

Northpoint Faculty Series, March 8 – 11

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A Brief Treatment of the Millennial Views, the Antichrist, and the Need for Critical Thinking

I. Introduction

A. Purpose of this Series

1. The original impetus: What to make of current events? Or What do current events—if anything—have to do with the end times?
2. Some faculty members will be speaking on matters that may not be directly related to (my) original concern stated in a faculty meeting, which was to consider, in the light of Scripture, the recent display of solidarity and power by big tech, the mainstream media, and various corporate giants, such as—but not limited to—Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, Apple, Google, etc., to selectively shape and control the news and the 2021 presidential election. This massive display of power caused me to think of the kind of framework the antichrist would need when he came on the scene, whenever that is. Also, the move towards globalism also seemed to be something necessary for antichrist to make his move.
3. All of this series is intended to be practical.
4. A great personal concern is for students to be critical thinkers
5. NP and the faculty want to help you build you up in the faith and enable you to be capable ministers of the gospel. For that to happen, however, knowledge and wisdom must be key (does wisdom exist without knowledge?)

B. Today's Teaching Sketch

1. Discuss views of the millennium and how one's general eschatology affects one's practice
2. Briefly talk about the idea of "antichrist"
3. To comment on some recent events in American news, society, and politics, and global politics that may interface with eschatology
4. To strongly emphasize the crucial need for critical thinking

C. What Is Not Being Said or Trying to Be Accomplished Today

1. I am a relative newcomer to politics and world events and may make a mistake or need better information

2. Not interested in dates, or directly identifying who the antichrist may be or when he will come
3. Not directly talking about the Rapture
4. Nothing I say is to be construed to mean that I do not hold to God's sovereignty, or do not value evangelism.
 - a. To the first possible misconstrual, God's sovereignty does not imply human passivity; the idea of God's sovereignty could become an erroneous ground or basis for inactivity or non-engagement, or acceptance
 - b. To the second, evangelism is for me an ongoing activity or idea that is to play out in all contexts no matter what the circumstances

II. The Millennium

A. Terms

1. Millennium: Latin *mille* (thousand) and *annum* (year)
2. Chiliast: = millennium > Greek *χίλια* (*chilia*)
3. In the NT 11 times
 - a. 2 Pet. 3:8 < Psa. 90:4 [2x]
 - b. Revelation 9 times
 - c. Three times it refers to something unrelated to a one thousand year period:
 - In Rev. 11:3 and 12:6, it is part of the larger number, 1,260 days
 - In Rev. 14:20, to the two hundred miles of shed blood due to God's wrath, expressed in Greek by 1,600 stadia (preserved in the ESV)
 - d. In Revelation 20:1 – 7, it appears six times: vv. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.
 - e. Here in Revelation 20:1 – 7 are the only instances in the Old and New Testaments of a one thousand year period

B. Millennial Views (three basic)

1. Premillennialism: Christ returns *before* the millennium
 - a. Historic Premillennialism
 - b. Dispensational Premillennialism
2. Amillennialism: (“no millennium”): the millennium is the present church age or the saints reigning in heaven with Jesus during the church age

3. Postmillennialism: Christ returns *after* the millennium
- C. Assemblies of God
1. Pretribulational or Dispensational Premillennialism
 - a. Pre-tribulation rapture
 - b. Two future comings of Jesus
- D. Pessimism and Optimism
1. Theological Optimism
 - Postmillennialism
 2. Theological Pessimism
 - a. Amillennialism (the Greek letter “a” means “no” here)
 - b. Premillennialism
- E. A Key Factor that Determines One’s Millennial View: Hermeneutics
1. Literal or spiritual/non-literal?
 - Isa. 11:6 – 9
 2. Interpretation of Revelation 20:1 – 7
- F. Practical Outcomes or Results of One’s Hermeneutics > Millennial Stance
1. How one views the modern nation of Israel?
 2. Where does a Christian send his or her dollars?
 3. How does one pray?
 4. Does one expect things to get better and better as postmillennialists do, or worse and worse, as amillennialists and premillennialists do?
 5. How does one interpret Jesus’s sayings, or weight them?
 - Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven or Yeast
- G. Enter the Complexity
1. Most Pentecostals are premillennialists
 2. Most Pentecostals are, thereby, theological pessimists: things will grow worse and worse until Jesus returns
 3. There are many in the Pentecostal movement who are actually—whether consciously or not—adopting a postmillennial attitude and looking for the Christian church to gain the ascendancy on earth, apparently during this age or time in history
 4. If one is a thoroughgoing premillennialist, and believes only Jesus’s return can fix this planet, and not the work of the Holy Spirit through the church and during the church age, how can they

express their faith powerfully knowing that eventually moral and spiritual matters will get worse and worse?

