict other clear passages of Scripture. Millennialists, posing as specialists, in Bible prophecy, have distinguished themselves by their extreme literalism in the interpretation of Scripture. Identifying certain events of yesterday with certain figurative prophecies in the Old Testament or visions in the Book of Revelation, millennialists make their calculations and predictions and foretell the events of tomorrow. But, of course, when tomorrow comes, they will find their prophecies exploded, themselves the laughing stock of the world, and much worse, the Bible exposed to the mockery of scoffers.

Moreover, such an interpretation of Scripture can only lead men to look upon the Bible as an obscure book. It makes the Bible into something that it was not meant to be—namely, a kind of code book which, if understood properly, will yield a host of information about the future. This tends to put the Bible into the same category with horoscopes. Once one cracks the code and understands what all the prophecies are about, he can make all kinds of marvelous predictions, like Hal Lindsey does in his book. But of course, the earnest believer needs a book like Lindsey's if he is to know what is going on! You cannot tell the events of the future without some kind of code book to unlock the secrets of the Bible. Such toying with the Bible panders to vulgar curiosity and blinds men to the central theme of the Scriptures, namely, God's great redemptive work through Jesus Christ, our Savior. And those who handle the Bible in this way will miss the great blessings that God wants to give them through His Word. St. Peter, in speaking about the second coming of Christ, warns us that "unlearned and unstable" men would "wrest" the Scriptures "unto their own destruction" (II Pet. 3:10,16). To "wrest" means to pervert, twist, misapply—exactly what is being done today by millennialists to their own destruction.

Secondly, millennialism is a threat to the faith once delivered to the saints because its teachings clearly distort and contradict many clear and plain doctrines of the Bible. Some of the teachings involved are the following: (1) Millennialism conflicts with what Scripture says about "the end" and about Christ's one and only return on Judgment Day. Luke 2:11; Acts 10:42, Matt. 25:31, Matt. 24:6-14, Mark 13:7-13. (2) Millennialism conflicts with what Scripture says about the nearness and uncertainty of Judgment Day by inserting a 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth before it. I Peter 4:7, Matt. 24:32, Luke 21:35, I Thess. 5:2. (3) Millennialism perverts the Bible's teaching of the nature of Christ's kingdom on earth, making it an earthly kingdom instead of a spiritual kingdom. John 18:36, Rom. 14:7. (4) Millennialism does not see the members of Christ's kingdom on earth as being always cross bearers, but as people who will eventually enjoy prosperity, peace, glory and good fortune on earth. John 16:33, Matt. 16:24, Acts 14:22, Mark 10:34-36. (5) Millennialism contradicts Scripture's teaching on the conversion of a remnant of Israel by insisting rather on a restoration of Israel and a conversion of all the Jews. (6) Millennialism perverts the Bible's teaching on the resurrection of believers and unbelievers on Judgment Day by insisting on two resurrections. John 5:25-29, Dan. 12:2. (7) Millennialism also perverts the doctrine of the Anti-christ, not seeing this prophecy already fulfilled in the Roman papacy, but in some future world dictator. II Thess. 2:1-12.

Thirdly, millennialism is a threat to the Christian faith because it is more world centered than Christ centered. Christ wants us to look to Him for peace and rest and not to some perfect

1,000 year kingdom of peace and rest here on earth. Thus that peace that Jesus gives us through the forgiveness of sins, the peace that He obtained for us on Calvary's cross, the peace of which He speaks when He says, "My peace I give unto you", (John 14:27), that peace is not fully appreciated by the millennialist who is still looking for some future earthly peace. St. Paul says, "Set your affections on the things above, and not on the things of this earth." (Col. 3:2). But millennialists do not follow this injunction. Since millennialism is crassly materialistic in character, it must be utterly rejected by us!

