

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Why Every Calvinist Should Be a Premillennialist, Part 4

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-337

Now tonight as we continue our study on the future of Israel, I want to begin by reading you a portion of Scripture. Open your Bible, if you will, to the forty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, Isaiah chapter 44 and without a lot of comment on this text from the forty-fourth chapter, I want to read for you a few selected portions which I think will provide a foundation for the things that I want to say to you tonight.

While you're turning to that, let me just say that this is the fourth message in a series on the future of Israel. It also is tied in to the wonderful biblical doctrine of sovereign election, God's sovereign election of the nation Israel for a future. That really sums up what we're looking at.

As you look at the forty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, there are a number of portions of this text that I want to draw to your attention. First of all, verse 6, "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and His Redeemer, the Lord of hosts, I am the first and I am the last and there is no God besides Me. And who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it, yes let him recount it to Me in order, from the time that I established the ancient nation and let them declare to them the things that are coming and the events that are going to take place. Do not tremble, do not be afraid, have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me or is there any other rock? I know of none."

In those few verses, God identifies Himself as the Lord the King of Israel and Israel's Redeemer. He is a God who fulfills what He proclaims and what He declares, who brings to fruition what He establishes, who declares things that are yet to come and events that have not yet taken place.

If you look further into the chapter, down to verse 21, again God is the speaker and He says, "Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are My servant. I have formed you, you are My servant. O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me."

And then looking at the future salvation of Israel, God says, "I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud, and your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me for I have redeemed you. Shout for joy, O heavens, for the Lord has done it. Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth. Break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it, for the Lord has redeemed Jacob and in Israel He shows forth His glory."

Previews of that great and final redemption of Israel were seen in Israel's recovery from captivity. Isaiah prophesied that the children of Israel would be taken into captivity and they would be recovered from captivity, but that would only be a historical preview to the great redemption that God had planned for the nation. In verse 24, "Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and the One who formed you from the womb, I the Lord am the maker of all things." That is to say, I do what I will to do. It cannot be any different.

In chapter 45 and verse 17, Israel has been saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation. You will not be put to shame or humiliated to all eternity. In chapter 46 of Isaiah and verse 9, "Remember the former things long past, I am God there is no other. I am God there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done saying, My purpose will be established and I will accomplish all My good pleasure." And what is that? Verse 13, "I bring near My righteousness, it is not far off, and My salvation will not delay and I will grant salvation in Zion and My glory for Israel." Here is God affirming His nature, affirming His purpose and affirming His promises to Israel, promises that ultimately bring about the redemption, the salvation of Israel and God manifesting His glory through that salvation.

To put it simply, God has already written history. God has already written history to its end. All history is really His story. It is all moving in the direction and toward the objectives that He has already designed and already determined. And Scripture is not vague about the end. In fact, Scripture reveals much about how the world will end and how redemptive history will come to its final consummation. And as we've been saying in this series, looking at the end, looking at doctrines of eschatology, the study of the eschaton in the Greek meaning the end, we have come to the conclusion that the cornerstone of all eschatology is Israel. The foundation of any understanding of end times is an understanding of God's future promises to the Jews. The history of the world is really the redemption of the world. In fact, history is redemptive at its heart. Man was created in order that God might call to Himself a redeemed people. And history goes on until that redeemed people have been called, until the elect are all gathered in. And the final element of God's redemptive history, the culminating element is the salvation of a future generation of ethnic Jews because that is exactly what God has promised.

As I said in the beginning of this series, the future fascinates everybody...everybody. It also frightens most people. And many people seek to understand it, many people seek to predict it. There are the doomsday prophets who tell us the worst about the future and then there are the hopeful folks who try to put the best spin on it. People are fascinated by the future even in a fantastic way, a science fiction way, a very unreal way. But Scripture tells us the truth about the future. In fact, Scripture records the future before it happens. That's why when God talks about something that's going to happen in the future, He speaks of it in the past tense...I have redeemed Israel...even though it hasn't yet happened.

