

# Fundamentals of Our Faith from the Beginning

## *Frameworks and the Future*

### Postmillennialism

#### 1. An overview of the system:

- a. There are many variations within postmillennialism which make it difficult to engage with it as a system (e.g., historic/preterist/future millennium/present millennium/Golden Age, etc.). The following are definitions from relatively recent and prominent proponents:
  - i. "Postmillennialism is the belief that Christ, with His coming, His atonement, and His continuing regenerative power in those whom He calls, creates in His redeemed people a force for the reconquest of all things. The dominion that Adam first received and then lost by his fall will be restored to redeemed man. God's people will then have a long reign over the entire earth, after which, when all enemies have been put under Christ's feet, the end shall come, and the last enemy, death, will be destroyed" (Rushdoony).
  - ii. "The Kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individuals, that the world eventually is to be Christianized, and that the return of Christ is to occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace commonly called the 'Millennium.'" Boettner.
  - iii. The Golden Age is "a time in history prior to Christ's return in which faith righteousness, peace, and prosperity will prevail in the affairs of people and of nations" (Gentry).
  - iv. "The overwhelming majority of men and nations will be Christianized, righteousness will abound, wars will cease, and prosperity and safety will flourish. 'It will be marked by the universal reception of the true religion, and unlimited subjection to the sceptre of Christ' ...It shall be a time of universal peace...It will be characterised by great temporal prosperity" (Gentry with David Brown).
- b. This view is often misunderstood and its history is unclear in part because the terms pre, post, and amillennial were not coined until the mid-1800's, so the church fathers and reformers did not identify themselves as such and could themselves be easily misunderstood.
- c. All PMs believe that the gospel will prevail such that most people will be genuinely converted prior to Christ's return, and this global conversion will result in widespread shalom. This view is based in part on the following:
  - i. Jesus commands us to make disciples of the nations, and we ought to expect to be successful.
  - ii. Jesus taught us to pray "Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," and we ought to believe He will answer the prayer.
  - iii. The gospel is said to be like a tiny mustard seed that grows into a habitable tree or like leaven that spreads through the whole loaf (Matthew 13:31-33).
  - iv. Paul tells the Romans that Satan will soon be crushed under their feet (Romans 16:20).
  - v. Isaiah 2, 11, 65, etc. describe a time of global righteousness and prosperity that accords with the PM vision.
  - vi. Psalm 2 and 110 and others describe Jesus taking dominion over the nations.
  - vii. 1 Cor. 15:25 - Jesus must reign until his enemies are put under His feet (Ps 110:1).
- d. This transformation is gradual with many advances and setbacks; the church may now only be in its infancy with the Golden Age hundreds, thousands, or even tens of thousands of years out.
- e. Most PMs believe that Satan was bound during the life of Christ thus empowering the Great Commission (Rev. 20:1-3, cf. Matthew 12:28-29, Luke 10:17-19, etc.). This binding is specific to the deception of the nations (note the same term in Matt. 28:19).

- f. Many current PMs are preterists, understanding Matthew 24 and Revelation to be describing the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.
- g. PMs are divided as to whether the “millennium” is the church age or the Golden Age, but all agree that Christ’s reign is spiritual, and He reigns from heaven through His Church.
- h. Most believe Satan will be released to lead a rebellion at the end of this age, but preterists do not associate this with the Antichrist or the Great Tribulation.
- i. Christ’s second coming is the consummation of all things including the New Heavens/Earth.

## **2. Three common “myths” current postmillennialists decry:**

- a. Universalism
- b. Perfectionism
- c. Satisfactionism

## **3. What are common questions and difficulties for postmillennialism?**

- a. Often PM is dismissed because of current conditions (i.e., “things are obviously not getting better!”); however, this is a misunderstanding of the position and a bad argument. That said, the “advance/setback” or “infancy” arguments are irrefutable because more time can always be added. As such, these arguments require more than just an assertion based on past observation or future speculation. They require biblical proof.
- b. Current PMs rely on disputable interpretations of many passages, and some put forward novel interpretations of passages that might otherwise undermine their position:
  - i. The “nations” in Matthew 28:19 are not unambiguously socio-political and often refer to the Jew/Gentile distinction (Acts 10:45; 14:16; cf. Matt. 28:19 with Rev. 20:3).
  - ii. The kingdom coming in the Lord’s prayer does not unambiguously suggest a golden age.
  - iii. The adverb “soon” in Romans 16:20 more likely means “quickly” (cf. Luke 18:8).
  - iv. The preposition “until” in 1 Cor. 15:25 does not necessarily refer to progress but could refer to Christ’s work at His return (cf. Ps. 110:5; Luke 18:8; 1 Thess. 5; 2 Peter 3, etc.).
  - v. Isaiah 2, 11, 65, etc. do not unambiguously teach an earthly golden age prior to Christ’s return and have been understood differently by many faithful expositors.
  - vi. “You will be hated” in Matthew 10:22; 24:9 and others is limited to the 1<sup>st</sup> century church and not understood to mark the entire present age.
  - vii. Gentry and others understand the coming of Christ and the day of the Lord in 1 Thess. 4 and 5 as references to the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D.
  - viii. Gentry and others understand the “difficult times” in 2 Timothy 3:1f to refer to the 1<sup>st</sup> century Christian experience. He doesn’t address 3:12 or 1 Peter 4:12-19 or 2 Peter 3.
  - ix. Wilson believes that we are in the “age to come” and that the new heavens/earth in Rev. 21 refer to the current church age.
- c. The two-age eschatology suggests that we are in “this present age” (cf. Luke 20:34, etc.) and that this age is an “evil age” (cf. Gal. 1:3) marked by hatred of the gospel and persecution of the church until Christ returns (cf. 2 Thess. 1:5-10).
- d. No epistle in the NT teaches or describes the PM golden age; it is a vision largely built on speculation from prophecies and parables that all have alternative explanations.
- e. The hope held out to persecuted believers is not the global triumph of the gospel or the “footstooling” of enemies but the vindication of Christ’s return (1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Peter 3, etc.).
- f. Some PMs diminish the effects of sin in terms of anxious longing and trivialize suffering in order to allow for the presence of these things in their golden age vision.