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PREMILLENNIALISM

By

G. C. Brewer



Lecture Delivered at
DAVID LIPSCOMB COLLEGE
January 27, 1939

Outline

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DAVID LIPSCOMB COLLEGE NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

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PREMILLENNIALISM

My Brethren and Friends: I am happy indeed to have this great audience to speak to tonight. I do not think that it is the speaker that has brought you but the subject; I don't know why we should be so much interested in the subject, but we are, and if I can do anything to help us solve our problems or settle our questions, I shall be very happy to contribute my effort to that end.

There are two sides among us on the question of Premillennialism, and there have been two sides ever since I have been preaching the gospel, even among us. I, however, have never been upon but one side and I am still on that side; and necessarily I may not be able to please all who are present tonight, because we probably have both sides represented and maybe a third side; I don't know. I should be very glad indeed if I could make us all happy and please everybody present, but I am not giving that my chief concern. As has been my practice in discussing any question that I have attempted to handle since I have been before the public, my heart's desire and prayer to God is that I may please Him. Then if I have pleased Him, I will have nothing to regret so far as my work is concerned but, of course, I will be sorry if my brethren are not pleased.

I. HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

A few words in reference to the history of Premillennialism and our relationship to it, I think, will not be out of place. It is not by any means a personal issue. It is almost as old as the Christian religion and has been discussed probably in every century, at least from the third century on, and the position among the Premillennialists has been the same all down through time. From this we see that it is not personal and did not originate with any one who is now living.

I am reluctant only for one reason to speak upon this subject tonight. It has been said that I do not speak against Premillennialism and some of you have heard that. Naturally I don't like to do a thing that will give the falsehood to any of my brethren but since I have been preaching against it for thirty-three years, naturally I can't change my lifelong practice just to save some man's statement. It is very true that I haven't always used the term "Premillennialism" in preaching against it. If I had so named my subject in times past, many people wouldn't have known what I was talking about; and furthermore, I have usually tried to use scriptural phraseology in my preaching. I haven't always done it perhaps but I have tried.

"Premillennialism" is not in the Bible—the word is not; neither is "millennium," the word, in the Bible. Sometimes, therefore, I have preached against certain phases of premillennialism without naming it. And always I have set up the kingdom of our Lord on Pentecost. In the first debate I ever had in my life, I affirmed that the kingdom of our Lord was set up on the Day of Pentecost and I have been affirming that ever since. Right here in your own city the last meeting I held I preached two or three sermons on the subject of Pentecost and I set that up as the inauguration day of our Savior; the time his kingdom was set up and he was exalted in fulfillment of the oath that God made to David to set him upon his throne. So, that has been my position always.

This discussion of my personal relationship to the issue brings up the name of another man—a man with whom I was associated in this School. I hope I may be pardoned for these personalities at this time. Back in 1908, 1909 and 1910, Brother Robert H. Boll held meetings here at David Lipscomb College. He was a prime favorite with all of the students and, I think, with the teachers as well. He did me much good; taught me many lessons that I still believe and preach and they still bless my life. He did, however, in one meeting here, preach the whole of the premillennial theory. He did not call it the premillennial theory but he set forth the ideas that are now included in those terms. He set forth the idea of the rapture and the revelation, that is, Christ's coming, and his saints meeting him in the air and then coming back with Him. I shall never forget the night he presented that. He took the passage of scripture that says that two women shall be grinding at the mill and one shall be taken and the other left; two shall be in bed and one taken and the other left, and he interpreted that to mean that one is a Christian, and that when Christ comes in the air, the Christian will be taken up to meet him and the other will be left. The one that is not a Christian will miss his companion but will not know what has become of him.

He illustrated this by Enoch. God translated Enoch and he **was not found**. He put the emphasis on that; that they were seeking for Enoch is implied in the expression "**he was not found**;" therefore, they went about looking for him. And I never shall forget how he represented them as saying, "Where is Enoch?" We boys kept saying that as a kind of proverb around school here for months—"Vare iss Enoch?" But he preached the whole thing and we heard him. Brother Lipscomb, Brother Elam and many of the other preachers here in Nashville heard him but if any of them agreed with him I didn't know it. If there was a single member of this faculty that agreed with him I don't know which one it was unless it was Brother John T. Glenn and I would be afraid to say that he did because I don't know that he did.

I remember distinctly seeing Brother Pittman walk up to him one day and say, "Brother Boll, you don't expect us to believe all that, do you?" And Brother Boll said, "Why, yes, Brother Sammy." But Brother Sammy didn't. We had no trouble about the matter at that time, however. We did not fight about it then. We discussed what he preached on the campus, and we discussed it in our rooms and often discussed it in the classrooms, and the idea that was advanced by the different teachers was, as I remember, that Brother Boll's conclusions were far fetched and fanciful. We thought he was drawing on his imagination a little on many of those things. The only conflict that came up about the matter that didn't seem to be pleasant was right here (indicating in front of rostrum in auditorium). Brother Boll was speaking on the Jews going back to Palestine and Brother Lipscomb was sitting right out there. As Brother Boll told of the history of the Jews and showed that they have remained a distinct nation through all the centuries, despite the persecutions they have endured, and advanced the thought that God is with the Jews and is preserving them for some future blessing in fulfillment of his purpose in them and of his promise to them, Brother Lipscomb spoke up from his seat and asked, "Do you think the Jews are now the people of God and above the Church?" Brother Boll replied, "No, Brother Lipscomb, Christians—the Church—are the people of God **par excellence**. But the **natural branch** is to be brought back into the root and fatness of the olive tree."

