

The Inheritance of the Nations

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – An introduction to postmillennialism, the inheritance of Jesus of all things on earth
2. aim – To cause us to understand postmillennialism as the logical consequence of reformed theology
3. passage – Psalm 2

b. outline

1. The Definition of Postmillennialism
2. The Biblical Support of Postmillennialism
3. The Ramifications of Postmillennialism

c. opening

1. my **opening comments** regarding the Conference
 - a. my *honor* for being invited – thanks to Reformation Church for hosting the conference
 - b. my *thanks* to Jeff Johnson for appearing – appreciate meeting him and having this time together
 - c. my *trepidation* in discussing this topic – not my area of “expertise” (per se)
2. my **personal journey** to postmillennialism
 - a. **Catholic**: amillennial/non-millennial; **Fundamentalist Baptist**: dispensationalist; **Calvinist**: historic premillennialism; **Reformed Baptist**: postmillennialism
 - b. **IOW**: although not an “expert” re: eschatology (per se), I have arrived at my current view *mainly* through the study of (reformed) theology itself – **i.e.** postmillennialism is (to me!) the *logical outcome* of my larger *theological development* over time (**e.g.** synergism → dispensationalism)
3. my assertion regarding **eschatology** in relation to postmillennialism
 - a. **eschatology** = from *eschaton*; **i.e.** the “*last days*” (**Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1; John 6:44; Acts 2:17**), or the “*last time*” (**1 Peter 1:20**), or the “*last hour*” (**1 John 2:18**)
 - b. the theological discussion of all that is (yet?) necessary for the divine decree to be accomplished in time and space; the *consummation* of all things in the plan of God re: redemption
 1. in the *specific sense*: what will *yet* happen in the world as the gospel reaches all of the elect, Christ returns, and the kingdom of Christ is established (the sense *most notably* considered)
 2. in the *larger (global) sense*: all of what *has* happened, what *is* happening, and what *will* happen to consummate the divine decree in creation, fall, redemption, proclamation, return of Jesus
 - c. **IOW**: where *creation* is the *beginning* of the outworking of the decree, *consummation* is the *ending* of the outworking of the decree, **and everything in between is linked to both**
 1. **i.e.** everything has a *beginning* in the creative work of God; everything has an *ending* in the consummating work of God – **i.e.** creation → human history (eschatology) ← consummation
 2. **e.g.** although the kingdom of Christ is not fully established upon the earth, it is true that he is *already* seated upon the throne of David, has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, and is commanding all things to his glorious ends (**i.e.** the “already” and the “not yet”)
 - d. **conclusion**: eschatology is certainly concerned about events yet to be, but (in reality) *all of creation* has an eschatological sense, for all things are part of the *goal* of time and space itself
 1. God did not just create human beings – he created an entire *world* of human realities, *all of which* were corrupted by the Fall and are awaiting their redemption (**Romans 8:19-23**)
 2. **thus**: God’s decree of redemption extends *far beyond* the individual – while the gospel call is to individuals, the gospel must (by definition) also be a function of *earthly redemption*; restoring *all things* back to their rightful place *under the authority of a sovereign Christ through his gospel*
 - e. **IOW**: eschatology is *more* than just “the end of the world” – it is the *totality* of God’s decree being worked out through *all* of time and space – to “limit” the *eschaton* to just the Parousia is to argue that God’s plans *for human history* are irrelevant, just as long as the elect are saved
4. my **thesis** regarding postmillennialism
 - a. **thesis: postmillennialism is the most consistent eschatological view in regards to the church age (or the millennium) within the framework of reformed theology**
 - b. **i.e.** postmillennialism insists that the sovereign authority of Christ Jesus, as given to him by the Father and as applied to human history by his Spirit, posits that *all things* must be conformed to his decree by the *means he has established*: his gospel going out through the church *over all* the realities of human life, with him taking dominion over all things both in heaven and on earth

I. The Definition of Postmillennialism

Content

a. a *simplicistic* review of millennialism (lacking *many* details)

1. **millennium** = the 1000-year reign of Christ as revealed in **Rev. 20** – a time of peace and prosperity ushered in by the Lord as the “culmination” of human history as promised in his redemptive work
 - a. **i.e.** a time when “*the wolf dwells with the lamb*” (**Isaiah 11:6**) – a period in which the warring nature of human beings (and the corrupted earth) is replaced by a time of peace and harmony
 - b. **e.g.** the “utopia” of science fiction, ushered in by technology (**Star Trek**)
2. **millennialism** = the relationship of the return of Christ to this period of peace and prosperity
 - a. **pre**millennialism = the belief that Christ will return *prior* to the millennium *in order to establish it*
 1. **e.g.** *dispensationalism* includes a *detailed* listing of the events *preceding* Christ’s return (**i.e.** a rapture, tribulation, antichrist, rebuilt temple, battle of Armageddon, binding of Satan, etc.)
 2. *historic premillennialism* simply asserts the return of Christ without such accoutrements
 - b. **am**illennialism = the belief that there is no *earthly* millennium *per se* (thus the “a”), but sees the kingdom of God being established as a *spiritual reality* “outside” of time and space (**see Jeff**)
 - c. **post**millennialism = the belief that Christ will return *after* the millennium is established (thus the “post”), whereby the church *herself* ushers in this period of peace and prosperity
 - d. **i.e.** amillennials and postmillennials see the “millennium” as a *metaphorical* picture of a time of peace and prosperity, lacking specific time “boundaries”, whereas premillennials *typically* view this *literally* as a 1000-year period beginning with the return of Christ (**i.e.** hermeneutic of **Revelation**)

