

PART 1. DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM
PART 2. HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM
PART 3. POSTMILLENNIALISM
PART 4. INAUGURATED MILLENNIALISM
PART 5. SEVEN OBJECTIONS TO PREMILLENNIALISM
PART 6. FOUR IMPLICATIONS OF INAUGURATED MILLENNIALISM

PART 1. DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM

Premillennialism is that view of the last things which holds that the kingdom of God is only *established in the future* and is a literal 1000 year kingdom of peace which involves the personal, visible reign of Christ as king in Jerusalem.

While historic premillennialism believes in only one second coming of Christ, dispensational premillennialism believes in two returns of Christ before the millennium. The millennium is followed by the resurrection and judgement of only unbelievers and wicked people and the renewal of the earth.

The millennial kingdom is to be established, not by Christ's completed work of salvation at his first coming (the inaugurated millennial view), also not by the proclamation of the gospel over a long period of time (the postmillennial view), but suddenly and by overwhelming power by the second return of Christ. The Jews are to be converted not as individuals, as will those in Gentile groups, but en masse at the mere sight of Christ. 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) will again be established.

Premillennialism places a strong emphasis on *the separation of the Christians and the Jews in God's plan of redemption*, inserts an interim New Testament Church period in the middle of God's programme with Israel in the Old Testament period and continued programme with Israel in the book of Revelation and employs a literalistic hermeneutic (including a literal 1000 year millennium).

The physical nature in the millennium will share in the blessings of the kingdom and the wild animals will be tamed. During the millennium the saints (the Jews and possibly the Christians) in their resurrected and glorified bodies will mingle freely with the other Gentile nations who are still in their mortal and unsanctified bodies!

Evil does not cease to exist in the millennium and is not necessarily decreased in amount, but is held in check by the rod-of-iron rule of Christ. At the end of the millennium this evil breaks out in a terrible rebellion that that will almost destroy the saints and the city of Jerusalem.

A more detailed description of the millennium of dispensational millennialism.

Christ's second return.

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 14:4,10,11). Changes in nature would reshape the land of Israel (Ezekiel chapter 47). Christ together with Christians (the Church) would return to the old earth. Christ will first bind Satan (in the sense that he could do no harm) and then establish the millennial kingdom of peace on this present earth. The dispensation of the millennium would be God's final test for mankind under the most favourable circumstances: in the millennial kingdom Satan would be bound totally (20:1-3), Christ would be present and all the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit would be available.

The government of the future millennial kingdom.

After the Gentiles had trodden down Jerusalem for centuries (Luke 21:24), it would be rebuilt and become the seat of government of the millennial kingdom. 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 promised to the sheep nations who treated the Jews (Christ's brothers) well (Matthew 25:34).

This kingdom would be 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 (20:4-6), that is, the Jews would become the chief rulers in the millennial kingdom.

The future millennial temple.

The Jews would build the future millennial temple, not in Jerusalem, but in the middle of the sacred portion, located at or near Shiloh where the tabernacle once stood. 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. The glory of God, which departed at the time of the Babylonian exile, would return (Ezekiel 43:1-5). The Aaronic priesthood would be re-established (Ezekiel 44:15-31). The Old Testament blood sacrifices would be resumed (Ezekiel 42:13; 45:17; 46:13-15). Dispensationalists interpret these sacrifices as only being remembrance offerings and not atonement offerings! 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.

The whole Jewish nation would be converted (Ezekiel 37:1-28; Romans 11:26), not by hearing the gospel, but suddenly and by the mere sight of Christ at his so-called future second return! Their conversion would be sealed with a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:25-27). Whether this outpouring of the Holy Spirit would be universal or only upon Israel, is not clear (Joel 2:28-32). Dispensationalists argue that this promise was given to Israel and was only partially fulfilled to Israel at Pentecost! The result would be that the Gentile nations would want to 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 (Malachi 1:11). Israel would be the head of all the nations (Deuteronomy 28:13). The Gentile nations that do not serve Israel would perish (Isaiah 60:12). Ezekiel 48:1-35 gives a detailed description of the restored land and restored city.

The nature of the future millennial kingdom.

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 (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 (3:26-27; Psalm 2:8-9). However, this peace would be superficial - feigned obedience, more the result of fear than of love. Hal Lindsey and other premillennialists admit that evil people would still occupy the earth during the literal 1000 year reign of Christ.¹ They also admit that people in the millennial kingdom would have unbelieving and rebellious offspring (Zechariah 14:17-19). After 1000 years this persistence of evil would lead to the massive revolt (20:7-8).

The purpose of the future millennial kingdom.