But to understand eschatology, to understand the biblical doctrines that relate to the end of redemptive history and therefore the end of human history, and therefore the end of the age and also the end of the universe as we know it, one must understand the role that Israel plays in this because it is the cornerstone. We have been saying, if you get the future of Israel right, you're going to get eschatology right. If you get the future of Israel wrong, you're going to get eschatology wrong. If you get Israel wrong, you're going to find that everything else is a muddle and you're left with nothing but confusion and therefore the diminishing of the glory of God in our eyes.

God made promises to Israel. He made unilateral, unconditional, irrevokable promises and covenants with Israel. In those covenants He included the promise of a great nation, a land defined in boundaries, blessing through Israel, blessing to the world, salvation, the Messiah and a great glorious Kingdom in which the Messiah would rule in Jerusalem, Israel would become the center of the whole world and from His throne in Israel in Jerusalem, Messiah would rule the entire world, wisdom and knowledge would pervade all the world and righteousness and peace would dominate. The book of Revelation tells us this Kingdom would last for a thousand years, after which this entire universe as we know it is dissolved and God creates a new heaven and a new earth which is the eternal state where the righteous will live in joy forever.

Now the fulfillment of God's purposes in the end will come only when a future generation of Jews repents and acknowledges Jesus Christ as Messiah and Lord. Only then will God bring salvation to Israel, only when He brings salvation to Israel will the Messiah come and establish His Kingdom. That is the sequence in Zechariah 12 through 14, as you, no doubt, remember. They look on Him whom they've pierced and they mourn in repentance, putting their faith in the very one they pierced. God then opens a fountain of cleansing. They are washed from their sins and the Kingdom follows because Messiah returns.

The Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the establishment of His messianic Kingdom then is contingent upon the salvation of a future generation of ethnic Jews who will collectively understand the horrors of the crucifixion of Christ and embrace Him as their Lord and Savior. Will it come to pass? It will come to pass, it must come to pass because God promised it would come to pass and God refers to it as a future promise that He will fulfill. In fact, God calls Israel, "My elect...Israel, My elect." We all understand that the gifts and callings of God, as Romans 11 says, are without repentance. If God elects some to salvation, He is bound to fulfill His purpose. Strangely then, so strangely, there is a widespread and deep-seated idea in Christian theology that Israel is no longer in the plan of God, no longer part of the purpose of God, that Israel has forfeited all claims to God's promises because of unbelief, because of rejection to Christ Israel has forfeited all the promises, covenants and blessings. They are all canceled because of Israel's apostasy. And, in fact, the church made up of Jew and Gentile is now the recipient of all the promises once given to Israel. They are now for us because Israel did not believe, Israel rejected Christ and we have accepted Christ and

believed and therefore we have earned the right to replace Israel. In fact, this view is called “replacement theology.” The church replaces Israel, the church is now the Israel of God and all the promises given to Israel are for the church.

I think the strangest part of this view is that it is dominant among those who are Reformed in their theology and who hold most tightly to the doctrine of divine election. And we ask the question, “How can someone who believes in divine and sovereign election and who understands clearly that Israel is God’s elect, chosen for a future salvation to come, believe that God has canceled out His elective purpose?” This is very strange, and so I’ve said that the idea of replacement theology is better suited to an Arminian view of theology where God promises things, pledges things, gives things that can be lost, forfeited or taken back. It belongs in an Arminian environment but certainly not in an environment of Reformed theology.

So the popular view in Reformed Theology is that there is therefore no Kingdom coming for Israel. In fact, there is no earthly Kingdom at all, no actual fulfillment of promises given to Abraham, David or through Jeremiah and Ezekiel in what was called the New Covenant given to Israel, no millennium at all and therefore this view is called Amillennialism.

