

The Question before Us: What is the CHARACTER of the "Millennium"?

I. Six Biblical Propositions concerning the Return of Christ;

1. The Bible speaks of a singular return of Jesus Christ.
2. The Bible speaks of this singular return of Jesus Christ including the resurrection of both the just and the unjust.
3. The Bible speaks of this singular return of Jesus Christ ushering in the Day of Judgment in which all shall be judged.
4. The Bible speaks of this singular return of Christ ushering in the new heavens and the new earth.
5. The Bible speaks of this singular return of Christ ushering in the eternal state.
6. The Bible speaks of this singular return taking place after the "1,000 years" of Revelation 20:1-10 (see 2/28, 3/7, & 3/14)

II. When Does (Did) the "1,000 Years" of Revelation 20 Commence?

The "binding of Satan" and the commencement of the "1,000 years" took place at the completion of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ in AD 30 or 33 (Christ's death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and session).

III. How Do We Understand the Duration of the "1,000 Years"?

The 1,000 years are to be understood symbolically. Ten is the number of fullness. $10 \times 10 \times 10 = 1,000$. It represents a long period of time which is equivalent to the complete fullness of God's purpose and timetable. For all intents and purposes it is equal to the NT era minus Satan's "little season" right before the end.

IV. How Do We Understand the "Binding of Satan" During this Time?

The binding of Satan is a specific binding that prevents him from deceiving the nations in the same manner that he did in the OT era. He is still free to harass, to persecute, and to tempt, but not to hold sway over the nations in such a way as to prevent the gospel of Christ from penetrating and prevailing. The binding for 1,000 years is equivalent to the time of the gospel going forth to the ends of the earth during the entire NT era.

V. How then Are We to Understand the Character of this "1,000 Years"?

This leads us to discuss the two positions that hold to Christ's return AFTER the millennium:

1. Post-millennialism
2. A-millennialism

Both of these positions are "post-millennial" in that they agree that Christ's second coming is after the millennium. Hence they have much in common with each other in terms of the overall scheme of understanding redemptive history. Because of this, these two views were not sharply distinguished before the beginning of the 20th century.

The questions which distinguish the two positions boil down to the following:

1. How pervasive and all-encompassing will the success of gospel be before Christ returns?
2. Are we to look for a significant period of history wherein the reign of Christ through His people is all but absolute on the earth before Christ comes back?
3. Can we in any way speak of Christ's return being "imminent"?

1. Proponents

Historic proponents: John Cotton, Thomas Goodwin, John Owen, Savoy Declaration, Jonathan Edwards, Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, R.L. Dabney, J.H. Thornwell, W.G.T. Shedd, B.B. Warfield

Current proponents: Loraine Boettner, John Jefferson Davis, J. Marcellus Kik, Keith Mathison, Iain Murray, Ken Gentry, all theonomic reconstructionists

2. Graphically Represented

3. Three Primary Distinctives

1. The progressive triumph of the gospel world-wide
2. The inauguration of a long golden-age before Christ returns
3. The belief that Christ's return is not imminent

4. Biblical Support

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country. From your family And from your father's house. To a land that I will show you. I will make^you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Psalms 22:27-28 All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations Shall worship before You. For the kingdom is the LORD'S, And He rules over the nations.

Psalms 67:1-7 God be merciful to us and bless us. And cause His face to shine upon us. Selah That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You. Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy! For You shall judge the people righteously. And govern the nations on earth. Selah Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You. Then the earth shall yield her increase; God, our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us, And all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.

Psalms 72:8-11 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth. Those who dwell in the wilderness will bow before Him, And His enemies will lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles Will bring presents; The kings of Sheba and Seba Will offer gifts. Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; All nations shall serve Him. (also see whole Psalm)

Psalms 110:1-2 The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand. Till I make Your enemies Your footstool." The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! (also see whole Psalm)

Isaiah 2:2-4 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD'S house Shall be established on the top of the mountains. And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To

the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations. And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.

Isaiah 11:9-12 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain. For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. " And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious." It shall come to pass in that day That the LORD shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant of His people who are left. From Assyria and Egypt, From Pathros and Cush, From Elam and Shinar, From Hamath and the islands of the sea. He will set up a banner for the nations, And will assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth.

Daniel 2:31-35, 44 "You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. "This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, "its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. "You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth... "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

Zechariah 9:9-10 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation. Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be 'from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.'

Matthew 13:31-33 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, "which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches." Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."

Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came 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 [literally: disciple all the nations], baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

1 Corinthians 15:24-25 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.

Revelation 5:9-10 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain. And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

Revelation 7:9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb,

clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

5. Proper Qualifications

1. Postmillennialism is not liberalism.
2. Postmillennialism is not evolutionary optimism.
3. Postmillennialism is not the social gospel.
4. Postmillennialism is not universalism.
5. Postmillennialism is not perfectionism.
6. Postmillennialism is within the bounds of the Presbyterian and Reformed confessions.

6. Positive Contributions

1. There is complete agreement with the "Six Biblical Propositions" at the beginning of this lesson.
2. There is the desire to take the entire Bible seriously, authoritatively and literally.
3. There is the acknowledgment that the kingdom of Christ only grows supernaturally through the proclamation of the gospel.
4. There is a healthy antidote to the prevailing pessimism within the 21st century western evangelical church. The gospel is the POWER of God unto salvation!
5. There is an honest reading of the last 2,000 years of church history as the gradual expansion and triumph of the gospel of Christ.

7. Biblical and Theological Challenges to this Position

1. There is a failure to appreciate that the gospel of Christ as it is preached always provokes two responses - one of reception, and one of opposition. "The preaching of the gospel and the advance of the kingdom always call forth a counter gospel, a reaction of unbelief and opposition" (Venema, 355).
2. There is the failure to appreciate that tribulation, cross-bearing, and persecution will characterize the entirety of this age (John 16:33, 2 Timothy 3:12, etc.).
3. There is a subtle shifting of the believer's focus away from the "blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" to the advancement of the kingdom in the here and now. I recognize that this may be a false dichotomy in some ways. But if Christ's return is placed so far into the distant future that it really has no practical bearing on the here and now, then it is hard to see how this emphasis in the NT can really intersect the life of the believer in the post-mil scheme.
4. Many of the passages attempting to support postmillennialism are better understood as being fulfilled in the new heavens and the new earth after Christ returns.

8. Books Supporting Postmillennialism (non-theonomic)

Boettner, Loraine. *The Millenium* (Revised Edition), Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1984.

Davis, John Jefferson. *Christ's Victorious Kingdom*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986.

_____. *The Victory of Christ's Kingdom*, Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1996.

Kik, J. Marcellus. *An Eschatology of Victory*, Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1971.

Mathison, Keith. *Postmillennialism: An Eschatology of Hope*, Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1999.

Murray, Iain. *The Puritan Hope: Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1971.

9. Critiques of Postmillennialism

Hoekema, Anthony. *The Bible and the Future*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979. (Pages 175-180)

Venema, Cornelis. *The Promise of the Future*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000. (Pages 219-244; 340-362)