Fourthly, millennialism is a threat because it centers its teachings not on what God *has done* for us in Christ in the past, but mainly on what *he will do* for us in the future. It speaks of a future kingdom of Christ, future life with Christ, future glory with Christ, future reign with Christ, and a future victory over sin and Satan. However, Christ's kingdom is here and now. St. Paul says in Col. 1:12-13 (NIV), "Give thanks to the Father, who has qualified you, to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For He *has (now!* not in some future date) rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves." John the Baptist, Jesus, and the 12 disciples, all preached that the kingdom was "at hand", literally meaning, "is come near." (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7). Christ also exclaimed, "Verily I say unto you, There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power." (Mark 9:1). Either the kingdom came within the lifetime of those to whom Jesus referred, or they are getting very old! Make no mistake about it, the kingdom of God has come. We reign with Christ now! Satan has already been defeated. He is a vanquished foe. (John 12:31-32). We share in Christ's victory over sin and Satan *now*, "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work," says St. John in I John 3:8. Even the last enemy, the king of terrors, death itself, *has been* abolished by Jesus (II Tim. 1:10). Thus Jesus can say: "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die!" John 11:26. The New Testament everywhere presents the Gospel as the good news of what God *has done* for us already through the life, suffering, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. All the glorious promises of the Old Testament—the promise of victory over death and evil, judgment and deliverance and the coming of the kingdom of God—all were fulfilled in the first coming of Christ (II Cor. 1:20, Acts 13:32-33). To confess anything less is to confess that Jesus is not God's Messiah! If there is anything better than this Gospel which will more effectively kill the love of the world in our hearts, we would like to know what it is. As Luther said, if we would only believe this Gospel and constantly affirm it in our hearts, we would utterly despise all the pomp and vainglory that this world has to offer. If only the millennialists would also see that!

Fifthly, millennialism poses a threat to Biblical truth because it refuses to see the Old Testament prophecies of Christ as being fulfilled already, and looks rather still for some future fulfillment. This clearly contradicts what St. Paul says in II Cor. 1:20: "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "yes" in Christ." (NIV) Whereas the Old Testament proclaims, "Behold, the days come...", the New Testament electrifies us with the announcement: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." "The time is fulfilled..." "...the hour is coming, and now is..." Unless we utterly deny what the New Testament Gospel is all about, we must see that its message is that God *has at last acted*, gloriously acted, in fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets looked forward to in hope. Old Testament expectation have become present tense. The long-looked for, hoped-for kingdom of God has arrived in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. The hope of Israel has become present fact in Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament with all its hopes and promises finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. This is the united testimony of all the New Testament witnesses. According to all He had

promised, the New Testament records that He has indeed “visited and redeemed His people.” Luke 1:68. What God promised to the Hebrew father He has fulfilled in raising Jesus from the dead (Acts 13:32-33). That was Paul’s startling message to the Jews after they had read the prophets again in their synagogue on the Sabbath day. He told them that these things are no longer future tense, for God has acted to do all He said He would do in Jesus Christ. If one says, “Wait a minute, there are a lot of promises in the Old Testament that have not come to pass yet,” then he does not see how gloriously God has fulfilled all, accomplished all, indeed given to Israel absolutely all things in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:32).

Thus the great hermeneutical question is not whether we are going to interpret the Old Testament promises and prophecies literally or spiritually. The real issue is whether we are going to follow the lead of all the apostles and interpret the Old Testament Christologically! We cannot arrive at the truth about eschatology by taking the Old Testament utterances and then jumping clear over the New Testament proclamation of the entire fulfillment of the Old Testament in Jesus Christ. Thus the millennialist must stop gazing at Palestine or Russia to understand eschatology and fix their eyes rather on Jesus!

Finally, the millennialist teaching poses a threat to the Christian faith by causing men to become indifferent to Christ’s second coming and the final judgment and giving them a false security. For if Christ is going to reign first 14,000 years here on earth before his final judgment, why be so concerned about being prepared for that judgment now. There will still be sufficient time yet for conversion to God later on—even during His thousand year reign. But how does this agree with the words of Christ who said, “Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh”? (Matt. 24:44). And how many do you think will be unprepared for Christ’s coming because of this teaching of the millennialists?

The Bible is a wonderful Book used by the Holy Spirit to create faith in the heart of sinful man. It is God’s Book of comfort and consolation, bringing forgiveness and peace to all who accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. But the Bible can also be misused to teach the most outlandish, preposterous, and weird theories that the mind of man can invent when he rises roughshod over clear passages of Scripture. God’s Book is one harmonious whole. Like God it is perfect, if we will allow the Holy Bible to speak for itself and not force *our* thoughts and theories into the Bible, we will experience the unfathomable depth of the riches of the glory of God and be blessed both now and throughout eternity. Above all, our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the cross to save us, will be mightily strengthened, and we will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to live our life to God’s honor and glory, because our faith will be Christ-centered and heaven-centered rather than millennial-centered and earthbound. To this end may God bless this paper for Jesus’ sake.