

IS THE MILLENNIUM NEXT--OR NEVER?

By H. C. Heffren

Do you know whether the Millennium is the next event in Divine history or do you think there will never be a millennium? This is an important question. Some people confidently assure us that a glorious earthly millennium is about to break upon this troubled world, while others are equally confident that the Bible teaches no such thing. Only one faction can be right because the views are based on entirely different interpretations of the Bible. Therefore, one must be an error. Only one can be truth. Are you positive you know which is right?

Some people say it doesn't matter which way you believe because this doctrine does not affect your salvation anyway. This is only partly true. The Jehovah's Witnesses and many Dispensationalists do teach a form of salvation AFTER the coming of the Lord and the so-called rapture of the believers. A theological controversy rages among professed Christians concerning which is the right interpretation of the Kingdom of God. Dispensationalists confidently assure us that the millennium is next. Amilennialists affirm with equal conviction that there will never be a millennium. You must decide which is right. Our task will be made easier if we know exactly what the basic issue is. This we shall proceed to reveal.

The Question Stated

To begin with, there are two questions that must be asked and answered. The first is, "Where and when did Dispensationalism originate? The second is, "How will it end?" The first question directs us to the foundation on which the doctrine rests. The second causes us to ask what conditions entitle one to participate in its blessings, and what ultimately

happens to the millennium itself. It should not be difficult to find a satisfactory answer to these valid questions.

Dispensationalism originated in England about the year 1840. Several prominent names such as Irving, Maitland and J. N. Darby were among the first ones to preach and publish articles and books on the subject. In America it engaged such outstanding men as Dr. C. I. Scofield, James M. Gray and Harry Ironside, all of whom were connected with Moody Bible Institute and who contributed tremendous influence to its propagation. A natural question at this point is, "Where did J. N. Darby and his group discover the doctrine?" Dispensationalists would have us believe that it came as a result of discovering new light on the Bible itself, but the facts lead us elsewhere.

The real source of the doctrine came from a book that was written much earlier by two Jesuit Priests by the names of Ribera and Alcazer. These men were commissioned by the Pope to publish a teaching that would counter-act the prevalent Protestant belief that proclaimed the Pope as the Antichrist. Eventually this book fell into the hands of Irving and from its interpretation of the Bible Dispensationalism was born.

The Antichrist of the Reformation

History makes it very clear that the very heart of the Reformation preaching attacked papal claims of supremacy and as a result of this onslaught they rocked Catholicism to its very foundation. Luther, Zwingli and Calvin, as well as countless other Reformation preachers opened up the Word of God and fearlessly proclaimed that the Pope was the Antichrist of prophecy, the Beast that overcame the saints mentioned in Revelation. As a result the strangle hold of Papal authority was gradually weakened and Papal power began to topple and crumble as multitudes embraced this liberating truth.

It is interesting to note the meaning of Antichrist in Webster's Unabridged Dictionary. It is described as: "pretender to

Christhood; a false Christ." Webster also mentions the fact of history that Wycliffe and Luther identified the Pope as the Antichrist and that the real meaning of Antichrist is, "an OTHER Christ." In view of the fact that the Pope assumes the title of "Vicar of the Son of God," it gives further evidence that the Antichrist is a false Christ. Webster's meaning of Vicar is: "A substitute, a proxy or representative." He adds this illuminating information that "The Pope is the Man of Sin heralded by the Reformation preachers." The Antichrist not only means a false Christ, and an OTHER Christ, but also as one "Who takes the place of Christ as Head of the church."

It is easy to see the task that confronted Ribera and Alcazar. However, they cunningly conceived a plot to rival the interpretation by the Protestants. They sought to prove that Luther was wrong about the Antichrist being the Pope. To accomplish this they speculated on a future Antichrist who would oppose Christ with all the infernal powers under his control. Dispensationalism adopted the Futurist theory with its future Antichrist and future millennium. It should be pointed out that there is nothing in Dispensationalism that in any way identifies Catholicism with its place in prophecy. History labels their long tyranny over man as the Dark Ages. The Bible says "They made war on the saints." The Reformation was born with the proclamation of the Papal Antichrist. Dispensationalists have relegated all the Scriptures relating to the Antichrist to a mysterious creature of horror in some unknown future. When a substantial segment of the Protestant faith accepted this interpretation, the Jesuits accomplished their purpose far beyond their fondest hopes.

