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Eschatology

Last time we pressed on to the post-Reformation period we'll call the Modern period, from 1600 on down to the present. In this period we said that two things come up for emphasis and they're still being worked on, and that is Ecclesiology, the nature of the Church and Eschatology, the doctrine of last things. Those two go together and you can easily see why those two topics go together. If you replace Israel with the Church so there is only one people of God then all believers are thrown into one pot and there is no room for distinctions in the end times. If however Israel and the Church are distinct then there are two people of God and there is room for distinctions in end times. Now by two people of God we don't mean two ways of salvation; there is only one way of salvation, by grace through faith, but so far as purpose and destiny are concerned, so far as the nation politic Israel in the OT and the supra-national organism Church in the NT, are these to be identified as one and the same?

To get up to speed on answering these questions we need to go back and review the kingdom in the OT. If you remember, the OT framework events, starting with the Call of Abraham you have the beginning of the kingdom of God. God starts to build a kingdom with the Jewish people, so there are a people of the kingdom or subjects. He delivers these subjects out of a pagan Gentile kingdom at the Exodus. He takes His subjects to Mt Sinai where He gives them His Law for living in His kingdom. They go into the land designated as the realm of the Kingdom, the Promised Land and they Conquer and Settle. God was the king but they rejected God as their king and asked for a human king like all the other nations, God gave them Saul. Saul failed, David was chosen and he comes to the throne. He is given eternal rights to the throne so we have a Davidic lineage of the King who is to rule God's kingdom. David's son Solomon succeeds him and ushers in a Golden

Era, a period of tremendous blessing, tremendous prosperity. Then you see spiritual decline and the Kingdom Divides. As the Divided Kingdoms rebel God sends prophets to prosecute the kingdoms to convict them of sin so they'll confess and be restored to fellowship. But as the kingdoms fail to respond God disciplines them increasingly and they go through the degrees of cursing. Finally God has had it with both kingdoms and He kicks them out of the land into Exile. Obviously God does not tolerate sin in His kingdom. Yet the prophets spoke of a future kingdom of God, they spoke of a restoration of the kingdom on a far greater scale.

And here's an interpretive question? If you were a Jew in the OT period, say living in the times of Daniel and you are reading the kingdom prophecies of Jeremiah, Daniel, Micah, what kind of kingdom would you think of when you read the words "kingdom of God?" How would you interpret that? Would you interpret the kingdom as an inner spiritual reign on the throne of your heart? Or would you interpret it to be an outward physical reign on a Davidic throne in the Promised Land involving subjects in physical bodies? What was it back in David's time? It was physical. Did it have spirituality to it? You bet it did, of course there's spirituality to it because God kicked them out of the land when they rebelled spiritually against Him. So there's spirituality there. But what else is there besides spirituality? Physical people in physical bodies, living in a physical land doing physical things in a physical land.

So the kingdom of God is not heaven. We've got to watch it here because there's sloppiness in our thinking. The kingdom of God is not a synonym for heaven. People get that because they skip the OT and start with the NT and they just float off into outer space never understanding the kingdom was defined long before Jesus and the NT.

The word "kingdom" has its roots in the OT as something physical, something that is land oriented, something that is centered on Jerusalem and something that has to do with a Jewish throne and Jewish king. That's the kingdom.

The problem of Judaism at the end of the OT is man alive, God is holy and He just kicked us out of His kingdom, how then is the kingdom going to be restored if we remain sinners? How are we going to produce the righteousness necessary to live in His kingdom? Holy mackerel, God is serious and we have a serious problem! They all agreed that history would come to an end and there would be a judgment that separated good and evil.

Every eschatology has to have a judgment that separates into two; one side eternal blessing and the other side eternal cursing. The discussion among the Jews during the intertestamental period prior to the time of Christ was this: when will that kingdom be restored? Will it be a kingdom inside of history, in time, inhabited by mortals, non-resurrected people? Or will it be a kingdom outside of history, in eternity, populated by immortals, resurrected people?

Those were the two views circulating among the Jews *before* the time of Christ. Will the kingdom of God be restored in time or in eternity? Those are the two views and the first of those views is a proto-premillennialism, the second of those views is a proto-amillennialism.