Tenney believes that Revelation chapters 4 to 16 describes the whole process of judgement and Revelation chapters 17 to 20 describes 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. The millennial kingdom would have a dual purpose: the completion of God's promises for the restoration of Israel and Israel's deliverance from Gentile oppression; and the demonstration of his sovereignty over the Gentile nations in the temporal affairs of earth. Finally, after Christ would have

¹ Hal Lindsey, *The Rapture*, pp. 65,143

completed his administrative task he would transfer the perfected kingdom to the new heaven and the new earth.²

The relation of the Church to the millennial kingdom.

Tenney also says that the relation of the Church to the millennial kingdom has long been a difficult question in eschatology (for dispensationalists). He contends that the Church and the kingdom are not synonymous. Tenney is a dispensational millennialist. Yet he admits that the Church cannot be completely separated from the kingdom.

The book of Revelation is addressed to the Church (symbolised by the seven congregations) (1:4). These congregations are definitely included in the 'us' of Revelation 1:5-6. Christians that are loved and whose sins have been atoned for by the blood of Christ have been made to be "a kingdom and priests".

However, Tenney argues that this 'kingdom' does not refer to the present New Testament period of the Church (of Christians) and also not to the future millennial kingdom (of Jews), 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 which the Son will present to the Father, and which shall be called the city of God."³

The failure of the future millennial kingdom.

God's test would last 1000 literal years and during that period of probation man would have all the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit, the presence of Christ himself and Satan completely bound! Generally uninformed premillennialists believe that the millennial kingdom would be a kingdom without sin. But trained premillennialists choose to neglect or minimize this fifth column of evil people in the millennial kingdom, because it is embarrassing!

Nevertheless, man (and Christ as King of the millennial kingdom) would fail once more!!! At the end of the millennial kingdom Satan would be released, deceive the Gentile nations and gather them in a final effort to destroy the Jews and Jerusalem. But they would be defeated in the battle of Gog and Magog (20:7-10). Only then would all the wicked dead be resurrected, judged before the great white throne and cast into the lake of fire (20:11-15).

"The millennial dispensation, like all the six dispensations before it, would end in failure! God would have tested man in innocence, under conscience, under self-government, under the headship of the family, under law, under grace and finally under the influence of the Holy Spirit, free from satanic influences. Under all seven dispensations man will prove himself to be hopelessly, incurably and incorrigibly bad. Therefore God will purge the earth with fire."⁴

The new earth after the millennial kingdom.

After the future millennial kingdom Christ would renew the earth and the eternal state would commence (chapter 21-22). Larkin says that the final (omega) age would begin with the future millennial kingdom, but this would not yet be a perfect kingdom. Only after the renewal of the earth by fire would it become the perfect kingdom (chapter 21-22).⁵

[Remarks.

The three cardinal assumptions of premillennialism.

The absolute separation between Israel and the Church, the parenthesis period of the Church sandwiched in the middle of God's programme with Israel and the literal hermeneutic of the Bible, which leads to interpret the 1000 years as a literal millennial kingdom.

The dispensational premillennial 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 proves that it has not taken the Bible seriously enough!⁶ Christians do believe in the millennium (a 1000 year period), but NOT in the millennium of the premillennialists or dispensationalists!

² Tenney, p. 89, 159

³ Tenney, pp. 169-170

⁴ Larkin, Revelation p.192

⁵ Larkin, The Greatest Book on Dispensational Truth in the World, pp. 20-21

⁶ John Gilmore, Probing Heaven, 1989, p. 367

The dispensational premillennial view assume 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 (20:1-6) follows the future second return of Christ (19:11-21).⁷ Premillennialists have forced an apocalypse into a historic mode. But the Book of Revelation is not a prophecy that predicts the future, but rather an apocalypse that reveals God's plan for all of the Messianic Age and thereafter (1:1). The Book of Revelation is not a linear chronological account of future history, but depicts the struggle between Christ and his Church on the one hand and Satan and the world on the other hand in seven parallel sections. 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, final judgement and the new earth.

The dispensational premillennial view has assumed and imported ideas into their future millennial kingdom that cannot be found in Revelation 20:1-7.

Dispensationalists assume that Satan has not yet been bound and therefore the 1000 years must come after Christ's future second return. However, the New Testament clearly teaches that Satan has been bound at Christ's first coming (Matthew 12:28-30; John 12:31-32; cf. Revelation 12:5-11)! Dispensationalists assume that Satan must be totally bound. However Revelation 20:1-7 does not teach that Satan is bound in a way that he can have no evil influence at all. Satan is only bound in a way that he cannot deceive the nations in this period (Matthew 12:29; John 12:31-32). Satan still persecutes the Church (12:13-17).

Dispensationalists assume that the number 1000 must be literal.

