

The Calling of the Church and Historic Premillennialism

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Introduction

In one sense, our Millennial position 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, one of which we have been asked to address tonight: what are we Christians individually and collectively supposed to be doing right now? i.e., what is the calling of the church?

Two other items that are less important, but by no means trivial:
-- what is the status of Israel today?
-- how do we go about deciding on a hermeneutic for the interpretation of OT (and NT) prophecy?

Overview of Historic Premillennialism

Historic: shows up as early as Papias (dc 130-155; acc Eusebius, CH 3:39), Justin Martyr (dc 165; DT 80-81; ANF 1:236-40) and Irenaeus (dc 200; AH 5:33-36; ANF 1:563-65).

Premillennial: The Pre-Mill view sees the Millennium as a "silver age" to follow the return of Christ, distinguished from "this present evil age" and also from the "golden age" (for believers) of the eternal state.

Distinguished from A-Mill and Post-Mill positions:

Unlike both, the Mill is viewed as following the 2nd coming of X rather than preceding it, and a long time-span is viewed as intervening between the 2nd coming and the last judgment. (OT passages on silver age; Rev 19-20)

Like A-Mill but unlike Post-Mill, the 2nd coming could be very soon (no long period needs to intervene)

Unlike the A-Mill but like the Post-Mill, the Mill will be an age of unprecedented peace, righteousness and prosperity (OT passages re/ such)

Like both, Hist Pre-Mills see that the kingdom is already present in some restricted sense, but not yet present in its fullest sense (sketch some of Ridderbos' points)

Distinguished from Dispensational Pre-Mill position:

Apparently an older view than Disp PM, so "historic"

The kingdom has already begun at Jesus' 1st coming, rather than being refused and postponed entirely as is common in DPM position ("already but not yet")

Does not make such a hard distinction between Israel and the church as DPM does:
Paul's olive tree (Rom 11)
The New Jerusalem (Rev 21:12-14) combines apostles and the tribes of Israel
Sees more continuity between Israel and the church, between OT and NT than DPM
does, though perhaps less than some AM and PostM do.

View of the Kingdom

Biblical pictures of the relations between God and humans:
potter/clay; farmer/plant; shepherd/sheep; king/subject; master/slave; father/child;
husband/wife

Danger of overemphasis on one picture

King/subject implies kingdom

Some more collective aspects pictured:

kingdom: subjects, rebels, armies, conquest

body: head, parts

temple: chief corner stone, other stones

The Calling of the Church - the collective aspects of the pictures above suggest that the church
has some purpose(s) as a whole; what might this/these be?

Passages on our calling:

Matt 28:19-20 and other Gospel commissions

Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing, teaching

Acts 1:6-8, not for you to know time, but you will be my witnesses

Various characterizations of church

Jesus to Pilate (Jn 18) - if my kingdom were of this world, my servants would
fight

Paul (Eph 6) - wrestle not against flesh and blood

Parable of pounds (Lk 19) - servants given cities after master returns

Parables of kingdom (Mt 13) - structure of parables seems to indicate growth of
mustard seed/leaven is good/bad rather than (AM & PostM) good/good or
(DPM) bad/bad

Parable of sheep/goats (Mt 25) - what were people supposed to have been doing
before Xs return?

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