

A-Millennialism

By E. KIRK

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IN the past few years, there has been a notable and welcome revival of interest in what is known as “the doctrine of grace”, that is, the truth of God respecting election and predestination according to the sovereign will of God. One cannot but rejoice in such a revival; at the same time let it ever be realized that “Knowledge of the truth” (see 2 Peter 2 : 21) is not the same, necessarily, as “the love of the truth”. The novelty—as it would seem to some—of the doctrine might appeal to certain types of mind, but the mere head-knowledge thereof, unless accompanied by humbleness of mind, is dangerous, and if not the fruit of the Holy Spirit’s in-working, it will but add to the professor’s condemnation. It has been well said that to hold the doctrine of grace is good, provided the grace of the doctrine holds the one professing Christ and His words.

But, alongside this renewed interest in Puritan doctrine, there has been a trend of disregard for other parts of truth held very dear by a considerable number of believers during, especially, the past hundred years. This is that prophetic part of Scripture relating to the Divine purpose concerning earthly Israel. There are those who hold that GOD has cast off Israel as a nation, and that “the Church” is His last word in dealing with mankind.

Let some of the views held by these sincere believers be examined in the light of Scripture. They are described as “a-millennialist”. “A” is deprivative (equal to “a” in “atheist”, that is “no god”). Hence their views are summed up in the phrase, “no millennium”. Now this *word* “millennium” is not in the Bible, but it means, “one thousand years”, which expression is found in Revelation 20 : 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. The opinion is formed and freely expressed that this phrase is not to be taken literally, but symbolically. Indeed, the writer has heard it said that “we are in the millennium now”.

But are not periods of time elsewhere in Scripture to be taken literally? Examples of such are the “four hundred years” (Gen 15 : 13, Exod. 12 : 40, Acts 7 : 6), the “seventy years” captivity (Dan. 9 : 2), the “seventy weeks” (Daniel 9 : 24). Further, as if to emphasize the exactness of the time, the “three and a half years” of Rev. 12 : 14 is equated with the “forty and two months” and the “thousand two hundred and three score days” of Revelation 11 : 2, 3.

It is not without significance that nigh six thousand years have elapsed since the creation; and seeing that “one day is with the LORD as a *thousand years*, and a *thousand years* as one day” (2 Pet. 3 : 8), may it not be agreeable to Scripture to say that six “days” have nearly been completed? According to Divine commandment, every seventh day was a day of rest, and so was every seventh year (Exod. 20 : 10, 11; Lev.

25 : 4. By analogy, it may be affirmed that the “thousand years’ of Revelation 20 will also be a “sabbath day”.

That there is to be this long period of “rest” is borne out by many Scriptures, for example, Psalm 72 and Romans 8 : 19-23. In that passage, we are to read “creation” rather than “creature”. There is a time coming when “the *earth* shall be full of the Knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11 : 9). Remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, “When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the *earth*?” (Luke 18 : 8), it cannot be that the fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy will take place before the coming of the Lord. It is not according to Scripture to expect a world-wide acceptance of the Gospel through intensive evangelism. The Lord’s words are, “And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world *for a witness* unto all nations, and THEN shall the end come” (Matt. 24 : 14). *Not* the end of all things, but “the end of the age” (verse 3 and see ch. 28 : 20).

Since, therefore, Isaiah’s prophecy, as quoted above, must yet be fulfilled, such a period of a thousand years is plainly necessary. That prophecy includes a description of the cessation of the “groaning” of creation (Isa. 11 : 6-9). Why the literality of these words should be doubted is not easy for a simple reader of the Bible, comparing Scripture with Scripture, to understand. The writer feels that the a-millennial position presents to the mind more problems than it is able to solve.

The Future of Israel

It has been stated, somewhat recently, that, *“Israel and Judah” is an ideal representation of the true Israel, the people of God.* The promise of God regarding the New Covenant is indeed said to be with Israel and Judah (Jer. 31 : 31) and Israel (v. 33). Now, it is perfectly true that certain “things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition”. God’s dealings with Israel in the earthly sphere have an analogy with His grace and revealed purpose for His Church. He calls the nation “My people”, “My son”; He is said to be “espoused to them”. All these expressions are true of His Church; but, although there is “neither Jew nor Greek”, since those who have “put on Christ” are “all one in Christ Jesus”, the distinction between “Jew, Gentile, and Church of God” remains (see Gal. 3 : 26-29, and 1 Cor. 10 : 32). Moreover, in Romans, chapters 9, 10, 11, the term “Israel” is applied consistently to the natural Israel, although they are warned (9 : 6) that nationality is no proof of acceptance with GOD. Let it be noticed, however, and stressed, that “Israel after the flesh” is before us in these chapters, and particularly in chapter 11. “For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead” (verse 15, and compare verse 12). Observe also the close connection of verses 25 and 26. “Blindness in part is happened to Israel, UNTIL the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so ALL ISRAEL shall be saved: as it is written, There

shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from JACOB". The "all" here is that of distinction, not of inclusiveness, for a remnant—a third part brought through the fire (Zech. 13 : 8, 9)—shall be the subject of the promise, "It is My people".

It is not easy to follow the reasoning of such as consider there is no future for the nation of Israel, particularly in view of the Holy Spirit's use of the name "Jacob" (Rom. 11 : 26). Have not they pondered the solemn words, "*Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee*" (Rom. 11 : 20, 21, and context)?

The writer is of opinion that "covenant-truth" is not fully understood if God's promises concerning Israel, as revealed in the Bible, are not taken in their literal sense. Blessed be GOD, every regenerate person is within the New Covenant—the Covenant of Grace, because of Divine election, and effectual calling; but the *house* of Israel, and the *house* of Judah, are predestined to come, in God's time, within its gracious provision. By way of illustration, the "salvation" caused by Joseph was experienced *first* by Egypt and "all countries" (Gen. 41 : 57), and *secondly* by his brethren, who had despised and rejected him. So, the Church has entered into the blessings of that Covenant sealed by the precious blood of Christ, but the hour is coming when, "They shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in

bitterness for his first born'' (Zech. 12 : 10, and note particularly the context). This is plainly unfulfilled prophecy, but a faithful God, Who has not cast away Israel, will fulfil His faithful word. The nation is already established in her land, and this fact alone should give pause to those who profess a-millennial views, for it seems to fit in with the prophecies in the latter part of Zechariah.

In conclusion, the writer would appeal to those who differ from the views expressed in the foregoing to re-examine their standpoint, by studying the Scriptures quoted, and *particularly in their contexts*.

May God, by His Holy Spirit, lead both writer and readers into all His Truth.

(From "The Student of Scripture").