In view two, amillennialism, the Messiah comes at the end of history and simultaneously there's a resurrection and judgment and we go immediately into the eternal state. The eternal state is the restored kingdom. So the millennial kingdom is the eternal state. That position comes over into the Church as amillennialism. There is no millennial Kingdom in this history, history just goes on the way it is now and then Christ returns. There's a resurrection and a judgment; we go into the eternal state resurrected, immortals populate it, the eternal state is it. That view was prevalent, it wasn't fine tuned but that was one logical possibility.

The other possibility was view one, premillennialism. The Messiah would come inside of history and He would restore the kingdom and then after the millennium, after the thousand years, because that was already articulated in Jewish thought. The Apocrypha written before the time of Christ discusses the thousand year reign. That was already known before John wrote the revelation. So in this view Christ comes inside of history, He reigns over mortal people, non-resurrected people for 1,000 years and then after the reign there is the resurrection and judgment. This view prevailed among the Jews.

What happened historically was the Messiah came to His own people, Israel. He was rejected by His own people, something begins on the day of Pentecost called the Church and this complicates the kingdom discussion. Now we have this church thing and the question is, is the Church Israel? What is the Church's relationship to the kingdom? What is the church's relationship to Israel's promises? In other words, before we debated the nature and the timing of the kingdom; is it in history or eternity; is it *before* or *after* the

resurrection, now we add to that where is the Church in all this? For the record “The earliest Fathers in the church did not identify the Old Testament people of God with the New Testament church.” They “...embraced a premillennial understanding...Christ would return to earth and physically reign before the Final Judgment...the Fathers associated the coming of Christ with the establishment of an earthly kingdom.” As Justin Martyr (c 100-c 165) says, look at his dates, very early. “But I and whoever are on all points right-minded Christians know that there will be a resurrection of the dead and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged as the prophets Ezekiel, Isaiah and others declare... And, further, a certain man with us, named John, one of the Apostles of Christ, predicted by revelation that was made to him,” speaking of the Book of Revelation, “that those who believed in our Christ would spend a thousand years in Jerusalem, and thereafter the general, or so to speak briefly, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place.” That’s a clear premillennial statement. It’s not the premillennialism of today, it was an historic premillennialism, meaning that generally they saw the Tribulation unfolding down through the entirety of church history and then toward the end a time of turmoil issuing in the return of Christ and His millennial reign. But premillennialism nonetheless, the early church followed the prevailing Jewish interpretation of a kingdom inside of history which was a literal interpretation.

Then we have the rise of amillennialism in the Church. Origen the allegorist (c 185-c 254) was the first to promote these ideas and he often attacked church leaders who spoke of a literal, earthly kingdom, identifying them as Jewish literalists. “For Origen, the kingdom is not a future rule of Christ over the earth; it is the reign of God in the saint presently.” For Origen, when Christ returns there will be a general resurrection and judgment immediately followed by the eternal state. That’s amillennialism. Augustine crystallized amillennialism in his book *The City of God*. As Augustine says, “During the ‘thousand years’ when the Devil is bound, the saints also reign for a ‘thousand’ and doubtless the two periods are identical and mean *the span between Christ’s first and second “coming”* (20.9) Augustine did not see any improvement of society, it would not get worse or better, things would just go along as they are until Christ returns and issues in the eternal state.

So you have these two view points in the early church; premillennialism and amillennialism. Premillennial means Christ returns before the millennium. After the kingdom comes eternity. That's the premillennial view of history. Christ comes back; the kingdom of God in Premillennialism is inside history for a literal thousand years of this mixture of mortal and immortal and after that comes eternity.

The Amillennial view is that there isn't any more millennium than there is right now. So in this view they're saying the kingdom is identical with the Church. Christ returns after the Church kingdom, there's a resurrection and judgment and that's it, that's the end of history and we go into eternity. So the Church and the kingdom are not separated in this view, they're seen as one event, complex but one basic event. That's Amillennialism.

Premillennialism was at that time rejected. By the end of the 3rd century there was hardly a vestige of premillennialism anywhere. Why you ask? What happened to it? There were various reasons why and they're largely circumstantial. One of the interesting things about eschatology is when you research people's eschatological beliefs you ought to do a little background study and find out what was going on around them in the world at large at the time. Was it a period of triumph and progress or was it a time of discontent and suffering. Because what you'll tend to find is that these sociological factors influenced heavily how they were interpreting eschatology texts.

