

# CHRISTIANITY: THEN AND NOW

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## “BELIEVING THE MYTH OF PREMILLENNIALISM”

The wild speculations of the various teachers of premillennialism seem to dominate the religious book market, the journals of most conservative denominations and the religious broadcast media. Almost weekly some new discovery is announced: the man of sin has been identified, Armageddon is just around the corner, the mark of the beast has been spotted, the State of Israel is ready to fulfill Bible prophecy. The date of Christ's return has been repeatedly set and then abandoned. The absurdity of this game-playing would be humorous were it not for the precious souls being led astray by its false teachers.

A few clearly stated Biblical facts forever refute this ancient heresy. God is omnipotent. Therefore, the Jewish nation could not thwart his plan to establish his kingdom in the days of the Roman kings (Dan. 2:44). Christ established his kingdom and first century saints were citizens of it (Col. 1:13, Rev. 1:6). Christ now reigns on David's throne in heaven (Rev. 3:7; Acts 2:29-33). No one knows the date of Christ's return (Matt. 24:36). When he does return there will be one general resurrection of the good and the evil (John 5:28-29). These and many other plainly stated Scriptural truths destroy once and for all the foundations of this false system.

### Why is Premillennialism So Popular?

Millennialism is embraced by most evangelical churches. Generally speaking, only the Lutherans, conservative Presbyterians, Reformed Churches, Mennonites and Churches of Christ are free from its taint. Most other bodies are infected to some degree.

The following reasons help to explain why this strange, contradictory teaching has such an attraction and hold on people's minds.

\* Paul wrote of those who believe a lie, "because they receive not the love of the truth... but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thess. 2:10-12).

Those who have had much experience in teaching people who hold this view have observed an amazing lack of interest in those plain, simple truths of God that nullify the millennial heresy. Jesus spoke of a kind of person who seeing, saw not and hearing, understood not. "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart..." (Matt. 13:14-15).

- Some folks are attracted to the bizarre and incredible. The more unbelievable the proposition the more eager they are to embrace it. We see this spirit demonstrated in the huge crowds lined up to view the freak shows at fairs and the masses that pay their money to see movies based upon the occult, the ghoulish and the impossible. Perhaps the human race is not so far removed from the primitive superstitions of yesterday with ghosts and apparitions of demons. Premillennialism abounds with spicy fruits for superstitious souls.
- Premillennialism appears to answer questions of the unknown future. Men have always had an insatiable desire to know what lies beyond the curtain of tomorrow. With its predictions of the date of Christ's return and the end of the world, it attracts these date seekers even as does astrology its disciples.
- There are people who relish the thought that they have discovered a mystery others have not found. This, in their proud minds, elevates them and makes them superior. The infamous Gnostics of early Christian centuries suffered from a similar illusion. Thus false pride and a superior attitude is at

least one of the many causes. It will not take many encounters with such teachers to see this attitude demonstrated. Paul warns against being lifted up with pride lest we "fall into the condemnation of the devil" (I Tim. 3:6).

- Some folks are prone to be naive and gullible in religion. They do not like to expend the mental energy to think for themselves. They let the preacher do the studying and explain it to them. They are like baby birds, they trustingly open their mouths to whatever the preacher says. Such people need to take heed to those verses that stress individual responsibility for faith. Study to show yourself approved unto God, "rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). The Bereans were commended because they searched the Scriptures to see if the teaching was true (Acts 17:11). Each of us will give account of himself before God (Rom. 14:12).
- Some people believe this lie because they have been told that they are supposed to believe it in order to be faithful. They are like sheep; they blindly follow their leaders. They should remember that the Judas goat leads the flock into the slaughter pens. God never intended his people to be blind followers of blind teachers. He warned us that both will fall into the pit (Matt. 15:14). John says, "believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out..." (I John 4:1).
- Some blindly hold to premillennialism because they have heard it proclaimed in a bold, matter of fact way and have never thought to question it. Propagandists have learned that a lie oft repeated is soon held to be truth by the thoughtless masses. The early church had men miraculously endowed by the Holy Spirit to be discerners of spirits (I Cor. 12:10). Each of us needs to measure what we hear by the infallible Word of God. Jesus warned "Take heed what ye hear" (Mark 4:24).
- Some Bible students fall into the trap of premillennialism because they fail to rightly divide the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15). They co-mingle Old and New Covenant promises. They do not compare scripture with scripture to learn of God's fulfillment of his promises to Israel. They fail to

distinguish between figurative and literal language. A correct hermeneutic will destroy the premillennial doctrine.

