

### Millennialism and the Church

- In fundamental ways, a person's millennialism determines a person's ecclesiology.
  - Ecclesiology = the doctrine of the church
  - The doctrine of the church = practical living doctrines
- "Dispensational ecclesiology defines the church as a distinct body of saints in the present age, having its own divine purpose and destiny and differing from the saints of the past or future ages" (pg 224).
- When did this church begin?
  - If it begins with the baptism of the Spirit ("for by one spirit are we all baptized into one body" 1 Cor 12:13) then it cannot exist before Pentecost.
  - If it begins with the baptism of the Spirit of both Jews and gentiles ("...whether we be Jews or gentiles" 1 Cor 12:13), then it cannot exist before Cornelius.
  - "In virtue of this significant truth, it becomes apparent that a new thing has been formed—the body of Christ. It did not exist before Pentecost, as there was no work of the baptism of the spirit to form it" (pg. 226).
  - "The baptism of the Spirit...is **the subject of predictive prophecy**...[and] finds its first fulfillment in Acts 2" (pg. 226) [emphasis mine].
  - Clearly the ecclesia had some germination at the day of Pentecost.

### The Church Age as a Parenthesis

- While the ecclesia may have been birthed with the fulfillment of prophecy, the Church Age was not birthed at the same time.
- "One of the important questions raised by the amillenarians is **whether the present age is predicted** in the Old Testament. This they confidently affirm and find the kingdom promises fulfilled in the present church age" (pg. 227) [emphasis mine].
- "Premillenarians have not always give a clear answer to the amillennial position...some premillenarians have tended to **strike a compromise interpretation in which part of the Old Testament predictions are fulfilled now** and part in the future. In some cases they have conceded so much to the amillenarians that for all practical purposes they have surrendered premillennialism" (pg. 227).

### Evidence for a Parenthetical Age

- A parenthesis is **necessary** for premillennialism to work, without it, premillennialism is built on a faulty assumption.
- Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week: The Messiah is cut off after the 69<sup>th</sup> week but before the 70<sup>th</sup> week—there must be a parenthesis.
- Psalm 22:1-21 is about the crucifixion, v. 22 is about the resurrection, vv. 23-31 is about the millennium—there must be a parenthesis.
- Joel 2:28 is separated from Joel 2:29 by at least 2,000 years.

### The Church Age as Mystery

- In dispensational premillennialism, the church is "distinct in character from the Old Testament saints" (pg. 231).
- The church age as a parenthetical age allows the church to be distinct, "not fulfilling or advancing the program of events revealed in the Old Testament foreview" (231).
  - The church is a "purpose of God separate from Israel" (231).

- *“This is vital to premillennialism. If the church fulfills the Old Testament promises to Israel of a righteous kingdom on earth, the amillenarians are right” (231).*
- *What is “mystery” about the church?*
  - *It is “one body” of both Jews and gentiles. Eph. 3:5-6*
    - *Gentiles are “fellowheirs of the same body”*
    - *NOTE: The gentile inclusion into the same body is “the mystery,” NOT the baptism of the Spirit (which Walvoord rightly called “predictive prophecy”).*
    - *“...the central feature of the mystery...is that Gentiles should have an absolute equality with the Jews in the body of Christ” (233).*
    - *The Old Testament NEVER HINTS of this equality.*
      - *The Gentiles “are promised salvation, material blessing, and a share in the glory of that era. None of these promised blessings are extended to Gentiles on the ground of equality, however, and this is the point of the mystery” (236).*
      - *Isaiah 61:5-6 is representative of the revealed inclusion of the Gentiles in the Kingdom age.*
    - *The church today, as body of Christ, is not fulfilling the promises of the Old Testament nor the work of Israel, but has a fundamentally new identity.*
  - *It is indwelt by Christ Himself – Col. 1:26-27*
    - *This is a “mystery which hath been hid for ages and generations”*
    - *The mystery: Christ in **you** (not in thee) (see v. 24).*
    - *In the Old Testament, the Kingdom was promised in which Christ’s glory would be revealed to all the earth.*
    - *In the church, Christ’s glory is veiled in the church, and is “the hope of glory”*
      - *Israel’s “hope of glory” was the second coming.*
      - *The Church’s “hope of glory” is “Christ in you.”*
  - *The “translation” of the church - 1 Cor 15:50-52*
    - *In this age, there are two ways to be transformed: death or translation*
    - *In the Old Testament, a transformation of every believer would be catastrophic to the Kingdom.*
      - *Old Testament and the Gospels teach that saints living at the time of the establishment of the Kingdom will enter the Kingdom in the flesh, and will do physical works, including bearing children.*
      - *By sheer necessity, 1 Cor. 15:50-52 has to be reserved for the church alone.*
  - *The timing of the resurrection – 1 Thes 4:16-17*
    - *Both the translation and the resurrection take place before Christ returns to earth.*
    - *Every Old Testament and Gospel passage that speaks about the resurrection places the resurrection after Christ returns to earth – Matt. 25:31-46, Ezek. 20:33-38*

### **A Church Age Doctrine**

- *If the church age is not distinct and separate from Israel, then dispensational premillennialism must be rejected.*
- *If the church age is distinct, unrevealed in the Old Testament and unrelated to Israel, then amillennialism must be rejected.*
- *If the church age is revealed to any degree in the Old Testament and the Gospels, then all forms of millennialism must be rejected, along with the Bible itself.*
  - *Paul would be in error or deceptive*
  - *Biblical chronology would be meaningless*
  - *Both the church and the Kingdom would be defined at man’s whim*

## *A church age conclusion*

**Whereas** the Apostle Paul was adamant that the church age was a mystery never previously revealed, and

**Whereas** there are numerous aspects of the church that are in complete opposition to the aspects of the Kingdom, and

**Whereas** the Bible cannot contradict itself, and

**Whereas** God must fulfill His promises in complete fidelity to His recorded word...

### **Therefore,**

- I conclude that the church age is unforeseen and unprophesied in both the Old Testament and the Gospels, and that
- The church as a called out body of believers began with the Day of Pentecost, and that
- The church age, in which both Jews and Gentiles were made into one body, indwelt by Christ, began when this mystery was revealed to Paul, and that
- The church age will end suddenly and instantaneously with the rapture (which was previously unforeseen), and that
- God will resume His prophetic program with Israel, using the Jewish nation as the superpower of the future physical Kingdom of God, and that
- God will bless all the nations of the earth through the Jewish nation in that future day