Boll had spoken of the necessity of studying the prophecies and had implied that some people do not encourage the study of prophecies, so Brother Lipscomb's next remark was, "Yes, I understand you are attacking me." And he seemed to be agitated as he raised his palsied hand in gesture and tears were in his eyes.

Brother Boll was moved also and tears suffused his eyes as he replied, "O, no, Brother Lipscomb, I was not attacking you. I had no thought of offending you."

Brother Lipscomb said, "Well, I thought you were. You know my well-known position about the Jews and the teaching of the prophecies."

Brother Boll said, I think, that he was not sure that he did know Brother Lipscomb's position about the teaching of the prophecies. Then Brother Lipscomb alluded to some controversies he had had on these points before Boll's day. And he mentioned having read something from Boll's pen in a recent issue of the Gospel Advocate that he thought was directed at him. It had something to do with the teaching or the objection to teaching the prophecies in the Bible schools.

Again Brother Boll disclaimed any intention to criticize Brother Lipscomb, but he asked why the prophecies were not taught in this school.

Brother Lipscomb said that the prophecies were not taught in this school and he gave the reason. He said, "Our students are young and immature and do not yet know the simpler and easier parts of the Bible. I have always held that one should know the rest of God's word thoroughly before one undertakes to study the prophecies. Even then he will encounter things that he will not understand, but a general knowledge of God's word should save him from false and speculative interpretations."

This dialogue ended pleasantly enough, but it resulted in two things that I think it will be profitable for us to remember: (1) Brother Boll gave up the afternoon lectures on the Jews and the prophecies relating to them. He did this out of deference to Brother Lipscomb. He did not want to appear to be attacking him. He did not speak again on the subject. In doing this he increased the respect and admiration that we all had for him and he probably caused some to be more inclined toward his position than they would have been if they had heard all of his arguments. If my memory is not at fault, Brother John Glenn told me that he and the other teachers who were near Brother Boll's age, including Brother Pittman, Brother Ed Sewell, Brother H. Leo Boles, and Dr. J. S. Ward, advised Boll to abandon those lectures. (I was interested in them and was asking why they did not continue.) (2) Brother Lipscomb also made a concession. He said that if the older and more advanced students wanted to study the prophecies he would teach the class. We clamored for the class and when it was started, all the preacher students enrolled as did nearly all the faculty. Several men who are here tonight were in that class. Brother Pittman, Brother Boles, Brother Charles Brewer, and I were all in the class. There may be other members present, I do not know, but I know we were all in it.

I have related these things in the hope that the manner and the spirit in which this matter was handled then might be a valuable suggestion to us now in this time of rancorous disputing and disfellowshipping each other. I lay special emphasis upon Brother Boll's willingness then to abandon his lectures for the sake of peace.

It was several years after the things here related before the bitter fighting and personal impeachments over these questions began among us. The beginning of this unfortunate condition was in 1915 when Brother Boll and his fellow editors of the Gospel Advocate disagreed about what they thought was an agreement on Boll's part to cease to teach these things. But upon that incident we here draw the curtain.

Now with this much history given in which my own position and the position of the teachers in this school has been set forth as it now is and always has been, may we not enter upon a study of the issue proper without accusing each other of being off sides—a football term—on this question? Surely we can. We shall attempt to discuss the question on its own merit without any reference to any personal dispute that may exist between any of us anywhere.

II. THE ISSUE INTRODUCED AND DEFINED

As we begin to study this question, however, I must disclaim any purpose tonight to examine the arguments in detail and to refute them all. You would hardly expect me to do all that in one lecture. Men have written books on these points and you would not expect me to do in one speech what they did in volumes. These books are still extant and are available to all of you. Brother Boles here had a debate with Brother Boll and that debate is now in book form and may be read by all of you. I have said and I still say that it is the best thing in print on the subject. I have commended all of Brother Boles' and Brother Hinds' writings against premillennialism. I still commend them.

But take now the word **premillennialism**: that word, no form of it, is anywhere found in the Bible. Neither is the word **millennium** ever used by any Bible writer. This word, however, comes from the two Latin words **mille**—thousand—and **annus**—year—and, therefore, means a thousand years. This is mentioned in Rev. 20:1-9. In this one reference that period of time called "a thousand years" and "the thousand years" is discussed and those expressions occur six times—three times each. Since we have "the thousand years" in the Bible it is not incorrect to use the equivalent expression **the millennium**. But so far as I know this is the only passage in the Bible that says anything about the thousand years. Yet there has been an endless discussion of Millennialism or Chiliasm—the Greek word **chilias** means a thousand and in Rev. 20 the expression for a thousand years is in

the Greek *ta chilia etee*—for hundreds of years. The two main ideas connected with this famous passage are the premillennial theories and the post-millennial theories. "Pre" means before and "post" means after. Therefore the pre-millennialists are those who contend that Christ will come before the millennium and the post-millennialists contend that He will come after the millennium. And there are those who think that we all must be either the one or the other. They do not see any other position for us to take and this fallacy causes many people to accept the pre-millennial view without knowing anything else that is contained in that theory. They think that there is a period of time one thousand years in duration that is definitely set in God's program and that it is yet future. If that period has yet to come and then run out before our Lord comes, that would make his coming at least a thousands years yet future, even if we could begin the millennium now. They think that contradicts all those passages of Scripture that teach us to watch for, look for, wait for, and be ready for the coming of our Lord. Why should we be watching for a thing that we know cannot occur for a thousand years yet? They ask with great earnestness. And they understand the post-millennialists to hold that the triumph of righteousness is to be brought about by the preaching of the gospel and the conversion of the world. And that, therefore, the millennium will not begin until the entire world is converted. That seems to be a long way in the future and then the coming of Christ will not take place for a thousand years after that! Truly there is no need for our looking for Christ, according to that theory.

