



martyrs  
CHURCH

# autumn teaching week

## *The End Times*

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> - Friday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2011  
Dr Alan Cairns



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## A TEACHING WEEK FOR ALL CHRISTIANS

Hosted by Martyrs Youth Fellowship

*“...Tell us, when shall these things be?  
and what shall be the sign of thy coming,  
and of the end of the world?”*

Matt 24:3



**THE END TIMES**  
**The Millennial Reign of Christ**  
**Daniel 2:44-46; 7:12-14; Revelation 20:1-6**

The subject of the Millennium is a vexed one. There are three main streams of thought, reflecting three different schemes of interpretation:

- **Pre-millennialists** believe that after He returns Christ will reign in Jerusalem for 1000 years.  
They adopt futurism, the view that the great prophecies of the Kingdom wait to be fulfilled at and after the return of Christ.  
They employ a literal hermeneutic—that is, they interpret prophecy regarding the future by the same interpretive rules as have been used with regard to fulfilled prophecy. That means, they take the prophets literally, though not literalistically: They admit there may be symbolic language, but insist that symbolic or not the events predicted by the prophets are literal events. And they reject any interpretation that spiritualizes the text of the prophets for no better reason than that the interpreter's scheme demands it.
- **Post-millennialists** believe that the church will see a golden age, perhaps a literal 1000 years but at least a protracted period, before the Lord's return.  
They usually adopt *historicism*, seeing the Book of Revelation as a symbolic record of history from Pentecost to the Second Coming. The Old Testament kingdom prophecies, applying them to the Church not Israel.  
Some do see a restoration of Israel but they see it as a result of church evangelism and discount any reign of Christ on the throne of David in Jerusalem.
- **A-millennialists** dismiss all thought of a thousand year period and see the millennium as a description of the period between Christ's ascension and His return. Most of them adopt a form of *preterism*, the belief that the prophecies in Matthew 24 and Luke 21 were entirely, or mainly, fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. They adopt a thoroughly *spiritualizing* manner of interpreting the prophets.

Perhaps the crux of the whole controversy depends on how we see the relation of the Church to the Kingdom, of Israel to the Church, and of Israel to the Kingdom.

The subject of the Kingdom is too extensive for us to deal with here. Suffice it to say that both post-millennialism and a-millennialism relate the Church and the Kingdom so closely as to make them virtually synonymous—different descriptions of the same thing.

Pre-millennialists may agree that the Church is the current expression of the Kingdom, the great body of Old Testament prophecy on the subject shows that it is largely eschatological (others disagree and make the Kingdom entirely eschatological).

I am among those who see the Church as the current expression of the Kingdom that awaits the return of the King to see its full manifestation on the earth. Thus I will give reasons for my position and answer the main objections to it.

- I. Only pre-millennialism does justice to the statements of Scripture regarding the resurrection of the dead.
- A. Both Post- and A-millennialists insist on the simultaneous resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. They cite Christ's words that place the resurrection of saints and sinners at *the last day*, John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48. They boldly proclaim that the Bible nowhere teaches a divided resurrection.
- B. But this assertion is plainly wrong!
- If the texts just cited were all the Bible had to say on the subject we would have to agree—but it actually makes very clear statements teaching a divided resurrection.
1. Revelation 20:4-5
  2. Daniel 12:1-3
    - a. *Many* does not mean *all*. So Daniel predicts either a divided or partial resurrection, but certainly not a general resurrection: *Many from among the sleepers in the grave* is positive proof of this.
    - b. *Some ... some* in the AV is in the Hebrew text *These ... those*.
      - i. The Hebrew *elleh* “is never repeated in any other passage in the Hebrew Bible, in the sense of taking up distributively any general class which has been previously mentioned” (S.P. Tregelles).
      - ii. In simple terms, that means that the Hebrew *elleh ... elleh* does not mean “some of the many ... and some others of the many.”
      - iii. It has only one possible meaning: *THESE* [the many who then rise] and *THOSE* [who do not then rise].
    - c. Thus Daniel 12:2 is a very clear witness to a divided resurrection, something none but pre-millennialism is capable of accepting.
  3. Post- and A-millennial attempts to deal with this evidence are pitiful.
    - a. Some, such as Louis Berkhof, *ignore* it completely.
    - b. Others claim, in defiance of Hebrew usage, that *many* means *all*.
    - c. Others, such as E.J. Young, admit that *many* cannot mean *all* but insist that somehow this does not militate against the theory of a general resurrection!
    - d. Some in this last group explain that the *many* are those who die in the tribulation, some of whom will rise to everlasting life and others to everlasting ruin.
    - e. But this will not do! The prophecy is about Daniel's people.
      - i. Are they Jews? How does it come, then, that Jews (i.e., people not in the church) can be raised to everlasting life?
      - ii. Are they Christians (spiritual Israelites)? How then will any of them be resurrected to everlasting shame and contempt?