5. How involved does one get in social concerns?
6. There has been a spate of powerful prophetic words being given by “prophets” stating that Donald Trump and America—according to their ideas of what is good for America—will be restored to what it was before democratic liberalism gained the ground that it has; I am very cautious regarding such words and remain skeptical at present

III. Broad Historical Outline of Millennialism in Church History¹

A. The Early Church

1. What has come to be labeled “**historic premillennialism . . .**” seems to have been the prevailing eschatology during the first three centuries of the Christian era and is found in the writings of Papias, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Methodius, Commodianus, and Lactantius” (Clouse, 546)
2. At least three factors diminished premillennialism’s dominance:
 - a. The second-century Montanists, “who stressed a third new age of the Spirit that they believed was coming among their number in Asia Minor”
 - b. Origen’s “emphasis on the kingdom’s manifestation withing the believer’s soul rather than the world. Attention shifted away from the historical toward the spiritual or metaphysical.”
 - c. The “emperor Constantine the Great’s conversion and adoption of Christianity as the favored imperial religion” (Clouse, 546)

B. “Medieval and Reformation Millennialism”

1. Augustine

- a. Due to Constantine’s adoption of Christianity [Augustine followed Tyconius, the Donatist, Alan Johnson, “Revelation,” *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*] “Augustine bishop of Hippo articulated the amillennial view that has dominated Western

¹The data under III has been mainly taken, very often **word for word**, from Robert G. Clouse, “Millennium,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 3rd. ed., ed. Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 545 – 548. Typically, I have used quotation marks to alert to this. For the sake of time (getting these notes to Dean Howell by his deadline), I have employed a very **minimalistic form of citation beyond this footnote that is not Turabian**. My intention is to merely point to the few sources that I used. I even took a few things from Wikipedia, but not many, and they are virtually common or public domain. Do not do this in a paper!!! © Also, these notes need another proofing, but cannot receive it, so please forgive any typos, etc. **I did not initially prepare the notes for public reading.**

Christian thought. The millennium . . . referred to the church in which Christ reigned with his saints.” (Clouse, 546)

- b. Accordingly, there was not an imminent struggle of good and evil: “On the really important level, the spiritual, the battle had already been won and God triumphed through the cross. Satan was reduced to lordship over the city of the world, which coexisted with the city of God. Eventually, even the small domain left to the devil would be taken by a triumphant God.” (Clouse, 546)
- c. Thus, “Augustine’s allegorical interpretation became the official doctrine during the medieval period.”
- d. There did remain premillennial “countercultural groups” during this period, led by “charismatic leaders [who] were often associated with radicalism and revolts” (Clouse, 546)
- e. Clouse traces some of these movements from the eleventh century up to and through the early Reformation (Clouse, 546)
- f. For example, the “rebellion of Münster in 1534, with Jan Matthys “proclaiming that he was Enoch preparing for Christ by establishing a new code of laws that featured community property. He declared that Münster was the new Jerusalem and called all faithful Christians to gather in the city. Many Anabaptists answered his summons, and most original inhabitants were forced to flee or live in veritable terror” (Clouse, 546)

C. Reformation Period

- 1. “Perhaps the Münster episode led the Protestant Reformers to reaffirm Augustinian amillennialism. Each of the main traditions of the sixteenth century—Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican—had state support and so continued the same Constantinian approach.
- 2. Three doctrinal statements: The Augsburg Confession, the Westminster Confession, and the Thirty-Nine Articles, do not “support apocalyptic millenarian speculation” (Clouse, 546)

D. Modern Millennialism

- 1. During the 17th century, a “premillennialism of a more scholarly nature” came from [the pens] Johann Heinrich Alsted and Joseph Mede (Clouse, 546)
 - a. Revelation was to be interpreted literally

