

Session 3 Historic Premillennialism and the Victorious Church

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE END TIMES

- A. It is important to have a biblical perspective on the end times because what we believe about the end times greatly affects how we approach the work of the kingdom. Ideas have consequences.

This is our third session here on the Millennial Kingdom. We are looking at historic premillennialism and the victorious church. That is a mouthful. I want you all to say that, “Historic premillennialism and the victorious church.” I am giving you my opinion, my view, and the view of our leadership team. There are three or four major views in the body of Christ. I want to say this is the view that we think best represents what the Scripture says. We have honor and respect for men and women in the body of Christ who have different views on this point, as long as they magnify Jesus. That is what we really care about—that and honoring the Word of God. I am going to present this without stopping every time to qualify it and say this is our view and our opinion. Currently this is how we understand the Scriptures. We are open to new and fresh clarity by the Holy Spirit through others in the body of Christ teaching us. We always want to stay open and teachable.

It is important to have a biblical perspective on the end times because what we believe affects how we approach the work of the kingdom. I talk to some believers who say that they don’t really know what they believe. I say, “You might not have it clear, but it does affect your outlook, even if you don’t know it does.” Even a vague view has consequences. Ideas have consequences.

- B. I do not ask anyone to accept my views; rather I urge you to think for yourself. Truth is never hurt by careful scrutiny, but is confirmed. We must boldly challenge all the ideas that are being taught and refuse any that we cannot clearly see in Scripture for ourselves.

¹¹They [the Bereans] received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (Acts 17:11)

I like to repeat several times each semester that I do not ask anybody to accept my views on the end times. I want you to think for yourself. If you cannot see it with your eyes in your Bible, then reject it. I encourage you to boldly challenge any idea that anybody tells you in this place—really anywhere in the body of Christ—but do it with humility and tenderness. Learn to think for yourself as many of you do already. Those of you who do not yet, be committed to think for yourself. Search the Scripture like the Bereans did. Reject any idea you cannot see in the Scripture with your own eyes in your own Bible.

- C. We honor the godliness and wisdom of many who uphold different views, but some errors in understanding will leave many unprepared and even offended at Jesus in the end-time pressures.

We honor the wisdom and godliness of many who hold different views on the end times. We can work with them in many ways in the kingdom. However, I really believe some of the errors will leave some of the body of Christ offended at the Lord’s leadership in the end times. I do not think all the errors are neutral. They have consequences. Some errors will leave believers unprepared and even offended at the Lord’s leadership. They will say, “We thought the Bible said this will happen. How come that is happening? How can I trust the Word?” I think it is important we put time and energy to discover what the Bible says and then say what the Bible says.

- D. The most controversial point that we teach is that the Church will be raptured *after* going through the tribulation in great victory. This differs from the pretribulation rapture view that teaches that the Church will be raptured at any moment, missing the end-time revival and crisis.

The most controversial point our leadership team holds is that we believe the church will be raptured at the end of the Tribulation, not before the Tribulation. This view differs with the popular pretribulation rapture view. However, this view is not unique to us. Many, many ministries hold this view. We believe this, along with thousands—tens of thousands—of teaching ministries around the world.

We believe the church will go through the Tribulation period, but the church will go through it in victory. It will be the church's greatest hour. It will not be God's judgment on the church. It will be God's judgment on the Antichrist kingdom. The church will operate in power and victory second to no other time in history.

- E. There are several popular end-time views taught today. One is ***too pessimistic*** (dispensational premillennialism) with its pretribulation rapture. In total contrast, another view is ***too optimistic*** (postmillennialism) with its total Christianizing of all society before Jesus returns. This view claims that things will mostly get better. This overly optimistic view will lead to confusion and disappointment. *The power and promises of God will be released in fullness in the Millennium, yet are still released in part in this age and in greater measures as we get closer to Jesus' return.*

There are several popular end-time views today. I am going to be really general here. I will get more specific in a few moments. Some views are too pessimistic. They see too much negative. Some are too optimistic. They see the total Christianizing of all society before the Lord returns. I like optimism, but I want to be faithful to the witness of Scripture. The overly optimistic view claims things are mostly only going to get better and better. Though I believe in optimism and in preaching hope, the idea that things are mostly going to get better and better is going to lead to serious confusion and disappointment. That is a serious deception. Things are going to get better and better, but at the same time things are going to get worse and worse. Righteousness and victory in the church will reach all-time high, I believe, more than any time in history, but society will be darker. There will be more demonic activity and more trouble, and the judgments of God will rage against the Antichrist's work beyond any other time in history. It is going to get a lot worse and a lot better simultaneously.

- F. IHOPU leadership teaches the ***historic premillennial*** view of the end times with a post-tribulation rapture and emphasizing a victorious, praying Church (Eph. 5:27; Rev. 19:7). The Church will be victorious in love with power during the most dramatic time in history. This view gives us confidence and urgency to participate dynamically with Jesus now and in the coming revival.

The view that our leadership teaches on our mission base and at IHOPU is the historic premillennial view, the post-tribulation rapture view of the end times, with one addition, as we believe in a victorious church. We believe in historic premillennialism with a victorious church. You see, as I will cover in a moment, not everybody in history who upheld historic premillennialism saw a victorious church in the end. That might be a new idea to some of you. Some of you are saying, "I don't even know what you are talking about." I will break this down specifically in a few moments.

I believe the church will reach the highest point of victory and power that they have ever known, even beyond the book of Acts. I believe this view—the historic premillennial view with a victorious church—is the one most faithful to Scripture. That is my opinion. That is my view. I believe it gives us confidence to participate with the Lord now and in the future. It gives us urgency to participate, not just confidence, but urgency.