However, like the other numbers in the book of Revelation (2, 3½, 4, 7, 12, 24, 42, 666, 1260, 144 000), the number 1000 is symbolic. It is symbolic for the whole New Testament period between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming.

Dispensationalists assume that the 1000 years is an earthly kingdom in which the saints reign with Christ on earth. However, the 1000 years is symbolic of the intermediate stage between physical death and physical resurrection and the souls of the departed saints reign with Christ in heaven.

Dispensationalists assume that God would fulfil all his so-called unfulfilled promises in the Old Testament to Israel during the 1000 years. However, in Revelation 20:1-7 there is no mention of Jews, no mention of the real city of Jerusalem, no mention of animals and their being tamed, no mention of peaceful dwelling on the earth and no mention of perfecting Christ's 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 is mentioned in the only biblical passage which deals directly with Christ's millennial reign, Revelation 20:4-6.”⁸

The dispensational premillennial view is confronted with numerous inconsistencies and contradictions, because it adopted a literalistic method of interpretation to understand 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 (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 separate events that are 7 or 3½ years apart (the so-called first return and second return of Christ).

There is no biblical warrant to assume that Christ's so-called first return would be secret, invisible and inaudible for unbelievers. The one and only second coming of Christ will be very visible (1:7; Matthew 24:27,30) and very audible (Matthew 24:31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16)!

⁷ Tenney, p. 89

⁸ Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, p. 222

There is no biblical warrant to separate the final resurrection of the dead into two separate events 1000 years apart: the physical resurrection of Christians at Christ's first return (the rapture) and the physical resurrection of the wicked at the end of the millennial kingdom. Revelation 20:1-7 teaches a spiritual resurrection of only Christian souls into the presence of Christ in heaven (20:4-5; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9) – the intermediate state. And it teaches one general physical resurrection of all believers and unbelievers together at Christ's second coming (20:11-15; John 5:28-29; 6:39; 11:24; Acts 24:15).

There is no biblical warrant to separate the final judgement into two separate events 1000 years apart: the judgement of Christians before the judgement seat of Christ (at the rapture) and the judgement of the wicked before the great white throne. The final judgement of believers and unbelievers together is in the Bible always associated with Christ's second coming (Matthew 13:39-43; 16:27; 24:39-41; 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jude 14-15; Revelation 20:11-15; 22:12)!

There is no biblical warrant to assume that Matthew 25:31-46 teaches who would enter the millennial kingdom and who would not. The historic premillennialist George Eldon Ladd says, "This is impossible for the text itself says that the righteous will go away into eternal life while the wicked go into eternal punishment". Eternal life and eternal punishment are NOT 1000 years long. 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."⁹

There is no biblical warrant to assume that the king in the millennial kingdom would bring animal sacrifices as atonement for his sins (Ezekiel 45:22). The blood sacrifices in the Ezekiel temple were definitely atonement sacrifices (Ezekiel 43:18-27; 45:15-20; 45:22)! If Ezekiel chapter 40 to 48 is regarded as the millennial kingdom, then this king (whether Christ or David) can never be regarded as perfect and the atonement sacrifice of Jesus on the cross at his first coming is declared to be insufficient! The dispensationalists 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)! The dispensational view reverts to the Old Testament Law in their interpretation of the so-called millennial kingdom.

There is no biblical warrant to assume that the Holy Spirit promised in Joel 2:28-32 would be poured out on Israel in the future, because the Bible clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit has already been poured out at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21)!

There is no biblical warrant to assume that the saints that came from heaven with Christ with their already resurrected bodies would mix with mortal Gentiles on the millennial earth. 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 (2 Corinthians 2:17; 4:2)!

The dispensational premillennial view has grossly overestimated the free will of man as the condition for God's tests.

According to the dispensational view all seven dispensations end in failure and man would thus prove for himself that he is hopelessly, incurably and incorrigibly bad. However, 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 whatever way (Isaiah 43:11; Acts 4:12) is clearly taught in the whole Bible without having to revert to dispensational teaching and to seven long periods to experiment with it. Therefore the so-called free will of sinful man is a futile point of departure for God to put man to the test! The free will of sinful man cannot justify him (Romans 8:7-8; 9:10-18; Ephesians 2:8-9)!

The dispensational view has grossly underestimated and undervalued the first coming of Jesus Christ and his absolutely completed work of salvation for justification and sanctification.

It has grossly underestimated Christ's victory over Satan and this evil world by denying that the kingdom of God has come and by denying that Satan has been bound (cf. Matthew 12:28-29).

⁹ George E. Ladd in Robert G. Clouse, The meaning of the Millennium, 1977, pp. 38

The dispensational premillennial view has grossly underestimated and undervalued the second coming of Jesus Christ.