- b. A literal kingdom was coming on earth (Clouse, 546)
 - c. Premillennialism did not gain a foothold, and “waned” (Clouse, 547)
2. “During the Puritan Revolution these writings encouraged others to look for establishment of the millennial kingdom in England. One of the more radical of these groups, the Fifth Monarchy Men, became infamous for insistence on reestablishing OT law and reformed government for England. Collapse of the Cromwellian regime and restoration of the Stuart monarchy discredited premillennialism.” (Clouse, 547)
 3. Premillennialism “continued into the eighteenth century through Isaac Newton, Johann Albrecht Bengel, and Joseph Priestly” (Clouse, 547)
 4. But Premillennialism “waned” and postmillennialism dominated
 - a. First by Puritans
 - b. **Daniel Whitby** [1638 – 1726; English scholar] gave it its “most influential formulation” Clouse, 547)
- E. Modern Rise of Premillennialism
1. “The violent uprooting of European social and political institutions during the French Revolution [1789 – 1799] encouraged a more apocalyptic climate.”
 2. Renewed interest in Jewish fortunes
 3. Edward Irving [1792 – 1834]
 - a. Church of Scotland minister pastoring in London
 - b. Prophecy conferences and apocalyptic premillennialism (Clouse, 547)
 4. **J. N. Darby** of the Plymouth Brethren [1800 – 1882; England]
 - a. Adopted Irving’s apocalypticism
 - b. Two comings secret rapture [Until the nineteenth century all premillennialist held that the rapture of the church was coterminous with the second coming and came at the end of the tribulation period. (R. G. Clouse, “Rapture of the Church,” *EDT*, 2nd ed., 983; full article: 983 – 985]
 - c. Church was a “mystery” of which only Paul wrote [it was not mentioned in the OT] (Clouse, 547)
 - d. Advanced dispensationalism (*EDT*, 3rd ed., “Millennium,” 547)

5. Adopted by
 - a. H. A. Ironside
 - b. Arno C. Gaebelein
 - c. Lewis Sperry Chafer
 - d. C. I. Schofield
6. **C. I. Schofield**
 - a. Baptist minister
 - b. “Through Schofield and his works, dispensationalism became the norm for much of American evangelicalism” (EDT, 3rd ed., “Millennium,” 545)
 - c. *Schofield Reference Bible* sold three million copies in fifty years
 - d. “Bible Schools and seminaries such as Biola, Moody Institute, Dallas Theological Seminary, and Grace Theological Seminary, along with popular preachers and teachers, spread this interpretation among millions of conservative Protestants” (Clouse, 547)

F. Manifest Destiny

1. Nineteenth century American form of Civil Postmillennialism
2. Dependent on “the spread of democracy, technology, and other putative benefits of Western civilization” (Clouse, 547)
3. Hollis Read, two-vol. work, *The Hand of God in History*
 - a. America was the locus of “God’s millennial purposes” (Clouse, 547)
 - b. Through “geography, politics, learning, the arts, and morality . . . pointed to the millennium’s coming to America in the nineteenth century” (Clouse, 547)
 - c. English and Western imperialism were essentials: “In order to accomplish global evangelism, Read favored imperialism, because extension of Anglo-Saxon control over other nations ensured the gospel’s spread. He cited the English language’s prevalence, which made it easier to preach the Word and to teach native people the more civilized Western culture, as one example of the benefits of Western control. Technological improvements such as the steam press, the locomotive, and the steamship were also given by God to spread enlightenment and the Christian message to all peoples.” (Clouse, 547)

G. American Resurgences of Civil Postmillennialism

1. “during the Civil War, many agreed with Julia Ward Howe’s ‘Battle Hymn of the Republic,’ which described God as working through Northern forces to accomplish his ultimate purpose.” (Clouse, 547)
2. President Wilson’s crusade to ‘make the world safe for democracy,’ which led his country into World War I, was based on a postmillennial vision that gave American ideals the major role in establishing peace and justice on earth.” (Clouse, 547 – 548)

IV. The Antichrist and Related Figures and Concepts (Political and Religious)

- A. Paul’s Man of Lawlessness, the Son of Perdition: “Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God” (2 Thess. 2:3 – 4)
- B. The figure in Daniel: The “prince who is to come”
1. Daniel 9:26 (9:24 – 27)
 2. τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως (*to bdelugma tēs erēmōseos*: “the abomination of desolation” or the “desolating sacrilege”
 3. Matthew 24:15 // Mark 13:14 // Luke 21:10 (ἐρήμωσις (*erēmōsis*) only here in the NT and not in the LXX)
 4. “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)” (Matt. 24:15, ESV)
 5. Matthew adds: “spoken of by the prophet Daniel” (Dan. 8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11)
 6. 1 Macc. 1 – 4
 - a. Alexander the Great’s conquest from 334 onward
 - b. His empire was divided after his premature death in 323 BC
 - c. In 323 BC, Ptolemy the I took over Egypt and Seleucus (312 BC) ruled Asia Minor
 - d. All Egyptian kings took the dynastic name “Ptolemy”

