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**B0952 – December 27, 2009 – The Millennial Issue**

We're going to begin the first of three or four appendices to the OT that address eschatology. Eschatology just comes from a Greek word that means study of last things. Every doctrine is categorized this way so when we say eschatology we mean we're going to be looking at last things, in particular the issue of the kingdom of God and the millennium. We do this because we're coming up on the Gospels. You can't understand the Gospels without understanding the kingdom because the Gospels begin with an offer of the kingdom and we have to understand what the nature of the kingdom is that is being offered. There are three basic viewpoints on the kingdom and since we now have enough background from our study of the OT we want to put together some of what we've learned in the OT and realize that an eschatology is implicit in the Christian faith, and in fact, everyone has an eschatology. This is not strange; this is not something that Christians dream up when they have nothing else to do. Eschatology is just basically God's plan for where history is going. And all people have an idea of where history is going. It may be that history is going nowhere. If I'm a hedonist my philosophy is "eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die." That is very clearly an eschatology; a view of the future that affects how I live. We want to be keenly aware that whatever future is sketched down on the map level dictates very heavily how you behave in the present.

The thing I want to put away right from the start is that this is not something strange, new, and different; it's not something that should be foreign to us, because we operate every day with a view of what is coming. We may worry about it, we may fret about it, we may be glad about it, we may hope about it, but everyone has a view of the future. It may not be developed, you may not have sat down and thought it through, but it's always there. In fact, it can be argued that eschatology is always involved when you make a

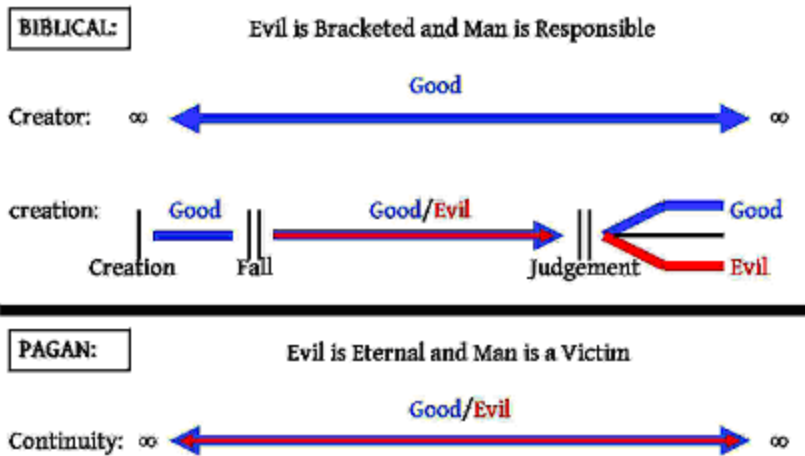
moral judgment, because if you say that something should be, or should not be, you're stating what the future should or should not be like. And usually there's a motive behind that moral judgment and to reach that future there are certain choices that must be made and those choices are influenced very heavily in terms of your eschatology.

As we go through these views on the millennium, I'm going to point out to you historic consequences. This is not a peripheral discussion that has no practical applications. You're going to see that there have been vast historical movements throughout history involving millions of people who have died because of wrong eschatology's. Communism was one of them. Communism borrowed its eschatology from the Book of Daniel. The atheist movement, in order to hold to a progressive view of history borrowed it from Daniel 2 and 7. Of course, Marxists today would be utterly embarrassed to admit where their idea of progress came from; but that's where they got it.

Why is that? Because the Bible alone has the concept, has the truth, that history is going somewhere, that future experience has already got a shape to it. That is not a possibility if you do not accept the God of the Scriptures. If God is not outside of history and sovereign over it then the future has no shape, it's being shaped by human decisions but there's no plan and you have no idea where it's going. All you have is just a personal arrogance in deciding; because you decided it's going to be that way, the future is going some way, that's all you've got is arrogance or the word of God.