This seems to be the one point that our premillennial brethren cannot get by. Just here I wish to read from a letter just recently written to me by Brother Robert H. Boll. The occasion of this letter was some questions that I submitted to Brother Boll. He answered them and further on in this speech I shall read both the questions and the answers, but on the point now under consideration, I wish to read from his letter that accompanied the answers. I think this will be fair to him. (Incidentally, that you may know that it is not unfair to read these questions and the answers, I may tell you that Brother Boll gave me permission to do this). But here is the paragraph from the letter that applies on this point:

"The term 'Premillennialism' covers a great deal of ground. The essential point in all premillennial doctrine" (now, watch that) "the essential point in all premillennial doctrine, as I see it, is that Christ's coming is now, and always, to be expected and looked for and not to be postponed to some far-distant day, beyond a golden age to come. As to what the 'Millennium' will be, or whether there is to be any millennium, is really secondary to this. (See enclosed leaflet on Pre-

millennialism.) I, of course, believe that there will be such an age, following this one in which we now live. But I do not claim to be able to answer all questions that might be asked about it, or to set forth all the circumstances and conditions that will prevail then. A devout Old Testament believer in God's prophetic word might not have been able to answer all the questions about the Messiah's first advent, and all the new conditions that would follow it. So much as the Bible reveals can be known; no more."

That is prefatory to my questions and alludes to some questions about conditions on the earth, but here is the point: he says, "The essential point in all premillennial doctrine is the fact that the coming of Christ is not definitely postponed beyond some supposed golden age."

Well, if that is the essential point, I don't see why we could not all agree, because I don't know that any of my brethren anywhere now hold or contend for the position that there is yet to come a golden age on this earth that will have to come and expire before our Lord breaks in upon the earth. I don't know anybody that holds it now. It is true that this position has been held. Ashley S. Johnson of Kimberly Heights College held that position. I was there in his school two years; he held that position and sent us out to preach and made us believe that we could convert the world and bring in that millennium. Then after the world reached that high state of righteousness under Christ and stayed that way for a thousand years, the Lord would come. And I went out preaching, therefore, with some of his enthusiasm and fire, believing that I could convert the world and I thought I would be through by the time I was forty years old. I am "about" that now, but I am not quite through. (Laughter). (The speaker is "about" 14 years above 40).

Dr. H. Christopher, who was a contemporary of Brother Lipscomb and Brother McGarvey, wrote a book, entitled "The Remedial System." In that book he has a chapter on the Millennium. He set forth the idea that the gospel will convert the world and bring in the time of righteousness and peace on earth which he says is foreseen in Rev. 20 and there symbolized by the millennium. He does not make this period a literal thousand years, but he uses a day for a year and makes this time extend over a period of three hundred and sixty-five thousand years.

But these were only the ideas that these men held, and they were never generally accepted, and I do not know of any one who would now contend for such a view. We would all be slow to say under present conditions that the world is going to be brought to Christ. And there are some scriptures that teach that when He comes the world will be in a wicked and faithless condition (Matt. 24:37-48; II Tim. 3:1-5; I Thess. 5:1-10; II Thess. 1:1-10).

But when he comes will He bring in that thousand years of triumph over Satan? When He comes, He will bring **eternal** triumph, rest, peace and joy for those who are ready to meet Him, whether they be living in Him or sleeping in Him.

But what about that Millennium? When is it going to come in God's scheme of things? That is the question that many people ask. They make this one passage of Scripture the pivotal point of their thinking and form all their conclusions around it. And many of those who will not accept either the premillennial or the postmillennial theories still feel it necessary to make some explanation of the millennium. Well, says one, don't you believe that some explanation of this passage, some understanding of the millennium is necessary? If it is, we are lost. For no explanation has ever yet been given that we all accept, and if I should offer my explanation how could I know that it is correct? And if I could not know, how could I ask others to abandon their explanation and accept mine? Some say that the millennium began on Pentecost. Others say it began with the Reformation of the 16th century. Still others say that it began with the Restoration under the Campbells. And there may be yet other views that I do not know about. It is a favorite theme for guessing and it is always open season on the millennium.