You do **not** have to accept this view to be a part of our spiritual family here. You do **not** have to accept this view to be a part of our mission base on IHOPKC staff. You **do** have to accept it to be a teacher here. If you are going to teach the Word here, you have to accept that view and promote it. You can hold another view and still be a first-class citizen in our spiritual family and be on our staff even, but for everyone who teaches, this is a nonnegotiable to us. We believe this is the biblical view, and we are taking a bold stand together in our entire teaching team, which involves many, many people. Maybe up to a hundred or more Bible teachers that we have on our base, possibly more than that. We are in unity about this.

- G. The harvest *both* of righteousness *and* of sin will come to fullness at the end of the age resulting in the greatest outpouring of the Spirit and the greatest crisis in history—the tribulation.

³⁰**Let both [wheat and tares] grow together until the harvest... (Mt. 13:30)**

¹¹**For the Day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:11)**

Both the harvest of righteousness and the harvest of sin will come to fullness at the end of the age. By the harvest of righteousness—which is really good—I mean the maturity of righteousness. The harvest of sin is the maturity of sin, which is a bad thing. They will both come to fullness at the end of the age. I believe that is what Jesus taught. He said in Matthew 13, “Both the wheat and the tares will grow together”—they will mature together—“until the harvest at the end of the age.”

I believe this will result in the greatest harvest of history, the greatest number of souls. I believe millions of intercessors are believing the Lord now for a billion souls. Multitudes of believers are actively believing God for a billion souls in the coming harvest. I also believe it will be the greatest crisis in history at the same time, called the Great Tribulation. Joel called it the day of the Lord. He said that the day of the Lord is great—the great outpouring of the Spirit—and it will be very terrible—the great tribulation against the Antichrist. The tribulation will not just be the Antichrist against the saints. It will be the judgment of God upon the nations that are embodying that antichrist spirit.

We saints do not take the judgment of God into our own hands. We simply pray for mercy, we call on Jesus to be glorified, and we trust the Lord to release the judgments that He wants to release. I have been asked many times, “Do we pray for the release of the judgment of God?” No. In this hour we do not. We pray for the mercy of God. The Lord knows when to release His judgments.

There is a time—the final three and a half years—when the saints will actually pray that the judgments written in the Word of God will be released on the Antichrist kingdom. We will be participating with the Lord, with His leadership in that. It will be His initiative. It will be His doing. We will be blessing, doing acts of love and service. We will be asking the Lord to stop injustice. The prayer, “Stop injustice,” will be a prayer for the intervention of God upon the Antichrist kingdom, which will be the greatest perpetrator of all of history.

- H. **Many unique dynamics will occur in Jesus’ end-time plan** as He transitions the earth from this present age to the age to come and drives evil from the earth forever. He has a plan to intervene to confront oppression and corruption in a way that He has never done before (Rev. 19:2). God’s judgments will remove all that hinders love so that multitudes are saved and matured in love. He uses the least severe means to reach the greatest number of people at the deepest level of love.

Many unique dynamics will happen in Jesus’ end-time plan. There is that generation—I do not know what timeframe that is, whether that is twenty years or 100 years—there is that timeframe, and I am vague about that, where things escalate rapidly over decades, where the power of God being released in the midst of the people escalates rapidly, and where sin and darkness escalate rapidly. I believe we are in that escalation period

now. That is just my opinion. I believe there are people on the earth today—they may be the two years olds, I do not know—who I believe will see the Lord's return in their lifetime. That is an opinion. That is not a prophecy.

I have had folks ask, "Wow, did the Lord show you that?" No, no, He did not. It is my observation from looking at the signs of the times that Jesus and the apostles indicated, that the prophets of the Old Testament indicated. We study the signs of the times, and many of them are escalating together on a global level for the first time. It could go on and on. This could go on some decades and decades, or it might speed up. I do not know. I do not know if I will be here when that happens, and I do not know if my children or grandchildren will. They really could be. I believe it is not too soon to begin equipping the next generation with what the Bible says about these things. That is our urgency: to see what the Bible says about it. Not to try to predict a time or a date. We have no interest in that kind of thing.

I have never had an interest in trying to know exactly when it will happen. I do not even care. I just want to prepare people in my lifetime. The Lord is wise, powerful, and loving. He will do what He wants to do. Someone might ask if I hope that I am here when it happens. I say that I do not care if I will be here or if I will not be here. Either way I will be with Him. I do not even have an opinion about my own personal life and the end-time timeframe. The Lord will be magnified in His purpose. As we get closer to that timeframe, things will intensify, both good and bad. They will escalate.

God has a plan. Jesus is going to confront oppression and corruption at that time beyond any other time in history. He will confront particularly the epicenter of oppression and corruption that is the Antichrist kingdom. God's judgments will remove everything that hinders love. His judgments are not a contradiction to His love. They are an expression of His love. His judgments will intervene to confront what hinders love. I believe the great principle related to God's judgment in that generation is that Jesus will use the least severe means to reach the greatest number of people at the deepest level of love possible without violating anybody's free will. He will use the least severe level. The end time judgments are severe. I believe He could say, "That is the least severe level I could use to accomplish reaching the greatest number at the deepest level of love."

II. APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY: NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH LIFE

We sometimes use the phrase "apostolic Christianity." When we talk about apostolic Christianity, what we mean by that—I have used that phrase for many, many years—I mean New Testament Christianity. That is the Christianity that the early apostles taught and led. That is what I mean by apostolic Christianity. It is the New Testament record of their leadership and what they did.

- A. The Lord is returning for a victorious Church (Eph. 5:27; Rev. 19:7). Because of the element of victory, we sometimes refer to our historic premillennial view as **apostolic premillennialism**. We use the term *apostolic* to refer to the vision, values and victory of the New Testament Church.

²⁷ **...that He might present her to Himself a glorious church... (Eph. 5:27)**

⁷ **...for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. (Rev. 19:7)**

I believe the Lord is returning for a victorious church, a church that is filled with His glory. I do not believe He is coming back for a church limping along in a Laodicean spirit, barely making it and barely holding on. I believe the church will be operating in the glory of God. Revelation 19 says, "The bride will make herself ready." It will be in the power of God, the grace of God. It will be the power of the cross. It will be God's power, but she will freely respond, and she will be ready at the time of His coming. Meaning, she will be in agreement with her Bridegroom King, the Lord Jesus.

