

Problems with Premillennialism

By Sam Storms

Note: What follows is an excerpt from a rough draft chapter of what would eventually become Sam Storms book *Kingdom Come: The Amillennial Alternative*. It was posted as an article on The Gospel Coalition blog with some comments by Justin Taylor on October 7, 2009. The original post can be found here: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/what-you-must-believe-if-you-are-a-premillennialist/>

My departure from Premillennialism was gradual and came as a result of two discoveries as I studied Scripture. First, I devoted myself to a thorough examination of what the NT said would occur at the time of Christ's second coming (or Parousia). What I found was a consistent witness concerning what would either end or begin as a result of our Lord's return to the earth. Sin in the lives of God's people, corruption of the natural creation, and the experience of physical death would terminate upon the appearance of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, and the inauguration of the New Heavens and New Earth would ensue. But why is this a problem for Premillennialism? Good question.

If you are a Premillennialist, whether Dispensational or not, there are several things with which you must reckon:

You must necessarily believe that physical death will continue to exist beyond the time of Christ's second coming. The reason for this is that all Premillennialists must account for the rebellious and unbelieving nations in Revelation 20:7-10 who launch an assault against Christ and his people at the end of the millennial age. Where did these people come from? They must be the unbelieving progeny born to those believers who entered the millennial age in physical, unglorified bodies. Not only they, but also the *believing* progeny born to those believers will be subject to physical death (notwithstanding the alleged prolonged life spans experienced by those who live during the millennial reign of Christ).

You must necessarily believe that the natural creation will continue, beyond the time of Christ's second coming, to be subjected to the curse imposed by the fall of man. The reason for this is that all Premillennialists must concede that unbelievers will continue to populate and infect the earth during the millennial reign of Christ. Notwithstanding the presence of Christ himself, as Premillennialists argue, the earth will continue to be ravaged by war and sin and death, even if only at the millennium's end (Revelation 20:7-10). As a Premillennialist, you must necessarily believe that the redemption of the natural creation and its being set free from bondage to corruption does not occur, at least in its consummate expression, until 1,000 years subsequent to Christ's return.

You must necessarily believe that the New Heavens and New Earth will not be introduced until 1,000 years subsequent to the return of Christ.

You must necessarily believe that unbelieving men and women will still have the opportunity to come to saving faith in Christ for at least 1,000 years subsequent to his return. The reason for this is that, according to Premillennialism, countless millions of people will be born during the course of the millennial reign of Christ. Are Premillennialists asking us to believe that upon their attaining to an age when they are capable of understanding and responding to the revelation of God and the personal, physical presence of Christ Jesus himself, that *none* of them will be given the opportunity to respond in faith to the claims of the gospel?

You must necessarily believe that unbelievers will not be finally resurrected until at least 1,000 years subsequent to the return of Christ.

You must necessarily believe that unbelievers will not be finally judged and cast into eternal punishment until at least 1,000 years subsequent to the return of Christ.

In my study of the second coming of Christ I discovered that, contrary to what Premillennialism requires us to believe (see above), death is defeated and swallowed up in victory at the Parousia, the natural creation is set free from its bondage to corruption at the Parousia, the New Heavens and the New Earth are introduced immediately following the Parousia, all opportunity to receive Christ as savior terminates at the Parousia, and both the final resurrection and eternal judgment of unbelievers will occur at the time of the Parousia. Simply put, the NT portrayals of the second coming of Christ forced me to conclude that a millennial age, subsequent to Christ’s return, of the sort proposed by Premillennialism was impossible.

The second factor that turned me from Premillennialism to Amillennialism was a study of Revelation 20, the text cited by all Premillennialists in support of their theory. Contrary to what I had been taught and long believed, I came to see Revelation 20 as a strong and immovable support for the Amillennial perspective.

I will examine Revelation 20 in detail in a subsequent chapter. But in this chapter I want to look closely at those texts in the NT that, in my opinion, render impossible a post-Parousia millennial kingdom on earth.