Now in order to make this view work, you have to manipulate the Scripture because this isn’t stated in Scripture anywhere. You have to violate the normal rules of interpretation of Scripture to avoid the obvious meaning of Scripture. And the biggest issue is that you have to say that when the Bible says “Israel,” it doesn’t mean Israel. And that we have covered in detail and won’t go over it again.

So to sum it up simply, just to catch up, having missed the last three weeks, Amillennialism denies the plain meaning of Scripture and the nature of divine, sovereign election...pretty serious things to deny. In our previous consideration then, I told you that the key to eschatology is what we could call Judeo Centrism, getting Israel in the right place. Why then would anybody deny this? Historically if you go back, and I gave you a little bit of that last time, you can get the CD on that, historically if you go back and study it, it really is the product of early, anti-Judaism...not anti-Semitism, that is to say it’s not a racist idea, but it’s anti-Judaism, it is against Judaism as a religion that rejected Christ. It showed up very early in church history, fairly well formed by Augustine, the fourth century. That becomes the footing or the root system that develops into modern replacement theology. So what I’m trying to help you do is clear all that out and go back and take a biblical look at this issue of Israel in the future.

Now in order to do this effectively, I’ve posed a series of questions. So let’s jump back into our questions tonight. These questions will lead us into the teaching of the Word of God. Question number one...Is the Old Testament Amillennial? Is the Old Testament Amillennial? Frankly I don’t think there’s anybody that says it is. That is to say, does the Old Testament deny a future Kingdom? Answer: Of course not...of course not. And we looked in detail at this question at the Abrahamic

Covenant, at the Davidic Covenant, at the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36 and 37. And we pointed out that all of these Covenants promise all those things that I reiterated to you a moment ago, a King and Kingdom, and blessing, and salvation, and blessing the world, etc...possession of the land, further descriptions of Kingdom life, long life, prosperity, the flourishing of peace and righteousness, paradise regained, if you will. The Old Testament is precisely clear on this and all of the promises that relate to the future of Israel and the Kingdom to come are unilateral, unconditional, irrevokable promises which God made and to which God bound Himself. So we have to answer the question...Is the Old Testament Amillennial?...with a resounding no.

Second question, "Were the Jews of Jesus' day Amillennial...Were the Jews of Jesus' day Amillennial?" Which is to ask the question...How did people in the day of Jesus interpret the Old Testament? Had something happened in the four hundred years between the end of the Old Testament and the time of our Lord when the New Testament is being written, had something happened in that period of time to change the interpretation that they put on the Old Testament? How did the Jews of Jesus' day interpret the Old Testament promises?

This is an easy question to answer, very easy really. And I want to give you a sort of summation of it and then take you to a couple of passages to look at it. It was back in 1880 that a man named Amel Schurer, S-c-h-u-r-e-r, wrote a book on this very subject, 1880. And Schurer had done a very definitive study on existing Jewish eschatology at the time of Jesus. What did they believe about the future? What did they believe about the promises of God? It lays out Jewish eschatology and what they believed concerning Old Testament Covenant promises. Here's the sum of it.

Messiah is coming but His coming will be preceded by a time of severe trouble. Sound familiar? That's what the Bible calls the Great Tribulation. That's what they believed even without the New Testament. Jewish eschatology at the time of our Lord also believed that before Messiah comes, Elijah or one like Elijah would come. Jewish eschatology affirmed that Messiah comes and He will be a Son of David who will exercise power to set up His Kingdom on earth in Israel and fulfill all the promises made to Abraham and the patriarchs and to David. This study points out, as well, that Messiah in His coming and the establishment of His Kingdom must wait for the repentance and salvation of Israel. The Jews also believed that the Old Testament taught that the Kingdom would be established in Israel and Jerusalem would be the capital city. They also believed that dispersed Jews scattered around the world would be gathered from around the world into the land for that great Kingdom. They also believed that the Messianic Kingdom would extend to cover the whole earth and the whole of human society around the world would be dominated by peace, all people would worship Messiah, no one would resist Him, even those who did not worship Him in heart, there would be no war, only joy, gladness, health, prosperity. They also believed that the temple would be rebuilt because that's what Ezekiel says in Ezekiel 40 to 48, and temple worship would be at its apex. The eschatology of the Jews at the time of our Lord is precisely the eschatology that I believe because it's what the Bible teaches. They were just interpreting the Old Testament in its normal sense.