4. The simple fact is that Daniel 12:2, a key text, *refuses to be forced into any Post- or A-millennial theory of the resurrection.*
5. The Pre-millennial position does justice to Daniel's text and agrees with the plain statement of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:23-24 (often misused to attack the belief in a divided resurrection):
  - a. The text states: *But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority.*
  - b. Many argue that Paul states categorically that the end follows immediately upon the coming of Christ, leaving no room for a millennial reign—verse 24, *THEN...*
  - c. But that is not the meaning of the text. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul uses three adverbs to denote what we mean by *then*.
    - i. In verse 5-7, he uses *epeita*, a word that denotes succession and may or may not mean that there is no period of delay between the events (though in this chapter he does use it to include the idea of unmentioned time lapses, v. 5-7, 23).
    - ii. In verse 24, he uses the adverb *eita*. Why does he change from *epeita*? Probably because *epeita* while both denotes a successional order—that is a sequence of connected events—*eita* carries the idea of *consequence* in it (Donegan, *Greek-English Lexicon*).
    - iii. Paul is not establishing a detailed order of prophetic events; he is rather showing that the resurrection of the saints is an exercise of Christ's kingly power over death, the consequence of which is that He will subdue all enemies and deliver up the kingdom to His Father.
6. What then is the meaning of *the last day* in John 6? Pre-millennialists understand it as the millennial day, *the day of Christ*. Saints are raised at the beginning of it, sinners at the end of it.

## II. Only Pre-millennialism does justice to the plain statements of Old Testament prophecy regarding the Messianic Kingdom.

- A. Daniel 2:44-46—here the great growth of the Kingdom *follows* the defeat of the final Gentile empire in world history.
- B. Ezekiel 37:11-14—These verses have the nation of Israel in view, as verses 16-17, 22-24 make clear—*I will make them ONE NATION in the LAND upon the mountains of Israel; and ONE KING shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more*

*at all. ... So shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they shall have one shepherd.*

**NOTE: One, nation, one land, one king.**

Only pre-millennialism accepts the obvious meaning of these passages. To take them as a prophecy fulfilled when Judah came out of Babylonian captivity is ludicrous, a plain contradiction of verse 23, for the Jews did deeply transgress after their return.

To turn such passages into a spiritual promise to the church may be allowable by way of *application*—for there is a fundamental unity in all God's gracious actions toward all sorts of men—but as a method of *interpretation* it is inadmissible.

**III. Only pre-millennialism can do justice to those Scriptures that predict a restoration of Israel with the Lord reigning in person in Jerusalem, after which she will never again apostatize or be downtrodden by her enemies.**

Isaiah 51:22; 52:1; 60:18; 62:4, 8; 65:19; Jeremiah 23:4; 30:8 (note the reference in verse 7 to the Great Tribulation); Ezekiel 34: 22, 29; 36: 14-15, 30; 37:22; 43:7; Joel 2:19; Amos 9:15; Nahum 1:15; Zechariah 14:11.

These view her as a nation in her own land and have never been fulfilled.

On any other scheme but pre-millennialism they will remain unfulfilled.

**IV. Only Pre-millennialism does justice to prophetic language that demands a literal interpretation.**

Other schemes spiritualize what the Lord declares to be literal.

Why? Not because the language or contexts demands it or even lends itself to it but because of a predetermined scheme of interpretation.

Such a process is not *exegesis* but *eisegesis*.

**Zechariah 12:6 is a crucial text: *In that day ... Jerusalem shall be inhabited again IN HER OWN PLACE, even in Jerusalem.***

**A. The time frame:** *That day* refers to the time of Christ's return: see verse 10 with Matthew 24:29, 30 and Revelation 1:7.

**B. Jerusalem here is literal**—as it is also in 14:2-4 and therefore also in 14:8-9. Yet all but Pre-millennialists spiritualize these passages.

**V. Only Pre-millennialists allow the clearly defined periods of time mentioned in Revelation to have their natural meaning.**

According to A-millennialists the 1000 years of chapter 20 *does not refer to ANY specific period of time* but to the entire course of church history after Pentecost.

According to Post-millennialists the 42 months of 11:2; 13:5 and the 1260 days of 11:3 and 12:6 cannot mean what they say—they rather mean 1260 years!

VI. Post-millennialism and A-millennialism stand on fundamental errors of interpretation.

A. Post-millennialism adopts the *year-day* theory of prophetic interpretation.

It is based on a misuse of a few misapplied texts:

1. **Numbers 14:34**, where Moses said that as the spies had spent 40 days searching the Promised Land the Israelites would spend 40 years in the wilderness as a punishment for their unbelief.

Obviously in this passage *days* means days and *years* means years.

2. **Ezekiel 4:4-6**, where Ezekiel is commanded to lie on left side for 390 days and on his right side for 40 days, each day representing a year of judgment on Israel and Judah respectively.