So what was going on sociologically in the first three centuries that caused this rejection of premillennialism in favor of amillennialism? The first factor was that the makeup of the Church shifted from Jew to Gentile. It started off strongly Jewish but in just 30 or 40 years the majority was Gentile. The Gentiles kept evangelizing Jews but what happened was the church eventually turned anti-Jew because the Jews never responded to the gospel; that was when the Jews formulated all their anti-Christian interpretations of the OT. So now you have a situation where the Jew who gave us the Scriptures isn't in the Church to protect the Gentiles from misinterpreting this Jewish book. That was a precursor to amillennialism.

A second factor was that the Gentile Christians started bringing over neo-Platonism. Augustine and some of these guys had philosophic

presuppositions that they brought over from Greek philosophy, and one of the presuppositions that lead to this view was that matter is inherently evil and therefore a material, earthly kingdom is inherently evil. So he wrote a book, *The City of God* where the kingdom is all heavenly, otherworldly.

A third factor was the Christianization of the Roman Empire with Constantine. Constantine became a Christian after the Battle at Milvian Ridge where he claims he saw a vision of a red cross on a blue background. That, by the way, is the historic background for the Christian flag. Constantine took that vision as a sign that Christianity was correct and he made it the official religion of the Roman Empire. Think of what this would mean to you if you were a Christian at this time. Whereas before Christianity was persecuted, think of the reign of Diocletian, not 50 years before when your brothers and sisters in Christ were thrown in the arena to be ripped to pieces by lions. Now Christianity is made the official religion of the Roman Empire? What do you suppose that effect had on the Church? Well, hey, everything is going our way, maybe the Church is the Kingdom after all.

So anti-Semitism in the Church, Neo-Platonism's negative view of the material world and the Christianization of the Roman Empire are the three factors that set men in the Church up to reject the early premillennialism and promote this amillennialism. Amillennialism starting with Origen and popularized by Augustine is now going to totally dominate the Church for the next 1,000 years, the entire Middle Ages. Premillennialism was held by a few obscure people here and there, people like Joachim Fiore, but basically premillennialism died by the end of the 3rd century. As Henry Sheldon says, "In general, the medieval mind seems to have imitated Augustine in looking to the past, rather than to the future, for the beginning of the millennial reign."

So you have the Roman Catholic Church amillennial and when Luther and Calvin come along at the Reformation they were so tied up focusing on the issues of sin and grace and how the benefits of the cross come to me that they didn't have time to go into eschatology. So they followed Augustine's amillennialism and that's how it got into the confessional churches and the creeds.

What you'll read, if you look at Luther for example is he's reading prophecy and interpreting it in light of his present situation. This is a very popular way of doing prophecy. They'll read the Bible in light of the surrounding culture and interpret the Bible in light of the culture instead of interpreting the culture in light of the Bible. This is that tendency to allow our social milieu to control how we interpret the text, what we call "newspaper exegesis." For example, Luther interpreted the "little" horn" of Daniel 11 as the papacy or the onrushing Islamic Ottoman Turks. The two beasts of Rom 13 were the papacy and political Rome who would be judged in Rev 15-19. Then Christ would return in final judgment and issue in the eternal state. So he was Amillennial and so was Calvin, they all were because they simply didn't have enough time to study everything, they were fighting the war of their lives over salvation and how salvation comes over to us, how that is dispensed, so we can't be too hard on them.

However, despite the fact that the major Reformers followed amillennialism without much critique, the door for more advanced biblical studies had opened and with the progress of Protestantism it wasn't long before a third view of eschatology emerged. Here is where we come to postmillennialism. Really postmillennialism is an optimistic amillennialism, it's amillennialism with progress thrown in. Thomas Brightman in his commentary on Revelation taught the "Christianizing of the earth through a progressive triumph of the church before the return of Christ in the Last Day." They don't see the entire Church age as the millennium, they see only the latter part of the church as the millennium. As Daniel Whitby, a major influence in postmillennial thought says, "...it is not a reign of persons raised from the dead, but of the church flourishing gloriously for a thousand years after the conversion of the Jews, and the flowing-in of all nations to them thus converted to the Christian faith." "After the "literal" reign of the saints in peace, Christ will return in judgment at the end of the age." So then the postmillennial view says post-, afterwards, after the millennium Christ comes. So they believe in a Triumphant Kingdom of God in history, which is the Church, and after it is triumphant then Christ comes back and eternity begins.

