

Postmillennialism Briefly Defined

A Subset of Covenant Theology

Postmillennialism is the primary ecclesiology and eschatology of Covenant Theology.

Postmillenarians affirm that the people of Israel have not been cast off or replaced, but rather, that the Gentiles have now been included among the Jews in God's Covenantal promises. In other words, not replacement but expansion. God's redemptive plan, as first promised to Abraham, was that "all nations" would be blessed through him. Israel is, and always has been, saved the same as any other nation: by the promises to the seed, Christ.

Postmillennialism is highly Christocentric: it makes Christ the center of all the biblical covenants (even the "Land" covenant or Sinaiic). It notes the universal scope of the Abrahamic Covenant (as key) to interpreting the rest of the biblical covenants * It sees salvation history oriented to a person (Christ), instead of a people (the nation of Israel).

Postmillennialism emphasizes continuity between the "people of God" (Israel and the Church are one in Christ Eph. 2:11ff). It provides an ethic that is rooted in creation, and "re-creation" (continuity between God's redemptive work now, carried over into the eternal state then).

Postmillenarians emphasize a Trinitarian view of God as it elevates the person Christ Jesus, the second person of the trinity as the point and mediator of all history.

The Timing of the Kingdom

Postmillenarians understand that the Kingdom of God was inaugurated with the first advent of Christ and will be consummated with His second advent. Postmillenarians believe that the future "Millennium" foretold by the Apostle John is the New Covenant ministry of Christ, as was foretold by all the prophets (Acts 3:24; cf. Acts 2:14-36; 3:12-26). This period of incremental worldwide Gospel triumph when the Kingdom of God is dramatically unveiled in world history is not literally limited to 1000 years (eg. It has already been 2000 years).

Postmillenarians believe that "the rapture" will be a public event that takes place at Christ's second coming when believers who are still living are "caught up" and transformed. When Christ returns, the resurrection of both the righteous and wicked will take place simultaneously (see John 5), followed by judgment and the eternal state in the new heavens and new earth will begin as Christ reigns forever.

The Nature of the Kingdom

Postmillenarians view the New Covenant Kingdom age to be a period of time when the Church, the people of God, will globally spread the gospel and glory of God. The nature of the kingdom is defined by fulfillment of the Great Commission as the Church disciples the nations. The Church is viewed as the manifestation of the Kingdom of God, as the Church grows the glory of God engulfs the globe – fulfilling God's stated purpose to such men as Adam, Noah, Moses, David, Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Disciples.

Gospel-progress will be incremental but successful. The Devil will be present in all of his scheming on the earth, but Christ has rendered him powerless to deceive the nations or stop the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Revelation 2:20; cf. Matthew 12:28-29).

The Hermeneutics of Postmillennialism

Postmillennialism flows from a hermeneutic that takes seriously the literary character of the Scriptures. Such hermeneutics not only interpret the Scriptures from a literal-grammatical-historical perspective but also from a theological (cf. Galatians 3:16) and literary perspective (cf. Galatians 4:24). Furthermore, many hold a preterist view of the Book of Revelation (ie. Although it was future to John, the Great Tribulation that he foresaw happened in 70 AD which fully removed the physical remains of the Old Covenant and ushered in the New Covenant kingdom reign of the enthroned Christ which will consummate in our future according to Revelation 20:7ff at the Second Coming of Christ).

Comparisons

What is currently called Amillennialism is a subset of Postmillennialism. These two have a different view of the nature of the millennium, but basically agree on the rest. Some Reformed theologians are Premillenarian and agree with Postmillennialism on just about everything except for the timing of Christ's Second Coming. Premillers believe Christ must return prior to the "millennium" in order to reign over His kingdom; Postmillers believe that Christ was enthroned over His kingdom at the ascension and that He will return at the end of the "millennium" to judge all things. This difference effects the way one understands the purpose of the church, the "ruling and reigning and priesthood of the saints," and the expectation of the Great Commission to disciple the nations.