

# Historic Premillennialism

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# Introduction

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- In one sense, our view of the Millennium doesn't matter.
  - God initiates the Millennium (whenever it is) and doesn't need our advice on when or how to go about it!
- But there are some important aspects to think about:
  - What are we as Christians (individually & collectively) supposed to be doing right now?

# Introduction

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- Two other items are less important, but by no means trivial:
  - What is the status of Israel today, both people and land?
  - How do we go about deciding on principles for the interpretation of OT (and NT) prophecy?
- These are the sorts of things we wish to consider in this talk.

# Historic Premillennialism

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## An Overview

# Historic

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Shows up very early:

- Papias, died about 130-155 AD, acc to Eusebius, *Church History* 3.39
- Justin Martyr, died ~165, see *Dialog w/ Trypho* 80-81
- Irenaeus, died ~200, see *Against Heresies* 5.33-36

# Papias, according to Eusebius

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*CH* 3.39.11. The same writer gives also other accounts which he says came to him through unwritten tradition, certain strange parables and teachings of the Saviour, and some other more mythical things. 12. To these belong his statement that there will be a period of some thousand years after the resurrection of the dead, and that the kingdom of Christ will be set up in material form on this very earth. I suppose he got these ideas through a misunderstanding of the apostolic accounts, not perceiving that the things said by them were spoken mystically in figures.

## Justin Martyr, *Dialog w/ Trypho*

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And Trypho to this replied, "I remarked to you sir, that you are very anxious to be safe in all respects, since you cling to the Scriptures. But tell me, do you really admit that this place, Jerusalem, shall be rebuilt; and do you expect your people to be gathered together, and made joyful with Christ and the patriarchs, and the prophets, both the men of our nation, and other proselytes who joined them before your Christ came? or have you given way, and admitted this in order to have the appearance of worsting us in the controversies?"

Then I answered, "I am not so miserable a fellow, Trypho, as to say one thing and think another. I admitted to you formerly, that I and many others are of this opinion, and [believe] that such will take place, as you assuredly are aware; but, on the other hand, I signified to you that many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians, think otherwise."

## Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.35

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For all these and other words were unquestionably spoken in reference to the resurrection of the just, which takes place after the coming of Antichrist, and the destruction of all nations under his rule; in [the times of] which [resurrection] the righteous shall reign in the earth, waxing stronger by the sight of the Lord: and through Him they shall become accustomed to partake in the glory of God the Father, and shall enjoy in the kingdom intercourse and communion with the holy angels, and union with spiritual beings; and [with respect to] those whom the Lord shall find in the flesh, awaiting Him from heaven, and who have suffered tribulation, as well as escaped the hands of the Wicked one. For it is in reference to them that the prophet says: "And those that are left shall multiply upon the earth..."



# Premillennial

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- The Pre-Mill view sees the Millennium as a "silver age" to follow the return of Christ.
- That age is to be distinguished from:
  - "This present evil age" in which we are now living, in which the righteous are persecuted.
  - "The golden age" (for believers) of the eternal state, in which there is no sin or rebellion.

# Silver-Age Passages

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- Zechariah 14
  - Rebellious survivors after 2<sup>nd</sup> coming
- Daniel 7
  - 3 of the 4 beasts survive, but without power
- Isaiah 30-32
  - Assyrians become forced labor after God defeats enemies w/ breath of his mouth
- Joel 3
  - Jerusalem safe & holy; nations sold as slaves

# Zechariah 14

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- Lord comes with holy ones to fight nations gathered against Jerusalem. (1-5)
- Lord destroys them miraculously. (12-15)
- Subsequent silver age?
  - Zech 14:16 (NIV) Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. 17 If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, they will have no rain.

