

Part 4 | Christ's Crown, continued

Evangelicals and the Last Days

How Evangelicals Differ Over Things to Come

...continued from Session 10

- The three views of evangelical eschatology:
 - Premillennialism
 - Premillennialism describes the belief that Christ will return before the millennium and, in fact, will establish it when He returns to the earth.
 - The future 1000-year millennium will be characterized by righteousness (Isa. 60:21), holiness (Isa. 52:10), truth (Ps. 45:4) and the fullness of the Holy Spirit of God (Joel 2:28-29). Christ will rule and reign from His throne in Jerusalem over the whole world. Satan will be bound in the abyss for the entire period (Rev. 20:1-6). During that time, all war will cease (Isa. 9:4-7), and there will be joy (Isa. 9:3-4), peace (Isa. 65:25), holiness (Isa. 1:26-27), glory (Isa. 24:23), comfort (Isa. 12:1-2), perfect justice (Isa. 9:7), the lifting of the curse imposed because of sin, the removal of sickness (Isa. 33:24), healing of the deformed (Isa. 29:17-19), great economic prosperity (Isa. 25:1-2), unified worship of God (Isa. 45:23), and the visible manifestation of the very presence of God Himself (Ezek. 34:27-28).
 - The view prevailed and was virtually unchallenged until the time of Origen (185–254 AD) and his allegorical or nonliteral method of interpretation of Scripture.
 - Premillennialism went into something of an eclipse from the time of Origen and about 1830 and the time of the prophetic Bible conferences when it was revived.
 - Differences among premillennialists center chiefly around whether the church will go through the period of tribulation prior to the millennium.
 - Pre-tribulational premillennialists believe the church will be raptured prior to the tribulation.
 - They see a definite distinction between Israel and the church.
 - They are dispensational in interpretation of Scripture.
 - They believe that the Lord could return for the church at any time.
 - Post-tribulational premillennialists believe the church will go through the coming tribulation.
 - They believe the church will be protected *through* the tribulation.
 - They do not see a distinction between Israel and the church, but believe that the church is an extension of Israel.
 - Mid-tribulational and Pre-wrath premillennialists believe the church will go through part of the tribulation.
 - Partial-rapture premillennialists believe that the spiritual believers will be raptured, while carnal believers will not.
 - Amillennialism –
 - Amillennialism is the view that does not hold to a future reign of Christ on earth after Christ returns nor to a period of peace and prosperity before Christ returns.
 - Accurately speaking the biblical system may be distinguished from the other systems as *realized millennialism*. Whereas both pre and postmillennialists look forward to a future unrealized millennium.
 - Jay Adams, an amillennialist, said,
“Amillennialists contend that the millennium is a present reality. This chronological difference necessarily involves the nature of the period. If the millennium is a

present reality, it is most certainly of the non-utopian type. Both of the other systems maintain that the millennium is future exactly because they cannot conceive of its nature as identical with the recent church age. Both wrongly look for an earthly utopia apart from that fiery purging which alone will bring what the Bible calls 'the new earth.' They anticipate a golden age prior to the judgment of all men. Adherents to realized millennialism, on the other hand, maintain that such a belief confounds the millennium with the eternal state described in the last two chapters of Revelation; 2 Peter 3:12-14; Isaiah 65:17, and other prophecies. While realized millennialists believe there is a future golden age, they teach that it follows the millennial period. It will not come until the old earth has 'fled away' (Rev. 20:11)."¹

- All amillennialists reject Dispensationalism and adopt Covenant Theology, a system in which mankind is seen as being under the covenant of works or the covenant of grace. A covenant of redemption determined the method and scope of salvation.
 - These are *theological covenants*, not to be confused with Biblical covenants (Adamic, Noahic, Davidic, etc.)
 - All of humanity since Adam's fall are under the covenant of grace (if they are going to be saved, it will be by grace).
- There are two approaches to the scripture passages that deal with the millennium:
 - Augustine's approach: *these passages are now being fulfilled on earth, spiritually within the church.*
 - BB Warfield's approach: *these passages are now being fulfilled in heaven.*
- Amillennialism has no role for the future of Israel. Israel has rejected God's conditional promises and her promises have been transferred to the church.
- A brief history of Amillennialism:
 - The view was created by Augustine, and his view prevailed in the Catholic church and the reformers kept it: *the Kingdom of God is the church.*
 - The view lost prominence in Protestant circles from the mid 1700s through WWII.
 - After WWII, Amillennialism returned, and the BB Warfield view has been preeminent: the Kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom with Christ reigning from heaven and operative within the obedient Christian.
- Postmillennialism –
 - The Postmillennial view is that Christ will return after society has been Christianized by the church. In this view, the church is not the kingdom, but it will, through the spread of the gospel, build it. Theologian Loraine Boettner, a postmillennialist, says,

*"Postmillennialism is that view of last things which holds that the kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit, that the world eventually will be Christianized, and that the return of Christ will occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace commonly called the millennium... It should be added that on postmillennial principles the second coming of Christ will be followed immediately by the general resurrection, the general judgment, and the introduction of heaven and hell in their fullness."*²
 - Postmillennialism and Amillennialism both believe that when Christ returns, He will judge the world and then immediately usher in the New Heaven and New Earth.
 - Differences among postmillennialists-
 - Liberal postmillennialism believes the Kingdom of God will be built through social action and human achievement.
 - Evangelical postmillennialism (held mostly in Reformed circles) believes that *"Every single stroke of the law must be seen by the Christian as applicable to this very age between the advents of Christ."*³

¹Jay Adams, *The Time Is at Hand* (Nutley, NJ: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1966), 9.

² Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1964), 4, 14.

³ Greg Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1977), 82.