1 Corinthians 15:22-28

²² “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For ‘God has put all things in subjection under his feet.’ But when it says, all things are put in subjection,’ it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. ²⁸ When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.”

The PM argues from this passage that since there is a lengthy gap between the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of his people (v. 23; it is now almost at 2,000 years), so also there is a gap between the resurrection of his people (at the time of the second coming) and “the end” (*to telos*, v. 24). In other words, when Paul says in v. 24, “then comes the end,” he does not mean “thereupon” or immediately after the resurrection of believers described in v. 23, but only after the millennium or 1,000 years later. At the close of the millennium, i.e., when “the end” comes, Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (v. 24a) after having abolished all rule and authority and power.

This reign of Christ, says the PM, which entails his abolishing of all rule, authority, and power, occurs during the earthly millennium, a reign Paul further describes in v. 25 as the putting of all his enemies under his feet. The last of these enemies is death (v. 26). Clearly, then, for the PM, death will not be destroyed or defeated or abolished until the close of the millennial age.

Before proceeding, note well that the matter under dispute is not whether the terms Paul used (*epeita* and *eita*; both of which are translated “then” by the ESV) will admit of a time gap. Obviously they may. The question is whether or not in this context they do. I will argue below that other factors in the text prohibit our interpreting Paul as saying that there is a gap of 1,000 years (the millennium) between the resurrection of Christ’s people at his second coming (v. 23b) and

“the end” (v. 24a). This is not to deny the obvious gap between the resurrection of Christ (v. 23a) and that of Christians (v. 23b). But no such gap, I will argue, is possible in the case of our resurrection and “the end”.

Look again at v. 24 where Paul declares that “the end” occurs “when” (*hotan*) Christ delivers the kingdom to God the Father, “when” (*hotan*) he has abolished all rule and authority and power. This second “when” clause is retrospective and describes the condition that must be fulfilled before the kingdom is handed over to the Father. Paul’s thesis, then, is that the subjugation of Christ’s enemies precedes and is consummated by his delivering of the kingdom to God the Father. This reign of Christ consists in the putting of all his enemies under his feet (v. 25), the last of which is death (v. 26).

In summary, “the end” (*to telos*) marks the close of Christ’s reign, or at least that phase of it with which Paul is concerned. It is brought to its climax by the complete and final overthrow of death. The point of dispute is the time of the “end.” The PM argues that the “end” is the end or close of the millennial age, one thousand years after Christ has returned to earth. The AM argues that the “end” is the end or close of the present church age, signaled and brought to fruition by Christ’s second coming.

It seems clear that all one need do is demonstrate which of these two options is correct and the millennial debate would come to a close. This isn’t as difficult as one might think. Since both eschatological schools agree that Christ’s reign consummates with the destruction of death, and since the destruction of death signals the end, we need only ascertain the time of “death’s death”!

As I read 1 Corinthians 15:50-58, the defeat of death occurs at the second coming of Christ (see more on this text below). Therefore, we must understand the reign of Christ, consisting of his progressive abolishing of all rule, authority, and power, as presently occurring. The last of these enemies is death, which is abolished or swallowed up at our Lord’s second coming when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father. That is “the end.” C. K. Barrett explains:

“In some way (never specified by Paul) . . . authority has come into the hands of evil powers, whom God has to dispossess in order to reassert his own sovereignty. In the passage before us Christ appears to reign during the period in which this dispossessing takes place, one enemy after another (cf. verse 26) being overpowered. When the kingdom has been fully re-established, the Son hands it over to the Father, and the kingdom of Christ gives place to the kingdom of God. There is . . . nothing to suggest that this developing reign of Christ falls between the *parusia* [sic] and the End; it culminates in the *parusia* [sic]. This is supported in the following verses, in which it is said that Christ reigns until all his enemies are defeated, and that the last enemy to be overcome is death; the defeat of death however is naturally taken as belonging to the time of the resurrection of Christ’s people (verse 23) [at his second coming].” (C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 357.)