It 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 premillennialists is described as peace, but this peace is superficial. Christ reigns in the millennial kingdom with the force of an iron sceptre. Yet his reign seems ineffective. According to dispensationalists themselves the millennial kingdom (like all the previous dispensations) ends in 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) for the final battle 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. Christ is the King of all kings and the Conqueror who goes forth to conquer at his first coming (cf. 1:5; 6:1-2; 17:14). Christ is the King of kings (19:16) who demolishes all opposition with one great earthquake (6:12; 11:13; 16:18), with one slash of his sickle (14:16) and with one blast of fire from heaven (20:9) at his second coming! Christ will overthrow his enemies with the breath of his mouth and destroy them with the splendour of his (second) coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8)! At his first coming Christ has curtailed Satan's power, but has not yet removed Satan from the earthly scene. But at his second coming Christ will destroy Satan and his allies with one knockout blow!]

PART 2. HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM

Historic premillennialism is that view of the last things which holds that the kingdom of God is only *established in the future* and is a literal 1000 year kingdom of peace which involves the personal, visible reign of Christ as king in Jerusalem.

While dispensational premillennialism believes in two future returns of Christ, historic premillennialism believes in only one future second coming of Christ before the millennium. There will be no two returns of Christ, no rapture.¹⁰ Historic premillennialism says that dispensational premillennialism distorts the Bible by saying that there is a secret rapture before the final revelation of Christ!

The millennium is preceded by the second coming of Christ and the resurrection and judgement of only believers. It is followed by the resurrection and judgement of only unbelievers and wicked people and the renewal of the earth.

The millennium is a literal and physical kingdom of peace after Christ's second coming. While dispensational millennialism forms its eschatology by a literal interpretation of the Old Testament and then fits the New Testament into it, historic millennialism forms its theology from the explicit teaching of the New Testament. Historic millennialism confesses that it cannot be sure how the Old Testament prophecies about the end-time are to be fulfilled, because:

- (a) the first coming of Christ was accomplished in terms not foreseen by a literal interpretation of the Old Testament, and
- (b) there are unavoidable indications that the Old Testament promises to Israel are fulfilled in the Christian Church.¹¹

Remarks.

Ladd does not explain the binding of Satan! While in dispensational premillennialism there is no final knockout of evil at Christ's first return (the rapture) or Christ's second return (the revelation), in historic premillennialism there is also no final knockout of evil at Christ's second coming before the millennial kingdom.

¹⁰ George E. Ladd in Robert G. Clouse, *The meaning of the Millennium*, 1977, pp. 17-40

¹¹ George E. Ladd in Robert G. Clouse, *The meaning of the Millennium*, 1977, p 27

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? Was not this phase of his work completed during his state of humiliation (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 blessing (the millennium), but the final state of unqualified perfection (the new earth)?”^{12]}

PART 3. POSTMILLENNIALISM

Postmillennialism 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. The gospel will not simply be preached as ‘a witness’ to the nations (the premillennial and inaugurated millennial view), but all the nations will be truly and effectually evangelised and the lives of people will be truly transformed by it. The gospel age gradually merges into the millennial age 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.

The millennium will be a period in which this present world will enjoy almost complete 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.¹³ 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. Evil in all its many forms will be reduced to negligible proportions. 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.

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 postmillennialists believe in only one second coming of Christ.

Postmillennialism 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 will be saved. The kingdom of God will fill the earth (Zechariah 9:10). In the Bible ‘heaven’ is pictured as a large place: the next world, as a great 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 Satan is insignificant in contrast to the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13).

[Remarks.

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 can only be the new earth (2 Peter 3:13).

¹² Anthony A. Hoekema in Robert G. Clouse, *The meaning of the Millennium*, 1977, p. 59

¹³ Loraine Boettner in Robert G. Clouse, *The meaning of the Millennium*, 1977, pp. 118-141

Boettner makes no mention of the apostasy (the falling away), the great tribulation or the appearance of the final antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). Moreover Christ's words, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8) implies that the number of true believers may be small at Christ's second coming. The Bible does not support the idea that the whole world would be Christianized.^{14]}

PART 4. INAUGURATED MILLENNIALISM

Inaugurated, realised or present millennialism is that view of the last things which holds that the kingdom of God exists from eternity (Psalm 145:13; 46:10; Matthew 25:34) and is visibly established on earth through the completed work of salvation of Jesus Christ at his first coming. The kingdom of God is continually extended through the binding of Satan (Matthew 12:28-30) and the proclamation of the gospel (Mark 1:15). The kingdom of God is a present reality that grows and extends throughout the New Testament age (Matthew 11:12; Mark 4:26-32) until it reaches its final and perfect phase at the second coming of Christ (Matthew 13:40-43).