- Most believers in premillennialism have not taken the time to review the spotted history of the millennial movement and discover their numerous false predictions and contradictions. Most glaring are the predictions of Christ's return by William Miller of the Adventists and Judge Rutherford of the Jehovah's Witnesses. More recently Hal Lindsey has repeatedly set dates for the Master's return, only to see them fail. Moses said "When a prophet speaketh in the name of Jehovah, if the thing follow not nor come to pass, that is the thing which Jehovah hath not spoken; the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously..." (Deut. 18:22).
- Shrewd teachers take advantage of the ignorance and credulity of the believers. They feed them their sorry diet of speculation for the notoriety and wealth it brings them. "By their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent" (Rom. 16:18). They are "false teachers, who... bring in destructive heresies... bringing upon themselves swift destruction" (II Pet. 2:1). They make merchandise of non-discerning believers.

It is not enough that we reject this false system. Our task is to fortify the faith of our brethren lest they be led astray and to liberate those held captive to this erroneous doctrine. May God give us wisdom to understand the issues and the courage to press the battle in Jesus' name. **JHW**

## **BREAK THEIR BOWS AND BLUNT THEIR ARROWS**

Aspah wrote of the day when God "brake the arrows of the bow; the shield, and the sword and the battle" (Ps. 76:3). The picture he paints is that of God neutralizing the weapons of the enemies of Israel so they would be powerless before his holy people. It would be altogether suitable for us to ask the Father to do the same for us as we struggle against those who are determined to capture and remake Christ's church into something he never intended her to be. One of the primary weapons of change agents is to discredit sound preachers and elders in the eyes of young, immature and impressionable disciples. The following are some of the charges frequently lodged

against those who wish to walk in the old paths of the gospel.

Promoters of change suggest that we have ignored and neglected the Old Testament. This is a broad, sweeping charge that ignores reality. We do not deny that some preachers or churches may have paid too little attention to the Old Testament. But many have made the Old Testament books an important part of their teaching program. This criticism masks their real objective which is to persuade brethren to regard the Old Covenant as of equal importance with the New. Since the New Testament does not provide the proof they need, they need the Old Testament to justify their use of instrumental music in worship.

They charge we are legalists, teaching salvation by works of human merit and law keeping. That some have been legalists or that some are today, we cannot deny. But certainly such is not true of all. It is a "religious slur" or put down. They pronounce this damning judgment against those who stand in their path to dominance. Unthinking minions are expected to believe it without question. They then will be free to march on to ultimate victory.

They assert that we don't understand God's grace and have failed to teach it. This is another example of blaming the whole for the failure of the few. The fact is, the promoters of change are generally mistaken in their understanding of grace. Many of them are teaching that sinners are saved solely by grace, ignoring the many verses that clearly enjoin faith and obedience on the part of the sinner who seeks salvation (Matt. 7:21).

They insist that we have emphasized obedience to the neglect of faith. This is the most egregious of their false accusations. I would challenge them to cite a concrete example of any brother who has neglected to emphasize the importance of faith. Brethren have correctly emphasized the importance of obedience to make faith meaningful, as did James in his epistle (2:14-26), and Paul in Gal. 5:6. This charge also is a ruse. They are teaching salvation by faith alone, and to veil that which is clearly contrary God's word, they falsely accuse us!

In each of these slanderous charges those who have infiltrated the church to do her harm are using false allegations to weaken the resistance of those who oppose them and to deceive those who are willing to listen. They cite the failures of a few and then seek to attach them to all faithful preachers and elders of the church. Do not allow them to deceive you.  
**JHW**

## **THE RIGHT AND THE WRONG WAY TO SERVE GOD**

God wants us to be faithful to him (Rev. 2:10), but He does not want us to be legalists. Some confuse faithfulness with legalism. The legalistic spirit is at odds with God's way of serving Him.

The legalist may do God's will as a matter of grim duty...obey or be sent to hell. The faithful child serves God out of pure love and gratitude (II Cor. 9:7). The legalist only does what the law demands...the faithful child does everything he can for his Father. The legalist loves to condemn, punish and reject those who fall short. The faithful child feels deep sympathy for them and prefers to love them, correct and restore them (Gal.6:1-2). The legalist gives up only such sin and pleasure as he fears will keep him from hell...the faithful child gladly surrenders all to his Savior. The legalist concentrates on outward things to the neglect of the heart, the faithful child seeks to have the mind of Christ (Phil 2:5) and this makes it easy for him to demonstrate the outward aspects of Christianity. The legalist expects others to yield to his will and serve his needs. The faithful child is willing to become all things to all men (I Cor. 9:22), to spend and be spent (II Cor. 12:15), to be a servant to all (Matt. 20:27).  
**JHW**

## **CTN VOLUME IV NOW READY**

The fourth volume of CTN is now available. Three previous volumes may also be ordered. Each contains 65 or so articles relating to the change movement. Single copies are \$6.50 (post paid) Order all for \$22.00.

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Send your check to Church of Christ c/o John Waddey 12630 W. Foxfire Dr. Sun City West, AZ 85375.

## **BOOKS YOU NEED TO READ**

Long ago someone learned that the past is the key to understanding the present. This is true in religion and especially in understanding what is happening to our brotherhood today.