III. THE SPEAKER'S OWN POSITION

But some of you are wondering what my position on the Millennium is. You know some people will never be satisfied on such things until you express an opinion or make a guess. But I shall have to disappoint you on this point tonight. **I do not know anything at all about the Millennium.** I do not know what Rev. 20:1-6 means and I will not venture a guess or spin a theory. All my thinking and believing is independent of this passage. With me, it is not a pivotal point at all. My view on this point is expressed completely by Dr. Robertson. I published this a year or two ago in the Gospel Advocate and I still say that it expresses better than I can express it myself, my attitude toward the Millennium. Here is what he says—Dr. A. T. Robertson—in his book called "New Testament History," page 116:

"The millennium plays a really unimportant part in the book itself (only in chapter 20), and yet it has been made to dominate the interpretation of the book by premillennial or postmillennial theories. As for myself, it is by no means clear what the millennium is, nor how long it lasts, nor what is its precise relation to the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. So I leave the millennium to one side in my own thinking, and grasp firmly and clearly the promise of the personal second coming of Christ as a

glorious hope and have no program of events in my mind for that great event."

I have no program of events in my mind in reference to the second coming of Christ except that he is coming to judge the world, make up his jewels and take his children home, and when that judgment is completed and death has been defeated he will surrender the kingdom to God, the Father, and we will live with Him forever and ever. That is all I know. About the millennium, I know nothing in the world.

IV. THE PRE-MILLENNIAL DOCTRINE STATED AND REFUTED

But we must now give our attention to the Pre-millennial theory, so that those who are unacquainted with it may know what it is and may also hear in brief our reasons for not believing it. We shall see that it embraces more than just the view that Christ will come before the millennium begins. It tells what will take place during the millennium.

In giving a statement of this theory, I am going to avail myself of another man's efforts. I am going to read to you from this book. It is entitled "Systematic Theology" and it was written by a Presbyterian teacher of theology, Dr. R. V. Foster, who taught for many years in Cumberland University here at Lebanon. This book was published in 1898. I read from this old textbook on theology for three reasons: (1) I want you to see that this is not just a controversy that has arisen among us, and that it is not in any sense personal. Theologians have discussed all these theories for centuries. (2) This is not a modern doctrine and did not originate with anyone who is now living. It is not "Bollism" in any sense, except that Brother Boll believes this theory. It is not his however. (3) I think this is as good a statement of the doctrine as I have ever seen and I think Dr. Foster's strictures on it are as good as I ever saw, although they are brief. I make his objections to the different points of the theory **my objections** and shall content myself with these without further effort at refutation at this time. We emphasize the statement of the view and then change the inflection on his comment so that you may get what he states as the theory and then distinguish his objections to the joint. (In type the point is in *Italics* and his comment in plain type). This is found under the general subject of Eschatology. Here is what he says:

"We close, then, what we have to say on this subject with a brief statement of what is known as the premillennarian doctrine concerning the second advent of Christ, and with an equally brief comment upon it. With more or less unanimity the premillennarians affirm the following propositions:

(1) **That the second advent of Christ is to occur at a time not very far from our day.** This may indeed be true; but it is a matter in regard to which we are all equally ignorant. The attitude of every Christian (and hence of the Church), whether he be a premillennarian or not, should be one of expectancy.

(2) **The second coming of Christ is to be visible and personal, and that it is to be signalized by the resurrection of some or all of the saints.** Of this latter fact, as an event distinct from the general resurrection, there is far from being any decisive proof in Scripture.

(3) **That Christ, with the risen saints, is to reign a thousand years on this earth, visibly and in person, and that the end of the world and the general resurrection and judgment are not to occur until after this thousand years.** Concerning which it may be said, that the Scriptures uniformly speak of the visible return of Christ, the resurrection, and the final judgment, as occurring in immediate consecution, unless this passage in Rev. 20:1-6, be regarded as the one exception.

(4) **That at the beginning of this thousand years the scattered Jews are to be restored to the land of Palestine, and re-established as a kingdom of which Christ is to be the visible and personal head, and that during this interval, and from Jerusalem as a center, the process of world-evangelism is to be carried on by extraordinary agencies.** This is equivalent to saying instead of two there are to be three dispensations, viz., the Old Testament dispensation, the New Testament dispensation, under which we are now living, and this millennial dispensation. This, also, is equivalent to saying, that the agencies instituted by Christ when he was on earth before for the evangelization of the world are not adequate to this end and that they were not designed to be so.

(5) **That this millennial reign is to be followed by the withdrawal of Christ and by another temporary supremacy of Satan.** We don't mean that each of these propositions is affirmed by all premillennarians, but that each one is peculiar to the premillennarian theory. And the general remarks which we make upon it are these:

(a) However attractive to some minds, and however true, this chronology of the world's future may be, it is utterly impossible to verify it by Scripture.

(b) Theoretically, there may be no harm in believing any one or every one of the propositions, but it is difficult to see what intrinsic advantage, either theoretical or practical, the theory has over the commonly received Church doctrine. If it soothes our sense of discouragement and despair as we contemplate the slow

progress, which the ordinary agency of the gospel has ever made and still makes, in its conquest of human hearts, so, also, is it calculated to damage the zeal and energy at least of the great mass of Christian people.

(c) The theory is no more calculated to induce devoutness of spirit, serious mindedness, and earnestness, on the part of Christians, than are the simple words of Christ, "Watch and be ready, for ye know not the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh." The pertinency and value of these words do not depend upon any millennial theory.