They also understood that there would be renovation of the world because that's what Isaiah said would happen. They also understood there would be a general resurrection, Daniel 12, of the righteous, there would be final judgment and they even understood that there would be a new heaven and a new earth because that also is specifically prophesied by Isaiah. So at the time of our Lord, nothing had changed in terms of how you interpret the Old Testament. They interpreted the Old Testament in the normal sense anybody would interpret it and their eschatology reflects that.

Now to look at some biblical indications of this, go to the gospel of Luke...and we could spend a lot of time going to a lot of places, but let's just stick with our beloved Luke with whom we have walked for so many years. Luke chapter 1 verse 67, this is Zecharias, the father of John the Baptist, is filled with the Holy Spirit, he has been given a message that he's going to be the father and his wife, Elizabeth, is going to be the mother of the great prophet who will be the forerunner of the Messiah, the herald of the Messiah. Messiah is coming, he now knows that. He will have a son though he and his wife have been barren and they're likely in their eighties and past the possibility of conceiving children. They've never been able to anyway, but now they will miraculously give birth to a son. He will be the forerunner of the Messiah, therefore the Messiah is coming. Zechariah is filled with praise and he says this in verse 68, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David, His servant." The first thing they understood was the Messiah would come, He would come to reign, He would come to save and He would come from the house of David. That is to say, they understood literally and normally what the Old Testament prophesied. Verse 70, "As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old, salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us." This would result in the priority, the preeminence of Israel in the world. Instead of being abused and hated and embattled, they would rise to a time of glory. This God would do, "Showing mercy toward our fathers, to remember His holy Covenant, the oath which he swore to Abraham, our father, to grant us that we being delivered from the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days."

Pretty clear. Here is an Old Testament priest, this man is a priest, Zacharias. This man is a priest like a whole lot of other people who function as priests in the land of Israel. He is still in an Old Testament environment, pre-Christ. He understands the Old Testament, he's a student of the Old Testament, he is a priest as one who studies the Old Testament, teaches the Old Testament. His understanding is this, the Messiah comes, the Messiah fulfills the promise of God to bring redemption to Israel, which we read about in Isaiah 44, He comes as a horn of salvation, He comes in the house of David, He comes to assert the primacy of Israel. He comes to end the tortuous treatment that they have endured at the hand of all their enemies. He comes to remember His holy Covenant made to Abraham, He comes to grant holiness and righteousness. That's all related to Old Testament Kingdom promise. "And you, speaking as it were to his son yet to be born, John the Baptist will be called the prophet of the Most High, you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways, to give His

people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins because of the tender mercy of our God with which the Sunrise from on high shall visit us to shine upon those who sit in darkness in the shadow of death and guide our feet into the way of peace.” He’s coming to save Israel. He’s coming to bring salvation to Israel.

Our course Zacharias would have assumed that all of that would have happened at His first coming. The fact that it didn’t happen at His first coming is no justification to assume that it will never happen and that some other people have taken Israel’s place. They understood that when Messiah comes, salvation comes to Israel and the fulfillment of Davidic and Abrahamic promise and New Covenant salvation. All the verses in that benedictus of Zacharias, everything he says is built on Old Testament texts related either to the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, or the New Covenant. It is Old Testament Covenant language. And the essence of what Zacharias is saying is, Messiah comes, it will all be fulfilled. This is what they expected.