Again, in this passage—which is not one of symbolic utterance at all but of symbolic action, the significance of the days in which would be utterly incomprehensible were it not that God explains His intention to the prophet—uses *days* to mean days, otherwise Ezekiel would have been lying there for a total of 430 years!

3. **Daniel 9:24-27**, Daniel's vision of the 70 prophetic weeks.

But there is no mention of days here at all. And the *weeks* are simply a series of a period distributed into seven parts.

4. The Year-Day theory has been forced to change its interpretation of prophetic events as history has progressed, so that now events that earlier post-millennialists cited in the outworking of prophecy are now dismissed as almost irrelevant.

History has proved the utter failure of the Year Day theory.

B. A-millennialists make the present age the millennium—the very same period that Jesus calls *the times of the Gentiles*, Luke 21:24.

It simply cannot be both.

C. A-millennialists and Post-millennialists generally hold to *preterism*, according to which even *the sign of the Son of man* and the nations' sight of *the Son of man coming in his glory* were fulfilled in Titus's destruction of Jerusalem.

D. A matter of concern:

If we are free to explain away the plain meaning of such passages to mean something other than the actual, physical Second Coming of Christ, what defence do we have against the liberals who seek to explain away all prophetic language?

**VII. A-millennialism and Post-millennialism contradict Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3.**

- A. A-millennialism does so by placing the day of Christ—His millennial reign—right here and now. Paul condemns this view in verse 2 and teaches that it is not *at hand*, literally *now present*.
- B. Post-millennialists do so by replacing the apostle's inspired order of events with another.
  - 1. He says *apostasy, the revelation of Antichrist, the coming of Christ, the day of Christ*.
  - 2. They postulate *millennial blessing, apostasy, the coming of Christ*

**VIII. Only Pre-millennialism supplies a satisfactory interpretation of Revelation, especially chapter 20.**

- A. Postmillennialism is usually **historist**, seeing the apocalyptic symbols fulfilled in the events of history, and sometimes **preterist**, seeing their fulfilment all or mainly in the destruction of Jerusalem.
- B. **A-millennialism** is usually **preterist**, using an idealist interpretation of the book, that is spiritualizing its symbols to convey moral and spiritual messages.
- C. **Both are all at sea when it comes to chapter 20.**
  - 1. According to both Satan is now bound—in contradiction of 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Corinthians 4:4.
  - 2. Neither can make sense of *the first resurrection*. Usually interpret it as regeneration or spiritual quickening. What then of *the rest of the dead* who live not again *until the thousand years were finished*, verse 5? Logically, any spiritualizing of this passage leads to universalism.
  - 3. The objection that if Satan's binding is literal the chain that binds him must be literal is simply ludicrous. 2 Peter 2:4: There can be no doubt that the fallen angels Peter speaks of are literally reserved in hell to the day of judgment. So are the chains of darkness he says they are held by chains made up of metal links? *Just because a figure of speech or a symbol is used in describing an event does not make it any less literal.*

**IX. The main objection to the doctrine of Christ's millennial reign on earth is the idea that it involves the reintroduction of animal sacrifices in a millennial temple under the ministry of Aaronic priests of the line of Zadok, according to Ezekiel 40-48.**

- A. The problem is real, but it bears just as heavily on the other schemes as well.



Those who try to spiritualize the chapters find it an impossible task. Ezekiel is describing an actual temple with actual sacrificial rituals or words are meaningless.

- B. In reality the problem has to do with Israel's restoration more than on the millennium.

Many who are not pre-millennialists are forced by Scripture to accept a restoration for Israel—they must face the question of Ezekiel 4:48 just as much as pre-millennialists.

- C. Let it be said once and for all that our starting point in meeting the problem is that in the light of the book of Hebrews there can never be a return to Levitical animal sacrifices.

Hebrews 8:13 makes it clear that the meaning of Jeremiah 31:31<sup>f</sup> is that God was stating to the Jewish people that the Levitical system was *ready to vanish away*.

So there can be no question of a reintroduction of the Levitical system.

- D. So what of Ezekiel's temple. I can only suggest an answer:

1. Ezekiel gives the plans of an actual temple, but the entire project was conditional on the wholehearted obedience of the Jews on returning from Babylon: 43:11.
2. That condition was never met and Ezekiel's temple was never built, but a much inferior one, Haggai 1:4, 9-10; 2:3.
3. And yet the Lord promised glory for the house they did build, Haggai 2:9.
4. And John used some of the details of Ezekiel's vision to describe the future glories of the New Jerusalem, Revelation 22:1-3—with this major difference: there will be *no temple* there, Revelation 21:22.

We have only scratched the surface of a vast subject. Let us fix our eyes on the certainty of our Lord's return and live with that in view, remembering the promise of Revelation 3:21.