

“Eschatology”
(Part 43: Postmillennialism and Amillennialism)

I. Postmillennialism and Amillennialism.

A. Introduction.

1. We’ve seen that the Premillennial view is excluded in Scripture.
 - a. When Christ comes again, He sets in motion a series of events that culminate in the consummation of all things:
 - (i) The destruction of all of Christ’s enemies: “For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed -- for our testimony to you was believed” (2 Thes. 1:6-10; cf. Rev. 20:9).
 - (ii) The resurrection of all the dead – righteous and unrighteous: “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28-29).
 - (iii) The rapture of the church: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thes. 4:16-17).
 - (iv) The final judgment of the righteous and the wicked: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10; cf. Matt. 25:31-46).
 - (v) The destruction of the old heavens and earth and the bringing in of the new: “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10; cf. Rev. 21:1-4).
 - (vi) The end of Christ’s mediatorial reign: “Then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death” (1 Cor. 15:24-26).
 - b. Why does this exclude the Premillennial view?
 - (i) Premillennialism teaches that when Christ comes again, He will set up a kingdom on earth, prior to the consummation; and He will reign over all the nations for one thousand years, where there will be both believers and unbelievers present (Rev. 20:1-10).
 - (ii) But this isn’t possible because:
 - (a) All the wicked are destroyed when He returns.
 - (b) All the dead are raised.
 - (c) All the remaining living (the church) are raptured from the earth.
 - (d) All the wicked and righteous are judged and placed in their eternal dwellings.
 - (e) The curse is removed from the Creation, the Old Heavens and Earth are burned up, and the New Heavens and the New Earth are brought in.

- (f) When Christ comes again and defeats His final enemy through the resurrection, His reign will end, not begin.
- 2. This leaves us with only two remaining options: Postmillennialism and Amillennialism.
 - a. Both positions have much in common:
 - (i) They both agree on the above events.
 - (ii) They both agree that the millennium takes place between the first and second comings of Christ, that there is only one final battle, one Second Coming, one resurrection, and one judgment.
 - b. But they differ in one significant area: the success of the Gospel.
 - (i) The Amil position teaches the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan will continue to battle neck and neck until the kingdom of God triumphs at the Second Coming.
 - (ii) The Postmil position teaches that the kingdom of God will triumph in history prior to the Second Coming, ushering in a long period of peace and prosperity.
 - c. Since they are so similar and differ on this one basic point, we'll consider mainly the Postmil position.
 - (i) If Scripture shows us that the kingdom of God will triumph prior to Christ's coming, then the Postmil position is correct.
 - (ii) If it doesn't, then the Amil is correct.
- 3. What difference does it make?
 - a. On one level, it doesn't matter what we believe regarding eschatology.
 - (i) We are not saved by believing one position or another.
 - (ii) All will work out as Christ planned, whatever we believe.
 - b. On another level, it makes a great difference.
 - (i) Dispensational Premil stresses a future plan for Israel, shifting the focus heavily on the Middle East; as well as the gradual decline of the church until Christ returns, leading us to expect very minimal results from the Gospel.
 - (ii) Historic Premil basically does the same, minus the focus on Israel.
 - (iii) Most Amils may not see a gradual decline in the church, but they don't expect it to ascend (with some exceptions).
 - (iv) But Postmils expect the Lord to do great things, to advance His kingdom, and to bring the universal dominion of Christ over the world through the Gospel.
 - (v) Postmil encourages us that we are fighting a winning battle.

B. Postmillennialism: Overview.

- 1. Postmillennialism teaches:
 - a. That Christ was given the nations as the reward for His work:
 - (i) "Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession" (Ps. 2:8).
 - (ii) "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will worship before You" (22:27).
 - (iii) "And let all kings bow down before him, all nations serve him" (72:11).

- b. That this was what was intended by the Abrahamic Covenant:
 - (i) "And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." (Gen. 12:3).
 - (ii) "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (22:18).
- c. That in His work, Christ first bound Satan so He could plunder his kingdom: "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong *man*? And then he will plunder his house" (Matt. 12:28-29).
- d. That He began to exercise this authority on earth, but was fully invested when He ascended.
 - (i) "But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet" (Heb. 10:12-13).
 - (ii) "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (12:2).
- e. That His intention behind the Great Commission was to extend His dominion throughout the world:
 - (i) "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age'" (Matt. 28:18-20).
 - (ii) "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches *were* in their hands" (Rev. 7:9).
- f. That His kingdom will eventually influence the whole world: "He spoke another parable to them, 'The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened'" (Matt. 13:33).
- g. That His kingdom will subdue all other kingdoms and eventually fill the earth:
 - (i) "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. . . . In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and *that* kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever" (Dan. 2:35, 44).
 - (ii) "He presented another parable to them, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all *other* seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches'" (Matt. 13:31-32).
 - (iii) "There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this" (Isa. 9:7; cf. 11:9; 66:23).
 - (iv) "Then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. 15:24-25).
- h. That Christ's reign will continue for long time: "Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and

reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years” (Rev. 20:4-6).

2. Prior to the two world wars, a good portion of the church had a Postmil perspective.

Here are two examples:

- a. Jonathan Edwards writes, “It shall be a time wherein *religion* shall in every respect be *uppermost* in the world. It shall be had in great esteem and honour. The saints have hitherto for the most part been kept under, and wicked men have governed. But now they will be uppermost. The kingdom shall be given into the hands of the saints of the ‘most high God,’ Dan. 7:27. And ‘they shall reign on earth,’ Rev. 5:10. They shall live and ‘reign with Christ a thousand years,’ Rev. 20:4. In that day, such persons as are eminent for true piety and religion, shall be chiefly promoted to places of trust and authority. Vital religion shall then take possession of kings’ palaces and thrones; and those who are in highest advancement shall be holy men: Isa. 49:23. ‘And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens they nursing-mothers.’ Kings shall employ all their power, and glory, and riches, for the advancement of the honour and glory of Christ, and the good of his church: Isa. 60:16. ‘Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breasts of kings.’ And the great men of the world, and the rich merchants, and others who have great wealth and influence, shall devote all to Christ and his church: Psa. 45:12. ‘The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift, even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour’” (*The History of Redemption*).
- b. And Charles Hodge writes, “The principal reason for assuming that the prophets predict a glorious state of the Church prior to the second advent, is, that they represent the Church as being thus prosperous and glorious on earth. But we know that when Christ comes again the heavens and earth are to pass away, and that no more place will be found for them. The seat of the Church, after the second coming, is not to be the earth, but a new heavens and a new earth. As therefore the Scriptures teach that the kingdom of Christ is to extend over all the earth; that all nations are to serve Him; and that all people shall call Him blessed; it is to be inferred that these predictions refer to a state of things which is to exist before the second coming of Christ. This state is described as one of spiritual prosperity; God will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh; knowledge shall everywhere abound; wars shall cease to the ends of the earth, and there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord. This does not imply that there is to be neither sin nor sorrow in the world during this long period, or that all men are to be true Christians. The tares are to grow together with the wheat until the harvest. The means of grace will still be needed; conversion and sanctification will be then what they ever have been. It is only a higher measure of the good which the Church has experienced in the past that we are taught to anticipate in the future. This however is not the end. After this and after the great apostasy which is to follow, comes the consummation” (*Systematic*).