There are the three positions; premillennial, held by the earliest church Fathers, which states that Christ will return and raise His saints who will then go into the millennium kingdom for 1,000 years, after which he will

raise the unbelievers who will go to judgment. Then came amillennialism, there is no more kingdom than there is now, the Church has replaced Israel and the Kingdom is Christ reigning spiritually in the heart of believers. Christ will return at the end of the age where there is a general judgment and the issuing in of the eternal state. And third, as a variant of amillennialism, beginning after the Reformation, postmillennialism, the Church goes on until there is sufficient Christianization and the millennial kingdom begins when the Church is Triumphant and when there has been a period of peace Christ returns and there is a general judgment and issuing in of the eternal state.

Of the three positions *only* premillennialism separates Christ's coming from the final judgment and says that the Church Age is not the Kingdom. If you look at those three positions, just look at it logically, there's only one of them that forcibly separates the Church from Old Testament Kingdom imagery, the Church from Israel; it's premillennialism. That's the only one of the three because in premillennialism the Church Age finishes, it's done prior to the coming Kingdom, so the Church is not presently participating in that Kingdom, there's a relationship of the Church to the Kingdom but the Church is not the Kingdom, the Kingdom is the Kingdom. In the other two views the Church and the Kingdom are essentially the same thing.

So what happened after the Reformation? Briefly, in the 1620's a good portion of English puritans started interpreting Rev 20 to refer to a literal 1,000 years though they hesitated to claim that Christ would return for an earthly reign. There was a German Calvinist, Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588-1638) and he was the first to openly adopt the early premillennial view. "Alsted turned from the amillennial view of end-times events...because of the tragedies and devastations connected with the Thirty Years War that ravished Germany...These insights, sustained from his understanding of the Bible, gave him comfort in the midst of uncertainty, even hope, as fear was circumscribed by the knowledge of it's ultimate termination." I mention him because somebody has to have the guts to stand up and say it and this was the guy, he went against the grain of his time. But you'll also notice, there were sociological factors involved in his coming to this position.

In England a man you want to be aware of, often considered the father of premillennialism, Joseph Mede, taught at Cambridge University. He was a

Puritan and biblical scholar. The circumstances surrounding his premillennialism appears to have been the oppression of the Puritan movement within the Church of England. The state oppressed those who would not wear certain clothing, read from the Book of Common Prayer, etc...he, along with many others were against this, interpreting such measures as mere liturgy and nothing more than a prescribed spirituality. He saw his day as one of persecution that would be followed by a literal reign of Christ on earth for 1,000 years.

This oppression in England led, of course to the Puritans leaving for Holland and after a 12 year failed experiment there they set off on the Mayflower with hope that the New World would be the scene where they could flourish spiritually. Most of them brought with them premillennialism. For example, the Mather family, Robert, Increase and Cotton Mather, all Boston clerics held to historic premillennialism. The new world was an opportunity for renewed hope.

In Colonial America, some notable Puritans in their optimism over American's opportunities turned to postmillennialism. Alright so here we have a shift. The Puritans were a mixed bag, they were premillennial Puritans, there were amillennial Puritans, and there were postmillennial Puritans. Don't ever let anybody tell you that all Puritans were postmillennial. They were not. They had a lot of guys that were premil. However, postmillennialism did begin to dominate. Then "Unitarian influences and later modernist teachers hijacked postmillennial visions and transformed them into vehicles of a 'social gospel.'"

This was one of the problems of postmillennialism, it is open to getting hijacked by other people who have progressive ideas like the Unitarians and the liberals. And do you know the Unitarians and liberals, though they differed with each other, hated premillennialism? Do you know why? Because they said if a person is a premil we can't get them to believe in our programs. Of course, because we don't believe we're in the Kingdom.

So as Puritanism declined and Unitarianism increased," see, that's what's happening in America, "As Puritanism declined Unitarianism increased," and guess what the Unitarian vision of the future is? Postmillennialism. And what is the vehicle of salvation in Unitarianism? Ever been in a Unitarian

Church, ever talked to a Unitarian; what's the characteristic of them? Unitarians are always involved in education; they pride themselves on their intellect because education is the way of salvation for the future society. And see, once you master these ideas you can walk through these things and basically get oriented very quickly when you deal with people, because you just have to master these basic ideas.

