

Anointed Prince Or Crowned King? #1

No doctrine is more popular today than the theory of the "rapture." Many books and not a few movies depict such a time. Briefly stated, the doctrine holds that near the end of our present age Jesus will come, raise all the righteous dead and with the living righteous catch them both up to him in the air. Below all bedlam breaks out. After seven years, the Lord will come to earth with his glorified saints, reign for 1,000 years in Jerusalem on the literal throne of David, rebuild the temple which was destroyed in A.D. 70 and reinstitute the priesthood that has not functioned for nearly 2,000 years.

At the conclusion of the 1,000 years, Satan (who was bound during those years) will be released. He will muster all hosts of wicked and wage a great battle against Jesus. The battle will be decisive in the favor of Christ for Satan and his hosts will be defeated. Then the wicked dead will be raised, the great white throne judgment will take place and eternal rewards given to the righteous and unrighteous. Different groups who hold the doctrine of pre-millennialism [(pre-before; millennial, 1,000, thus before the 1,000 years)], have their own varieties and shades of the doctrine but in general agree with the above stated synopsis. They all teach Jesus will return to the earth before the beginning of an earthly kingdom of God lasting for 1,000 years. The question is: Is it true? Are God's people to look forward to a future 1,000 year earthly reign of Jesus? Is Christ today a mere "anointed prince" "waiting in the wings" for his future reign, or is Jesus now in fact the crowned King of Kings? Such questions are significant with eternal implications.

Jews in Jesus' day were looking for a king who would establish his kingdom. One of the reasons for the large crowds who thronged both John and Jesus was that both preached the nearness of an approaching kingdom (Mt. 3:1; Mk. 1:14f). Their messages were scriptural subjects: 600 years before, Daniel had interpreted the dream of Nebuchadnezzar which not only accurately projected four world-empires but also predicted that in the days of the Roman Empire a unique kingdom would be set in place. *"In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever"* (Dan. 2:44). Also significant but not as familiar is Daniel's prophecy that one like unto the son of man would be given dominion, glory and a kingdom by the Ancient of Days (God) (Dan. 7:14). The prophets stirred the hopes of Israel as they spoke of him who was the offspring and root of Jesse (Isa. 11:1, 10). Isaiah spoke of the day when the mountain of the Lord's house would be established in the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills (Isa. 2:2-4). In prophecy, "mountain" stands for government thus the prophet prophesied of the exalted nature of the kingdom of God.

After John's death, Jesus continued his reference to an approaching kingdom. To one discerning scribe he said, "*Thou art not far from the kingdom of God*" (Mk. 12:34). He commenced His parable teaching by teaching seven parables (Matthew's account) on the nature of the kingdom (Matt. 13:11, 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47). He taught men that a new birth was required of one in order to enter the Kingdom (Jn. 3:3-5); warned that men must say more than "*Lord, Lord*" to enter it (Mt. 7:21); promised that some then living would not die until it came with power (Mk. 9:1) taught disciples to pray for its coming (Mt. 6:10); and urged steadfastness for "*no man, having put his hand to the plow and turning, looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God*" (Lk. 9:62).

Yet, if popular teaching is correct, Jesus did not do what he said he would do. According to this scenario, Jesus' purpose was thwarted by his nation's rejection of him and his offered kingdom. So instead, Jesus built his church, returned to heaven to await a more opportune time, and someday, very soon, he will return and accomplish what he purposed to do at his first coming. This view puts Jesus in the role as an anointed prince but his crowning as king must wait until his coming. Is this hypothesis true: Is Jesus still waiting to be crowned as king?

Problems With The Theory

The theory of premillennialism makes stirring sermons but is frayed with many God dishonoring problems. First, there is the problem of "postponement of prophecy." Every premillennialist agrees that Jesus came to set up a kingdom. Certainly this is what the scriptures assert. "*The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand,*" heralded Jesus (Mk. 1:15). "*But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his son ...*" (Gal. 4:4). That he did not (which reflects upon his credibility) is explained as a "postponement of prophecy." However, premillennialists are hard pressed to explain why "postponement" does not equate failure! One of the marks of a false prophet was that his predictions did not come to pass (Dt. 18:21-22). Daniel had prophesied that God would set up a kingdom in the days of the Roman Empire (Dan. 2:44). Both John and Jesus said the kingdom was near, that the time for it had come. Yet, according to premillennialists that kingdom does not yet exist. Premillennialists call this "postponement," the Holy Spirit calls such a "slip up" the mark of a false prophet. Whom are we believe?

To "patch up" the obvious problem of Christ setting up his kingdom in the absence of the days of the Roman Empire, the premillennialist is forced to affirm that kingdom will be revived again before Jesus comes. Little wonder that in every war of any consequence, premillennialists look for some thing

to "identify" the evil nation as the "revived Roman Empire." We cannot help but wonder that since according to Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the Roman was the last of four empires, why should not the other three be revived as well?

Third, there is the problem with the theory's re-establishment of an inferior temple and priesthood. The premillennialist looks at Zechariah's prophecy of the man "called the Branch." Such an one would build the temple and be priest and king (Zech. 6:12f). They tie this to Ezekiel's prophecy of a restored temple (Ezek. 40-44), and argue that a literal temple is to be built in Jerusalem with the Levitical priesthood and animal sacrifices restored. We cannot but ask, why replace the perfect sacrifice with the imperfect, one which could not remove sin (Heb. 10:4)? We have Jeremiah's promise of a new covenant to replace the old. Shall we revert to something God found fault with and removed (Hb. 8:6f)?

Then, there is the problem of contradiction that would exist between passages of scripture if the theory of premillennialism is true. According to them, Christ was going to set up his kingdom but was thwarted from doing so. They say the kingdom is yet to come but many New Testament passages affirm that the kingdom is here (Col. 1:13; 1 Thess. 2:12; Heb. 12:28). They say that Christ will set up his kingdom in the future but Jesus promised that some who heard him would not die until they had seen the kingdom come with power (Mk. 9:1). Further, Jesus said repeatedly that he came to do his Father's will (Jn. 4:34; 5:30; 6:38). He declared he had accomplished the work the Father gave him to do (Jn. 17:4). How could Jesus make such a statement to God when he failed, according to the premillennialists, to do the work he came to do? When he was on the cross, he said, "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30). This would not be true if what premillennialists tell us is true. (Continued next week).

Jim McDonald