

Chapter 6 The Case for the Historic View

Seven Reasons to Reject Other Views

Having stated my belief that the Historic Premillennial View is the most accurate, this chapter will continue to make the case for that view. First we will look at seven issues or doctrines related to the other views that make them difficult to believe. As we look at some of these doctrines and views, please remember that some issues addressed below are general and are not exclusive to the views to which they may be assigned. Some also describe the extreme and are not necessarily held by everyone who holds to the corresponding millennial views.

Issue # 1: Escapism

The escape rapture doctrine, as described in the “Escape Premillennial View.” is a central theme for many Evangelicals today when they think about end times. Many who hold to this teaching, some who are very good friends of mine, are responsible stewards of what God has entrusted to them and work tirelessly to be salt and light in our culture. But the feeling that everything is supposed to fall apart and the idea that we are leaving anyway causes many who hold this view to disengage from the culture. They fail to engage in the idea of influencing the culture or the civil government because, as one rapture preacher put it, "Why polish brass on a sinking ship?"

There are many scriptures that cast doubt on the escape view. The chapter on defining the rapture, goes into more detail, but a few key points are provided here. Consider these passages.

Proverbs 2:21-22 (NKJV)

For the upright will dwell in the land, And the blameless will remain in it; But the wicked will be cut off from the earth, And the unfaithful will be uprooted from it.

Prov 10:30 (NKJV)

The righteous will never be removed, But the wicked will not inhabit the earth.

John 17:14-15 (NKJV)

I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.

Once again, we have a biblical teaching that the wicked are removed from the earth, not the saints. Besides disengaging from the culture, another danger of the escape view is its inherent failure to prepare people to endure hardship, which is a warning given multiple times to New Testament Christians. For these reasons, and many more scriptural reasons that we will not go

into here, the escapist doctrine deserves scrutiny. At the very least, those who hold this view should realize that there are many Christians who do not and have a substantial scriptural footing to stand on.

Issue #2: Lack of Human Responsibility

Failure to take responsibility in this life may be rooted in several things.

- It naturally follows Issue #1 above, when people have a “Why polish brass on a sinking ship?” mentality.
- It may stem from an extreme view of predestination, in which one believes every detail of the future is already planned by God and is beyond our control. Of course, the issue of human responsibility revives the classic debate between Calvinism (predestination) and Arminianism (man has a free will). The result of this can be a sit, wait, and do nothing attitude.
- Irresponsibility may also simply come from apathy, laziness, selfishness, or ignorance.

Lack of responsibility is also common where there is an over spiritualization of the Kingdom of God, as in the Amillennial View, which makes it seem so detached or removed from this present age that it is irrelevant. In his book, *The Bible and the Future*, Anthony Hokema (who holds the Amillennial view) critiques the Historic Premillennial view saying: "Why should believers, who have been enjoying heavenly glory during the intermediate state, be raised from the dead in order to return to an earth where sin and death still exist?"

One reason is simply because Jesus taught us to pray for the kingdom of heaven to come on earth (Matt 6:10). Hokema's statement, besides demonstrating a focus on going to heaven instead of bringing heaven here, shows the man-centered nature of that focus. God has a deeper purpose for His people than just eternal pleasure. The question itself reflects a lack of understanding concerning an important aspect of God's purpose in Christ, which is peace on earth, and the earth as our inheritance.

In response, I would simply say, "People will leave heavenly glory for the same general reason Christ left the glory of heaven and came to earth the first time, to do His will and accomplish His work. God has a plan to rule the earth and it is an honor to come back and rule and reign with Christ in His Kingdom." Consider this passage:

Psalm 149:6-9 (KJV)

6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand;

7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people;

8 To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;

9 To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord.

Human responsibility will also be addressed in the chapter on *Cognitive Prophetic Cooperation*. The issue of too much human responsibility can also be a problem and will be addressed later.

Issue # 3: One Dimensional Thinking

Hokema also referred to a millennium where Christ reigns in His Kingdom but where

there can still be sin and death as an anomaly, being neither part of the present age nor part of the age to come. This reveals the one-dimensional human thinking that struggles to reason beyond the limits of time and space. This is prevalent in the Amillennial view as well as in the Postmillennial.

I would respond by asking, "Was Christ an anomaly when he said, 'I am the resurrection' and then raised Lazarus from the dead?" Lazarus' sister, Martha, revealed her one-dimensional thinking when she said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (John 11:24). Jesus said, "I am the resurrection." and He proceeded to raise Lazarus demonstrating that the future and the present can overlap. Jesus had authority to exercise the powers of the age to come in this present age and so do we to a certain extent (see Heb 6:5)!

In his book, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, George E. Ladd does an excellent job of explaining the Historic View and how the present age and the age to come overlap. This overlap of the present age into the age to come is not an anomaly; it is a biblical concept.

