

What Does the Bible Say about the Millennial Kingdom?

Introduction:

- I. Premillennialism is a doctrine that has infiltrated almost every denomination in the world, if not every not every one of them. Through the years it has even found its way into the midst of the people of God. There are several local churches of Christ right here in Louisville that are premillennial in doctrine.

What is premillennialism? Simply put, premillennialism is the belief that the second coming of Christ will immediately precede the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, when Jesus sets up the kingdom He couldn't set up the first time He came (Pre meaning before and millennial meaning a thousand). When millennialism is considered, there are three groups that come to mind. The premillennialist (Christ comes before the thousand year reign). The postmillennialist (Christ comes after the thousand year reign). The amillennialist (the second coming of Christ has nothing to do with a literal thousand year reign of Christ at all). For the next few weeks we will be showing that amillennialism is the position taught by the Word of God.

What does the Bible say about the millennial kingdom? The quick answer to this question is nothing. The words millennial and kingdom never appear together in the Bible. The fact is the word millennial never even appears in the Bible. Now, we know that the word millennial relates to "a period of a thousand years." But the truth is the word thousand never appears with the word kingdom either. Ever! Yet, when you listen to a premillennialist, you would think that the Bible is full of passages that speak of a millennial kingdom. Why then is there so much talk of the millennial kingdom? It is because premillennialists have totally misunderstood the nature of the kingdom of God.

Lesson:

I. The Nature of the Kingdom:

Premillennialists are looking for a physical, theocratic kingdom here on earth. In a book written by Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy called *Prophecy Watch*, they write the following:

"An earthly kingdom with a physical presence and rule by the Messiah-King is foretold throughout the Bible. This promise was not fulfilled in the first coming of Jesus Christ because, though offered, the kingdom was rejected by Israel and, thus, it was postponed until the second coming of Christ."

This is a typical premillennial statement and accurately sets forth their position on the kingdom of God. Unfortunately for those who believe in a premillennial doctrine, this typical statement is bursting with problems. Let's break it down.

A) First, the kingdom that Jesus promised was spiritual, not physical.

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus taught that the kingdom over which He would be King would be spiritual in nature. Jesus said that His kingdom would not come with observation.

Luke 17:20-21

20 Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; 21 nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

Now, if Jesus were planning to set up a theocratic kingdom, a kingdom that would by necessity overthrow and replace the Roman kingdom, would He be able to say that it would come without observation? Of course not. The truth is Jesus did not come to set up an earthly kingdom which would control a certain geographical area. Jesus came to conquer the hearts of men, turning man away from sin and unto Himself. Thus, the kingdom would be within the hearts of men, that is, citizens of this kingdom would be those who allow God to rule and reign in their hearts by faith. This kingdom would be greater than any earthly kingdom. Its borders would extend to the whole world, wherever the gospel would be preached. Members of this kingdom would conquer souls for Christ the King, not with swords of steel, but with the sword of the Spirit.

When we trace the thoughts of Jesus concerning the nature of the kingdom, we find that He taught at both the beginning and the end of His ministry, that it was to be of a spiritual nature. Notice this.

1. In the beginning of His ministry, Jesus taught that the kingdom was spiritual in natural.

How did Jesus do this? He did it by emphasizing that entrance into the kingdom was spiritual in natural (**Jn. 3:1-5**). What kind of birth is this to which Jesus refers? Nicodemus was thinking in physical terms because his view of the kingdom was of a physical nature. Jesus, however, says that the way into the kingdom does not involve being born a second time physically, but rather it is necessary for a person to be born again of the water and of the Spirit. This new birth consists of faith in the Son and obedience to the revealed word of the Spirit. Whatever one's view of being born of water and the Spirit may be, it should be obvious to all that the birth under consideration is of a spiritual nature. One becomes a citizen in this kingdom by faith and obedience (**ver. 16; John 1:13**), not by physical birth. Now, in regard to the kingdom of Israel of the previous dispensation, a Jew became a member of the kingdom by way of physical birth. Why? He did so because it was a physical kingdom. Becoming a citizen of the kingdom of God in this dispensation, however, necessitates a different kind of birth. Why? Because it is a different kind of kingdom. It is a spiritual

kingdom and thus necessitates a spiritual birth. Thus, we see that from the beginning of His ministry, Jesus spoke of the coming of a *spiritual* kingdom.

2. In the end of His ministry, Jesus taught that the kingdom was spiritual in natural.

Did Jesus speak of physical kingdom in the late stages of His personal ministry? No! Consider this conversation between Jesus and Pontius Pilate (**Jn. 18:33-38**).

There are several indications in this text that Jesus never planned to set up a physical kingdom.