We want to look now, as we come down to how eschatology developed, by giving you a little history and background. One other thing we want to define before we get in here. You'll hear two words used in this discussion a lot. One is history, and the other is eternity. What we mean by eternity here is not God's attribute. What this word, "eternity" means; it means future, the future experience with God, the future eternal history you might say, outside of time.

There are two categories, so let's look at these two categories and get them firm in our mind so we can start a vocabulary of thinking this through. History is a period of time and we've seen this, we've just never used the word before in connection with this diagram.



Let's go back to our old familiar diagram and look at the Christian position. The biblical position has creation as the starting point, before creation you have God eternally existing. So there's no eternal history except His own personal eternality. History begins at creation and runs on a line to judgment. Then, once we reach this point in judgment, we say good and evil are separated, the Book of Revelation ends with a total division, and it's locked. So here is a characteristic that sets apart eternity future and history as we live it. In this interim what do we say? Good and evil coexist. It's possible to cross from one to the other. This is the time of grace, men are given time to repent and move over to the good or they are given time to rebel and harden up in sin and stay on the side of evil.

When we come out to eternity, however, the evil remains evil and the good remains good, and there is no crossover, there is no further repentance. Nobody on the good side falls and nobody on the evil side is saved, those options are gone. The only time we discuss salvation is the period between creation and the final judgment. So that tells us something else, it tells us that as far as God's plan for us, there's something greater than the salvation plan. Salvation is not the goal of history. If it were, then there would be no sense in living forever and ever. If salvation stops at a point in time then it can't be the goal. If salvation is not the goal, then what is the goal? Of course the answer is the glory of God. The glory of God is a higher goal than salvation itself, and why any plan of salvation must be subordinate to the glory of God, because that's ultimately what occupies the new creation. History is a period of grace and repentance and sin, and eternity is a time

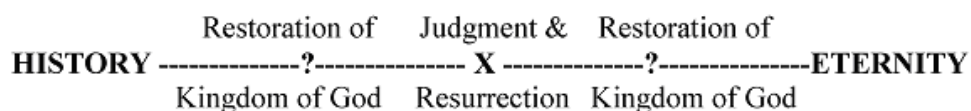
when there's no grace, no repentance, it's frozen and locked in place. That's a pretty big difference between history and eternity.

Let's bring out a few other things. We call this period of time in history the time of mortality, i.e. it's the era of mortality. What does that mean? It means we can die. In Adam and Eve's case they could die if they fell, so they were vulnerable to death. We see now why we're setting this up because we're going to start talking about Christ and what He could do and couldn't do. Christ in His humanity, Jesus Christ as true humanity could also die. That was possible, because He lived inside history, that potential was present. That's all tied in with His incarnation. What a magnificent miraculous thing it was for the God of eternity to condescend in the second person to take true humanity, a true human body and a true human spirit, in history such that he's vulnerable to death. So we have 'mortality' in history.

On the eternity side we have 'immortality.' There's no death. Those two words, mortality and immortality, become very important when we go to sort through the pieces in all of this. Here we have history and in history there is mortality and time for repentance. Here we have eternity and in eternity there is immortality and no time for repentance.

Let's go to the pre-NT controversy. This is a chart depicting the controversy among the Jews before Jesus Christ. They had it long before Jesus walked the face of the earth.

### **The Pre-NT Controversy of the Timing and Nature of the Kingdom**



We said this all develops out of what we studied in the OT, so let's go back to the Call of Abraham and the origin of the kingdom of God in the OT. We called these Disruptive Truths of the Kingdom because the world had fallen, and God intruded into fallen history. From the standpoint of man it was a disruption; it's not a disruption as far as He's concerned, He's eternal. In this situation, we talk about the kingdom, and that's a theme in the OT, the Kingdom of God. And Abraham is told that kings shall come out from Him, and they shall rule, they shall have dominion. In the Exodus we have God

starting His theocratic kingdom. When we come to Mt Sinai we have Him giving the constitution of the theocratic kingdom. What was the constitution? The Mosaic Law. Watch it here, because this is a point that we will see again and again in the next two or three lessons. Where's the Church in all this? That's the big question. The Church is not visible at all in any of this kingdom business. This is all Israel. The Church has nothing to do with this in the OT, because the Church doesn't exist in the OT. It's Israel and Israel alone that's in this. It's Jewish; it's a Jewish versus Gentile issue. Forget all the NT, the NT hasn't come yet.