Turn to Luke 17 for a moment. The Pharisees were probably the most notable students of Scripture, assisted by the scribes who did the grunt work of the text and theology to provide them with the right beliefs. Jesus in this constant encounter with the Pharisees is confronted here in Luke 17:20, having been questioned by the Pharisees. And what is it they’re asking? As to when the Kingdom of God was coming. Now what does that tell you? That tells you that the Pharisees, the elite, the fundamentalists, the scholastics, the purveyors of Judaism to the populous believed that a real Kingdom was coming. That’s what they believed. That’s what they assumed.

Go to chapter 19. Chapter 19 verse 11, and you will remember this, we talked about it recently...

“And while they were listening to these things,” this, of course, just after Jesus has left Jericho and He has a great crowd to whom He is speaking, “He went on to tell a parable because He was near Jerusalem and they supposed that the Kingdom of God was going to appear immediately.” What does that tell you about how they interpreted the Old Testament? There was only one way to understand the Old Testament, a real Kingdom is coming. And it’s going to come immediately. The Pharisees want to know when is it coming, when is it coming? And here they expect it to come immediately. You remember now this is just at the very beginning of the...the fever that starts to strike the crowd as Jesus approaches Jerusalem for His triumphal entry. They think it’s coming and it’s coming now. He’s arrived finally to bring the promised Kingdom. There is no other way to understand the Old Testament promises. The Old Testament is not Amillennial and the generation of Jews at the time of our Lord were not Amillennial. They believed in the coming of the promised King and Kingdom.

Well let’s ask the third question. “Was Jesus an Amillennialist?” That’s a strange question, isn’t it? Was Jesus an Amillennialist? Did He bring the shift? If there’s going to be a shift, I would venture to say it ought to be at the point of our Lord. Nothing in the Old Testament, nothing in the Old Testament

gives any hint of the cancellation of Kingdom promises which include the land, the primacy, the reigning Messiah, salvation, and all of those things, nothing in the Old Testament hints at it. Nothing in the 400 years between the Old and the New Testament developing in Jewish theology indicates that there was any sense in which anyone interpreted it any differently than that. So if it's now changed and if it no longer is to be believed that there is a real Kingdom for Israel, as defined by the Old Testament, the shift probably should come with Jesus.

Turn to Acts 1, this is, to put it mildly, an extremely definitive text...extremely definitive text. It is a text that one is hard-pressed to get around if one wants to hold to the cancellation of God's promises and replacement theology. This is post-cross, this is post-resurrection, therefore it is post-rejection, it is post-apostasy. It is after our Lord has said, "Your house is left to you desolate," Luke 13. It is after our Lord has said, "I will not answer your questions. You have enough light, you have rejected the light, I will give you no more light." It is after the Lord has pronounced a judgment on their apostasy. It is after the fickle crowd who hailed Him through most of the week turned on Him and screamed for His blood on Friday calling, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." It is after Israel's apostasy. Okay? That's important. In fact, Jesus has died, He has risen. And now we read in verse 3 to the Apostles whom He had chosen, mentioned in verse 2, He presented Himself alive after His suffering by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of 40 days. Now we're in to the 40 days between the resurrection and the ascension, Israel's apostasy is set, in fact we remember, don't we, that Jesus already declared in the nineteenth chapter of Luke, verses 41 to 44, that there would be a siege against Jerusalem. He predicts the destruction of Jerusalem and reiterates it later in Luke's gospel before He was crucified. Judgement has already been pronounced on Israel.

And so during this 40 days, Jesus is speaking. What's He speaking about? Listen to this. "Speaking of the things concerning the Kingdom of God. And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised which He said you heard of from Me, for John baptized with water but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." For 40 days, okay? 4-0, He taught them concerning the Kingdom of God. Verse 6, here's the telling verse, "So when they had come together, they were asking Him saying..." listen to this question, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the Kingdom to Israel?" Do you understand the importance of that question? They had just had 40 days of instruction about the Kingdom of God and after 40 days of instruction concerning the Kingdom of God, they only had one question...and the question is not...why did You cancel the Kingdom? The question is not...why is the Kingdom now spiritual and not for Israel? They have one question, verse 6, "Is it at this time You are restoring the Kingdom to Israel." He must in 40 days have affirmed to them unmistakably that the Kingdom promised to Israel was still coming. The only question was...what?...when? It's unmistakable. And this is His response in verse 7, "Where did you get that crazy idea?" Is that what it says? "Where did you get that wacky notion? Have I wasted My 40 days trying to tell you that you've been replaced and you don't get it? You blockheads."