Dispensationalists maintain that God divided His government of the world into seven dispensations, each of approximately 1000 years duration. Five, they say, are already past. We are now in the sixth, namely the age of grace. According to their theory the millennium is next. However, there is no place in the Bible, or even in the Scofield notes, that Scripturally indicates seven dispensations. Try to find them! Jesus Christ made no reference to seven dispensations. The Bible says there are two,

namely the Old Testament and the New Testament. Where then did the teaching of seven dispensations originate? The first proponents of this novel interpretation came from these two Jesuit priests. Their purpose was to blunt the attack of the Reformers on the Papacy and direct it to some future mysterious Antichrist. In this subtle manner Satan accomplished his objective by infiltrating the ranks of Protestantism with the doctrine that offers a glorious earthly millennium filled with carnal delights and the possibility of getting saved under more favorable conditions, leaving a purgatory as an escape from hell for the Catholics.

The Acid Test of Truth

Any doctrine based on an erroneous foundation cannot support its ultimate conclusions. The farther error is pursued, the more difficult it is to maintain. This is one reason for the multiplicity of different interpretations among Dispensationalists themselves. It also accounts for the necessity of introducing plural resurrections and judgments, and many other complications such as restoring the ancient animal sacrifices during the millennial age as well as the racial barrier between Jew and Gentile. Even a causal Bible reader will be well aware of these distinctions having been removed by the Cross. Truth is simple and profound. Error is complicated and mysterious. As we deal with the second question this will become more apparent.

Who Will Inhabit the Millennium?

Some years ago I posed the question, "Who will inherit the millennium?" to the editor of Our Hope Magazine. The answer given will be found on page 557 of the March 1957 issue and reads as follows: "The question doubtless concerns the people who will inhabit the earth during the millennial reign of Christ. The Scriptures clearly teach, we believe, that when the Lord returns in glory to this earth, THEN Israel as a nation WILL BE

SAVED. (Caps mine). Rom. 11:25-27. Preceding this, as the result of the preaching of the Jewish remnant saved at the beginning of the tribulation period, a great number of Gentiles will have been saved and will manifest that salvation by befriending the Jewish remnant, our Lord's brethren according to the flesh. Matt. 25:31-46. This same passage shows that when the Lord returns, He will judge the nations then living upon the earth, and only the saved from among them will enter the kingdom, though, of course, children will be born to the inhabitants of the earth throughout Christ's thousand year reign. These, in order to be saved must be "born again," just as is the case in the present age. Now all of those born into the world during the millennium will receive the Lord Jesus, though fear of swift judgment will keep them from openly manifesting their hatred of the King. At the end of the thousand year reign of Christ, when Satan is loosed for a litter season, he will find a great multitude ready to follow him." (End of quote).

It is difficult to understand how this learned writer could impose so many errors in such a small compass of words. First, he misquotes Rom. 11:26, by saying that it teaches at the Lord's return, THEN, all Israel will be saved. The passage reads, "SO" shall all Israel be saved. "Then" is an adverb of time, but "SO" is an adverb of manner. Rom. 11:26 does not offer fleshly Israel a future salvation. "Then," by the ushering in of a glorious earthly millennium, but clearly says she will be saved "SO," as the context amplifies by being grafted into the true olive tree, which is Christ. On this basis of saving faith "So all Israel will be saved." While this writer has asserted that only saved Jews and Gentiles will enter the millennial kingdom, it should be observed that both classes get saved AFTER Christ's return to earth.