# Daniel 7

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- Beast thrown in fire (11); cp Rev 19:20
- Thrones set for judgment (9-10); cp Rev 20:4
- Universal dominion given Son of Man (13-14) and saints (22); cp Rev 20:4 (reign w/ Christ)
- Subsequent silver age?
  - Reign of saints follows Beast's destruction (26)
  - Other beasts live on without power after Beast's destruction (11-12)

# Isaiah 30-32

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- God defeats nations with breath of mouth (30:27-28), w/ a sword not of man (31:8), coming down on Mt. Zion (31:4).
- Casts leader (king of Assyrians?) into fire (30:33)
- Subsequent silver age?
  - Young Assyrians become forced labor (31:8)
  - God's king & rulers will rule righteously (32:1ff)

# Joel 3

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- God will gather all nations and judge them in Valley of Jehoshaphat (1-2)
  - His activity is pictured as threshing, trampling grapes, God roaring from Zion (13-14)
- Jerusalem will be safe and holy (16-17)
- Subsequent silver age?
  - Nations sold as slaves (6-8)
  - Egypt, Edom desolate (19)

# Distinguished from A-Mill & Post-Mill Positions

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- Unlike both:
  - The Millennium is viewed as following Jesus' 2<sup>nd</sup> coming rather than preceding it.
  - A long time-span is viewed as intervening between the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming and the last judgment.
- Like A-Mill but unlike Post-Mill:
  - The 2<sup>nd</sup> coming could be very soon.
  - No long time-period needs to intervene between now and the Millennium.

# Distinguished from A-Mill & Post-Mill Positions

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- Unlike A-Mill but like Post-Mill:
  - The Millennium will be a time of unprecedented peace, righteousness and prosperity.
- Like both A-Mill and Post-Mill:
  - The kingdom is already present in some restricted sense...
  - ... but not yet present in its fullest sense.



# Distinguished from Dispensational Pre-Mill Position

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- The HPM view is older than dispensational view (DPM), so the label "historic."
- The kingdom has already begun at Jesus' 1<sup>st</sup> coming, rather than being refused and postponed entirely, as is common in the DPM position.
- The HPM position does not make such a hard distinction between Israel and the Church as the DPM position does.

# Paul's Olive Tree

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Romans 11:17 (NIV) If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, 18 do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. 19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." 20 Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. 22 Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. 23 And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 24 After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree! 25 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob."

# The New Jerusalem

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- Revelation 21:12 (NIV) It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel... 14 The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.
- Combines features of Israel & of the Church.

# Distinguished from Dispensational Pre-Mill Position

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- The HPM view sees more continuity between Israel and the Church, between OT and NT than the DPM view does...
- ... though perhaps less continuity than some A-Mill and Post-Mill do.

# Historic Premillennialism

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View of the Kingdom

# Biblical Pictures of God & Humans

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- Potter & clay
- Farmer & plant
- Shepherd & sheep
- King & subjects
- Master & slave
- Father & child
- Husband & wife

# Some Comments on Biblical Pictures

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- We must be careful not to overemphasize one picture to the neglect of the others.
- King & subjects implies a kingdom.
- These pictures can sound rather individualistic, but some more collective aspects are also pictured:
  - Kingdom: subjects, rebels, armies, conquest
  - Body: head and parts
  - Temple: chief cornerstone, other stones

# The Calling of the Church

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- The collective aspects of the pictures above suggest that that Church has some purposes as a whole.
  - What might these be?
- Passages on our calling:
  - Matthew 28:19-20
  - Luke 24:44-48
  - John 20:19-23
  - Acts 1:6-8



# Matthew 28:18-20

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18 (NIV) Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

# Luke 24:44-48

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44 (NIV) He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things."

## John 20:19-23

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19 (NIV) On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. 21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

# Acts 1:6-8

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6 (NIV) So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

# The Calling of the Church

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- ❑ To be witnesses of Jesus' life, claims, death and resurrection.
- ❑ To make disciples of Jesus, baptizing them in his name, teaching them to obey all he commanded.
- ❑ To proclaim repentance & forgiveness in Jesus' name.
- ❑ To go throughout the world with this mission, sent by Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

# Various Characterizations of the Church

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- John 18 – Jesus to Pilate: my kingdom is not of this world.
- Ephesians 6 – Paul: we wrestle not against flesh & blood.
- Luke 19 – Parable of the pounds: servants given cities after master returns.
- Matthew 13 – Parables of the kingdom: a struggle against evil
- Matthew 25 – Parable of sheep & goats: what were people to be doing before Christ's return?

# Various Characterizations of the Church

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- We are in a spiritual rather than a political or military struggle, against supernatural evil.
- Though this involves evangelism, it is not the whole story. How we treat others is of crucial importance.
- It appears that our rewards will include future responsibility in Christ's kingdom after his return.

# The End

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1Cor 15:58 (NIV) Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.