No. He said to them, "It's not for you to know...what?...times, seasons, which the Father has fixed by His own authority." In verse 6 they use the word "restoring." This Greek verb, *apokathistano*, means to restore. And interestingly enough in all Jewish sources, it is a technical eschatological term for the end time. They're asking an eschatological question, is it at this time that the final Kingdom promised to Israel will come? And Jesus' only answer is, "It's not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed, set, appointed." By the way, that in the Greek is a...that is *tithemi*, an aorist middle which means reflexive, fixed for Himself by His own authority. So the idea of "by His own authority" is intensified by the middle voice which is reflective in the Greek language. The time that the Father has fixed for Himself by His own authority is not for you to know. If Jesus was an Amillennialist, this is the moment in which He must declare Himself. This is the perfect question for Him to answer by saying, "Didn't you hear what I've been saying for 40 days? It's cancelled, it's not going to happen. I am now an Amillennialist. And that's what you all need to be. You have been replaced by a yet to be identified new redeemed people called the church, made up of Jew and Gentile."

There's one other note to make in verse 6 that must have been a part of their teaching in the 40 days. "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the Kingdom to Israel?" They knew from 40 days of teaching that there would be a Kingdom and there's only one who would be able to bring that Kingdom and it was Christ Himself. And He affirms it. This is His perfect opportunity to announce that He is Amillennial, His perfect opportunity to affirm replacement theology, or as scholars call it, Supersessionism where the church supercedes Israel. This is His moment to establish once and for all there will be no earthly Kingdom for Israel, no national fulfillment of Abrahamic, Davidic and New Covenant promises, to tell them all the church will come, the church will receive all of the promises. And what was once physical promises will become spiritual promises because Israel has rejected Him and crucified Him. This was the perfect time to say, "Don't you know that that was only going to happen if Israel received Me? What they did to Me cancels everything. Forget all those Old Testament prophecies and covenants made to Israel, forget the idea that Israel is God's elect...no more, it's all cancelled."

Well all of what Jesus says is it's not for you to know times and seasons. That's all. And if, think this one through, if Israel's rejection of Christ, apostasy and crucifixion of Christ cancelled the Kingdom for them, then we would have assumed that if they wanted to receive the Kingdom, they would have had to embrace Christ and not kill Christ. And if that had occurred, then there would be no salvation for anybody. Are we to assume then that the cross is an adjustment, plan B, a contingency, a reaction to an apostatizing Israel? Did He not Himself say that He was born to die? Did He come to give His life a ransom?

At the end of Luke's gospel in the twenty-fourth chapter, verse 25, He said to those disciples on the road, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken, was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" The Old Testament

promised the suffering of Christ. The Old Testament promised the crucifixion of Christ. Psalm 22 describes it, Isaiah 53 describes it, the sacrificial system of the Old Testament typifies it, Zachariah 12:10 talks about Him being pierced. Same chapter, Luke 24:44, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the prophets in the Psalms must be fulfilled, including that Christ should suffer and rise again the third day." The Old Testament prophesied His resurrection, Psalm 16, "You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption, but show Him the path of life."

The cross was the plan. It is not an afterthought. It is not an adjustment to Jewish apostasy. It is the plan. Listen to our Lord's words in Luke 18:31, "He took the Twelve aside and said to them, Behold, we're going to Jerusalem and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished, He will be delivered to the Gentiles, will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him." Matthew says, "Crucify Him." "And the third day He will rise again." He says that will happen. He predicted every detail of His suffering and His death. The cross is the plan. It is not an afterthought, it is not Plan B.