*Because we believe this apostolic or this New Testament Christianity will emerge, we sometimes talk about apostolic premillennialism. What I mean is historic premillennialism with a victorious church. When I use the word **apostolic**, I use that word to mean the vision, the values, and the victory of the New Testament church. When I say apostolic Christianity, I mean the vision of the New Testament church. God is going to have a people across the earth—I mean a billion, two billion—I do not know the number. All the streams in the body of Christ that are functioning when the Lord returns will be operating in the power of God. Someone may ask, “Is it this group or that group?” I would say that it is the whole body of Christ. He is going to bring the church to unity. It is not going to be one little group that is right. It will be multitudes, millions of different ministries and streams, but believers all being under the Holy Spirit’s leadership brought to the unity of the faith.*

- B. Apostolic Christianity, or New Testament Christianity, will emerge in the end times as the Spirit raises up a victorious Church that operates in unprecedented unity, intimacy, and maturity (Mt. 16:18; 22:37; Jn. 17:21-26; Acts 2:17-21; Eph. 4:13; 5:27; Rev. 7:9; 12:11; 15:2; 19:7).

¹¹He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints... ¹³till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge [intimacy] of the Son of God, to a perfect man [maturity]... (Eph. 4:11-13)

Ephesians 4:13 says that the ministries will function until the whole body of Christ, all of us, come to the unity of the faith. The Holy Spirit has a plan to bring the body of Christ to the unity of the faith. The John 17 prayer will be answered. Some folks will ask, “Well, it is this remnant over here or that little remnant group there?”

I answer, “Your vision of Jesus’ leadership is far too small.” Jesus is a far better leader than Satan is a deceiver. Jesus is an excellent leader. He will have His church in unity, in intimacy with His heart, and in maturity in the things of God. Unity, intimacy, and maturity.

III. WHAT IS APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY?

What is apostolic Christianity? I am laying out these nine very simple points. These are just really simple points, but they will come together, I believe, to give what I believe to be the biblical picture of historic premillennialism with a victorious church. What is apostolic Christianity? I believe it will be the whole body of Christ in that time when the Lord returns. It will be all the groups. You do not have to make sure you join the right group. Every group will be functioning in this before it is over.

- A. ***It is Jesus-centered:*** It has a deep allegiance to Jesus, proclaiming His supremacy, glory, and worth.

It will be Jesus-centered. Apostolic Christianity is Jesus-centered. There is an allegiance to Jesus, to His supremacy, His glory, His worth.

- B. ***It is Church-centered:*** Jesus is building His Church locally and universally, which will openly triumph over all the powers of hell (Mt. 16:18). The local church is central to the purpose of God.

It is church-centered. He is building His church. That is what He is about. The church will openly triumph over the gates of hell.

- C. ***It is wholehearted:*** It embraces holiness and discipleship as the Holy Spirit establishes the first commandment in first place in the Church in relation to Sermon on the Mount lifestyles (Mt. 5-7).

It will be a wholehearted people. Again, a billion, two billion, I do not know the number, but a large number who will walk in the first commandment. They will love God with all of their heart. They will walk in the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle.

- D. ***It operates in supernatural power:*** It heals the sick and operates in all the gifts of the Spirit.

They will operate in the supernatural power of God in the gifts of the Spirit.

- E. ***It grows through prayer and intimacy with God:*** Its ministries flow from a foundation of intimacy with God (Mt. 25:1-13), with persevering faith and prayer that releases the Spirit's power.

Apostolic Christianity will grow in intimacy with God. The ministries will flow out of intimacy with God.

- F. ***It possesses a missionary spirit:*** It is focused on proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom in every nation and every area of society (Mt. 24:14; 28:19). This is referred to as the **Great Commission** or the **cultural mandate**. In the Millennium there will be a continuity of some of our present labors.

New Testament Christianity or apostolic Christianity—I use those synonymously—possesses a missionary spirit. It is engaged in the Great Commission to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to every tribe and tongue, in every sphere of society. Meaning, the kingdom will be proclaimed to the realm of education, to the realm of economics, to the realm of media, to the realm of government. Many will reject it, but there will be God's people in all those spheres that will have God's wisdom for that sphere of life. Many leaders in those spheres will say no, but God will raise up leaders in all those spheres who will manifest a dimension of the kingdom in those spheres of life.

- G. ***It embraces persecution:*** Persecution is part of spiritual warfare for the godly (2 Tim. 3:10-12).

It will embrace and endure persecution. That is part of spiritual warfare for godliness.

- H. ***It engages in God's purpose for Israel:*** The salvation of Israel is a significant aspect of God's end-time plan. Jewish and Gentile believers are unified in salvation as one new man (Eph. 2:15).

It will engage in God's purpose for Israel. There are a number of views concerning God's purpose for Israel, but God's purpose for Israel is a significant part of God's end-time plan. I am not saying we understand it fully. I feel like we have some key points clear from the Scripture. I believe there is more to understand about God's purpose for Israel for all of us.

- I. ***It is free from the wrath of God:*** It is protected from God's wrath through Jesus (Rom. 8:1).

⁹For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord... (1 Thes. 5:9)

It is free from the wrath of God. The reason I say that is because some people think, "Well, if the church goes through the tribulation, we are not free from wrath. The Bible says we are not under the wrath of God." The church will not be under the wrath of God. The Antichrist will be under the wrath of God.

IV. THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

- A. The Millennium is a literal 1,000-year period in which Jesus will rule the whole world from Jerusalem in righteousness, peace, and prosperity (Rev. 20:1-6). Jesus will govern in partnership with resurrected saints to establish a biblically-based social order (Mt. 19:28; 25:23; Lk. 19:17-19; 22:29-30; Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6).

