

Author: Ron Graham

Premillennial View of the Church

—*Compared with the New Testament view*

According to the premillennialist, the church is not mentioned in prophecy, and the church is only a stop gap arrangement inserted into a parenthetical and unintended dispensation.

Premillennialists don't believe that the church is God's kingdom. They say the church was necessary only because Jesus was unable to set up his kingdom at his first coming.

So they say the prophecy clock stopped; and it will not tick again until just before the second coming when Christ will finally set up his kingdom.

If the church is not the realisation of prophecy, but a substitute until the realisation comes, a number of things said in the New Testament about the church and the kingdom do not make sense. Seven of these are noted below:

1 *The One Body or Multiple Bodies?*

Premillennialists say there are other bodies of saints. For example, national Israel. Romans 11, particularly verse 26, is used to teach that the Jews will be saved by means other than the gospel and as a group distinct from the church.

But this disagrees with other teachings of Paul that there is one body (Ephesians 1:22, Ephesians 4:4).

Jews and Gentiles have been reconciled to God in this one body. There is no difference between them. Peter also recognised this. National Israel is no more the household of God or the house of Israel. God's Israel is now the church, those called out into Christ's kingdom.

Here's a scripture chain for study: Acts 15:6-1, Romans 9:6-8, Galatians 3:26-29, Galatians 6:15-16, Ephesians 2:11-22, Philippians 3:3, 1 Timothy 3:15, Hebrews 12:22-23.

2 *Glory in the Church or in a Coming Earthly Kingdom?*

The church is a glorious church in which God is glorified throughout all generations (Ephesians 5:25-27, Ephesians 3:21).

The premillennialist detracts from the glory of the church by making the imagined millennial earthly kingdom more glorious, and the church only a prelude to it.

3 *The Fulness of Christ or Just a Portion?*

The church is the fulness of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23). When Premillennialists say that the church is only one of several bodies of saints, and the church age is only a prelude to the golden age of the millennium, they represent the church as something much less than the fulness of Christ.

4 *A Soon Coming Kingdom or One Far Off?*

Jesus said, "**The kingdom of God is at hand**" (Matthew 10:7). The church was certainly at hand; the millennium wasn't.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "**Thy kingdom come**" (Matt 5:10). The church came; the millennial earthly kingdom didn't.

Jesus said, "**There are some standing here who shall not taste of death till they have seen the kingdom of God after it has come with power**" (Mark 9:1).

Many of that generation lived to see the church established throughout the world, but none lived to see the millennial earthly kingdom.

- Was Jesus right, and the kingdom which came was the church?
- Or was Jesus wrong, and the kingdom had to be postponed, whilst the church came instead to fill the void?

5 *A Spiritual Kingdom or an Earthly One?*

Jesus said, "**My kingdom is not of this world**" (John 18:36).

This makes sense if Jesus was talking about his church, however if Jesus was talking about a millennial kingdom on earth, his statement is problematic. The church is a spiritual kingdom not of this world. Its king and throne are in heaven.

The millennial kingdom, however, is imagined to be an earthly kingdom, very much of this world, especially in the sense that Jesus and Pilate would have had in mind at the time of their conversation.

6 *In God's Plan or a Quick Fix?*

Scripture shows that the church was clearly in God's eternal purpose. "**God created all things in order that his manifold wisdom might be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenlies, in accord with the eternal purpose which he carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord**" (Ephesians 3:10-11).

Jesus said, "**I will build my church...**" (Matthew 16:18). He was intending to carry out God's plan which he purposed before the world was made.

The church was not unplanned, nor was it a contingency plan if something went wrong. It was exactly what God intended, and Jesus died as planned to purchase the church for God (Acts 20:28).

When we enter into the blood of Christ, we are "delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of his beloved Son... the head of the body, the church..." (Colossians 1:12-20).

7 *In Prophecy or Unforeseen?*

At the outset of this lesson, we mentioned that the premillennialist claims that the church was not foreseen in Old Testament prophecy.

Here is just one way to prove that wrong. In prophecy God swore an oath that Christ would be a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:6, Hebrews 7:21, Psalms 110:4).

That prophecy was fulfilled and Christ became "a priest over the house of God" (Hebrews 10:21). The house of God is the church (1 Timothy 3:15). So Christ's priesthood is over his church.

So this key Messianic prophecy (as but one example) was about the church. The church was not an unforeseen parenthesis in prophecy. The church was predicted in prophecy.

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