- *First, he said that His kingdom is not of this world (ver. 36).*
- *Second, Jesus never planned to set up His kingdom by force (ver. 36).*
- *Third, Pilate found no fault with Jesus (ver. 38).*

So, Jesus taught that the kingdom was to be spiritual both at the beginning and the end of His earthly ministry. Why should we conclude that He taught something different in between John 3 and John 18? The truth is all through His ministry, Jesus spoke of setting a kingdom that was spiritual in nature.

B. Second, Jesus didn't offer a kingdom, He promised a kingdom.

Mark this down—those who advocate false doctrines always use subtle words that are wholly misleading. Viewing Jesus as just *offering* the kingdom, lessens the significance of the kingdom not being established when Jesus said it would be established. Now, listen to these statements and see if you think all Jesus did was offer something.

Matt 4:17

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Mark 1:14-15

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Mark 9:1

And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

Ladies and gentlemen, these passages are clear. Jesus taught that the kingdom would be set up in the first century. These passages don't simply set

forth an offering of something, they constitute direct statements of fact, do they not? How do premillennialists deal with this? They say the kingdom was postponed. Listen to me: the *postponement theory* taught in dispensational premillennialism is crucial to their doctrine. Without it the whole system falls and crumbles. Now listen to what they say about it:

Hal Lindsey, The New World Coming:

“Had the people received Him, He would have fulfilled the kingly prophecies in their day in addition to the ones regarding the suffering Messiah. But when the Jewish nation as a whole rejected Christ, the fulfillment of His kingship was postponed until the final culmination of world history.

John Walvoord, The Millennial Kingdom:

“As late as Acts 1:6, the disciples were still looking for a literal kingdom. While refused revelation concerning the ‘time’ of the kingdom, their hope is not denied, spiritualized, or transferred to the church. The kingdom hope is postponed and the new age of which they never dreamed was interposed, but the promises continue undimmed. Israel’s day of glory is yet to come and the Christ will reign on earth.”

Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today:

“To sum up: The cross is in no way minimized by the teaching of the postponement of the kingdom. The postponement relates to the outworking of God’s purpose in the Church, the Body of Christ, and certainly the cross is central to this work of God.”

Now, all of this postponement nonsense, the idea that Jesus didn’t do what He said He would do, that is, establish the kingdom in the first century, challenges the divinity of Christ and whether or not He is truly our Messiah. Listen: there are only three views of Christ with regard to the statements He made concerning the kingdom of God being at hand—either He was wrong about it, He lied about it or He was right and the kingdom was established when He said it was going to be, meaning it is here right now and not something we should be looking for some time in the future. Now, what position will you take. If you are a premillennialist, you have to take one of the first two views of Christ, that is, when it comes to the kingdom, Jesus either was wrong about it or He lied about it. Which position will you take. Someone says, “I take the postponement position.” Well that doesn’t help you much. Consider the following:

- If the kingdom was postponed, Jesus still failed to do what He came to do.
- If the kingdom was postponed, the prophets were wrong about the time the kingdom would be established (**Dan. 2:44-5; Dan. 7:14**).
- If you say the prophets spoke of a twenty-first century establishment of the kingdom, Jesus was wrong about the time, for He said the *“time is fulfilled.”* Now you have to choose between Jesus and the prophets. Any position that sets the prophets against Jesus cannot be right and should be immediately rejected.

Listen to me: this whole problem is eliminated when you just take that Bible view on the kingdom. Jesus did what He said He was going to do. He established His kingdom. It is here right now and has been since the first century **(Col. 1:13)**. You can become a citizen in it right now by obeying the gospel. It's not something physical, it is spiritual. It is indeed the church that Jesus promised to build and over which He reigns in the hearts of men **(Matt. 16:18-19)**. When Jesus comes back the second time, He is not coming to set up a kingdom He failed to set up the first time, He is coming to get the kingdom and deliver it up to the Father **(1 Cor. 15:24)**.

II. A Scriptural View of the Kingdom?

- **Jesus did what He said He was going to do—He set up a kingdom (Mk. 9:1).**
- **That kingdom has been here since the first century (Col. 1:13).**
- **The kingdom is spiritual in nature and is indeed the church (Matt. 16:18-19).**
- **When Jesus comes back it will be to deliver the kingdom to God (1 Cor. 15:24).**

Conclusion:

Let's end where we started. What does the Bible say about the millennial kingdom? NOTHING!!! The truth is, ladies and gentlemen, Jesus came to establish rule over the hearts of men in a spiritual kingdom which consists of those who obey the gospel of Christ. If you want to be in the kingdom of God, you can be, and you can be right now. Just obey the gospel. Your sins will be washed away by the blood of Christ and you will be a new creature in Christ in the kingdom of Christ. I hope and pray that you will make the right decision.