The above statements are too vital to go unchallenged. You must remember that the church is raptured to be with Christ-- "Forever with the Lord," prior to the millennial age. Only unbelieving Jews and unbelieving Gentiles are left. Now, if the righteous dead are resurrected in their glorified bodies, and if, the living are changed in the twinkling of an eye to their glorified bodies to be forever with the Lord, then the only way

anyone can inhabit the millennium is to be an unbeliever when the Lord comes. This is crystal clear. The editor just quoted, is a leading exponent of Dispensationalism and he asserts that the unbelieving Jews are Christ's brethren according to the flesh. The Bible says the "Flesh profiteth nothing." "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." "Wherefore henceforth (from now until all future time) know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now HENCEFORTH, know we Him no more." 2 Cor. 5:16. An abundance of texts will confirm this relationship and the severing of fleshly ties in Christ. Common human decency will cause a person to manifest friendship to Jewish people and does not indicate the fruit of salvation. A further statement from the quotation claims that the children born during the millennium will not all get saved--in fact the unbelievers are described as a great multitude ready to follow Satan when He is loosed. This is an understatement for the Bible says the number is as the sands of the sea. Rev. 20:8. A millennium filled with unbelievers to this degree could scarcely be as glorious as some people would lead us to believe.

The Chosen People Are All Believers

Quite obviously, this poses more questions than it does answers. In the first place, God has no CHOSEN people in UNBELIEF. The fate of unbelievers in the Bible is too well determined to require further substantiation. Furthermore, God has no special salvation for anyone except the atonement made on Calvary. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, (The Old Testament Covenant), hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son..." (The New Testament Covenant) Heb. 1:1. This is final. How could the Jews conduct such a successful worldwide revival without the aid of the Holy Spirit Who is taken out of the world with the church? Before the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost the disciples all fled even with Jesus amongst them. If the devil is bound during the thousand years,

how are the children born during that time tempted and deceived in such colossal numbers? Millennialists tell us that people will live to a great age, but some will die during that time.

If only those who are saved from "among the nations" enter into the millennial kingdom, what becomes of those still living, but have rejected this overture? Since the judgment of the wicked is deferred until after the millennial reign, what will these people do during that thousand years? Did not Christ say that those who do His will, are His brothers and sisters, rather than earthly kinship? Matt. 12:48-50. Did not Christ assert that the unbelieving Jews were of their Father, the Devil? John 8:44.

Dismal Prospects for the Millennium

Dispensationalists portray a very bleak millennium after all their efforts to make us believe in one. According to the writer just quoted, it will contain unsaved individuals who only subdue their hatred because of fear of swift judgment. There will be sickness for some and even death for the advanced in age according to their writers. Imagine if you can, Christ officiating at a funeral! To what lengths must error go? At the end of the millennium we are told that Satan will be loosed again and will marshal the enemies of the Lord who are described "as a great multitude ready to follow the Devil," even though they have been in the millennium for a thousand years under Christ's rule. To cope with this futile uprising, Dispensationalists portray Christ riding a white steed and plunging His unsheathed sword into human bodies until the blood reaches the horse's bridle. This blood-curdling horror, which is to cause swirling rivers of blood, cannot be the act of the Christ Who said, "For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Matt. 26:52. It merely shows the extreme to which error is driven to sustain its false interpretations. The Second Person in the Divine Trinity, does not have to rely on a carnal sword to achieve His victories. Did He not explicitly say, He had twelve legions of angels at His command? Is not the silent sleep of death to the armies of

Sennacherib sufficient evidence of His power? Christ's triumph came at Calvary where He said, "It is finished."

The Simple Gospel of Christ's Kingdom

Jesus gave us a simple gospel that even a child can understand. His kingdom requires the new birth in order to pass its portals. Then follows our walk of obedience and eventually the call of death or the Coming of the Lord, which will usher in eternity and the Judgment. None of the earliest creeds contain even a hint of a millennium. Without exception they state simply that: "Christ rose from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father, Almighty, from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead..." Since the Apostle Paul expounded the Scriptures to the Jews continually wherever he went, and heralded the message of God's kingdom all over the Roman Empire, does it not seem strange that the Dispensational interpretation only came to light more than eighteen hundred years later?