So you have this kingdom, and we know as we go through this kingdom, there was discipline in the kingdom, the blessing and cursing on Israel, not the Church, on Israel, and we said that one of the paradoxes that we're left with toward the end of the OT is this: how can a holy God, the King of Israel, bring sinful people into an everlasting kingdom? How can they ever get security as sinful people? And just to emphasize the point, what did God do to people who sinned back here? He disciplined them and what was the point of all the discipline? The point was that He's a holy King and He will not tolerate sin in His kingdom. He rules His kingdom with a rod of iron. He's a holy God.

Then in 586BC the kingdom disappeared at the Exile as any kind of visible, geopolitical entity. During this period the prophets spoke of a future kingdom; that one day God would restore the kingdom on a far greater scale. Here's a question for Bible interpretation. If you were a reader of the prophecies, not now in the NT, but if you were a reader of the prophecies of Jeremiah, the prophecies of Daniel, of Zechariah, what would we think when we read the words "kingdom of God?" Let's think about that before we get screwed up, because believe me, this is a central point. If you miss it here you'll miss the rest of the whole discussion, so that's why I want to take a few minutes and think about this.

What would you have if you just had the OT in your head, and somebody came to you and told you the kingdom of God is coming; repent for the kingdom of God is at hand? How would you interpret that? Would you interpret that to be an inner spiritual thing? Or would you interpret it to be a geopolitical thing? Geopolitical! What was it back in David's time? What was the historic context of word usage? That's how you define words. Was there

spirituality to it? You bet there was, of course there's spirituality with it because God kicked people out of it when they rebelled spiritually against Him. So there's spirituality there. But what else is there besides just spirituality? Physical existence, physical people in physical bodies in a physical land in a physical location, doing physical things, building physical temples.

So the kingdom of God is not heaven. We've got to watch it here because there's sloppiness in our thinking. The kingdom of God is not a synonym for heaven. People get that because they skip the OT and start with the NT and they just float off into outer space never understanding the kingdom was defined long before Jesus and the NT. Two-thirds of the Bible is OT. Why don't we spend two-thirds of our time preaching, teaching and learning it? We both know we can go out of here and examine 100 different pulpits and go into any of them on a Sunday morning and where's the sermon being taken from? OT or NT? Then we wonder why everybody is screwed up. The point we're making here is that you always define words in the Bible in basically the first usage and then you build from there. You don't work your way back from the NT. And the word "kingdom" has its roots in the OT as something physical, something that is land oriented, something centered on Jerusalem and something that has to do with Jewish kings. That's the kingdom.

The question the Jews asked was when the kingdom of God is restored is it restored before or after the judgment and resurrection? That was the question being tossed around in the centuries before Jesus came. Let's go back to our vocabulary. We've already learned two words: mortality and immortality. If the kingdom of God comes *before* the judgment & resurrection, is it made up of mortal people or immortal people? If it comes *before* the judgment & resurrection it's talking about people in their mortal bodies, and it would be a mortal population that dwells in the kingdom of God, it's a kingdom inside history.

On the other hand, if the kingdom of God comes *after* the judgment & resurrection, now what are we talking about? We're talking about people in resurrection bodies and then the kingdom of God is made up of immortal people, it's a kingdom that's outside of history in eternity. So if you drew this chart then you might want to add mortal people on this side and immortal on that side, that's a difference. Now this really gets complicated in the NT.



We're just beginning right here. So in the picture what I've tried to show you is that in the pre-NT version of this conflict they had a question about the timing and nature of the kingdom of God. Does the kingdom of God come on the history side or on the eternity side of the judgment/resurrection?