b. an overview of the *uniqueness* of postmillennialism

1. the *uniqueness* of postmillennialism lies in its assertion that Christ will, by virtue of his gospel, grow his kingdom gradually upon the earth, **visibly, publicly, externally**, and then return when all of the nations of the earth have been converted to either (a) full faith in Christ (**i.e.** in universal conversion), or (b) a general state of submission to him (**i.e.** under his universal moral law)
 - a. through the preaching of the Word via the church (**Matthew 16:18**; **i.e.** not through force, nor *sublimation* of government) – through the *ordinary means* of evangelism and Christian living
 1. **note:** I am *purposely* making a distinction here between *theonomy* and *postmillennialism* – discussions of “Christian nationalism” *all too often* assume that postmillennialists assert “force of men” taking over government – **we do not!!**
 - b. **i.e.** the gospel defeating the darkness of the world, the “salt” and “light” of Christianity savoring the *whole world* whereby every aspect of human civilization is brought under the dominion of Christ
 - c. **i.e.** the implication that not only the elect (individually) will be brought into his kingdom, but all of human civilization (collectively; nations, governments, cultures, social systems, education, art, science, technology, etc.) brought into submission under him by the work of the Spirit
 - d. **or:** the preaching of the Word bringing the elect to faith and discipleship, whereby **they** (then) “penetrate” every aspect of human civilization with the gospel and the law of God
 - e. with Christ returning *after* this objective is accomplished, unto the Resurrection and the Judgment
 - f. **note:** both *pre-* and *a-* millennialism assert that history simply “unfolds” along the lines of reprobate men acting according to their evil nature – the Spirit seeking out *only* the elect, “leaving” the church age under the sway of evil (**and lost!**), “recovered” only by the *direct return of Christ*
2. this *uniqueness* is based on the *sovereignty* of Jesus, his authority over all things (**Matt. 28:18**)
 - a. specifically, the authority given to him *to take up his inheritance*, which was *given* to him in eternity past by the Father in “anticipation” of his obedience in the Incarnation (**see below**)
 - b. and, which *is now* established as the *mission* of the church itself (**Matt. 28:19f**), the command for the church to take the gospel to “*all nations*” and bring *all things* under his sovereign rule
3. this *uniqueness* is central to the *consistency* of reformed theology (**as above**):
 - a. the **presupposition** at the *heart* of postmillennialism: that Christ *now rules* over all things as the *Sovereign One*, being given all authority by his Father and *exercising* that authority *through the church and its gospel* to bring all things under his rule (**Matt. 28:20**)
 - b. the **logical assertion** at the *heart* of postmillennialism: that Christ as the “*last Adam*” (**1 Cor. 15:45 cf. Romans 5:12-21**) takes *dominion* over all things, completing what the “*first Adam*” failed at (**Genesis 1:28ff**), thus reversing the curse of the *whole world* under the corruption of sin
 - c. the **divine prerogative** at the *heart* of postmillennialism: that the Spirit sent by Christ *will* accomplish the work for which he was sent: his *divine power* redeeming the *whole created order* as a *by-product* of bringing forth the elect from every tribe, tongue, and nation (**Romans 8:18-23**)

II. The Biblical Support of Postmillennialism

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a. a *specific* biblical view of postmillennialism (Psalm 2)