- e. Up to this point in history, the Seleucid kings took their dynastic name from Seleucus or from the capital of this territory, Antioch
 - f. Thus, the eight king of this line was Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175 – 173)
 - g. According to 1 Maccabees, Antiochus attacked Egypt in 169 BC, and upon his return, “came to Jerusalem with a strong force. He arrogantly entered the sanctuary” and took some of the holy things (1 Macc. 1:20, 21, NRSV)
 - h. On Chislev 15, 167 BC, Antiochus’s protégées “erected a **desolating sacrilege** [βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως; *bdelugma erēmōseos*] on the altar of burnt offering” (1 Macc. 1:54)
 - i. Being told to sacrifice on the altar in Modein by one of the king’s officers, Mattathias refused; another Jew did comply, and Mattathias killed him on the altar and then killed the king’s officer (1 Macc. 2:19 – 26)
7. Jesus is saying that this act of supreme profanation or pollution will occur again in the future
8. Possible references to this “desolation” before the fall of the temple in AD 70
- a. In AD 40, the Emperor Gaius ordered a statue of himself erected in the Jerusalem temple. He was assassinated in AD 41 before the order was carried out. (cf. R. T., France, *Matthew*, 913)
 - b. In AD 67/68, “the Zealots took over the temple as their headquarters, and Josephus speaks with horror of the way they “invaded the sanctuary with polluted feet”” (France, 913; Josephus Wars, 4.150 – 57, 196 – 207)
 - c. When the “Roman troops . . . book into the temple, the presence of their (idolatrous) standards in the sacred precincts would inevitable remind the Jews of Antiochus” (cf. Jos. Wars, 316)
 - d. The Nero Redivivus Idea: “In A.D. 68 Emperor Nero committed suicide by stabbing himself in the throat with a sword. There were rumors that he did not die but had escaped to Rome’s enemy, the Parthian Empire. Others though that he had died and been resurrected. The myth is called *Nero redivivus*. Either scenario depicted him as planning to invade the Roman

Empire. In one scheme he was to attach Jerusalem only to be stopped by the Messiah (Sib. Or. 5:93 – 110), and in another he was Beliar incarnate (Sib. Or. 3:63 – 74).” (D. F. Watson, “Antichrist,” *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & its Developments*, 50; pp. 50 – 53)

9. Post-AD 70

1. The Roman Catholic Church
2. Adolf Hitler

C. Johannine Epistles

1. 1 John 4:1 – 3: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already (ESV)
2. 2 John 7: “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist” (ESV)

D. Revelation 13

1. Beast “rising out of the sea” (v. 1)
2. Receives power from the dragon (Satan) (v. 4)
3. The beast and the dragon are worshipped (v. 4)
4. “uttering haughty and blasphemous words” (v. 5) and “opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven” (ESV)
5. “Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon” (v. 11)
 - a. “It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people” (v. 13)

And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.

16 Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead,

17 so that **no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark**, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.

18 This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.” (vv. 15 – 18)

V. Conclusion

A. The recent powerplay by Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, Apple, Google, YouTube, etc. to make sure the 2021 election turned out the way it did is an eye-opening moment for all Christians.

1. Cancel Culture
2. The control and extreme bias exhibited by NBC, ABC, CBS, MSNBC, CNN, Apple news, etc. (things that I heard with my own ears, and saw with my own eyes)
3. **Parler** arose as an alternative to Twitter, and it was initially overwhelmingly countered (cf. 1 John 2:15 – 17), but eventually stood
4. The present democratic party and certain global elements are rallying around various causes (a mixture of good and evil): Christians must realize that good and bad things are being lumped indiscriminately together
5. People losing their jobs from either being a republican, Trump supporter, or being charged with racism, often for no good reason (which is not fair: true racism is wrong; to falsely accuses someone of racism to sway the public against them is bearing false witness and manipulation)
6. The failure of powerful U.S. Senators to bring criminals to justice (e.g.: three people in a room, all admit there was a 100.00 bill, and no one else was there, but none of them took it nor do they know who took it; I am not here saying the senators are guilty, but rather for all their power the political criminal element in America is presently too strong to take down, and this includes elements of the FBI, etc.)

B. Be Critical in Your Thinking!

1. Evaluate things deeply: most issues are complex and slogans and one-liners do not fix them or get to the heart of them
2. Do not be emotionally or reflexively driven: Think!! Think!! Think!!

3. Because you hear a drum roll and there is a parade marching down the street, don't necessarily join it! Don't capitulate to what the Germans call the **Zeitgeist!** (= the "spirit of the age" or the like)
 4. Let history be your constant companion
 5. Read all of Scripture and not just "feel good" passages or you will never achieve the level of discernment necessary to recognize antichrist forces and lies of all kinds!
- C. Speaking to a Different Issue
1. Pentecostals are issuing many prophecies today
 2. America and the kingdom of God are in danger of becoming blurred
 3. My advice is err on the side of caution
 4. Stay close to God. Read His word: all of it. Again, gleaning a few verses out of the Psalms to assuage your wounds will give you the biblical critical apparatus necessary to prevail in perplexing and confusing days like these
 5. Jer. 23:28 – 29: "Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the LORD. Is not my word **like fire**, declares the LORD, and like **a hammer** that breaks the rock in pieces?"