⁴They lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years...⁶They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Rev. 20:4-6)

The Millennial Kingdom, just to review, is a 1000-year period. I believe it is literally a 1000-year period where Jesus will rule the world from Jerusalem in righteousness, peace, and prosperity. We have gone over that the first couple sessions. We will go into a lot more detail in the sessions to follow.

- B. The kingdom of God will be openly manifested worldwide, affecting every sphere of life (politics, economy, education, agriculture, media, technology, environment, social institutions, etc.).
- C. This period of worldwide blessing will be initiated by Jesus' second coming (Isa. 2:1-4; 9:6-9; 11:1-16; 65:17-25; cf. Ps. 2; 110; Mt. 6:10; 17:11; 19:28; 28:19; Acts 1:6; 3:21; Rev. 20:1-6).

V. THREE WRONG VIEWS OF THE END TIMES

I believe there are three wrong views of the end times. I have covered this a little bit, but I want to say it a little bit more. Three wrong views. Or three views that have confusion in them that create trouble. That is what I mean by wrong views. I do not think anybody has a perfectly right view.

- A. **Too negative:** Thinking that all society is destined to fall into the hands of the Antichrist. This view leads people to draw back from changing society now. They say, "Why should we work to bring change to society, if satanic darkness is destined to dominate all society in the tribulation?"

There is the camp that is too negative in the most general sense. They are too negative, believing that all society is destined to fall into the hands of the Antichrist. They teach that the church is going to dwindle down to a little ragged remnant that hangs on until the very end.

This is too negative. It leads people to draw back away from engaging in the Great Commission. The Great Commission is more than soul winning. The Great Commission is soul winning, but it involves proclaiming what Jesus taught to every nation. Not just to every individual in evangelistic outreaches, but proclaiming everything He taught to the dimensions of the earth, to every sphere of society. I believe the gospel is to be preached to the media, to the government, to the education system, to the banking system, to the military. The gospel and the way of God for that sphere of life are to be proclaimed. Many will reject it, but there will be more than we might imagine who will accept it. We do not know the number. It is too negative a view to believe that everything is going to go down. Why polish brass on a sinking ship? I have heard that, "It is all going to go bad anyway. Why even bother with it?" I think that is too negative.

- B. **Too positive:** Thinking that most of society will be transformed before Jesus returns. This view ignores what Scripture says about the coming pressures in society and the necessity of Jesus returning to establish the fullness of the kingdom on earth. Though hope-filled desire is important, it must be tempered by Scripture. We must be loyal to God's end-time plan and wisdom as seen in Scripture and resist exaggerated humanistic optimism.

There is another view that is too positive. It teaches that most of society will be transformed. I do not believe most of society will be. I believe most of society—if most means fifty-one percent. I do not really know those kinds of numbers—I believe there will be a substantial acceleration of profound darkness and demonic activity. I do not know the percentage, of course. So the view that is overly optimistic, too positive, is ignoring what the Scripture says about coming pressures of escalating darkness and increase of demonic activity. These teachers ignore what the Scripture says, that Jesus needs to return as King to Christianize the world. These overly optimistic teachers see the world Christianized before the Lord returns.

I believe we need the physical presence of the King. Not just His presence through the Holy Spirit, but the King Himself will be on the earth when the earth is fully Christianized at the time of the Second Coming. I believe in a hope-filled desire. We need to be filled with hope, but it is hope tempered by the Scripture. We need to be loyal to the wisdom of God, to the Scripture. We must resist exaggerated humanistic optimism, optimism not rooted in the Scripture. We do not want to be overly pessimistic nor do we want to be overly optimistic. We

want to be biblical. I heard one preacher say, “I do not want to be a wide-eyed optimist or a muddy-eyed pessimist. I want to be a wide-eyed realist.”

- C. **Too vague:** Thinking that it is impossible to know what the Scripture says about the end times, so why even try. They ignore the end times, being assured that the future will take care of itself and thus do not have urgency to be prepared in their understanding. Pan-millennial? It will all “pan out.”

The third view that I think is wrong is the view that is too vague. We can only be bold on basic trends in the Scripture that the Scripture is clear on. There are a lot of details we can have opinions about, but we cannot insist on them. We cannot be dogmatic about them. Many are so vague.

But there is a view with the idea that it is impossible to know what even the major trends of Scripture will be in the end times. They feel that nobody can understand it anyway, so they draw back and just ignore what the Bible says. They say, “It will all take care of itself.” You have heard the joke and the statement, “I am a pan-millennialist. It will all pan out in the end.”

I love what Allen Hood says, “But will it pan out well for you?”

Yes, Jesus will come back regardless whether you are involved in it or not. If the Lord comes in your time or the time of your children, what you should care about is that we are cooperating with Him and not being overcome by fear or offense. It is not enough to say it will take care of itself. Yes, the Lord will make sure He returns, but every individual heart and life will have the responsibility to respond. The more each one understands the general trends of what the Scripture says, the more they will be equipped in faith and confidence in the Lord’s leadership and will resist fear, discouragement, and deception.

*Many will be offended. They will say, “I was taught the Lord was coming any minute and we would be out of here, and **then** the trouble would start.” When the trouble starts and they are still here, they are going to say, “Wait, if that is false, how much of the Bible is false? How much of what Jesus said is really true?”*

This has happened in different nations where it was taught strongly that they would be raptured out any moment, like the underground church in China. Some have testified they thought everything would go better, and then suddenly Communist China broke out in a great persecution, and many fell away thinking it was only supposed to get better and better. They thought if that persecution could happen, how much more of the Bible is not true if negative things happened at the measure that they happened. Meaning, it really matters that we get the general trend of what the Scripture says. It is not okay that it will take care of itself. Yes, Jesus will come back. That is for sure. But it also really matters how individuals are taught and how they respond.

VI. THREE COMMON VIEWS OF THE MILLENNIUM

- A. **Premillennialism:** This view teaches that Jesus returns **before** (pre-) His 1,000-year millennial rule. This is the only view that interprets end-time prophecy in a literal or face-value way.