Now, in the NT when the Church came along on the Day of Pentecost another problem arises. Here we're just sketching problems, later we'll solve the problems. Now with the Church a new question comes, "What is the relationship of the Church to the Kingdom?"

In other words, before we debated the nature and the timing of the kingdom; is it in history or eternity; is it before or after the resurrection? We add to that where is the Church in all this? And men have divided over whether the Church was a 'spiritualized' version of the kingdom of God or if the Church was only a parenthesis before the future kingdom of God.

So is the Church to be identified with the Kingdom here in history or is it identified with the kingdom over here in eternity or does it fit somewhere else? What's the place of the Church in the kingdom program? So, one of the keys is: what is the relationship of the thing called "Church" to the thing called "Kingdom?" Are they identical? Are they different? If they're different, then what is their relationship to one another?

There are three viewpoints that developed. There are only three possible viewpoints that could develop. They came to be called premillennial, amillennial and postmillennial because it's the Christian way of saying it's revolving around Christ.

### PREMILLENNIAL VIEW

PRESENT ----- O ----- X ----- ETERNITY  
Christ's Return      Triumphant Kingdom of God      Judgment & Resurrection

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### AMILLENNIAL VIEW

PRESENT ----- O ----- X ----- ETERNITY  
Christ's Return      Judgment & Resurrection

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### POSTMILLENNIAL VIEW

PRESENT ----- O ----- X ----- ETERNITY  
Triumphant Kingdom of God      Christ's Return      Judgment & Resurrection

First the word “millennial.” Why millennial? Turn to Rev 20:1; this is why it’s called the Millennial Kingdom. “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. <sup>2</sup>And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, <sup>3</sup>and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while. <sup>4</sup>Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. <sup>5</sup>The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup>Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years. <sup>7</sup>And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison...” Now if you count the number of times it says a thousand years I think you’ll find it seven times. The Greek word there for thousand is *chilia* and the early Christians who believed in a literal thousand years were called chiliasts because of this passage. The Latin



vulgate translated it *mille*, a thousand and that's where we got this vocabulary word from, the Millennium. This is actually what the word means, a thousand years. Just as a side, those of you who have the vocabulary down, do you notice something very peculiar about this passage? Let's look at a thousand year span. What happens at the beginning of the thousand years according to this passage? There's a resurrection. He says they came alive again, those who had been killed, and they participated in the first resurrection. Are those mortal or are they immortal people? They're immortal, and they reigned with Christ a thousand years. So interestingly this thousand year period has a reign of immortals, we'll see later it also has mortals. And then of course, there is the end, then eternity, Rev. 21. We have a funny situation in this millennium. This is why it gets so messy and I wanted you to get sharp with the vocabulary first, get the categories nice and clean before we get screwed up.

So there's a strange situation here in the text. Remember early in the Framework I made a big deal in pointing out Gen 6:1-4. What was that passage about? It talks about the sons of God going into the daughters of men. What kind of men, mortal or immortal? Mortal, they were Noah's uncles and all his friends. So they're all mortal bodies walking around, but who was walking around with them? The sons of God which are angels. So here you seem to have in the Millennial Kingdom a situation not unlike the strange situation that preceded the Flood, where apparently mortal human beings had intercourse of some sort with immortal beings. So in this thousand years we tend to have a similar mixture going on.

There's a lot of hairy stuff happening here, but today all I want to do is introduce the vocabulary. The Millennial Kingdom comes from Rev 20, that's where it got its name. Now if you look on that diagram you'll see there's a prefix to millennial: "pre," "a," and "post." Premillennial means Christ returns before the millennium, and if you look on the diagram you can see that Christ returns before the millennial kingdom. After the kingdom comes eternity. That's the premillennial view of history. Christ comes back; the kingdom of God in Premillennialism is inside history for a literal thousand years of this mixture or mortal and immortal, and after that comes eternity. That's Premillennialism, Christ's return precedes the millennium, mortals and immortals dwell together for a thousand years much like the pre-Flood world.