If the PM should question whether in fact Christ is *presently* ruling or reigning over every rule and authority and power, one need only read Ephesians 1:20-23 where precisely the same terms are used (*arche*, *exousia*, *dunamis*) in Paul’s description of what has been put in subjection under his feet (cf. also Colossians 1:13; 2:10,15).

The PM believes that death will continue on into the one-thousand year earthly reign of Christ and will in fact assume massive proportions at its close (see Rev. 20:9-10). But how can this be when Paul places the destruction of death at Christ’s second coming? The end of death *at that time* precludes the millennium of the PM, for according to the latter death still prevails.

It was precisely this sort of thing that I encountered as I studied what the NT said would occur at the time of Christ’s second coming at the close of the present age. When he comes, death dies. That is why there cannot be a millennium of history beyond the time of the second coming during which death continues to live (if I may so speak). Herman Ridderbos provides an excellent summation of the point I’ve labored to make:

“It is difficult to conclude otherwise from 1 Corinthians 15:50ff. than that the *parousia* itself and the resurrection taking place with it signify the end of the power of death. And inasmuch as death is the last enemy, the destruction of the remaining powers (“when he shall have destroyed all rule and authority and power”) will have to be understood not as a final struggle beginning after the *parousia*, but as the definite victory of Christ that has already begun in his cross and resurrection and exaltation (cf., e.g., Col. 2:15), and is now finally settled at, and in virtue of, his *parousia* (cf. 2 Thess. 2:8). This view seems to us, at least on the ground of the Pauline pronouncements, much more acceptable than that one still has to conceive of a battle for the destruction of the powers and of death, which would in the *parousia* have only its beginning and point of departure. Such a final phase or intermediate kingdom must in any case be introduced into the text as a presupposition, and has no basis in all Paul’s preaching of the last things, so far as that is known to us.” (Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, 559.)

1 Corinthians 15:50-57

⁵⁰ “I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ⁵⁵ ‘O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’ ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The key phrase is Paul’s declaration that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (v. 50). Simply put, a corruptible and perishable nature can neither possess nor participate in an incorruptible and imperishable kingdom. Neither the living (“flesh and blood”) nor the dead (“the perishable”) can inherit the kingdom in their present state. Several factors contribute to make this a strong argument for AM and against PM.

Here Paul insists not merely on the necessity of regeneration but of resurrection, which is to say the ultimate glorification of the believer that will occur at the second coming of Christ (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18). In a word, only those who have been consummately transformed in body and spirit by that resurrection / glorification brought to pass at the return of Christ shall inherit the kingdom of God.

The “kingdom” in view, according to the PM, is the millennial kingdom, that very “reign” of Christ we noted above in 1 Corinthians 15:24. But how can that be? The PM argues that many believers will enter and inherit and enjoy the blessings of the millennial kingdom in their natural, unglorified, untransformed, “flesh and blood” bodies. But that is precisely what Paul denies could

ever happen. Most PM also contend that these believers will bear children, many of whom likewise may come to faith and “claim” their inheritance while yet in “flesh and blood” bodies. The problem for PM is acute: either deny these believers that inheritance of the kingdom which Christ has promised, and into the experience of which he gives them entrance (Mt. 25), or recognize that 1 Corinthians 15:50 precludes the millennial age traditionally defined and defended by the PM.

I’m compelled to conclude that Paul’s declaration that unglorified, “flesh and blood” bodies cannot inherit the kingdom of God precludes a millennium following the second coming of Christ. The kingdom of God into which all believers are granted entrance at the time of their glorification (i.e., at the second coming of Christ), is the *eternal* phase of God’s kingdom rule. This eternal phase, at the beginning of which Jesus “delivers the kingdom to God the Father” (v. 24) follows immediately upon the second coming of the Lord Jesus. It is then that “we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet” (vv. 51-52).

Finally, according to vv. 54-55, the end of death at the second coming of Christ is the fulfillment of Isaiah 25:8. There we read that God “will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth.” Both the end of death and the wiping away of all tears are associated in Revelation 21:4 *not* with the coming of a millennial age but with the eternal state, i.e., the new heavens and new earth.