Even Charles Hodge, by the way, who was a conservative Presbyterian at Princeton, was a postmillennialist, so you had conservatives in the 19th century who were postmillennial. "In recent years postmillennialism has emerged again among conservatives" again, now they're called "reconstructionists." They've done some wonderful things. I've read a lot of the reconstructionist literature and some of it, frankly, is wonderful. What they believe is you reconstruct every area of society on the OT Word of God. Well, it's a nice motive to do that, the problem is if Christ doesn't come back you're dealing with an entire world full of sinful unregenerate people and they don't want society to be reconstructed on a Biblical basis. However, the positive side is that they have produced some wonderful stuff for Christians, at least, to think through these areas of economics and other places.

Severe problems plague postmillennialism, however, viz. non-literal interpretation of prophetic passages of Scripture" why do you suppose that is? If the Millennial Kingdom was prophesied in Daniel and Ezekiel and Jeremiah and Isaiah and Nahum and Habakkuk, and Haggai, they're all Jewish guys talking about what, the Church or Israel? They're talking about Israel; they're talking about the Kingdom centering on Jerusalem. That's Israel. So this Kingdom, it's Jewish, it's Semitic, its Jerusalem centered, the Church isn't even in it. So to make the Church get in it you're going to have to change the hermeneutic. That's why premillennialism is also characterized by what we call a literal method of interpreting the Scripture. That is, when I read a Kingdom passage, I interpret it literally, I interpret it as Jewish.

And on that note Premillennialism has exerted a strong influence upon American culture and its foreign policy, especially as it relates to Israel. It really has, and it's amazing to see this; in spite of the fact that people don't really know why, it's done this. Premillennialism has exerted a strong influence upon American culture and its foreign policy. By asserting a future for the nation Israel, premillennialism tends to be 'Jew-friendly' whereas

postmillennialism and amillennialism historically permit anti-Semitism. They don't necessarily promote it but it has given rise to it in certain places and times. Think of Reformation countries that were Amill, Germany is Catholic and Lutheran, both amillennial. Isn't that an interesting observation? France was mostly Catholic before it became totally secular and therefore what was its eschatology? Amillennialism. Italy is solidly Roman Catholic, what's its eschatology? Amillennialism. The Eastern Orthodox Church tends to be amillennial too. Russia, what's the Christianity dominating Russia? Russian Orthodoxy and what is its eschatology? Amillennial. So everywhere you see amillennialism what has been true about those countries and the programs against the Jews? They've all bred anti-Semitism, that's what I'm saying.

There are a few exceptions, take England and Lord Balfour. Maybe you've heard of the Balfour Declaration. Do you know who Lord Balfour was? He was the British Foreign Secretary who lobbied for the declaration to establish a national homeland for Jews in the ancient land of Israel. This was before the modern state of Israel in 1948, this was a precursor to that in 1917. Balfour was the Englishman that designed that policy. Well what did he believe? He was a premillennial Plymouth Brethren. The British foreign office has traditionally not been too friendly to Jews. In fact, one of the big problems they had in World War I was they got Lawrence of Arabia to go in and fight the Turks for the Ottoman Empire and get the Arabs on the side of the British against the Ottoman Empire, and of course when he did that he had to promise something to the Arabs and here Lawrence of Arabia was promising the Arabs they could have this land. Then after the war the Balfour Declaration gives it to the Jews. So right away you can see there is tension in there, how that whole thing was created. But in any case, Balfour was one of the few Englishmen, an influential Englishman, that set that whole thing up, and he was, I think interestingly, a premillennial Plymouth Brethren.

I just mention that because it illustrates the Jew-friendliness of premillennialism. But if you talk to amillennial or postmillennial people, and it comes to their attention that you're a premillennialist understand there is some bad baggage that has been historically associated with premillennialism and you will be called on the carpet for this, even though you didn't participate.

Premillennialism had long been associated with Judaism and extremist cults.” I remember Ken Ham, Answers in Genesis, in a discussion, when he heard I was a premillennialist he said, well, that’s early Jewish literalism and they were wrong to expect an earthly kingdom. So just understand you may get some funny looks or criticisms when people find out your premillennial.

Here’s another guy you should know about. He’s one of the five most voluminous writers in church history and he’s the guy who resurrected the pre-trib rapture idea, so clearly he sees a Church-Israel distinction. He was from Ireland, he came to the United States five times and in 1827 he re-discovers the pre-tribulation rapture. There were others who we know wrote about it prior to him but Darby was really the one who revitalized this truth. “Darby understood more fully his present standing with Christ in heaven.” He said, “I was in Christ, accepted in the Beloved, and sitting in heavenly places in Him. This led me directly to the apprehension of what the true church of God was, those that were united to Christ in heaven...At the same time, I saw that the Christian, having his place in Christ in heaven, has nothing to wait for save the coming of the Saviour, in order to be set, in fact, in the glory which is already his portion ‘in Christ.’” Further he says, “I saw in that word the coming of Christ to take the church to Himself in glory.” Darby spread this pre-tribulational premillennialism to America.

