

MILLENNIAL MANIA (2)

INTRODUCTION

A. There is “millennial mania” in the religious world today as many well known preachers predict that the return of the Lord is at hand!

B. Some of the prominent preachers contributing to this mania include:

- 1. Billy Graham**
- 2. Hal Lindsey**
- 3. Pat Robertson**
- 4. Adrian Rogers**
- 5. Jimmy Swaggart**

C. Millennial madness is not a new phenomenon:

- 1. It has occurred periodically in history.**
- 2. It has even invaded the Lord’s church at times.**

DISCUSSION:

I. THE NINETEENTH CENTURY WAS A TIME OF GREAT MILLENNIAL EXPECTATION IN AMERICA.

A. The Millerite Movement resulted in the beginning of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

1. William Miller (1782-1849), a farmer in Vermont, was converted to the Baptist Church and became a “lay” preacher.

2. He studied the Bible diligently, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation.

3. Miller made two major mistakes in his study of Bible prophecy:

a. He decided that a day must always represent a year (cf. Numbers 14:34).

b. He followed the chronology of Bishop Ussher; this chronology is now believed by many conservative Bible scholars to be wrong in places.

4. In 1818, Miller concluded that the 2,300 days in Daniel 8:14 “till the sanctuary be cleansed” was the time from Nehemiah’s rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem in 457 B.C. to the second coming of Christ.

2300

-457

1843

5. Miller wrote: “I was thus brought...at the close of my two year study of the Scriptures, to the solemn conclusion that in about twenty-five years from that time (1818) all the affairs of our present state would be wound up” (Sidney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, p. 479).

6. The preaching of Miller’s views throughout the nation created great excitement as tens of thousands began preparing for the Lord’s return in March, 1843.

a. When this prediction failed, Miller set the date at March, 1844.

b. When this prophecy also proved false, Mr. Miller set the date for the Lord’s return at October 22, 1844.

c. Once again, multitudes who had sold their homes and businesses, given away their possessions and quit their jobs, were disappointed, disillusioned, and disgusted.

d. How foolish and futile it is for mere men to claim knowledge of that which neither the angels nor Christ in His earthly sojourn knew (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32)!!!

7. James White, one of Miller’s disciples, and his wife Ellen, organized many of the disgruntled Millerites into what became the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

8. Today, the Seventh Day Adventists are among the most ardent millennialists in the religious world!

B. The Millennial Dawn Movement grew into the cult known as “Jehovah’s Witnesses.”

1. Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916), a successful businessman of Allegheny, Pennsylvania, was converted to Adventism and began preaching.

2. Russell predicted the millennium had dawned and began publishing a paper called “The Herald of the Morning.”

3. In 1879, he began a paper called “Zion’s Watchtower and Herald of Christ’s Presence.”

4. Russell taught the second coming had occurred in 1874 and the end of all things would take place in 1914.

5. He died in 1916 and J.F. “Judge” Rutherford replaced him as head of the Watchtower Movement.

6. In 1920, Rutherford published a famous book entitled *Millions Now*

Living Will Never Die in which he taught that “...the great jubilee cycle is due to begin in 1925. At that time the earthly phase of the kingdom shall be recognized...1925 will mark the return of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the faithful of old.”

7. The latest in a long series of dates set by the “Jehovah’s Witness” organization for the “conclusion of the present system of things” was 1975.

a. In the book *Everlasting Life in Freedom of the Sons of God* in 1966, it was suggested that 1975 could be the beginning of the millennium (cf. also “How Much Longer Will It Be?” in *Awake*, October 8, 1966).

b. Many of the members quit their jobs, sold their businesses and homes and gave full time to “witnessing” as 1975 approached.

c. They, like earlier victims of millennial predictions, had their hopes dashed to the ground and thousands left the group (Raymond Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, p. 206).

d. An article appeared in the March 15, 1980 “Watchtower” acknowledging their error.

8. Moses said: “And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’— when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him” (Deuteronomy 18:21,22).

9. All those who have set dates for the Lord’s return have been proven to be false prophets!

II. FUNDAMENTALISM FEATURES DISPENSATIONALISM.

A. When modernism and liberalism captured the leadership of many of America’s denominations in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s, conservatives regrouped in what became known as the “fundamentalist movement.”

