

## PREMILLENNIALISM: INTRODUCTION

Premillennialism is not only a big word, it is also difficult to pronounce in public (it gets to rolling around on the tongue and won't stop) and is a challenge to spell correctly, to boot. Its definition, however, is simple. Good thing the meaning is simple because the concept pervades almost the entirety of the religious thought, teaching and practice of this present time. It will be encountered at almost every turn in our contacts with practically every religious group professing faith in Jesus Christ.

Though the details may vary from group to group, this is the general meaning of the term. Millennial has to do with a period of 1,000 years in which, it is said, Jesus Christ will return to the earth, establish the promised kingdom of Old Testament prophecy, and rule over it from the throne of David in Jerusalem. (While some of these specifics are extracted from various passages of Scripture, the idea of an alleged reign on earth for a literal 1,000 years comes from a misunderstanding and misapplication of the twentieth chapter of The Revelation.) The prefix *pre* indicates the second coming of Jesus Christ will take place prior to, that is, before the events described above relative to the establishment of his kingdom and reign. The suffix *ism* frames the alleged foregoing ideas as the concept of the kingdom and reign of Jesus Christ and the doctrine which sets forth these allegations.

Over the next few months we will devote a series of articles to the study of premillennial doctrine. Doing so provides at least two advantages. First, and obviously, it allows a study of the doctrine itself with its many innate problems. Second, because premillennial theory impacts practically every facet of Biblical teaching relative to the gospel of Christ, one cannot study it without coming to a greater understanding of the Bible's theme in its entirety.

For now, notice that following his resurrection, Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18-20). In The Revelation, Jesus described himself as "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (19:16). Either these statements are true, or they are not. If true, Jesus already reigns and has been doing so for 2,000 years, rendering the premillennial theory wrong. If not true, then Jesus was wrong, rendering him unworthy of our faith. Clearly, this theory demands our critical study.

—Jerry F. Bassett