For the past few weeks I have devoted myself to

rereading historical and biographical material of our brethren covering events from 1850-1925. This has provided a detailed preview of the current change movement at work among us. Two books of value are biographies of Daniel Sommer: **Like a Lion** by Matthew Morrison (DeHoff Pub.) And **Daniel Sommer**, by W. E. Wallace (privately published).

Following the death of Benjamin Franklin, Sommer gained control of the American Christian Review and became the principal leader of the conservative forces of the northern states. Although he strongly opposed the digressives with their missionary society and instrumental music, he also militantly opposed everyone else in the brotherhood who did not follow his lead. Sommer was a gifted talented man, ambitious and determined to imprint his stamp on the brotherhood. His negative, legalistic approach to serving Christ has had a baleful influence on many and contributed to the rise of several ultraconservative schisms among us. The dark shadow of Sommer's influence is still felt in some areas of our brotherhood. This harsh, negative approach to Christianity has repelled many and created a environment of mushy, compromising liberalism that has allowed the change movement to take root and flourish among us. Read and be wise lest we repeat the mistakes of the past. **JHW**

## A SIMPLE CHURCH

Most of us like simplicity. It is hard to appreciate and embrace something that is complex and obscure. Let me tell you about a most unusual church in your community. It is called the **Church of Christ**.

- **This church has a simple faith.** It follows the Bible alone. It has no other creed or confession, no book of law other than God's Word. Paul wrote, "faith cometh of hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Every member is urged to search the scriptures for himself to know God's will (Acts 17:11).
- **It has simple worship.** No pomp and pageantry, no theatrical productions, no entertainment. Such was unknown in Bible times. Members of this church assemble on the first day of the week to sing hymns of praise (Eph. 5:19). They lift up prayers to God (I Tim. 2:8). They commune with a simple memorial feast of bread and wine (I Cor. 11:23-31). They present their freewill offerings to God (I Cor. 16:1-2; II Cor 9: 7). They study a lesson from God's Word (Acts

20:7). This simple worship is what saints offered in apostolic days. It is hard to improve on what the apostles did.

- **This church has a simple program of work** in which to engage. They endeavor to preach the gospel to every creature in all the world (Mk. 16:15). They remember to care for the poor (Gal. 2:10). They help each other to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (II Pet. 3:18) and to be faithful to Christ unto death (Rev. 2:10). They help each other to bear the burdens of life (Gal. 6:1-2).
- **They have a simple message.** They preach the gospel Christ gave them (Mk. 16:15). Christ, his death, burial and resurrection form the heart of their message (I Cor. 15:1-1-4). They teach converts to "obey all things whatsoever (Christ) commanded" (Matt. 28:20). They avoid speculation, social and political issues that have no bearing on their faith. There are no airs, no pretensions no mysticisms, just the plain message of God to humanity. Like Paul they emphasize the simplicity and purity of the gospel (II Cor. 11:4).

This simple church welcomes you. **JHW**

## AN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Orthodox means, "conforming to established doctrine." While Jesus did not bestow the name "Orthodox" upon his church, he does have a standard to which it must conform, his New Testament. The words he spake will judge us in the last day (John 12:48). Only by abiding in his doctrine can we enjoy his favor (II John 9-11). Orthodoxy is not determined by church traditions. Traditions of men that contradict his teaching are unacceptable (Matt. 15:9).

Nor is orthodoxy determined by ancient or modern church councils. Christ made no provision for men to render decisions and laws to govern his church. He is head over all things to his church (Eph. 1:22). His Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all the truth (John 16:13). The faith of Christ was given once for all time (Jude 3).

- A church is orthodox that loyally submits to the New Testament of Christ in all matters of faith and practice. He has all authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18).
- An orthodox church prays to God through Christ its only mediator (I Tim. 2:5). It honors the memory of Mary, the apostles

and exemplary Christians but does not pray to or through them.

- An orthodox church is not a national church. Scripture never mentions a church of Libya, or Germany. Christ's church is universal, for all races (Matt. 28:19; Gal. 3:28).
- An orthodox church only wears names that Christ authorized. We find in Scripture such names as "churches of Christ" and Church of God. Members were simply called Christians (Acts 11:26; I Pet 4:16). There were no hyphenated names for believers. These orthodox names glorify Christ (I Pet. 4:16).
- An orthodox church does not impose itself on government or use state power to harass

those who do not accept its teaching. Christ's church grows by teaching his gospel and winning people's hearts (Matt. 28:18). The use of violence and force are proof a church is not orthodox before Christ.

- An orthodox church follows the instruction of Christ and example of the original church in accepting members. It baptizes only those old enough to understand the gospel (Mark. 16:16), who repent of their sins and confess their faith in Christ (Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:9-10). This infants cannot do.

In the Church of Christ you can worship and serve Christ according to his prescribed standard. In so doing you will be truly orthodox in your faith. **JHW**