Romans 8:18-23

¹⁸ “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

Paul describes the deliverance or redemption of the natural creation as inseparably connected with that of the children of God. It is when the sons of God are revealed (v. 19) that the creation itself will experience its redemption. That is why the creation is personified as “waiting eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God” (NAS). The creation anxiously awaits the return of Christ and our glorification, for it is *then* that it too shall be set free from “its bondage to decay” into that very “freedom of the glory of the children of God” (v. 21).

The creation waits *for* the revealing of the sons of God (v. 19) because it is *into* that very freedom that the creation too will be delivered (v. 21). In other words, *the creation and the children of God are intimately intertwined both in present suffering and in future glory. As there was a solidarity in the fall, so also there will be a solidarity in the restoration.*

The redemption we will experience at Christ’s return is the complete and final eradication of all sin, of every trace of the corruption in spirit and flesh that was ours prior to that moment. Paul’s point is that the natural creation awaits that day because then, it will in like fashion be fully redeemed and delivered.

If the creation should somehow fall short of complete deliverance from its present corruption, the finality and fullness of *our* redemption is seriously undermined. Inasmuch as the natural realm will enter into “the freedom of the glory of the children of God,” any deficiency that

it might experience must obtain in the case of Christians as well. To the extent that the created order is not wholly and perfectly redeemed, we are not wholly and perfectly redeemed. *The redemption and glory of creation are co-extensive and contemporaneous with ours.*

The problem this poses for PM is clear: the consummate redemption of creation that occurs when Christ returns to redeem and glorify his people would appear to preclude any suffering or corruption of creation *subsequent* to that return. And yet the millennial age for which the PM argues is one that includes the corrupting presence of both sin and death. The question, then, is this: What kind of deliverance from corruption is it when corruption persists? How can the creation be delivered from the crippling effects of sin and death *when we are*, namely, at Christ’s second coming, if during the millennium it must yet suffer the presence and perversity of its enemies?

To insist, as the PM must, that the natural realm will undergo a *dual renewal*, a preliminary and incomplete one prior to the millennial age and a final and perfect one after it, demands that we anticipate a similar *dual renewal* in the case of all Christians. It seems more reasonable to me that Paul’s description of the day of redemption for both Christians and the created order (i.e., the second coming of Jesus) is identical with the advent of the new heavens and new earth portrayed in such texts as 2 Pt. 3:10-13; Rev. 21:1ff.; Mt. 19:28. If so, there is no place for a “millennium” subsequent to the return of Christ.

2 Peter 3:8-13

Following his reference to “mockers” who question whether Christ will ever return (vv. 3-7), Peter writes this:

⁸ “But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. ¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

Here Peter echoes the words of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3, both of whom refer to “the day of the Lord”, i.e., the second coming/advent of Christ (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Pt. 3:4,8-9). Peter tells us that it is on account of the coming of this “day of the Lord/God” (vv. 10,12), i.e., the second coming/advent of Christ, that the heavens will be destroyed. The end of this present heavens and earth is the effect of the coming of Christ. According to v. 10, the coming of Christ entails the consummate judgment (and eventual renewal) of the heavens and earth. Note well: “the day of the Lord” is the time, literally, “in which” or “when” (ESV) “the heavens will pass away.” Peter’s point is that the return of Christ and the judgment of the heavens and earth are causally related in that complex of events which will herald the end of the present age. The “present heavens and earth,” literally, the “*now* heavens and earth” (v. 7), are being reserved for this “day” of judgment.

Note also that the “present (now) heavens and earth” are contrasted with the former heavens and earth, literally, “the *then* world” (v. 6). Thus Peter looks at biblical history as consisting of three great periods: 1) the heavens and earth before Noah, which were destroyed by God’s

judgment, out of which he formed anew 2) the heavens and earth that now are, which are being reserved for destruction, and out of which he will create anew 3) the heavens and earth that shall be, which are the object of our hope. “Since you look for these things,” says Peter, that is, for the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells (v. 13), be diligent to be righteous.