The symbolic 1000 years (millennium) (Revelation 20:1-7) is a symbol for the whole New Testament period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. *The symbolic millennium is followed by Christ's second coming, the general resurrection of the dead, the general final judgement of all people and the renewal of the universe and the earth* (Revelation 20:11 to 22:5).

Inaugurated millennialism places the emphasis on *the sovereign reign of God* through Christ in the hearts and lives of Christians (Luke 17:20-21) that results in the salvation of believers from beginning to end (Mark 10:23-27; 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 renewal of the universe and the earth (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

PART 5. SEVEN OBJECTIONS TO PREMILLENNIALISM

1. Their literalistic interpretation of the millennium

Both historic premillennialists and dispensational premillennialists base their theories on a *literalistic interpretation of the millennium*. "Premillennialists are premillennialists 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"¹⁵ "A growing number of evangelical scholars are challenging the dogmatism of (pre- and post-) millennialists and doubting their hermeneutic assumptions"¹⁶.

"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' and a public return of Christ after the 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."¹⁷

[Remarks.

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!

¹⁴ Anthony A. Hoekema in Robert G. Clouse, *The meaning of the Millennium*, 1977, p. 151

¹⁵ John Gilmore, *Probing Heaven*, p. 372

¹⁶ John Gilmore, *Probing Heaven*, p. 392

¹⁷ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, p. 871

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 chapter 20, but Revelation chapter 20 must rather be interpreted in the light of all the clear teachings in the New Testament.

Premillennialists maintain that nothing short of a literal interpretation and fulfilment will satisfy the requirements of these prophetic forecasts. But the books of the prophets themselves already contain indications that point to a spiritual 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 instead of externally. God's people will have a personal knowledge of God and a personal relationship with God instead of a national relationship. God's people will really experience forgiveness of sins and complete acceptance (Jeremiah 31:31-34). God would no longer require animal sacrifices or the firstborn (the keeping of the ceremonial law), but would require his people to act justly, love mercy and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:6-8).

Premillennialists maintain that the name Zion always means a literal mountain and the name Jerusalem always a 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 that 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).

Premillennialists maintain that God would re-establish the Old Testament theocratic kingdom of David, but the New Testament contains not a single undisputed positive prediction of its restoration. On the contrary, the New Testament contains abundant references to the spiritual fulfilment of the promises given to Israel.¹⁸ The kingdom of God would be taken away from Israel and given to a people who would produce its fruit (Matthew 8:11-12; 21:43). King David remains dead, but he prophesied the resurrection of one of his descendants, Jesus Christ, who would sit as King on the throne in heaven until he has conquered all his enemies (Psalm 16:8-11; Acts 2:29-36). All the Old Testament prophets agree that God's way to rebuild the fallen tent of David was to take from the Gentiles a people for himself (Amos 9:11-12; Acts 15:14-18). God would effectively call Jews and Gentiles (formerly not his people) 'his people' and 'his loved one' (Romans 9:24-26). God would establish the new covenant promised to Israel in Jeremiah 31:31-34 with non-Jewish believers in Christ (Matthew 26:28; 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 New Testament believers are now called the same as the Old Testament believers: 'a chosen people', 'a royal priesthood', 'a holy nation', 'a people belonging to God' (1 Peter 2:9-10), 'the Church'¹⁹ (Judges 20:2; Psalm 22:22; 2 Chronicles 29:28; Matthew 16:18-19) and 'a kingdom of priests' (Exodus 19:6; Revelation 1:6; 5:10).

The literalism of premillennialists is not consistently literal. They interpret the chain and consequently the binding of Satan *figuratively*, but the 1000 years *literally* (Revelation 20:1-2). They interpret the word 'lived' as a resurrection of *bodies* (Revelation 20:4-6), while 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 premillennialists causes them to believe in absurdities: the future restoration of the past historical conditions of Israel's life. The ancient great world empires of 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

¹⁸ Details about the spiritualization found in the Bible, consult Dr. Wijngaarden, *The Future of the Kingdom*

¹⁹ Hebrew Old Testament: qahal, Greek Old Testament: εκκλησια

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 for sins would have to be brought instead of the atonement sacrifice of Christ (Ezekiel 42:13; 43:18-27). And all the Gentile nations in the world would have to go 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. Their importation of the Jews into the millennium

Premillennialists always *add outside material* like Jews (Israel), Jerusalem, animals and peace to their interpretation of the 1000 years period of Revelation chapter 20. A careful comparison of Revelation 20:1-6 with premillennial propaganda shows that so many ideas, which are not in the text, have been unfairly *assumed and imported*. In Revelation 20 there is no mention of Jews, of the real city of Jerusalem, of animals and their being tamed or of peaceful dwelling on the earth. 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 futurists do.²⁰

[Remarks.