Through 2000 years of church history, there have been three main views of the Millennium. One main view is Premillennialism. That is the view our leadership team takes, and millions take this view. In this view, the Second Coming of Jesus is “pre-” or before the Millennium. That is what premillennial means. He comes, and the Millennium starts after He comes. He comes before it. This is the only view of the three that takes end time prophecy at a literal, face value way.

- B. **Postmillennialism:** This view teaches that Jesus returns *after* (post-) the 1000-year millennium. The Church establishes the Millennium by fully Christianizing the world before He returns.

In Postmillennialism, Jesus returns after the Millennium. Post means after. This would mean that we are in the Millennium right now. They believe things are getting better and better, and the whole society will be Christianized. Jesus only comes when all the nations are filled with the glory of God. That's when the Second Coming comes. This used to be a very prominent view in the 1700s and the 1800s. That was maybe even the most prominent view in the 1700s among the Protestant churches. I am not sure. It was a very popular view espoused by many good Bible teachers. Then two great world wars happened, and that view fell on hard times.

- C. **Amillennialism:** This means “**no millennium.**” This view teaches that Jesus’ 1,000-year reign is not a literal, earthly reign, but merely a spiritual victory over sin in the heart of the believer. Most amillennialists limit the kingdom on the earth to being mostly in the heart of a believer.

The A in the Amillennialism means “no.” No Millennium. In this view there is not a literal Millennium. It is symbolic. It is figurative. There is no such thing as a Millennium. Millions of people believe that. There are quite a large number who believe in premillennialism, and millions who believe in amillennialism. Postmillennialism is not so big in the last hundred years.

I want to urge you to be familiar with these three terms. They really are quite simple. Have a few discussions with a few people. Get in a small group. Talk it through with a few people. You will get the terms quite quickly if you are new to them.

VII. AMILLENNIAL VIEW OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The amillennial view of the kingdom—the “a” means no—is the “no millennium” view. There is no such thing as a Millennium. Again, a lot of godly men and women teach this. Some of my dear friends teach it. They love Jesus as much as I love Jesus. They love the Word as much as I love the Word. I don’t look at them and say, “Bah humbug, aren’t you dumb?” or something like that. I say, “I really disagree.”

I do believe it will have some devastating consequences. I do not think it will be neutral or that it will be of no consequence. It will leave people believing many things are going to happen that are not really going to happen. For example, they teach the prophetic passages are figurative. When a real Antichrist appears and a real Great Tribulation begins—some amillennials do believe that, but many do not—when that happens, I think it will be confusing to people who bought into that mindset, that view.

- A. **The strength of this view** is in its focus on the spiritual triumph of the Church over sin and Satan before the Lord returns. Some amillennialists believe in a victorious end-time Church.

The strength of the amillennial view is they see spiritual victory over sin in the hearts of believers. There is a victory of the cross, but in this age it is over sin in the heart of believers. That is powerful. I love that doctrine. I believe that fully. I say, “Good, that is a great point.”

A weakness of the view is that they interpret much end-time prophecy, not all of it, but much of it, as symbolic. They do not believe it is end-time prophecy. When I say that it is end-time prophecy, they reply, “It is not. It is more like poetry or it happened in AD 70 and already took place.” They do not see it as end-time prophecy. They would say, “That is your view. We believe it is symbolic. Therefore it is not end-time prophecy.” That is the stand they take.

- B. **The weaknesses of this view** are found in interpreting much end-time prophecy as symbolic or figurative and in embracing replacement theology, which teaches that the Church replaces Israel as heir to Israel's prophetic promises. Some amillennialists believe in a tribulation with a literal Antichrist, but most reject this view.

A very negative part or weakness of amillennialism is that they embrace replacement theology. I believe replacement theology is a very serious error in the body of Christ, though I know many people who believe it. They love Jesus, love the Word, and have a great teaching anointing. But this is a very significant error.

Replacement theology means the church has replaced Israel. Therefore there is no longer any purpose of God related to Israel, and so the church does not stand with Israel. The church does not pray for Israel in any particular way with Bible verses. But in the rage of darkness against the nation of Israel, the Lord is requiring His church not only to stand with Him in His purpose for Israel, but also to understand the major themes of it. Again, we do not have to understand every point, but we need to understand the major thrust of what the Scripture says.

- C. Most amillennialists have a preterist view of the end times (*preterit* is a verb tense that describes a past action). *Preterism* teaches that end-time prophecy has already been fulfilled in the past. Some amillennialists are what I call “eschatological cessationists” in that they do not believe the power of God will be manifest in the events related to the Great Tribulation and the Millennium.

Most amillennialists have a preterist view of end times. Say “preterist.” That is a big word. It basically means past action, a past tense, in the simplest way. They see end-time prophecy as already fulfilled in the past in the preterist view.

- D. Many preterists do not believe in an end-time tribulation or Antichrist, nor do they interpret the book of Revelation in a literal way. Preterism sees most of the prophecies in Revelation (the tribulation, Antichrist, etc.) as being fulfilled when Israel was at war with Rome (AD 66–70) and/or sees them as merely symbolic—as a picture of spiritual conflict through Church history.
- E. Amillennialists see end-time prophecies (Mt. 24; Lk. 21) as completely fulfilled in AD 70. It is true that the events of AD 70 were a partial fulfillment of these prophecies, but those events are also meant to be understood as a significant prophetic foreshadowing of end-time events (e.g. abomination of desolation, cf. Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; Mt. 24:15-16; Mk. 13:14).

VIII. POSTMILLENNIAL VIEW OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- A. **The strength of this view** is found in zeal for the **cultural mandate**—working to see every area of society transformed (*government, economy, education, media, arts, etc.*). The Lord will release an increased measure of His kingdom purposes and power in every sphere of society before He returns. Some of our labors in this age will have continuity in the age to come.

