

The Postmillennial View: An Assessment and Critique

ESCHATOLOGY: SEEING THE GLORIOUS HOPE OF THE GOSPEL IN A STUDY OF LAST THINGS

Where is Jesus Christ and what is he doing right now?

- 1 Corinthians 15:22-26 “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. **For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.** The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”
- Philippians 2:9-11 “Therefore **God has highly exalted him** and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
- Ephesians 1:19b-23 “...according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and **seated him at his right hand** in the heavenly places, **far above all rule and authority and power and dominion**, and above every name that is named, **not only in this age but also in the one to come.** And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body the fullness of him who fills all in all.”
- Hebrews 7:23-25 “but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since **he always lives to make intercession** for them.”

A Review of Millennial Views

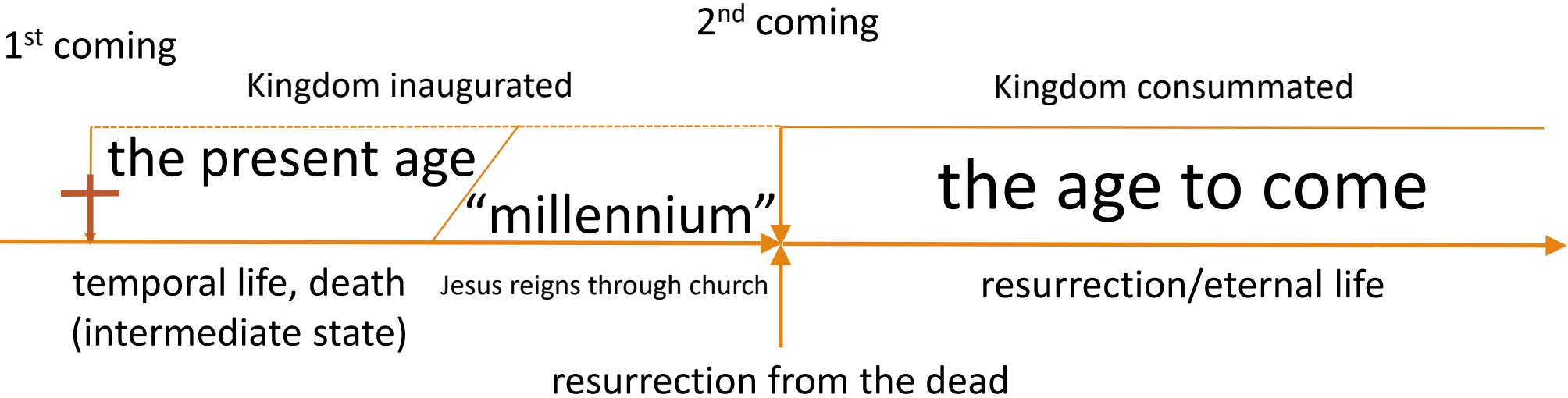
When will Christ return in relation to the millennium?

- Before the millennium—*premillennialism*
- After the millennium—*postmillennialism*
- No literal millennium—*amillennialism*

I. A definition of Postmillennialism

- Postmillennialism expects the proclaiming of the Spirit-blessed gospel of Jesus Christ to win the vast majority of human beings to salvation in the present age. Increasing gospel success will gradually produce 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. After an extensive era of such conditions the Lord will return visibly, bodily, and in great glory, ending history with the general resurrection and the great judgment of all humankind.
- Simply put, golden-age postmillennialism teaches that the millennium will be an extensive period in history during which the nations will be converted, the principles of God's law and gospel will govern the conduct of people, and undisturbed peace and prosperity will prevail throughout the world.

Overview of Postmillennialism



II. Historical Background

- Postmil and amil is a somewhat recent distinction (1930s).
- Postmil (postmil/amil) has been the historic position of the church, especially in the Reformed tradition.
 - NO ancient creed affirms a millennial view.
 - *The Westminster Confession* of the Presbyterian tradition and our own *1689 London Baptist Confession* allow follow a similar trajectory: postmil and amil work well in this system, premil may be possible, but not likely.
- Historically, the postmil view was at its strongest in the Puritan era in England and America (think Great Awakening).

III. Biblical Arguments for Postmillennialism

1. The Messianic psalms (Psalm 22:7, 67:2-7, 72:5-9, 86:9, 87:4, 101:1, 102:5)
2. The Kingdom parables (Matthew 13 – especially the parables of the mustard seed and leaven)
3. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:26-20)
4. The “world” passages (1 John 2:2, 4:19, John 1:29, 3:17)
5. A particular reading of Revelation 20 – basically the same as the amil reading

Strengths of the Postmil view

1. Founded on a high expectation for the success of the gospel
2. Founded on a high view of God's sovereignty in salvation
3. places great importance on exercising our responsibility in the areas of evangelism, social justice, politics, and economics
4. Christ's reign is seen as present and manifests itself through the church – other views seem to spiritualize too much.

Weaknesses of the Postmil View

1. Their great optimism may appear unwarranted given how little progress has been made in 2000 years.
2. Many passages seem to teach a worsening of conditions as time goes on.
3. Their interpretation of Revelation 20 appears somewhat forced.
4. Many look for earthly manifestations of heavenly realities, saying Christ's rule in heaven **must** emerge in history, on earth, prior to his return.
5. The Bible promises hardship for Christians in the present age. (Galatians 1:4, Romans 12:2, Mark 10:30, John 16:33, John 15:18-20)
6. Focuses our hope on the present age and not on Christ's second coming and the age to come. (Romans 8:18-25, Hebrews 9:27-28, Titus 2:11-14)