

# The Postmillennial Error

## (or The Golden Age of Righteousness and Peace)

By Rev. D. H. Kuiper

The importance for the Church of the return of Jesus Christ can hardly be overemphasized. It is the one aspect of the promise that awaits fulfillment. It is the last and crowning work on the whole process of redemption. It is, therefore, the object of the longing of hope that is in every saint. The return of Christ: the resurrection of the body... and final judgment... the renewal of all things... eternal glory!

Generally speaking there are three views which seek to set forth the Scriptural truth of the second coming of Jesus and the kingdom He shall perfect. These views differ according to the interpretation given to the word millennium (Latin - mille, one thousand; and annum, year). This word occurs but six times in Scripture and each time it is found in the twentieth chapter of Revelation, an admittedly difficult and symbolical portion of the Word. To the word millennium are added various prefixes (post-, pre-, and a-), thus designating a particular view in respect to the thousand years. Premillennialism takes the millennium literally and maintains that Christ shall come, and then reign upon this earth for exactly one thousand years. Postmillennialism takes the word figuratively, denoting a long period of time belonging to the last part of this Christian era, and immediately prior to Christ's appearing. The Amillennialist also interprets the millennium symbolically, only he maintains that it refers to the whole of the Christian era. We propose to call your attention to these positions in this series of three articles, subjecting them to the light of Scripture, in the hope they may be constructive to our faith and hope. We will begin with a consideration of Postmillennialism.

It is well to let a Postmillennialist define his own position. "Postmillennialism is that view of the last things which holds the kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the gospel and saving work of the Holy Spirit, that the world eventually will be Christianized, and that the return of Christ will occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace, commonly called the millennium." (L. Boettner) This definition is representative of those who hold this view. We wish to develop several of its elements that their implications be clearly before us.

Without any hesitancy, the Postmillennialist states that the majority of mankind is saved in Jesus Christ. If this were not true in Old Testament times, if this were not true at the time of the apostles, it certainly shall not be true during the later age of the millennium. He bases this contention on passages of Scripture which speak of the universality of salvation (Ps. 97:5, Mal. 1:11, Acts 13:47), the world as the object of redemption in Christ (John 1:29 and 3:16, I John 2:2), and especially upon Matthew 28:18-20 where Christ says: "All authority hath been given me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." In this text he sees that Christ has both the ability and the right to Christianize the whole world. Because of this promise of Christ, the number of the redeemed shall increase until it far surpasses the number of the lost.

Again, without hesitancy, the Postmillennialist states that the world is getting better; there are short periods during which it may appear that the forces of evil are gaining, but if one looks back across the sweep of history, he sees unmistakable spiritual progress and betterment. Always sin shall be found in the world, also until the end of time. But its influence shall lessen, and the wicked shall be few. Christian principles and conduct shall become the accepted standard in both public and private life. Education, business, government, industry, all of society shall come under the dominion of Christian life and thought. Can that not be observed already? Slavery and polygamy are practically non-existent. The role of women and children has greatly improved in one century. Nations have begun to learn to cooperate so that arbitration replaces war and bloodshed. The Bible, once the private preserve of the clergy, has been translated, and printed in hundreds of native tongues. Nearly ten million copies are sold annually so that ninety-eight percent of the world's people have it in their homes. Missionary work flourishes: Christianity stands at the verge of becoming THE world religion. And if progress has not been as rapid

or as extensive as one might desire, the blame must be placed at the door of the Church for not seriously striving to evangelize the world in response to Christ's command.

In fairness, it must also be mentioned that Postmillennialism believes these changes shall come about, not naturally, nor due to some evolutionary process working in the human race, but by the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the mighty working of the Spirit in man's heart. That gospel must be preached. Then the future will show that the best is yet to come; war and bloodshed shall cease (Isaiah 2:4), corruption shall all but disappear, and a long period of righteousness and peace (the millennium) shall come to this world! His will will be done on earth even as it is done in heaven. To the world in that golden condition Christ shall return. He shall bring an end to this present age, and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of Christ. (Revelation 11:15)

That the foregoing is not the truth of Scripture we are convinced. Although the Postmillennialist believes the Bible to be the Word of God, yet he errs greatly in interpreting many passages of Scripture, and thus also falls into error concerning the millennium. In the remainder, we shall show this error.

Strangely it can be shown from the daily newspapers; one does not read of nations settling disputes by arbitration. The United Nations has already proved to be an expensive hoax. Wars continue, even increase! One reads of crime increasing geometrically, so that countless areas of this land (supposedly the most advanced and Christian, which will lead others to Christ) are unsafe for normal living. Movie ads and book reviews, student riots and strikes, all this shows the Christianizing of these areas has not begun. Nor will it ever happen anywhere near the optimistic levels described above. The past world wars plus numerous restricted wars should have shattered such optimism. Daily events continue to do so. The present time does not compare so favorably with the Middle Ages. Sin has increased, though it has perhaps taken a more subtle and "refined" form. Civilization may not be mistaken for gospel fruit.

Decisive for the Christian is what the Word of God says concerning the realities of salvation, sin, the millennium, the last things. The Postmillennialist either ignores certain passages of Scripture, or he gives them a very forced, unnatural meaning. Certainly God has revealed His will to be to save in Jesus Christ a relatively small number of men, while the rest of mankind perishes. The redeemed host shall constitute a vast throng, to be sure, but compared to the lost, it must be termed a minority. Matthew 22:14 states that many are called, but few are chosen. Many, not even all men, hear the preaching of the Word, but few are chosen to be saved by that Word unto glory. To the majority the preaching is merely a witness that leaves without excuse. The Church of Christ is called a little flock (Luke 12:32) and a cottage in the vineyard (Isaiah 1:8). These terms forbid us saying that most men shall be saved, in any age.

Secondly, there is the tremendous testimony of the 24th chapter of Matthew. No one can believe these words and still maintain a golden age of righteousness and peace which shall be obtained just before Christ returns. Jesus tells us here that the sign of His coming and the end of the world (simultaneous events) shall involve an increase in war, ethnic uprisings, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes. Instead of a universal sway of truth and peace there shall be false prophets and lawlessness shall abound. Tribulation shall be the portion of the Church in those days. True religion shall be all but extinct. When Jesus returns, will He find faith on earth? (Luke 18:8). The answer is not a resounding "yes" as some would respond, nor is it "no", but the answer is a quiet, hesitant "yes, God will preserve His church in faith." But it will require His gracious shortening of those days.

We ask you to study Matthew 24 and Revelation 20, plus other relevant portions of Scripture. Put aside all private opinions, and let yourselves be guided by the Spirit and Word. Do this only after you have prayed. We believe that you will see that we live near the end of the millennium, that the period of time that stretches from the first coming of Christ to His return. In that era may be observed a twofold development: the world increases in sin and godlessness until Antichrist is revealed, and it is ripe for destruction; the Church is gathered and saved, even unto the last elect! Then shall Christ come. And with Him the end!