In the postmillennial view, Jesus comes “post,” after the Millennium, because they believe we are in the Millennium now. The strength of this view is they are working hard for the transformation of society. They are preaching Jesus and the kingdom to the banking industry, to the military, to the media, to the education. It is exciting because it is necessary. I believe the error is that those who are committed to this doctrine believe they will see a full transformation of society and government before the Lord returns. I think that is a really serious error because it is going to lead to tremendous disillusionment and confusion when it ends up being the

opposite of that. The strength is they are preaching the kingdom of God to people in politics. There are more men and women in politics who love Jesus than any time in history. They are growing in their faith. They are making converts and proclaiming the Lord's Word. It is amazing and glorious.

- B. **The weakness of this view** is similar to the weakness of amillennialism: end-time prophecies are usually interpreted symbolically instead of literally, and it embraces replacement theology.

The weaknesses of this view are like amillennialism. They do not interpret end-time prophecy literally. They take it as symbolic. Unfortunately it is very literal. Another weakness is that many of them embrace replacement theology, meaning the church gets all of Israel's promises. The problem with replacement theology is they teach that the church gets Israel's promises. Israel keeps the curses, and the church gets the promises. If you are going to get all the stuff for Israel, you have to take both. You cannot take the promises and not the curses. They will take part of the verse and throw out the other part of the verse. Not all of them, but some of them. I have seen that kind of picking the parts they like and ignoring the parts they do not like.

- C. Most postmillennialists are preterist; they see many end-time prophecies as fulfilled in AD 70, rather than being partially fulfilled at that time as a prophetic foreshadowing of end-time events.
- D. Postmillennialism is an overly optimistic eschatology. It was most popular during the Victorian age (about 1840–1900) when the Spirit was restoring the truths of social action and human rights. At that time, many believers thought things would just get better and better until Jesus returned.
- E. The two world wars (1914-1918 and 1939-1945) in the early 20th century caused postmillennialism to fall out of favor. For example, Wheaton College was founded with postmillennial views, but switched to premillennialism after the world wars proved postmillennial optimism to be wrong.

We looked at amillennialism for a minute and a half, and we looked at postmillennialism for a minute and a half. This is not a comprehensive teaching. Some of our teachers at IHOPU have energy to break these down these systems and present them in a thorough way. There are many nuances and differences in many camps inside those two systems of postmillennial and amillennial. I am excited that some of them want to take that on and really break that down so students get to see both sides of the argument, think for themselves, and choose the one they believe is the most biblical approach. I think that is a really good way forward to understand the whole picture.

IX. THE PREMILLENNIAL VIEW OF THE KINGDOM: 2 DIFFERENT APPROACHES

- A. Premillennialists believe that Jesus will return to rule the earth for a Millennium (1,000 years). The strength of this view is found in its literal interpretation of end-time biblical prophecy. The two differing premillennial views are **historic** and **dispensational** premillennialism.

The premillennial view is the view our leadership teaches here. Now there are two different types of premillennialism, two different types that are actually quite different. They are similar in a lot of things, but different in a couple key points. Do not mistake them.

- B. **Historic Premillennialism:** Most who espouse historic premillennialism teach a post-tribulation rapture (Jesus will return “after” the tribulation) and literal interpretation of end-time prophecy and honor God's purpose for Israel.

Historic premillennialism is the view that our leadership team holds. It is called historic because it is the view that was held by the church fathers back in the early centuries of church history. It was taught by the fathers in the early centuries of Christianity during and for several centuries after the book of Acts. That was the most

common view taught in the first three or four decades of church history. I believe this view not just because many of the fathers taught it, but because it represents the Bible in the clearest way.

- C. **Dispensational Premillennialism:** All teach a pre-tribulation rapture (Jesus will return “before” the tribulation) and the literal interpretation of end-time prophecy and honor God’s purpose for Israel. Most do not believe that the Church will be used to transform parts of society, operate in the gifts of the Spirit or win an end-time harvest. This is a new theology that was systematized in the 1830s by John N. Darby. It is called *dispensational* because it teaches that God has related differently to His people in seven dispensations of history. It includes: (1) two covenants of salvation (Israel and the Church); (2) a literal interpretation of Scripture; (3) premillennial views; (4) pretribulation rapture; (5) imminency that sees the possibility of an “any moment” rapture.

Dispensational premillennialism teaches the pretribulation rapture, meaning that Jesus raptures the church, then the tribulation happens, and then the Millennium happens after that. You may wonder what difference does it make if Jesus is going to rapture us at any moment, as that is a glorious hope that people can have. The problem is that they are not at all preparing from the Word, girding their mind, or preparing the next generation for trouble. They are preparing to escape and leave all the trouble to the Jews since we are going to be gone any minute.

The disaster of that is if we are not removed and the trouble happens, they will think, “What is this?” I think the consequences of that will be disastrous in terms of the offense and confusion of people who bought into a pretribulation rapture when things escalate in the difficulty while they are still on the earth.

I do not know exactly when it is going to escalate to that Great Tribulation intensity. I do not know if you will see it in your life, but you might. I do not know if your children or grandchildren will, but they might. I think it is very possible that they will. You can read some of the pros and cons of the strengths and weaknesses of the dispensational premillennialism in section ten.

- D. Today, some who hold dispensational views reject some of the early beliefs of their movement. *Classical Dispensationalism* (1850–1950s) sees the Church is a parenthesis in salvation history. *Revised Dispensationalism* (1950–1980s) rejects the idea of two new covenants (for Israel and the Church), but sees their distinction in eternity. *Progressive Dispensationalism* (1980s–present) refers to the “progressive” relationship of the successive dispensations to one another.

X. DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM

- A. **The strength of this view** is found in its literal interpretation of end-time prophecy and in embracing God’s purpose for Israel in the end times.

The strengths are more than I have written here. This is a very, very abbreviated snapshot and is not comprehensive. I am not trying to say that everyone who is in these camps believes exactly what I have presented about that camp. I am explaining the main ideas of that majority in each camp. You might meet somebody who is postmillennial who would say, “What I believe is not exactly what he said.” There is a lot of latitude in this. I am making very generalized statements, not really specific ones.