Where is there room in Peter’s scenario for an earthly millennium intervening between Christ’s second coming and the new heavens and new earth? On the contrary, the present heavens and earth will be judged at Christ’s return, at which time the *new heavens and new earth* (not a millennium) shall emerge as an eternal dwelling for God’s people.

Note Peter’s use of the word translated “look for” in vv. 12,13,14 (NAS; “wait for” in the ESV). We are to “look for” the day of God (the Lord), i.e., the return of Christ (v. 12). In v. 13 we are to “look for” the new heavens and new earth. In v. 14 we “look for” these things, i.e., the coming of Christ which brings judgment against the present world and righteousness for his people. It seems clear that the object of our expectation, that for which we are to “look” and “wait” is the *return of Christ when the present heavens and earth give way to the new heavens and earth*. If the new heavens and new earth come at the time of Christ’s second advent, there can be no earthly millennial reign intervening between the two. Remember that the PM places the creation of the new heavens and new earth *after* the millennium (Rev. 21-22). *However, if the new heavens and new earth come with Christ (as Peter indicates they will), the millennium must in some sense be identified with this present age and not some future period subsequent to Christ’s return.*

Finally, the PM argues that during the millennial age it will be possible for people to come to saving faith in Christ. But Peter’s argument is that the very reason why Christ has not yet returned is in order that he might patiently extend the opportunity for men to repent. This is meaningful only if it is impossible to repent subsequent to Christ’s return. If souls may be saved after Christ returns, the patience he now displays is unnecessary. The urgency of the moment can be explained only on the supposition that “now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2).

Matthew 25:31-46

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ ⁴¹ Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison,

and did not minister to you?’⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

The PM believes that this event, known as the “Sheep / Goat Judgment,” will occur at the close of the tribulation and just before the inauguration of the millennial age. Indeed, most PMs believe that the purpose of the judgment is to determine (or at least reveal) who is worthy of entrance into that millennial kingdom. He will gather all the nations of the earth (cf. Mt. 13:30,39-41,49-50), separate them (cf. Mt. 13:49), and pass judgment.

This judgment is said to issue in eternal fire (v. 41) and eternal punishment (v. 46) for the “goats” (the unsaved) and eternal life (v. 46) for the “sheep” (the saved). The problem this poses for PM is obvious. As noted above, PM believes this judgment occurs before the millennial age and is distinct from the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20:11-15 which occurs after the millennial age. But also as noted above, and is obvious from a reading of the text, the goats (the unsaved) go into the eternal (lake of) fire: “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (v. 41), which in v. 46 is defined further as eternal punishment.

How can this be, when the PM insists that the judgment which results in the lake of fire occurs after the millennial kingdom, one thousand years following Christ’s return in glory (Rev. 20:15)? There are two ways the PM can respond to this difficulty.

First, he can argue that Matthew does not intend to suggest that Christ casts the goats into eternal fire when he returns in glory. But how, then, should we account for the text which declares that “when” (*hotan*) the Son of Man comes in glory, “then” (*tote*) he will gather the nations, separate them, and pass judgment?

One way of dealing with this problem is to argue that there are, in fact, two different introductions into God’s kingdom (in the case of the saved) and into eternal fire (in the case of the unsaved). That is to say, a PM might suggest that the goats are judged before the millennium and at that time cast into eternal fire. Then, after the millennium, they are pulled out of eternal fire, judged yet again, and then cast back in. Likewise, he would have to argue that the sheep are granted entrance into eternal life before the millennium, and then again at its close. Dare I say that this sort of “exegesis” speaks for itself. It is indicative of the baseless duplication of eschatological events required to sustain belief in a post-Parousia millennial kingdom.

The passage makes perfectly good (dare I say, literal) sense if interpreted to say that at the second coming of Christ the lost are judged and cast into eternal fire, to be punished eternally (v. 46), whereas the saved are granted entry into eternal life, God’s eternal kingdom, which has been prepared for them from the foundation of the world. The “Sheep / Goat Judgment” of Matthew 25 and the “Great White Throne Judgment” of Revelation 20, therefore, are one and the same, each described in different but complementary terms, occurring at the time of the second coming of Christ.