(d) The premillennarianism which has to a greater or less extent ever been in the Christian Church (of course, you know he uses the term "Christian Church" not meaning a denomination. This is a presbyterian writing and he is talking about Christian people) has a twofold origin: First, historically, it is an inheritance from Judaism, the first Christians being Jews. Shortly before and after Christ, the Jews, as does every people in its own way under similarly dark circumstances, were eagerly longing and looking for a brighter and better day, and these national hopes were centered about, not the second, but the first coming of the Messiah. To this end and on this account the glowing Messianic prophecies in their Old Testament Scriptures were grossly carnalized, and their golden age was construed mainly as a secular one which should dawn when the Christ should come. Even the disciples of Jesus, during his early life, shared this secular expectation, and after his ascension, transferred and spiritualized the glories from the first to the second advent.

Second, morally or socially, the millennarian notions of the post-apostolic Christians were due to the dark times of persecution in the midst of which they lived; and by some of them, as Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Tertullian, the secular and materialistic conception of Judaism were incorporated as elements of their millennarianism. They naturally and properly looked forward to the time when the Church would not be despised and downtrodden as it then was, but under the visible and personal leadership of King Christ would be victorious over all enemies and the joy of the whole earth. Essentially, they were right, of course, but in working out the details of that golden future, the Church itself has for the most part long since agreed that these early fathers were in several respects unscriptural and Judiasitic"

That much I have read because it states clearly as you see that the theory has come on down from those men in early times. You see, also that it rises

and falls along through the ages. In times of distress and darkness it comes again to prominence. I do verily believe that today it is prominent among the denominational people chiefly because of the confused and disturbed state of the nations, which seems, to some extent, to contribute to the view of our own brethren, who hold the premillennial idea. I also believe that although Brother Boll believed this theory and preached it long before the World War came along and long before the dispute came between him and the brethren that led him to leave the Gospel Advocate, the World War then in progress in Europe contributed a part to his belief in the probable coming of the Lord at a very early period. Today they are predicting that perilous times are ahead of us. Today the outlook is not pleasant by any means but we should not, therefore, try to fix up some theory for the settlement of these difficulties. Leave that with the Lord, and if He wants to work it out and let the world continue to run, we will be happy. If it is the Father's will that our Savior return during our lives, leave that also with the Lord. At least, I should be glad to see Him, but above everything else, in our confusion and despair it certainly wouldn't become us to be fighting and devouring each other about the Lord's coming. You remember the story of the servant who said, "My Lord delays his coming," and he began to beat his fellow-servant and the Lord came in upon him and cast him out among the hypocrites? Above all, if we fight and beat and devour each other at all it certainly should not be about the second coming of our Lord, and most certainly not about some fanciful, far-fetched theory that we may have about what the Lord will do when he comes.

In order that I might have some detailed description of what will take place when the Lord comes and sets up his kingdom, according to the premillennial view, I asked these questions and I beg you to listen as I read them and then read the answers to them. Of course, I had known all the time that the idea held is that Jesus would come and reign on the earth a thousand years but I couldn't understand what kind of reign men thought it would be and I submitted these questions to three different men, prominent men in the religious world. Only one of them, however, is reckoned among us, and that is Brother Robert H. Boll. I asked him these questions and he answered them frankly and then, as I have already stated, gave me permission to use his name. The other two men did not answer. Therefore, I read the questions and the answers.

V. QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO BROTHER BOLL AND HIS ANSWERS

1. When Christ comes to reign on the earth—on David's throne — will that be a political or material government such as David's was, except

grander and more extensive?

2. Will the government be supported by taxes paid by the citizens in literal, earthly coinage, such as we now use?

3. Will the citizens of this kingdom be flesh and blood men and women, as we are now? Will there be births and deaths on the earth during that thousand years?

4. What sort of beings will Christ and the risen saints be during that time? If Christ becomes flesh once again, becomes an earth dweller, will he have to die again? If not, how will he pass back to a glorified spirit being?

5. Does it seem reasonable — or even possible — to have a temporal, material, political government composed of flesh and blood people and supported by "Caesar coinage" and yet the ruler and his subordinate officers all **spirit-beings** who neither eat nor drink, sleep nor die, exercise nor rest, rejoice nor weep as their mortal subjects do?

6. Since those nations over which Christ and his saints shall rule with a rod of iron are wicked, sinner nations, how will they be controlled, by a spiritual force or by physical force? Will there be armed police and trained soldiers to enforce the Ruler's will?

7. Will the gospel be preached during the millennium and will some of these sinners become Christians? If so, will these Christians live on to the end of the thousand years and then die or be changed or will they be dying along during the reign? If they die, what words of comfort could be said to the weeping ones seeing they could not use such scriptures as II Thess. 4:13 to close, and Rev. 21:1-7?

8. If this reign is to be entirely spiritual and in a new Heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness and where they shall not "hurt nor destroy" in what sense shall the rule be with a rod of iron and how break the nations in pieces? Are we not forced to "spiritualize" this? Also, why should such a reign end in a thousand years? Furthermore, why should we speak of such a reign as being **on earth** at all seeing it will not be this present earth at all and will not be "earthly" in nature?

I would like to imagine trying to preach a funeral during the thousand years when I couldn't tell them that Christ would come and the dead would rise or that the tabernacle of God is with men and he will wipe all tears from their eyes, but nevertheless, without any further comment upon the questions, I will read the answers.

1. "It will be a theocracy, extending over all 'the kingdoms of the world'. (Rev. 11:15), taking over

all the realm '**under** the heaven', which was previously held by 'the fourth beast' (Dan. 7:27); and its sovereignty is 'over the nations'. (Rev. 2:26). Whether in view of this it should be described as 'political' and 'material' you must decide. I never use either of those terms when speaking of it.