Issue #4: The Order of Peace

In the Postmillennial view, Christian influence is expected to gradually increase in a manner that results in a "golden age" where peace covers the earth. The return of Christ is expected after this "golden age" of peace is achieved. One problem with this is that it does not go along with the birthing analogy presented in Scripture. In the birthing process, pain begins as birth draws near and is actually most intense just before the birth happens. Paul described this, saying that creation will be delivered (as a baby is delivered) from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now (see Rom 8:21-22).

Even if The Great Tribulation of which Jesus spoke is a past event pertaining only to Israel and the surrounding area (a view held by some), persecution and tribulation still exist. Paul wrote to Timothy that all who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (see 2 Tim 3:12). Jesus said, "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). Though we should expect to be a victorious church, we can also expect increased conflict as we draw near to the Lord's return and the appearing of His Kingdom, not a situation where things gradually get better until the world is Christianized.

Issue #5: Satan is Bound Now?

Postmillennialism and Amillennialism both hold the view that the millennium is happening now. Since Revelation Chapter Twenty makes it clear that Satan is bound by a great chain and sealed in a bottomless pit during the millennium, this implies Satan is bound now. Proponents of this belief admit that Satan seems to be on the loose, but only because we are not taking our authority over him as we should. I would agree that we often do not use the authority that is available to us. However, there are many Scriptures that indicate that Satan is not currently bound in the bottomless pit.

Jesus referred to Satan's dwelling place being near Pergamos, not the bottomless pit (see Rev 2:12-13). It should also be pointed out that Jesus said this in this present age after His

resurrection, after His ascension, and after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, which is clearly part of the present age in which we now live.

Peter did, however, refer to the angels who sinned (a possible reference to Satan) being cast down to hell and chained to await judgment (see 2 Pet 2:4). But a quick study of the word chain(s) in the New Testament reveals that being chained does not necessarily prevent one from operating. For example, Paul was in chains but continued to preach the gospel.

Satan's imprisonment, spoken of in Revelation Chapter Twenty, is more comprehensive than simply being chained. He was not bound with just any chain, but a great chain. The word great means larger or largest. He was not just thrown in a pit, but a bottomless pit, again implying a more complete imprisonment. Satan was not only thrown into the pit, he was shut up in the pit, and the pit was sealed. Chapter Twenty also describes an imprisonment so complete that Satan cannot deceive the nations. Satan may be chained or have limitations, but he is not currently bound with a great chain and sealed in the bottomless pit, unable to deceive nations.

Peter referred to Satan as walking about. He wrote, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet 5:8). This reference describes "a devil on the loose." Satan is indeed defeated and we have been given authority over him, but according to these verses, he is not bound and sealed in the bottomless pit, but walking about. Therefore, Satan is not fully bound now, nor are we living in the millennium now.

Issue #6: The First Resurrection Past?

Revelation Chapter 20 clearly states that the first resurrection takes place at the beginning of the millennium. No one disputes that. In those views which interpret the 1000 year millennium as a symbolic indefinite period of time which is taking place now (usually the Postmillennial and Amillennial views), the first resurrection is therefore necessarily interpreted as a past event for the believer, a spiritual event, having spiritually taken place in the believer at his or her salvation/water baptism. The classic baptism verse (Romans 6:4) is used as the basis for such a view because it says, "... just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." But Paul wrote to Timothy regarding some who were teaching that the resurrection was already past.

2 Timothy 2:17-18 (KJV)

17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;

18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

The interpretation of 2 Timothy 2:18 by Postmillennialists and Amillennialists would describe this verse as a reference to the resurrection at the end of the millennium, but it doesn't say that for sure. Either way, the fact remains that there are two resurrections. Even if the first one is spiritualized, it is presented as having already taken place by those who say we are in the millennium now.

How could this overthrow the faith of some? For one thing it could lead to the deception

of believing that, as resurrected beings, we can transcend the rules of this world while in it. History is full of people who feel they have attained to a state of spiritual supremacy and begin to dominate and oppress those who are “less spiritual.” Rather than actually being more perfect, this usually leads to a justification of sinful behavior. I have known of people who connected this concept of the resurrection having already taken place with the scripture where Jesus said, “For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels...” (Matt 22:30). They then reasoned that marriage no longer applied to them and they could have sex with whomever they wanted, as long as it was “done from a pure heart in Christian love.” This is an extreme example, but you see the point.

Also, when Revelation Chapter Twenty refers to the first resurrection, the phrase "came to life" is used which is a reference to bodily resurrection. This reference cannot be spiritualized to mean a spiritual work because in context it refers to those who had been beheaded, or in other words, lost their physical lives. It says they came to life and reigned with Christ for one thousand years (see Rev 20:4 5). If the first resurrection was a spiritual event having already taken place, then this reference to the first resurrection would not have referred to those who had physically died and there would have been no need for the passage to speak of "coming to life" to reign with Christ.