It is noteworthy that Revelation 20:1-6 makes no mention of the Jews, the natural citizens of a Jewish millennial kingdom, or 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 that the 1000 years represent a kingdom or even a kingdom of peace with all wild animals tamed! These are all assumptions that are *added* to their interpretation of Revelation 20:1-6. Read Christ's warning about adding beliefs to the Bible (22:18-19)!

Premillennialists have forced unfounded conclusions on limited and highly symbolic verses. "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 is mentioned in the only biblical passage which deals directly with Christ's millennial reign, Revelation 20:4-6"²¹]

3. Their view of history culminates in the millennium

Premillennialists teach that God deals with people in the world on the basis of several 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 judgement.

Premillennialists teach that the theocracy of Israel was founded with the giving of the Mosaic Law. The form of the kingdom of God had its golden age in the days of David and Solomon. 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 also messages of hope that raised the expectation that in the days of the Messiah Israel would turn to God and the throne of David would be re-established in unsurpassed glory. Even the Gentiles would share in the blessings of Israel's future kingdom.

Premillennialists teach that when the Messiah came, he offered to establish the kingdom, but the Jews failed to repent. The result was that the King (Jesus Christ) did not establish the kingdom, but withdrew from Israel and went to a far country, postponing the establishment of the kingdom until his return.

²⁰ Tenney, pp. 159-160. The millennium with a theocratic government over the nations can be the fulfilment of a dual purpose: 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 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; 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).

²¹ Anthony Hoekema, "The Bible and the Future", p 222

Premillennialists teach that before he left the earth, Christ founded the Church, which has nothing in common with the kingdom and of which the prophets never spoke. The fifth dispensation of the law made way for the sixth dispensation of grace. The Church is gathered out of Jews and Gentiles and forms the Body of Christ, which now shares Christ's sufferings, but in the future as the Bride of the Lamb shares in his glory. Of this Church Christ is not the King (!), but its divine Head. The Church has the glorious task of preaching, not the gospel of the kingdom (!), but the gospel of the free grace of God among all the nations of the world in order to gather the elect out of them and to be a testimony to them. But the method of preaching the gospel of grace will also prove a failure, because it will not effect conversions on any large scale.

In the final seventh dispensation Christ will suddenly return and effect a far more universal conversion through the preaching of the gospel of the coming millennial kingdom and the establishment of the millennial kingdom.

[Remarks.

The New Testament history does not culminate in the Jewish millennial kingdom. The New Testament history begins with the establishment of the visible kingdom of God (Christ)(Mark 1:15; Matthew 12:28-30; 1 Corinthians 15:24-27; Revelation 1:5-6), which expands to include Christians from all nations throughout the whole New Testament period, and ends with the kingdom of God in its final, perfect phase (Matthew 25:34; 1 Corinthians 15:28; Revelation 11:15).

There is no biblical evidence that the Bible history is to be divided into seven dispensations.²²

There is no biblical evidence that Jesus came to re-establish the Jewish theocratic kingdom. Instead his teaching and parables about the kingdom are about the kingship of God through Jesus Christ in the hearts and lives of Jews and Gentiles (Luke 17:20-21), resulting in their salvation from beginning to end (Mark 10:23,26; John 3:3-8), in their establishment as a Church (Matthew 16:18-19), in their influence as the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16) and finally in the new heaven and new earth (Matthew 25:34).

There is no biblical evidence that the Old Testament prophets knew nothing about the New Testament Church (Genesis 22:18; 1 Peter 1:9-12). What the prophets did not know was that the Gentile believers would become heirs of all God's Old Testament promises *together with the Jewish believers on a complete equal basis* (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:20) 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; 3:2-6; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; John 10:16)!

Christ is not just the Head of the Church. He is also the Head of the whole universe (Ephesians 1:20-23), the King of all kings (Matthew 21:5; 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 1:5; 17:14; 19:16). All authority and power in heaven and on earth belongs to him (Matthew 28:18; John 13:3).

There is no biblical evidence that the gospel of the kingdom is different than 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; 28:23,31) and will be preached to all 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 ministry of Jesus Christ from his first coming to his second coming ended in failure! On the contrary, the Old Testament prophets proclaimed that he would be the Conqueror from the time of his death and resurrection (Isaiah 52:13-15; 53:11) and 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 remains 'finished' for ever (John 19:30).²³ At his second coming he will not need to struggle for 1000 years to conquer Satan

²² Study supplement 4, Dispensational or Covenant Theology

²³ τετελεσται >τελεω (to bring to an end, to finish, to complete)(virp). The perfect tense stresses the fact that nothing remains unfinished. The whole New Testament history is the outworking of his completed work of salvation and his victory!