2. When God headed the ancient theocratic kingdom, He demanded tithes and offerings. When Israel asked for a human king, God warned of the heavy taxations that such a king would demand. (I Sam. 8:1-18). Whether in the New Order anything will be demanded, is not perfectly clear. A typical indication may be discerned in I Kings 10:24-25 (Compare Rev. 21:24-25) and more direct prediction in Ps. 72:10,15; Isa. 60:6,9,11,16. Nothing is anywhere said about any 'coinage' so far as I know.

3. That Israel, and the nations, over whom that reign extends are composed of human beings in the flesh is seen in many scriptures e.g. Ps. 72:11-14; Jer. 30:19-21; Zech. 8:4,5 (See contexts also). There will be births and deaths. The lives of men, especially the righteous, will be much longer than human lifetimes run now. (Isa. 65:20-25).

4. Christ is not a 'glorified spirit being', but a resurrected and glorified **man**. Such will also His saints be. As such they have access to earth or to heaven. After His resurrection, Christ walked on the earth for forty days, not bound by physical laws, yet able at will to use them and act in accordance with them. That Christ is a glorified spirit-being is the doctrine of Russell and Rutherford. The Bible teaching is that He is Man, now. (I. Tim. 2:5) If He were not Man he could not sit on David's throne, now or ever; for God's oath is definite, that 'of the fruit of his (David's loins) He would set one upon his throne. (See Ps. 89:3,4; 132:11; Acts 2:30,31).

5. This question is answered to all effects by the preceding.

6. The rod (sceptre) of iron is the symbol of strong, unswerving rule. Only rebels and oppressors will feel the weight of that rod. (Ps. 72:4,9; Isa. 11:3-5). There is no indication that the King will need or use carnal forces to execute His judgments. After the great judgments of that Day the remnants of the nations will subject themselves willingly to His rule. (Ps. 47:9; 72:11; 102:22; Zech. 8:20-23). But also note Isa. 60:12.

7. There is a distinction between salvation and government. Government may have to be enforced; salvation is always by grace and voluntary. There never can be any salvation except through the gospel. During the millennium, Satan, who now blinds the minds of men (II Cor. 4:40) is bound and imprisoned, and the know-

ledge of Jehovah will cover the earth as waters cover the sea. All conclusions drawn from these facts must stand as conclusions only. The word of God denies that those who died in sin will have life and opportunity in the millennium; and there is no proof that those who today reject the gospel will have opportunity then.

8. We must distinguish between the new order under the "Millennium" on the one hand, and the 'new heaven' and 'new earth' which follow the passing away of the present earth and heaven, on the other. The rule of the rod of iron pertains to the former, not the latter. The latter represents the final perfect goal of Christ's work, the eternal state. (Even in regard to the millennium we would not be forced to 'spiritualize' the 'rod of iron'. There is a difference between 'spiritualizing' and recognizing a simple figure of speech.)"

VI. COMMENT UPON THE ANSWERS

You now have his answers to the questions, and so far as I can see there is no attempt at evasion on any point. He answers promptly and frankly. I do not intend to attempt a detailed review of these answers. I do not think that such a review is necessary. I wanted these answers in order that I might understand what they think the nature of that future kingdom will be and what the conditions under that reign will be. He has told me, and it seems to me that he has committed himself to some rather gross things. It seems to be an unseemly mixing of the material and the spiritual; the temporal and the eternal, the terrestrial and the celestial. And, as Dr. Foster said, it throws things into confusion and promises a fourth dispensation. I cannot believe this theory. I would not say that I can't believe any thing that God's book teaches, and of course, Brother Boll thinks that this is all clearly taught in God's word. He cites references for all his answers, but I can't see that they prove the point. To connect some of these passages with the millennium requires a more active imagination than I possess. Some prophetic utterances I do not profess to understand but, as Brother Lipscomb used to say, in the light of plain New Testament teaching, I cannot put the interpretation upon them that premillennialists do.

I do not believe that our Lord is ever to live on this earth, even as a glorified human being, and reign over a political kingdom or be the head of a world government composed of mortal beings and maintained by dirty dollars—that which belongs to Caesar. (This is not a denial of the fact that Christ is coming back to the earth to judge and destroy it before the eternal state of the righteous and the wicked begins). (Matt. 25:31-46)

Our brother says that Christ is now Man. Yes, I Tim. 2:5 says that. In like manner Christ was "God"

while he was here on earth. He was Emmanuel, God with us (Matt. 1:23). It would be easy for us to speculate and dispute about the nature of Christ now just as theologians in the days of Arius and Athanasius disputed and disfellowshipped each other about the nature of Christ while he was on earth. Of course, Brother Boll does not believe that Christ is a mortal man—subject to temptations, to pain and sickness and death. Nor will he ever be again. Then we will have an earth ruler that is in no way earthy—subject to or adapted to earth conditions. He is not mortal, but his subjects are mortal. See the mixture to which I referred?

