

A Review Of Foy E. Wallace, Jr.'s God's Prophetic Word

During the thirties and forties a false teaching called premillennialism was making inroads into the Body of Christ. It was a turbulent time, one in which many faithful men of God stood arm-in-arm to push back the error threatening the church. A prominent man in this fight was Foy E. Wallace, Jr. He was at the forefront of exposing the false theory of premillennialism, using his paper *The Bible Banner*, as well as preaching from the pulpit. It is from the latter that *God's Prophetic Word* was taken. It was originally a series of addresses in Houston, Texas, January 21-28, 1945.

God's Prophetic Word is a thorough examination and refutation of the premillennial theory. Brother Wallace takes all major points, and several minor arguments, and puts them to the test in light of the Word of God. It may be seen as one reads through the book that "no stone is left unturned." In fact, many times the same point and passage are covered more than once. The book may be broken down into two main sections: 1. The Word of God itself as infallible, once delivered, and its prophetic nature (chapters 1-3); 2. Specific tenets of premillennialism exposed (chapters 4-12).

In the first section, brother Wallace lays the ground-work for the remainder of the book. In chapter one he establishes the fact that the Bible is divinely inspired, and therefore infallible and reliable. A plethora of evidence is given to the reader for his contemplation. Several subject areas are listed, including history and archaeology. For instance, in the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles and 1 and 2 Kings, there are numerous mentionings of kings who lived and reigned over their kingdoms. While the majority of them had been found in secular history, forty-seven of them were not, and, therefore, unbelievers concluded the Bible to be legendary. However, "The spade brought forth the evidence" (p. 20). All forty-seven disputed kings eventually were found by archaeologist as they unearthed ancient treasures.

Chapter two goes on to discuss "the faith once delivered" (Jude 3). Worth note is the section on "the dogmatic faith." The author exclaims that Jude speaks in reference to maintaining doctrinal purity within the church and we must be adamant about it. He shows the text establishes four things: 1. the reality of an organized body of faith; 2. the completeness of this faith; 3. the absolute authority of this faith; 4. and the trustees of the faith, "the saints."

The third chapter, which carries the name of the book, deals with the prophetic nature of God's divine Word. This is a chapter of transition. It begins to point out in detail some of the specific errors of the premillennial theory. One area in which the millennialists err is in not understanding the purpose of prophecy. They say the purpose of prophecy in the Old Testament was to point toward a time when Christ would set up a temporal kingdom on earth, but inspired men of the New Testament contradict them. Brother Wallace cites an example of this in Acts 26:22-23, where Paul stands before King Agrippa on trial. In this speech, Paul pointed out that the "climatic purpose of prophecy" was to declare "that the Christ should suffer, be raised from the dead, and give light to all people" (p. 67). "Premillennialists to the contrary notwithstanding" (p. 83).

Now, we come to the second main section of God's Prophetic Word which explores specific errors of the premillennial theory. It covers nine chapters, consisting of four hundred forty pages, therefore, only the main points will be covered.

First, millennialists claim that the land promise made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1 was never fulfilled. Therefore, the Jews must yet occupy the "promised land." The book shows that the Bible contradicts this.

The land promise was fulfilled in Joshua. Gen. 15:18 shows the extent of possession; Deut. 1:7-8 says that they possessed it; Josh. 21:43 says that they possessed all of it; 2 Sam. 8:3 says they later recovered it; 1 Kings 14:12 says Solomon reigned over it; Neh. 9:7-8 says God performed all of his promise (p. 126).

Next, the promoters of the false theory say that Christ will one day be king, sitting on the throne of David in Jerusalem. However, the word of God says that the earthly kingship set up over Israel was against God's will (Hos. 13:9-11). "Israel demanded a king and got one. But Israel sinned and God was angry. That kingdom was destroyed, was taken from them and perished, but the millennialists do not like it and want to give it back to Israel" (p. 125).

Further, millennialists believe that the Old Testament prophecies of the coming kingdom have not been fulfilled. One kingdom prophecy is found in Daniel 2, where Daniel is telling the king of Babylon the correct interpretation of his dream. The point made is that during the days of the fourth kingdom, Rome, God would set up a kingdom that would consume all others and last forever. Premillennialists say this has not happened

because "the Jews did not accept it. And without them Jesus could not set it up--the Jews had the veto power over Jesus Christ and all the prophets" (p. 171). Hebrews 12:28 tells us that the kingdom has been received. In the same chapter you can see that the "kingdom which cannot be moved" is the same as the "church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:23,28).

Among the gross errors of millennialism, there lies the idea that we can tell when the Lord will return by the signs which he gave us and for which we are to watch. They say this because "error capitalizes on ignorance" (p. 227). These false teachers turn to Matthew 24, and its parallel passages, to prove that Jesus gave the signs of his second coming, and then they try to apply it to current events. After telling of the coming destruction of the temple, Jesus' disciples ask him three questions (though they believe them to be one): 1. "When shall these things be"; 2. "What shall be the sign of thy coming and (3.) of the end of the world" (Matt. 24:3)? Jesus answers the latter in verses 36-41, saying, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." The premillennial theory completely ignores the passages and overwhelming historical information that shows Matthew 24:4-35 apply to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Also, on the second coming of Christ, these false teachers insist that it is premillennial. That is, they say that when the Lord returns he will reign upon the earth for a thousand years. In supporting this notion, they will turn to Revelation 20:4,

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

There are numerous problems with this attempt to support their theory. If their accusation is correct, then, only those beheaded can reign with Christ and they will only live a thousand years. Moreover, one can look at the context of Revelation 20:1-6 and see that it...

...does not mention the second coming of Christ...does not mention a bodily resurrection...does not mention a reign on earth...does not mention the throne of David...does not mention either Jerusalem or Palestine, nor does it mention Christ on earth. (p. 284).

Many other Biblical arguments from the book can be offered in order to show the fallaciousness of premillennialism. Brother Wallace does an excellent job of defending the truth from those who would "pull the wool" over our eyes. Among churches of Christ, premillennialism was mainly a problem in the thirties and forties, but it is still prudent to study the issue because virtually all denominations thrive on it and we need to be able to teach them out of it. Also, we need not think that a false teaching which was defeated among the people of God in the past will remain defeated and not cause trouble in the future. "Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Heb. 2:1).

Steven F. Deaton