The Amillennial view is that there isn't any millennium, a- is the negation of a word so a-millennium means no millennium and in this view they're saying the kingdom is identical with the Church. It's not something separate and Christ returns after the Church and that's it, that's the end of history and we go into eternity. So the Church and the millennium are not separated in this view, they're seen as one event, complex but one basic event. That's Amillennialism, no millennium.

Then the postmillennial view says post, afterwards, after the millennium Christ comes. So they believe in a Triumphant Kingdom of God in history and after it is there, then Christ comes back and eternity begins. You'll see there are parallels and differences in these views, which I'm trying to summarize with another chart. These are three checkpoints from the standpoint of Christ's return, the kingdom and evil. We'll use these three checkpoints over and over. They're not the only checkpoints that can exist, but it will help you just to think about these three points. Look at the chart and we'll do a comparison.

### MILLENNIAL CHECKPOINTS

CHECKPOINT	Premillennialism	Postmillennialism	Amillennialism
Christ returns to end history	No	Yes	Yes
The Kingdom will triumph over world culture	Yes	Yes	No
Evil will increase before Christ's Return	Yes	No	Yes

Table 1. Comparison of the three millennial viewpoints from the three checkpoints discussed in the lesson.

Let's take the first checkpoint. Does Christ's return end history or doesn't it? Premillennialist, what would he say? Does it end history? No. What about the Amillennialist, does Christ's return in the Amillennial scheme end history? Yes. What about the postmillennialist? Yes. So the Premillennialist is the odd person out on that first checkpoint, Christ's return to end history, and Premillennialism is against the other two in saying no, Christ's return does

not end history. I don't want anybody to be fuzzy here as we go on, so we will repeat over and over, there will be a lot of repetition.

The second checkpoint: Does the kingdom of God actually triumph over world culture. What would the Premillennialist say? Is the kingdom of God in history or is it in eternity in the premillennial view? It's in history because there are mortal people in it. There are immortal people too, but there are mortal people in this thing, history hasn't ended, eternity hasn't begun in the premillennial view. So the kingdom of God precedes eternity, it comes into history and revolutionizes culture in the climactic age of the history of man. Human history culminates in the triumphant kingdom of God over all the earth in history. So the Premillennialist says yes, there's a Kingdom of God that undoes what we know as world culture, Christ will return and that will end the kingdom of man, the kingdom of God will come. What about the Postmillennialist? Does he have a triumphant Kingdom of God in history? Yes, he does. He puts it before Christ's return so it's the Church that builds the Kingdom and subdues world culture with biblical culture and when we've finished Christ returns and we hand the kingdom over to Him. What about the Amillennialist on this point? Does the kingdom come to triumph over world culture? He has to answer no because he doesn't believe in a Millennial Kingdom, this is all spiritual, so there is no geopolitical, physical kingdom that ever does come. On this checkpoint it's Amillennialism that's the odd man out. Postmillennialists and Premillennialists agree there's got to be a triumph, a climax to human history in which the kingdom of God appears in a physical, geopolitical form.

The third checkpoint: will evil increase in history before Christ returns? How do the Premillennialists answer? They say it isn't getting any better, so the Premillennialist says yes; evil will increase until Christ comes back. What about the Postmillennialist? He says no, history is going to get better and better until Christ returns. The Postmillennialist has the very optimistic view of history that evil will actually decrease prior to Christ's return. What about the Amillennialist? He agrees with the Premillennialist here? History is not going to get better before Christ comes back.

Now, those are the three views historically in the Church. Next time we're going to cover the first one, the Premillennial view. Then we'll go to the "a" and "post" and then we'll go to the resolution. What is the real issue at stake

and what I'm going to try to do, my methodology of presentation is I'm going to try to be as honest as I can to each of the three positions, you'll see where I stand later as we go on. If you know the doctrinal statement of this Church you know where I'm going. So for next time get familiar with these diagrams and be prepared to go into premillennialism next time.

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