VII. AN APPEAL FOR PEACE

But what is the profit of all this disputing? Why should we attempt to tell what God is going to do in the future and how he is going to do it? He may do some things about which I have no knowledge and of which I am not even able to conceive. If, therefore, he had told me about them I would not be able to bear them now, as the apostles were not able to take in the coming kingdom and its work in the long ago. (John 16:12). Would it not be wiser and better for us to leave God's plans with God and give our time and thought and energy to the work he assigned us? We cannot change his plans anyway. He will carry on his program and accomplish his purpose regardless of what we do or say or believe about it. If he intends to do all that the premillennialists say he does and in just the way they have mapped it out, all our disbelief of the plan and our fighting against it will not change it one iota. We cannot defeat God. But if these men are wrong in their interpretations and conclusions then all their faith in the plan and all their fervor and zeal for it cannot bring it to pass. They cannot tell God how to do things.)

What profit is it, I ask again? **It makes little difference what our ideas concerning future things are, but it makes an eternity of difference about what we do in the present and how we treat each other about our ideas and conclusions.**

This whole premillennial view does not touch present time or present duties at all. It does not concern one item of work or worship in the Church. It has nothing to do with any experience through which we must pass in this life. It is entirely future and has to do with what some men think God and Christ are going to do sometime in the future. We should not worry about what Christ is going to do in the future; the thing that should concern us is **what are we doing today?** Why should we lose valuable time and God-given opportunities by quibbling over eschatology? And why should we separate friends, alienate brethren, destroy fellowship, fill our hearts with rancor, offend these little ones and stab love dead at

our feet just because we cannot agree on what is to be the denouement of the divine drama? On how Christ is going to wind up **His** work? Brethren, this is folly!

I make one more appeal for reconciliation and for peace. Why not hold your views on these questions in private, brethren, and not give an occasion to stumbling to anyone? These things are not only future and outside the realm of our duties and responsibilities, but on some points, at least, they are nebulous. But none of us would presume to tell you that you cannot believe them, all we ask is that you do not preach them. Surely you brethren are too well informed in the word of righteousness to insist that you have the right to preach what you believe and that we are presumptuous, sectarian and dictatorial when we say, "Thou shalt not." Men frequently have **rights** that they should forego for love's sake and sometimes out of regard for the weakness of other men. (I Cor. 1:4-6; I Cor. 8:13).

The condition among us today is deplorable. While Premillennialism has been taught by some of our brethren for more than thirty years, as we related in the beginning, we have had more agitation concerning it in the last five years than we had in the twenty-five that preceded this period. We have had more hard feelings, more suspicions among us and more judging one another and even misrepresenting one another than we ever had before. You may account for this as you think you should and lay the blame on the man or men whom you think deserves or deserve it, but you cannot deny that what I state is a fact. We have a demonstration of it here in Nashville. It is lamentable and some of us like Jeremiah of old are weeping over our people.

But regardless of who has stirred up this schism in the last five years, it remains a fact that there has been trouble for twenty-five years, **and it is all so useless.** Let us cease teaching millennial theories and disarm those who speak evil of us, restore fellowship among ourselves and let us see peace and joy and a spirit of cooperation and good will abiding among us again. I am praying to see this come about before I am mustered out of service. Will you not join me in this prayer, brethren?

VIII. ADDENDA

Following the lecture on premillennialism at Harding College, one of the teachers came to me and asked me what I would do with Rev. 3:21 which says that Christ is not now on **his** throne but upon the Father's throne. I told him I had attempted to answer that in the Gospel Advocate in 1937, and cited the issue. After the lecture at David Lipscomb College a preacher and also a sister came to me with the same question. They both stated that they had never

heard any one attempt to explain this passage or to answer the argument that is made upon it. Since this seems to be such a favorite text with the premillennialists and since they think it unanswerable, I here present what I wrote on it some two years ago. The following was published in the Gospel Advocate in two articles. They appeared in the issue of June 24, 1937, page 578 and July 1, 1937, page 606. Here they are:

**MY THRONE; MY FATHER'S THRONE
OR, IS CHRIST NOW ON HIS OWN THRONE?**

G. C. Brewer

1. A brother who heard me through a meeting recently writes me a long letter filled with compliments, criticisms, and complaints. He feels that the glory has departed from spiritual Israel because some of us have sacrificed truthfulness, and fair dealing, for a ranting sectarian spirit; a spirit of factionalism and the determination on the part of some men to make themselves prominent, and even necessary, by becoming the champions of a faction. He in a half-hearted way exonerates me from this charge, but he thinks I, too, have either overlooked or repudiated at least one plain passage of Scripture. Here is an excerpt from his letter:

"You made the statement that, so far as you know, Christ is now on the only throne he will ever be on. I appreciate the fact that you were modest enough to say "so far as I know." That is much milder than the brethren usually put it. Some of them are so cocksure, dogmatic, and intolerant that they go to the point of blasphemy in declaring and announcing what Christ can and cannot do in the future, and they have definitely decided and decreed, as if in ecclesiastical convention assembled, that Christ shall not reign with his saints a thousand years, and woe unto him if he tries it! But you say "so far as I know," and yet you surely are well acquainted with the passage that clearly states that Christ is now on his Father's throne and that in the future he will be on his own throne, and those who overcome will at that time sit with him on his throne. (Rev. 3:21) If you are acquainted with this inspired statement, how can you say "so far as I know, Christ is now on the only throne he will ever be on?" It is hard to think that you are not acquainted with this passage, and yet it is harder to think that you, with this before you, would make the statement you made. If you do not know this passage, will you now read it and learn about the difference between the Father's throne, upon which Christ now sits, and Christ's throne, upon which he and his saints will sit in the afterwhile? Or will you do like the rest of

the brethren: repudiate this passage, tear Revelation out of your Bible, and berate, denounce, disfellowship, and damn those of us who still believe the Bible, and, therefore, accept this plain statement of God's word?"