1. **note (as continued below):** I offer (here) an *overview* of **Psalm 2** simply to demonstrate the veracity of my assertion that Christ is sovereign *over the nations* (not just the elect) = his **inheritance** is not just those for whom he died, but *all the nations of the earth* (representing all of human civilization)
2. **contextual interpretation:** a psalm of David as he begins his monarchy, completing the Conquest, establishing Israel by either (a) destroying, (b) driving out, or (c) sublimating the nations around her
 - a. **vv. 1-3** = the *general* rebellion of the nations against God himself (**i.e.** the God of Israel)
 - b. **vv. 4-6** = the *laughter* of a sovereign God over the nations in establishing a king in Israel
 - c. **vv. 7-9** = David's recognition of *himself* as the "Son" (**i.e.** the king) appointed by God to take possession of "the ends of the earth" by "breaking" the nations and bringing them to submission
 - d. **vv. 10-12** = the *warning* from David to the kings in/around Israel: either "serve the Lord" (and his servant-king; **i.e.** "kiss the Son") or "perish in the way"
 - e. **IOW:** in its *immediate* context, a psalm of *warning* regarding the sovereign actions of God *through* his "Anointed" over the nations: submit to him *willing* or it will come *in power*
3. **historical interpretation:** a psalm of Christ as he begins *his* monarchy, establishing the "new" Israel (**i.e.** the church) which then goes out to either (a) destroy or (b) sublimate the nations *to himself*
 - a. **note:** the psalm has *redemptive-historical* connections to Christ by virtue of its references in the NT (**i.e.** it *isn't* just about David; the NT *explicitly* connects it to Christ)
 1. **e.g. Acts 4:25-26** (as quoted by the early church) interprets **vv. 1-3** to be (specifically!) about the *crucifixion* of Jesus (**i.e.** the nations rage against God *and his Anointed*; his Christ)
 2. **e.g. Acts 13:33** (as quoted by Paul in C Asia Minor) interprets **v. 7** to be (specifically!) about the *resurrection* of Jesus (**i.e.** the *beginning* of a new reign, far superior to David)
 - b. the psalm is seen through lens of the crucifixion, resurrection, and *ascension* of Christ – once he has been raised and ascended on high *he is then free to ask his Father for anything*
 1. **vv. 1-3** = the *specific* rebellion of the nations against *the Anointed* of God, his Christ
 2. **vv. 4-6** = the *sending* of the Christ into the world to be the *final king* of God over mankind
 3. **vv. 7-9** = the *inheritance* given to the risen Son being **the nations of the world** (**i.e.** as *kingdoms*, not just as individuals scattered here and there)
 - a. **i.e.** all the Son need to is "ask of me" = the *eternal promise* made by the Father to the Son is *actuated* at his resurrection (**i.e.** not at his Second Advent)
 4. **vv. 10-12** = the *warning* from the *true* Son of God (**now!**): either serve *him* with fear or perish
 - a. **i.e.** either *submit to the authority of Christ*, given to him by his Father, or be swept away
 - c. **Psalm 2**, as interpreted through the NT view of Jesus, is about **his inheritance**, having been secured by his obedience in life, sacrificial death, and *victorious resurrection* – that inheritance is *not just the elect*, but every nation on earth (**i.e.** everything within human existence)

b. the *general* biblical view of postmillennialism

1. **observation:** if there was a "gotcha" passage of Scripture that *definitively* tells us which millennial view is correct, the church would have discovered it years ago
 - a. **IOW:** Jeff and I can "proof-text" each other until Christ returns (pun!), but none of our *fallible* interpretations of Scripture *necessarily* implies that we are either right or wrong *in the end*
2. therefore (**IMO**), what *must* be examined is the **presupposition** that undergirds each position – **i.e.** which position *best* defends the presupposition that Christ is Lord *over everything*
 - a. both *pre-* and *a-* millennialism (unfortunately!) **disintegrate** the conversion of the elect (**i.e.** as the *purpose* of redemption) *from* the general redemption of *all the earth* (**i.e.** all of human civilization)
 - b. postmillennialism **sees them together as a single act (decree) of God through his Son** – that God's purpose wasn't *just* to save a people, but to bring *the totality of human life under his saving purposes* – **IMO:** a position *most consistent* with reformed theology

III. The Ramifications of Postmillennialism

Content

a. the ramifications of postmillennialism

1. **question:** why is *everyone* (believers & nonbelievers) *suddenly* talking about “Christian nationalism?”
 - a. **as in:** a *euphemism* for society either (1) being led (only) by Christians, or (2) Christian law being at the center of political, moral, or ethical thinking (**i.e.** discussions of **theonomy**)?
 - b. **e.g.** I have read *at least* six (6) “critiques” of Christian nationalism and/or postmillennialism from reputable sources over the past week, including **John MacArthur** (but, not **Rob Reiner**)
2. **suggestion:** could it be that *ordinary* Christians (**i.e.** those still faithful to the true gospel) are beginning to connect the Lordship of Christ *over them* (**i.e.** in the church) with the Lordship of Christ *over everything else* (**i.e.** in the world)?
 - a. **i.e.** coming to realize the *consistent* view of the Lordship of Christ: he is *also* Lord of this nation, and are becoming more *vocal* with this thinking, such that even the *pagans* are noticing?
 - b. yes, the secularists are *scared* – they *intrinsically* know that the law of God is good and leads to human flourishing (**1689 19.5**), but are *yet* still under the power of their *delusion* (**2 Thess. 2:11**)
 - c. **meaning:** the Spirit may be *leading many* to a *better* view of the relationship of the church to the nation, and they are going out *with the gospel* into every sphere of life, bringing *his influence*
3. **the postmillennial view of the fullness of God’s decree, beginning in eternity past and being consummated in Christ’s kingdom, whereby all things in time and space are brought under his sovereign authority through his established means, represents the most consistent interpretation of the biblical worldview and its revelations of how this plan is being fulfilled**
 - a. **Ezekiel 36:22-28:** can the Holy Spirit take the “*heart of stone*” out of a nation, such as *Israel*? if so, *how?* and ... can he take the rebellion out of the “king” of America, and turn the nation *now* into one that recognizes the value of the law of God and the rule of Christ?