and the disobedient Gentile nations, because at that moment Christ's work of saving and judging people 'will have come to pass' and 'will remain done' (Revelation 16:17; 21:6).²⁴]

4. Their insertion of the Church period between the kingdom of Israel and the millennium

Premillennialists believe in a so-called postponement theory. According to them John the Baptist and Jesus proclaimed that the kingdom, that is, the Jewish theocracy, was at hand. But because the Jews did not repent and believe, Jesus *postponed* the establishment of the (Jewish theocratic) kingdom until his second coming. Scofield marks the change at Matthew 11:20, but others mark it at Matthew 12. Before that point Jesus did not concern himself with Gentiles, but preached the gospel of the (Jewish theocratic) kingdom only to Israel. After that Jesus did not preach the kingdom any more, but only predicted its future coming and offered rest (the gospel of grace) to the weary of both Israel and the Gentiles.

[Remarks.

This parenthetic (postponement, gap) theory is a human theory devoid of biblical truth.

Jesus concerned himself with Gentiles before the supposed turning point (Matthew 8:5-13; John 4:1-42).

Jesus preached the kingdom also after the supposed turning point (Matthew chapter 13; Luke 10:1-11 and his parables about the kingdom).

There is absolutely no proof that Jesus preached two different gospels: first the gospel of the kingdom to only Jews and then the gospel of grace to everybody, especially Gentiles.

Jesus never had in mind to re-establish the Old Testament Jewish theocracy, but the introduction of the spiritual reality of which the Old Testament kingdom was merely a type (Matthew 8:11-12; 13:31-33; 21:43; Luke 17:21; John 3:3; 18:36-37). Jesus did not postpone the task for which he had come into the world, but actually established the kingdom. He referred to it as a present reality (Matthew 11:12; 12:28; Luke 17:21; John 18:36-37; cf. Colossians 1:13).

This postponement theory is a comparatively recent fiction and very objectionable, because it breaks up the unity of the Bible and its message. Premillennialists believe that while the New Testament was intended to fulfil the Old Testament, it became something quite different. The Jewish theocratic kingdom that was predicted was not restored. Yet the Church that was not predicted was established. The absolute separation between Israel and the Church leads to splitting the Bible in a book of the kingdom for Jews and a book of the Church for Christians. Israel is regarded as God's natural and earthly people, while the Church is regarded as God's spiritual and heavenly people. But Jesus very emphatically teaches that he is the one Shepherd of one flock of sheep that originally belonged to the Jewish fold and to Gentile folds (John 10:16)! And Paul clearly teaches that the Gentile branches were grafted together with the Jewish branches into the one olive tree (Romans 11:17-24)!]

5. Their optimism or pessimism generated by their view of the millennium

The golden age theory of premillennialists and postmillennialists.

Both postmillennialists and premillennialists 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 Christ's absolute authority in Matthew 28:18 in terms of world-evangelisation and Christianisation.

[Remark. People are saved by entering the kingdom of God through regeneration between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming (John 1:12-13; 3:3-8; Titus 3:4-8). At Christ's second coming the absolute full number of saved Jews and saved Gentiles will have entered the kingdom (Romans 11:25-26; cf. 8:29-30); nothing will remain to be done (Revelation 16:17; 21:6) and an uncountable great multitude from every nation on earth will be with Christ (Revelation 7:9)!]

²⁴ γεγονεν > γινομαι (to happen, to take place)(vnp). The perfect tense stresses the fact that after his second coming nothing remains to be done!

The optimism of postmillennialism.

Postmillennialists say that Christ is exercising his absolute authority *before* his second coming. *Before* Christ's second coming more and more people in this present world will be saved until finally Christ will return to a thoroughly Christianised world and usher in the millennium. Thus postmillennialists tend to be *too optimistic* about this present world and tend to think only about the advance of the Church. Christ builds his Church on the rock and the gates of hell will not win a victory over it (Matthew 16:18). The Church will take the offensive, advance through the world and nothing will be able to resist its onward march. This was especially true during the time of the apostles, but also in the history of world missions.

[**Remark.** The Bible not only teaches that there will be great advances, but also that there will be great resistance. There will be many antichrists (1 John 2:18) and much tribulation (John 16:33; 2 Timothy 3:12) throughout the New Testament period. There will be the great apostasy, the great tribulation and the coming of the final antichrist, which will oppose and exalt himself over everything that is called 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*. It does not specify if the world will 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 premillennialism.