This was not the date-setting type of pretribulationism. It did, however, get bad press when the Millerites sought to ‘date-set’ the return of Christ only to be embarrassed by its non-occurrence in 1844. And when you read these kooks saying the rapture is going to happen next year, you can kiss it off because whoever is writing that kind of literature is not a conservative premillennialist. They’re doing some bizarre thing with the text but it’s not main line. As Professor Hannah notes, “After the Civil War, a type of premillennialism emerged that eschewed date setting but insisted on the imminent return of Christ.... The teaching of the any-moment return of Christ in a secret Rapture accomplished the same purpose in that it created expectancy. This form of premillennialism became increasingly popular through the Bible conference movement....” The Bible conference movement is something you ought to know about. The Bible conference movement was dated largely from 1865-1880, a fifteen year period. The interesting thing

about this Bible conference movement is that is where dispensational premillennialism was preached and it stimulated pro-Israel sentiments. And the interesting thing was that these people started predicting the return of Israel to the Land prior to their return to the Land. In other words, there was no State of Israel and yet on the basis of premillennialism, if Jesus is going to come back and set up a Kingdom, and He's going to build a Millennial Temple in the land, guess what? Israel is going to have to come back to the land. So here these people are in 1880 looking forward to the return of the Jews to the land.

So there were a number of things that came out of the Bible conference movement; dispensational premillennialism was basically fixed, the anticipation of the restored state of Israel was voiced, the Scofield Reference Bible came out of it which basically retarded the liberal assault on fundamental Christianity in the 1920's. It wasn't stopped but it was seriously retarded because people had the background from the teachers produced out of that Bible conference movement and from that reference Bible. And for that reason the liberal theologians have hated the Scofield Reference Bible, they hated the Bible conferences, they ridicule the Fundamentalist. The word "fundamentalist" is a term today that is used pejoratively when actually do you know who started the word "fundamentalist?" It was a group of conservatives. By this time the fundamentalists, dispensational premillennialists that came out of the Bible conference movement and the conservative Reformed people got together and they put out a series of books. I have it - one big thick volume in my office, called *The Fundamentals*. It is an historic set of articles that were written about 1910 to define what is orthodoxy, what does the Bible teach about the deity of Jesus, what does it teach about the authority of Scripture, the blood atonement, and all these fundamental doctrines and they had the audacity to say, if people don't hold to those fundamentals they're not Christians. And boy, that was not well-received, boy, you're being bigoted. So that's where it got started, and that's why the word fundamentalist has a certain negative flavor to it because it was the liberals who were ridiculing it, they didn't like getting called non-Christians.

But the big idea to learn here is that behind this movement, this wrenching debate that was going on, premillennialism played a vital role because it is the hardest of... of the three positions it's the hardest one to reconcile with

liberalism. It withstands error. Postmillennialism is easy, things are getting better and better, all we need is another social program, communism, fascism, or some other ism, all the modern isms can be interpreted postmillennially, which is why historically the postmillennialist seminaries were always taken over by liberals. They were able to slip in under the radar and gradually chip away.

So if the Church really is the Kingdom, the Church is involved in social society and politics, it's politically activist and it's involved in social programs; it's involved in economic programs. If the Church is the Kingdom then ultimately does a Kingdom have a political and social and economic aspect to it? Yes it does. So since we are premillennialists and we see the kingdom as distinct from the Church then we're not so optimistic. It doesn't mean we don't build subcultures that reflect Biblical teaching, it doesn't mean we don't think through the economics of this present age, it just means that we don't expect the gospel to triumph in this age and all society to accept the Bible as a basis for building society. We preach the gospel, that's where we start, we don't start with social programs, political agendas and all the rest of it, we start with the gospel.

Alright, so that's what the church has been working on in the last 200 years, the nature of the church and it's destiny. And remember that these are tied together, if the church is fundamentally Israel then you have to be a- or post-mill but if you keep them distinct then you have to be a pre-mill. And I want you to see there are connections between these ideas and they play out in history. History is a laboratory where if you want to test what a belief leads to, you can go back and watch and see what it produces.

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