Therefore, the first resurrection is a reference to the physical resurrection of the body and the return of Christ to the earth, not a reference to the believer's spiritual resurrection that takes place when a person becomes a Christian.

Issue #7: Too Much Human Responsibility

Though the concept of preparation is a key theme in this book, which emphasizes the need for modern Christians to take more responsibility, the Postmillennial view places too much responsibility on man. Not all Postmillennial people believe in what is often called a “domination” theology where entire nations or even the whole world is supposed to come under the control of an ecclesiastical hierarchy before the return of Christ. But the view is at least a fertile field for such a belief. Such views have resulted in some of the most domineering and oppressive government systems the world has ever known. The reason for this is that power corrupts. A golden age where men would obviously wield such tremendous power is more than mortal man is intended to handle. Such power is reserved for the time when we have escaped corruption through the redemption of our bodies, i.e., put on immortality (see Romans 8:23).

The Balance of the Historic View

The millennium and the kingdom described in the Historic Premillennial view represents the best balance and fits what we read in the scriptures and in history. It would be like the golden age expected by the Postmillennialist, except for two important differences. In the Historic view, 1) Christ resides on the earth during the Millennium, and 2) Christians have put on immortality. In the Postmillennial view, mortal men are expected to reconstruct society according to Kingdom principles until there is peace on earth and the resurrection and the return of Christ is expected as a result of this reconstruction of society. But in the Historic Premillennial view, the return of Christ and the first resurrection is precipitated by a restorative work in the Church as it becomes a mature people prepared to rule and reign with Christ. Though the Historic view has elements of

reconstruction (to influence civil governments according to biblical principles), we entertain no illusion that the entire world can experience external peace without the literal appearing of the Prince of Peace to be installed as the King of Peace.

Scripture teaches that we are to look forward to and love the coming of Jesus (see 2 Tim4:8 and Titus 2:11-14). The Historic view provides the tempering concept of preparation where we can love and look forward to the Lord's return without thinking it will happen any moment and losing a sense of responsibility and stewardship. If we fail to realize the preparation aspect and start to think that Jesus may return at any moment, we may be tempted to focus on waiting instead of working. On the other hand, if we take too much human responsibility and move out of preparation into extreme reconstruction (often called dominion theology), the Lord's return may seem so far in the future that current actions seem barely relevant. Any expectancy or desire to see His return is overwhelmed by the enormity of the task, especially when things don't seem to be heading in the right direction. In this extreme, people tend to focus on doctrine instead of doing. The end result of both extremes is the same: no zeal for good works.

In the Historic view there is both a restorative and reconstructive work taking place on earth through the work of preparation by the Church. Yet there is a realization that only Jesus, the Prince of Peace, can bring peace to this earth. There is both human responsibility and reliance on the sovereignty of God which promotes a healthy and balanced view of faith and works. It teaches people to be focused on bringing heaven here, not on going to heaven. It moves out of one-dimensional thinking and presents the age to come as overlapping into the present age, which has been shown to be a biblical way of thinking and creates an expectation for the supernatural power of God to be seen and used in this present age as we work to prepare the way.

That being said, holding the Historic Premillennial view is no guarantee against false doctrine or dead works. I know people from both sides of this issue who are very zealous in good works and visa versa. It is not our theology alone that creates a valid expectancy of His coming, but a living active faith. Active, because faith without works is dead. All the correct theology in the world will do nothing if we do not have faith that takes action.

As stated earlier, I embrace the Historic Premillennial view as the most accurate view. Whether you have been convinced of this or not, please take a moment to assume it is and let's ask the question: "Why would the enemy of God try to mislead God's people and deny the idea of Jesus ruling over a literal kingdom of God on earth?" Simple: if we don't believe in a literal kingdom of God on earth, we won't work to prepare the way for it. Satan doesn't want the Kingdom to appear because he knows that the literal Kingdom of God on earth spells the end for him. He wants to hinder the preparation for the coming kingdom which God's people are part of.

Paradigm Builder

If we don't believe in a literal kingdom of God on earth, we won't work to prepare the way for it.

Before reading this chapter, how would you describe your position regarding this concept?

1 Strongly Disagree - 2 Disagree - 3 Neutral/Unsure - 4 Agree - 5 Strongly Agree

How would you describe your position regarding this concept after reading this chapter?

1 Strongly Disagree - 2 Disagree - 3 Neutral/Unsure - 4 Agree - 5 Strongly Agree

The Kingdom Paradigm, Common Sense Theology for Politically Minded Christians
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