REPLY:

1. A Charge and a Challenge. The brother (he signed his name, but requested that it not be made public) makes a severe charge against some of his brethren, but he intimates that I do not belong in that class. Before he gets through, however, he puts a test before me. He challenges me either to believe what he says a certain passage teaches or else be put in that class that repudiates the word of God and deals out damnation. I shall let those who feel themselves guilty of this charge make their own denial. Since I am not guilty as yet, I shall try to convince the brother, whom I know to be an earnest, sincere man, even though he may be wrong in his interpretation of Scriptures, and also in his judgment of his brethren, that I believe and revere the word of God, even the passage which he cites, and yet I do not accept his view of the future throne and kingdom. I shall hope to give him no room whatever to make his charge against me. I think we can study the passage on which relies without denouncing or damning any one.

Surely the brother will be willing to enter into an honest analysis and study of the passage. He must not insist that what it says is so plain that it needs no study when to make it state what our brother understands it to mean would be to make it contradict other passages, and even throw the whole New Testament teaching into confusion. Can it be that this passage has a figurative meaning? Shall we not examine it in the light of its context and in the light of other passages?

2. The Promises to Those Who Overcome. The passage that our brother cites is the concluding part of the letter to the church at Laodicea, the seventh of the seven churches of Asia. If we read carefully these seven letters, we will see that each one of them may be divided into the following parts: introduction, commendation, condemnation, and promises. Each time the one who speaks is named or described and the description is borrowed from the description that is given of the One who appeared unto John in the first chapter. Some parts of that general description are given in each letter—a different aspect given in each one, thus:

1. "These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks."

2. "These things saith the first and the last, who was dead, and liveth again."

3. "These things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword."

4. "These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like unto burnished brass."

5. "These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars."

6. "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and none shall shut, and that shutteth and none openeth."

7. "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."

No one will suppose that this was a different speaker each time, though he is described differently. It is the same speaker under different description, and these descriptions are given in language that is highly figurative. The letters abound in figurative expressions, though most of them are easily understood. Some had not "defiled their garments"—plain. Some needed "eye-salve to anoint" their eyes—plain, but figurative of course.

II. As we saw in the preceding article regarding promises, we now see that the blessings promised to those who overcome are described in figurative language, and a different description is given in each letter:

1. "To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God."

2. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

3. "To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it."

4. "And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father: and I will give him the morning star."

5. "He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

6. "He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name."

7. "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne."

Now, is any one ready to contend that these seven churches will all have different rewards? Will only those of Ephesus be permitted to eat of the tree of life? Will only those of Smyrna escape the second death? Will only those of Pergamum have the hidden manna and the white stone? Will only those of Thyatira have authority and rule the nations with a rod of iron? Will only those of Sardis be arrayed in white and be confessed before the Father? Will only those of Philadelphia be pillars in the temple of God and have things written upon them? And will only those of Laodicea sit with Christ in his throne?

Will not our brother admit that these are just different ways of telling of the victory, the glory, and the blessings that the faithful shall receive and enjoy? Does he not also see that the language in each case, with the possible exception of "confessing his name," is figurative? What is the white stone? Are the white garments literal? Will any one be a literal pillar in a literal temple and have a literal inscription upon him?

This is just carrying out the figure. We put inscriptions upon cornerstones and pillars. Will any one be a literal ruler of a nation and break and destroy his foes as a vessel is broken? Is this not explained by the expression, "as I also have received of my Father?" Does it not show that Christ will give his faithful ones just such victory and authority over the nations as the Father gave him? Is Christ now ruling with a rod of iron? Does he break and destroy his foes by force? Is it the desire and the disposition of Christians to rule nations with a rod of iron and to break and destroy them by superior physical force? (In another article we may attempt to show what this figure of speech means.)

How will we be given the morning star? If the morning star here means Christ (Rev. 22:16), do we not now have Christ?

To sit with Christ in his throne must mean that we shall enter into and share his final victory and glory as he entered into the glory that he had with the Father before the world was. (John 17:5) This is not something different from the rewards promised in the other six letters. It is only a different way of describing it.

3. My Kingdom. Christ calls the present kingdom "my kingdom." And he told his apostles that some of them would live to see him come in "his kingdom," (Matt. 16:28) or that they would see the kingdom of God come with power (Mark 9:1). If Christ did not come in his kingdom during the lifetime of those apostles, his promise failed. Our brother would not accept that conclusion. He would agree that this promise was fulfilled on Pentecost. Shall we say, then, that Christ is now in **his kingdom reigning**, but not yet on his throne? Is he ruling **his kingdom** from his **Father's throne**?

If that future throne, which our brother contemplates and upon which we shall sit with Christ, is to be spoken of as the Father's throne and also Christ's **throne?**" If it can be spoken of as both David's throne and Christ's throne, why not the present throne to be **David's throne**, how can Christ speak of it as "**my throne?**"

This sort of discussion is distasteful to me, and in my view wholly unnecessary if not "unprofitable and vain." Let us be faithful Christians and eschew all such speculative questions. Leave the future with the Lord. He will fulfill every promise.