1. The name of the movement came from a series of 12 volumes published from 1910 to 1913 which stressed the “fundamentals of the faith.”

2. Many of the writers were premillennialists and therefore this doctrine was taught in every volume.

3. Among many conservative groups, dispensational views came to be equated with a belief in the literal second coming of Christ; if one did not accept dispensationalism, then he was accused of denying the Lord’s return.

B. Premillennialism has even been a problem in the churches of Christ.

1. Most of the early preachers of the Restoration Movement were postmillennialists; this is the reason Alexander Campbell named

his paper “The Millennial Harbinger.”

2. A few early preachers held to classic premillennialism.

a. Walter Scott flirted with premillennialism for a time, but later returned to the postmillennial view he had held earlier.

b. Moses Lard, Robert Milligan, and T. W. Brents also were classic premillennialists.

c. Remember: classic premillennialism does not make the church an afterthought or the plan of God a failure as does dispensationalism.

d. These men did not press their premillennial views to the dividing of the church as did others later.

3. John Thomas (1805-1871), a physician from England, who was baptized by Walter Scott, was a premillennialist.

a. Thomas also denied that man had a soul.

b. He taught the second coming and the resurrection would take place in 1866.

c. He returned to England and formed the sect known as “Christadelphians.”

4. A form of premillennialism invaded some of the churches in Texas between 1890 and 1910.

a. W. L. Gibbs published a paper called Word and Work in which he advocated soul sleeping, a second chance after death, hell is not eternal punishment but annihilation, and the personal reign of Christ on this earth for 1,000 literal years.

b. After Gibb’s death, A. S. Bradley became the leader of the movement, which came to be known as “Bradleyism.”

c. A debate between Bradley and C. R. Nichol in 1906 brought about the demise of Bradleyism.

III. THE GREATEST PREMILLENNIAL THREAT TO THE LORD’S CHURCH WAS LED BY R. H. BOLL.

A. Robert Henry Boll (1875-1956) came to the USA from Germany when he was 14 years old.

1. He heard and obeyed the gospel while working as a farm laborer in Middle Tennessee.

- 2. He worked his way through the Nashville Bible School where he studied at the feet of David Lipscomb and James A. Harding.**
- 3. Boll became the front page editor for the Gospel Advocate in 1910 and served until he was removed in 1915 because of his speculative writing on prophecy.**
- 4. He later moved to Louisville, Kentucky, where he edited a paper called Word and Work.**
- 5. Boll was a dispensationalist and used his paper to spread this view among the churches of Christ.**

6. H. Leo Boles conducted a written debate with Boll on the subject.

B. More than any other, Foy E. Wallace, Jr. was responsible for defeating dispensationalism in the church.

- 1. Wallace debated Charles M. Neal in Winchester, Kentucky, January 2-6, 1933; a second debate was held with Neal in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in June of the same year.**
- 2. Wallace used the Gospel Advocate, which he edited from 1930 to 1934, to wage an unrelenting war on premillennialism.**
- 3. In 1945, Wallace exposed premillennialism in a series of meetings in the Music Hall in Houston, Texas.**
 - a. The sermons presented in the meeting were later printed in a book entitled God's Prophetic Word.**
 - b. This is probably the most devastating and thorough refutation of all forms of millennial error in print!**
- 4. Today, only 81 congregations of the more than 13,000 in the USA hold to premillennial teaching and they are located mainly in Kentucky, Indiana, and Louisiana; their fellowship is largely with the Independent Christian Church and other denominational bodies which espouse premillennialism.**

CONCLUSION

- A. Millennial mania is not new; it comes and goes periodically.**
- B. Premillennialism poses a serious threat to the Lord's church for it separates the church and the kingdom, makes the first coming of Christ an ill-timed failure,**

and seeks to reinstate the old Jewish sacrificial system, which was done away at the cross (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 7:12).

C. Premillennialism also makes the kingdom of Christ a kingdom of this world, the very kind of kingdom the Jews sought, and our Lord denied He came to establish (John 18:36).

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