Premillennialists say that Christ will only exercise his absolute authority *after* his second coming. In this present world the greater part of humanity is lost. But *after* Christ's future first return (during the future tribulation period under the most adverse conditions) and *after* Christ's future second 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 as King in the present so-called dispensation of grace (the Church), this present dispensation will certainly end in failure! Thus, dispensational premillennialists 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 premillennialism, 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 and help them physically and spiritually (Matthew 5:14-16; 25:34-40; Romans 12:20; James 1:27; 2:14-17,22; 1 John 3:16-18), many Christians narrow their mission to an attempt to 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. Premillennialists 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 the great missionary commission (Matthew 28:19) as well as 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 Church is a healing community amidst the society in the world.

[**Remark.** The Bible not only teaches that there will be tribulation in the world, but that Christ had overcome this world (John 16:33). Christ had received all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). Christ is now exercising all his authority. He will not have any more authority in an expected future millennium than he has now for the carrying out of his plans!

Inaugurated millennialists and postmillennialists have a much greater appreciation of the Church as the community of God that transcends time and space than do many premillennialists. Therefore it is far more 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. Their sign seeking with a view to the coming millennium

Premillennialists make efforts to identify the signs of the times. Often such occurrences as natural disasters, apostasy in the churches, technological advancements and the rise of authoritarian political leaders are cited

as proof that the end is near and that Christ's second coming is imminent (can occur at any moment). Beside the fact that seeking for signs can lead down a blind alley of date setting, the tendency to identify *God's cause* with Zionism and the nation of Israel can lead support to 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: happy are those whom it (the Judge) finds labouring at their vocations, 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" (Matthew 24:45-51).

7. Their limitation of Christ's kingship

Although the rule of Christ is now mostly invisible and Christians look forward to the total visible expression of his rule 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 1000 year period. Why should this visible expression of Christ's rule still have to occur in the world as we know it now in distinction from the world to come? Why should Christians 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, Christ visibly conquered sin, sickness, death, evil spirits, Satan and his human enemies. No one and nothing could hinder his accomplishment 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" (Matthew 11:4-5). "If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then *the kingdom of God* has come upon you" (Matthew 12:28). "In this world you will have tribulation. But take heart! I have overcome the world" and the world will remain overcome by me²⁵ (John 16:33)! Concerning his work of salvation during his first coming, Jesus said, "It is finished" and it will remain finished forever²⁶ (John 19:30)!

At his second coming, he will come in the fullness of his glory to usher in, not an interim period (a 1000 years) of *qualified* peace, righteousness and blessing, but *the final state of unqualified perfection* (the new heaven on the new earth)!

PART 6. FOUR IMPLICATIONS OF INAUGURATED MILLENNIALISM

1. The Old Testament and New Testament are bound together into a unity by the covenant of grace

Salvation is by faith without the works of the law.

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 covenant of grace was in effect in the Old Testament and in the New Testament and binds the two testaments together into a unity.

The nature of the covenant.

The covenant is eternal (Genesis 17:7). It is a promise given by God's grace (Galatians 3:18). The essence of the covenant is "I will be your God and you will be my people" (Genesis 17:7; Leviticus 26:11-13; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Revelation 21:3).

The people of the covenant.

The promises of this covenant are for Abraham and his seed, Jesus Christ (Genesis 12:2-3; 22:18; Galatians 3:15-16). The covenant of grace includes, not just Abraham's physical descendants of faith, the Jews

²⁵ εν τω κοσμω θλιψιν εχετε (vira), αλλα θαρσειτε (vmpra), εγω νενικηκα >νικαω (vira) τον κοσμον

²⁶ τετελεσται > τελειω (vira)

(Genesis 15:5-6; 17:5-6; 22:17), but his spiritual descendants in all nations that 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 the promise that God's people will inherit, not just 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 is not another covenant, but *added* to the one and only covenant as the terms of the covenant (Exodus 20:2-17; Jeremiah 11:1-5; Galatians 3:17). It was added to keep transgressions in check and guide people to faith in Christ (Galatians 3:19-25). These terms were continually broken by Israel and therefore God established a new covenant in the place of the old covenant, which still included the terms of obeying the law (Jeremiah 31:31-34; 24:7; 30:21-22; Ezekiel 37:24-27; Malachi 3:1; Hebrews 8:6-13).

2. The kingdom of God is central in human history

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

3. Christ is the Lord of human history

All history is under the control of Christ and will ultimately prove to have been subservient to his purpose (Isaiah 14:24-27; Jeremiah 32:26-29; Romans 8:28-39; Ephesians 1:10-11). Christians therefore not only enjoy the blessings of their salvation, but joyfully serve Christ as Lord in every area of their human lives.

4. All history is moving towards the total redemption of the universe

History is not meaningless, but meaningful. Although we are not always able to discern the meaning of each historical event, we 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, inaugurated millennialism adopts a position of sober and realistic optimism. Belief in the present rule of Christ, in the presence of God's kingdom 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). Inaugurated 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). They do not expect to see the perfect society realised during this present age (as postmillennialists do).

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