There is one other alternative for the PM, as articulated by Robert Gundry. Gundry concedes that this judgment is the final one, identical with that judgment we see in Revelation 20:11-15 which will occur at the close of the millennial age, and that it is eternity, either of life or death, of blessedness or punishment, into which the sheep and goats enter respectively. He then suggests this solution to escape from the problem posed by v. 31 which appears to link this judgment with Christ’s second coming before the millennial age:

“A gap may intervene between the second coming and this judgment: ‘But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, [millennium] then

Storms – “Problems with Premillennialism”

He will sit on His glorious throne.’ Or, ‘He will sit on His glorious throne. [Millennium] And all the nations will be gathered before Him.’...But better yet, the statement, ‘He will sit on His glorious throne,’ itself summarizes the millennial reign of Christ.”

Although Gundry’s suggestion is slightly more plausible than the other noted above, it does not sufficiently bear the weight of Christ’s words. Note well that “when” the Son of Man comes, “then” he will engage in a series of interrelated activities. These activities are logically and temporally successive. They sequentially build upon one another. When he comes, then he will sit...and the nations will be gathered...and he will separate...and he will put...then he will say, etc. It seems unduly strained to suggest that the gathering of the nations and all that subsequently follows is not to occur when our Lord returns but only one thousand years after he initially sits on his glorious throne.

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

⁵ “This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—⁶ since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰ when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.”

The conclusions drawn from Matthew 25 are re-affirmed in 2 Thessalonians 1. This passage also indicates that it is at the time of Christ’s second coming/advent, not 1,000 years later, that the eternal punishment of the lost occurs.

When does the eternal destruction of the unsaved occur? When shall they pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord? Paul’s answer is: “when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints” (v. 10; emphasis mine). The climactic and final punishment of the lost is not reserved for a judgment 1,000 years after Christ’s return, but is simultaneous with it. And since this judgment is elsewhere said to follow the millennium (Rev. 20:11-15), the millennium itself must be coterminous with the present age.

John 5:28-29

²⁸ “Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”

An hour is coming when (lit., “in which”) all who are in the tombs, i.e., the physically dead, whether believer or unbeliever, shall hear his voice and come forth in the resurrection.

The PM, however, is unable to accept this straightforward declaration. He insists that a 1,000 year earthly reign of Christ must intervene between the resurrection of believers and the resurrection of unbelievers. He points to John 5:25 where the word “hour” encompasses the whole of this present age. Why, then, can’t the “hour” in v. 28 also span the 1,000 years of a millennial age? Anthony Hoekema answers this question:

Storms – “Problems with Premillennialism”

“First, in order to be parallel to what is said in verse 25, the resurrection of believers and unbelievers should then be taking place throughout this thousand-year period, as is the case with the regeneration of people during the ‘hour’ mentioned in verse 25. But, according to the theory under discussion (Premillennialism), this is not the case; rather this theory teaches that there will be one resurrection at the beginning of the thousand years and another at the end. Of this, however, there is not a hint in this passage. Further, note the words all who are in the tombs will hear his voice.’ The reference would seem to be to a general resurrection of all who are in their graves; it is straining the meaning of these words to make them describe two groups (or four groups) of people who will be raised at separate times. Moreover, this passage states specifically that all these dead will hear the voice of the Son of man. The clear implication seems to be that this voice will be sounded once, not two times or four times. If the word ‘hour’ is interpreted as standing for a period of a thousand years plus, this would imply that the voice of Jesus keeps sounding for a thousand years. Does this seem likely?”

No, it doesn’t. My conclusion is that when we examine what the NT says will occur at the time of the second coming/advent of Jesus Christ, there is no place for a 1,000 year earthly reign to follow. At the time of the second coming there will occur the final resurrection, the final judgment, the end of sin, the end of death, and the creation of the new heavens and new earth. As Peter has said, “Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these [things], be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace” (2 Peter 3:14).