We take issue with Dispensationalism because they maintain that unbelievers, that is, the unbelieving Jews, are God's chosen people. Jesus said, "The kingdom shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Matt. 21:43. The Pharisees made no mistake of His meaning. V. 44. No one has the right to offer a kingdom different in kind or on different terms than what Jesus specified. Only Christ has the authority to establish a doctrine that is binding upon His Church. His words shall judge us in the last day. No one has the right to propound a doctrine that offers salvation AFTER Christ comes. His last will and testament was sealed at Calvary and the terms are clear. It is a mistake to suggest that Christ only partially fulfilled the promises in His first coming. The only way Christ could be the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament was to fulfill every prophecy concerning Himself. To have failed in any particular would have convicted Him as an imposter. Even a postponement of the promises would invalidate His claim according to Deut. 18:22. "When a prophet speaketh in the

name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him." Invariably Christ substantiated His claims to being the Messiah by referring to how Scripture was fulfilled in His ministry. It is possible to conceive the hatred and persecution unto death against Christ and Paul if they were preaching a kingdom of Jewish pre-eminence with all the earthly carnal delights of Dispensationalism? Was not the opposition generated because Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world?" Has the Christ Who is "the same, yesterday, today and forever," changed?

The millennium is not next. Why was Christ silent about such a kingdom in His messages? Why is there no hint of a thousand year reign from Genesis to Jude? Why was something so important as this interpretation of the kingdom discovered until 1840? Revelation 20 is the only place in the Bible that mentions a thousand year reign and it does not say it will be on earth, but that souls of the martyrs will be with Christ. There is no reference to the Jews in this passage; nor, to an earthly millennium. Then what is next? Peter removes all doubt when he said, "Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God..." The entire third chapter of Second Peter should be read to get the full impact of coming events. These include the Coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead, the Day of Judgment and the eternal rewards meted out to both believers and unbelievers. Then, eternity in the place to which Jesus has gone to prepare.

Surely this truth is more attractive than a temporary millennium that ends in such terrifying carnage as Dispensationalists propound. "Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, ALL power is given unto Me in heaven AND IN EARTH." Matt. 28:18. Jesus reigns now at the right hand of God over the universe. Instead of a band of unbelieving Jews receiving the kingdom when Jesus comes, our Lord's final irrevocable ultimatum was, "Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken FROM you..." Matt 21:43. Instead of God regarding them as the Chosen People marked for Divine favors we read, "Behold your house is left unto you

desolate." Matt. 23:38. To be desolate means to be forsaken by God. Far from the bright future prospects which Dispensationalists anticipate, Paul said, "They please NOT God and are contrary to all men...For WRATH is come upon them to the UTMOST," meaning to the end of time. 1 Thess. 2:15, 16b.

Instead of Jesus postponing His kingdom to some mysterious future under more favorable circumstances, He said, "Fear not little flock (of believers) it is your Father's good pleasure to GIVE YOU the kingdom." Luke 12:32. We need to be born again to SEE it and to ENTER it. John 3:3, 5. Jesus said His kingdom comes NOT with observation and that it is NOT of this world. How can you reconcile these plain statements with the type of kingdom portrayed by Millennialists? Jesus has a kingdom NOW. When He comes again it is not to SET up His kingdom but to DELIVER it up to God the Father. 1 Cor. 15:24. Dispensationalists say the Millennium is next. The Lord Jesus Christ said He is coming again to JUDGE the world and take His own to the place He has gone to prepare. Jesus offers us heaven. He commissioned His followers to "Go into all the world and preach the GOSPEL." The urgency of this evangel is stressed by these words, "Behold now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation." 2 Cor. 6:2b. This is the last time and it will end on the LAST day with the sound of the LAST trump. There is no day after the LAST day. God offers salvation today and eternity next. Millennium? NEVER!