The strengths of dispensational premillennialism are that they believe in the literal interpretation of the end-time Scripture. I love that. Fantastic. They also believe in God’s purpose for Israel. That is fantastic.

- B. ***Its weakness*** is that most who hold this view do not believe that the Church will be used to transform parts of society, that it will operate in the gifts of the Spirit, or that it will be on earth during the tribulation to finish winning the harvest. It sees two new covenants pertaining to salvation—one for Israel and one for the Church. (Dispensationalists have differing views on this).

The weakness is that many of them—I am sure there are exceptions—do not see the point in bringing the kingdom to all the spheres of society because they think it is all going to submit to the Antichrist anyway, so why bother with it?

Then many of them do not believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Many in the dispensational camp are really adamant that gifts of the Holy Spirit passed away in the first century.

They do not believe we will be on the earth when the great harvest takes place. We will be gone and leave it to the Jews to bring the great harvest in. Beloved, the great harvest is the greatest hour of church history, when the power of God will be functioning in the church beyond any time in history surpassing, I believe, even the book of Acts.

- C. One weakness common to dispensationalists is teaching the pre-tribulation rapture of the Church. Dispensational premillennialism is an overly pessimistic eschatology. The common response is ***escapism*** (*why prepare and work hard if we will soon be raptured*) along with ***fatalism*** and defeatism (*society cannot be changed so why try*).

I believe another great weakness to the dispensational premillennialism is the pretribulation rapture, where the rapture comes before the tribulation. We are taken out before the trouble. They do not see the time of trouble as the time of power and the time of victory. This does not have to lead, but often does, to escapism. Why should we bother if we are going to be raptured any time anyway? Why should we work to establish the kingdom?

Now many of them are very strong soul-winners. That is another strength that should be up there in paragraph A. Many of the dispensational premillennial ministries and churches are very strong at soul-winning. That is a glorious strength.

But some of the response to the pretribulation rapture can be escapism. Since we are going to be raptured anyway, why do all this work? Or it can lead to fatalism. The devil is going to take it all over anyway, so why polish brass on a ship that is sinking? Why work to transform society? It is all going to be the Antichrist's anyway. Then God is going to wipe it out. Jesus will come and start all over again.

- D. The doctrine of imminency (Jesus returning at any moment) does not emphasize the need for a long-term plan to impact society or for Gentile believers to provoke Israel to jealousy and salvation by standing with them in persecution during the tribulation. Some with this view see the Church's mandate as being like a life raft, limited to delivering people from drowning (preaching only salvation), while abdicating kingdom responsibility to call society out of darkness. This view can lead to a lazy disengagement. Yet, some dispensationalist churches are very active in soul-winning.

I think another weakness is the doctrine of Jesus returning any minute. I do not believe Jesus is returning any minute. I do not believe that is what the Bible teaches. I believe Jesus will not return until after the Great Tribulation starts with the abomination of desolation. There are a number of things in the Scripture that have to happen before the Lord returns. He is not coming any minute. I do not believe that is biblical. After the abomination of desolation and after forty-two months, then we can talk about Him coming any minute. There are a number of things that have to happen before the Lord appears with a trumpet blowing in the sky and all the angels and coming in the glory of the Father and flaming fire to raise all the saints from the dead and catch

them up in the sky. I believe strongly in the rapture, but it is just after the victory of the Great Tribulation. Beloved, the Great Tribulation will be an hour of victory. An hour of great martyrdom, but an hour of power, an hour of supernatural intervention, an hour of the great harvest coming like no hour in history.

XI. HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM: THE TRADITIONAL VIEW

- A. **The strength of this view** is found in its literal interpretation of end-time prophecy, in preparing the Church for future persecution, and in teaching our responsibility to provoke Israel to salvation.

Let's look at the final view, historic premillennialism. Again, that is a traditional view because it was the primary view taught for the first couple hundred years of church history. It is the view we hold, but we also add to it the victorious church. Many, many believers preach the victorious church. The victorious church is not a new idea that only a few little groups on the side know about. The victorious church is being preached across the nation by many, many ministries. The Lord will return to the church when the church is operating in victory and in power, in unity, in maturity, in intimacy with God, walking in the things of the Spirit. The church will be unified. It will not be divided with sectarianism, with one group better than another group. Not any of that kind of thing or so much of that carnal thinking that happens today.

The strength of historic premillennialism is the literal interpretation of end-time prophecy. There is preparing for future persecution, but also I want to say preparing for participation with the Lord. It is not just that there is going to be persecution. The church will be participating with the Lord in the release of power and even in the downfall of the Antichrist kingdom. It will be Jesus' power from heaven bringing the Antichrist down, yet the worship and the prayers of the saints and the love and the acts of righteousness will build up the kingdom, and it will all be a part of a grand plan. We will be participating with the Lord. What I mean by we, I mean the body of Christ. I do not know that I will be here. I really might. I might not. I do not know.

- B. **Its weakness** is that some who hold this view do not believe that the Church will grow strong in prayer resulting in the great harvest and end-time victory and power as she functions in her bridal identity (Rev. 22:17). Note: some with this view do see a victorious praying Church.

There is a weakness with historic premillennialism going back to the early fathers. Some of them did not emphasize the church growing strong in prayer. I believe throughout the Old and New Testament the Bible prophesies a great prayer movement exploding across the earth. I do not find that emphasized in historic premillennialism. That is, in historic premillennialism, I do not find a victorious church or church functioning in her bridal identity, with the Spirit and the bride saying, "Come." When I look at the traditional teaching, I do not find those points about the victorious church emphasized.

XII. HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM WITH A VICTORIOUS CHURCH

- A. **The strength of this view** is found in combining the biblical strengths of postmillennialism and amillennialism with historic premillennialism and the call to victory and wholeheartedness.