When Jesus came the first time, He came in humiliation. When He came the first time, He was born to die. When He came the first time, He came to provide the sacrifice to propitiate God's justice as a satisfaction for the sins of all who would ever believe in order that sinners could be redeemed, including Jews and Gentiles and in the end a whole nation of ethnic Israelites.

Was Jesus an Amillennialist? No, not at all. Did Jesus promise a Kingdom and then take it away because Israel didn't believe when He prophesied their unbelief and His own execution because it was going to happen and even prophesied the betrayal of one Jew named Judas and even prophesied the amount of money for which the Messiah would be sold? No. Israel's rejection of Christ was written by God. It doesn't diminish their guilt and was not a reason to cancel the promises. In fact, it was necessary for the fulfillment of the promises that He bear sin and rise from the dead. Jesus was no Amillennialist.

And He also knew what God knows, that no people and no person can believe apart from God's sovereign election. Sinners are willing in the day of His power, says the Old Testament. If God cancelled promises because sinners didn't do what sinners can't do, then this is complete folly. The cross was the plan, not an afterthought and not Plan B. The Kingdom is not conditional on what men do. History is God's story. He writes it and He wrote into it His rejection and His crucifixion and His resurrection. It's pretty important, I think, if you're going to be an Amillennialist, to face the fact that Jesus won't join your group. I would like to think if I had a theological group that Jesus would join it. That would be an indication that I was right.

Now that poses a second critical New Testament question and a fourth question overall...were the Apostles Amillennialists? Maybe it shifted on their watch, huh? Maybe the Holy Spirit revealed to

them. There's got to a verse somewhere, right? Where's the Amillennial verse? Where is it? Where is the replacement verse? It's got to be in the Apostles and Jesus didn't say it, it must be the Apostles. And if you want to find out about that, be right where you are next Sunday night cause our time is gone and this part gets really rich. Join me in prayer.

Your Word is so thrilling and refreshing and clear and it is such a treasure, Lord, to be able simply to understand it. We thank You that it's not convoluted, mystical and esoteric, allegorical, that it can just be understood in the normal way we understand language. It's so important to us, Lord, that You don't cancel Your promises because we're banking on the fact that You won't cancel the ones You made to us in Christ. We're resting on Your irrevokable Word. We're resting on Your faithfulness. We're banking our entire eternity on it, that You don't change. You are the Lord, You change not. You do what You say, You fulfill what You prophesy. You bring to pass what You promised. You keep Your Covenants. And we depend on that. Father, we rejoice that history is unfolding exactly the way You designed it. And how stunning is it to know that the Jews are still with us while all other ancient people have disappeared in the amalgam of time. They're still here and they're even occupying a portion of the original promised land. How wonderful to know that some day they will look on the one they pierced, mourn for Him as an only Son, repent, exercise faith in the very one they crucified and a fountain of cleansing will be opened to them, they'll be washed from their iniquities. An entire generation will be purged, the rebels will be taken out and that generation will be saved...a hundred and forty-four thousand of them, the book of Revelation says, will become evangelists to the wide world, proclaiming the gospel across this planet. And when Israel comes to repentance and Israel becomes evangelistic with the gospel, there will be salvation and people will redeem...be redeemed out of every tongue and tribe and people and nation across this world. And then Christ will come to fulfill His promises to them and to all the saints of all the ages who will together with Israel enjoy all the glories of the Kingdom and of eternal life. This is how history ends, how we rejoice in Your unfolding purpose. And how we rejoice that we're a part of that. Even if we are gathered to be with You before this begins, we'll come back with You to reign in this glorious Kingdom and forever. You are the God of history, You have prewritten it and it moves inexorably down the path of Your eternal purpose. All things are in Your hand. Your purpose will be accomplished and no one can alter it. We rejoice in that confidence, give You all the praise and glory in Christ's name. Amen.

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