When we put together historic premillennialism and the victorious church, I believe we have the clearest statement of what the Scripture teaches. I think it combines the biblical strengths of postmillennialism—to impact society—of amillennialism—victory over sin in the heart of the believer—and historic premillennialism—that the church is here in the time of the difficulty, but the Lord's leadership is manifest.

- B. **A victorious Church** attains to unity, intimacy, and maturity, resulting in the greatest revival in history (Eph. 4:13). This prophetic, praying Church will walk in great power as it is used to bring in the end-time harvest and transform society in various places.
- C. **A wholehearted Church** walks in the “Sermon on the Mount lifestyle” of self-denial and serving, giving, blessing, praying, and fasting as seen in the New Testament Church (Mt. 5-7).

There will be a wholehearted church. I believe the first commandment will be restored to first place before the Lord returns.

- D. **A relevant Church** sees the **continuity** of some of our labors in impacting society now (righteous legislation, education, etc.) with the work of Jesus in the Millennium. All that is unrighteous will be dismantled and re-established in righteousness in the Millennium. However, truly righteous legislation in society that is established in this age will not need to be replaced. Works in society built on godliness and justice will last beyond the shaking of the tribulation judgments.

This is a very important point. I believe there is continuity. What I mean by this is found in Hebrews 12:25-29, which says that God declares He is going to “shake everything that can be shaken so that that which remains which cannot be shaken will become evident.” There will be things happening in the nations that when the Antichrist shakes them, when the judgments of God shake them, when testing shakes them, when persecution shakes them, those things will stand true. Those things in this age will actually carry over with continuity into the age to come.

Let me give you an example of what I mean by that. If in our city, by the will of God or whatever city—pick whatever city you want, whatever nation—if they outlaw abortion and turn that law aside, then when the Lord comes, wherever prolife legislation is in place, He is not going to have to change that law. It will be already in place in that city or nation. There will be things that will be in place that when the Lord comes, and He will not need to establish them or remove them. They will already be in place. I am talking about something like that.

Wherever there is righteousness in the nations leading up to that time, that righteousness will continue. Meaning when the Lord comes, He does not wave His hand and the earth disappears. When the Lord returns, cities will still be cities. There will be devastation in many of them. The nations will still be the nations. When He returns He is not going to wave His hand and everybody disappears. He is going to start reconstructing those cities and establishing those laws and godly government in each one of them. Wherever there is righteousness government He will not have to undo it. So it matters that we work for righteousness right now. There will be some continuity with what we do and how we pray in this age to the age to come.

XIII. TWO COMMON OBJECTIONS TO HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM

- A. Some claim that the *Holy Spirit is the restrainer* who is removed when the Church is raptured. Paul prophesied the removal of a “someone” or “something” that restrains the Antichrist from being revealed (2 Thes. 2:6-8). Paul described the restrainer of the increase of sin and the release of the Antichrist as a “what” (neuter gender in 2:6) and as a “He” (masculine gender in 2:7).

⁶*And now you know what is restraining, that he [Antichrist] may be revealed in his own time.*

⁷*For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.* ⁸*And then the lawless one [Antichrist] will be revealed... (2 Thes. 2:6-8)*

There are two common objections to historic premillennialism. Number one objection—I am not going to go through this, just point it out—some claim that when the restrainer, the “he who restrains will be taken out of the way” means the Holy Spirit is going to be gone. I honor people who teach that, but I believe that is the

wrong view. They say the Holy Spirit will be gone when the church is raptured. If the Holy Spirit is gone, how are the Jews going to get saved? How will they lead the nations to the Lord with no Holy Spirit? There is no way people can get saved if the Holy Spirit is gone. I do not think that is an accurate view of what this passage means.

- B. Paul taught that governing authorities are appointed by God to restrain evil (Rom. 13:1-4). The restraining force is a combination of a “what,” which may be the existence of national governments that will not allow the Antichrist’s government to emerge, and a “He,” or God and His sovereign decree to bring the ten-nation confederation into unity with the Antichrist (Rev. 17:17).
- C. Some claim that we will not go through the tribulation because “*we are not appointed unto wrath*” (1 Thes. 5:9). It is true—the Church is *not* appointed to wrath. However, the wrath of God in the tribulation will be released to destroy the Antichrist’s empire (not the Church).

I mentioned that some say that in the premillennial view the church is not appointed to wrath. I respond that this is right, but the church is not going through the Tribulation under the wrath of God. The Antichrist is the recipient of the wrath of God, not the people of God. Amen and amen!

I am excited. Again, I do not know what I will see in my day, but I want to prepare the next generation. If it is not that generation, I want to help prepare them to prepare the next one. I am talking about the whole body of Christ working together preparing the next generation.

I want to ask the Lord to touch us now. We are going to have a little ministry time. We are going to ask the Holy Spirit to come and touch us. I believe the Lord is setting people apart even now to be messengers to prepare people using the Scriptures to understand what the Bible says. The preparation for the Lord’s return is not about preparing food, water, and guns. If the Lord tells somebody to do that, then that is the Lord’s business. That is not something I am focused on. The preparation that we are focused on here is preparing our hearts and our understanding so we are not confused, we are not deceived, we are not overwhelmed with fear, but we have confidence and clarity.

I believe the Lord is raising up and preparing messengers even in this hour to prepare the next generation. Some of you will be messengers through social media. Some of you will be messengers in teaching in the children’s ministry, teaching home Bible studies, discipling a few believers. You do not need a public teaching ministry to be a messenger. Others of you will be involved in media. Others of you will be involved in worship teams. If you feel the Lord is stirring you, and you are saying, “I want to be prepared to be a messenger. I am one right now to some degree, but I want to be prepared to go deeper. I want to have clarity in these things. I do not want just to take a preacher’s word for it. I want to see it in the Bible and feel the power of it,” if you are saying, “I think that is what the Lord is calling me to,” and you would like prayer for that, I would like you to come up. This is something I am focused on in my life. I want to be a messenger. I want to prepare myself to prepare others. I want to understand these chapters of the Bible better, these truths.