

April 3, 2022

The Promise of the Kingdom in the Prophets

1 Corinthians 15:24-27a

What will the Kingdom look like?

Last time we were together, we took a tour through the Psalms asking the question: what will *Christ's kingdom* look like? Will this world grow worse and worse under His reign? Or will righteousness and peace increase such that all the nations eventually turn to Him? The Psalms answered in the positive.¹

What do the prophets say?

Today we turn to the prophets asking the same question: *what will Christ's kingdom look like on earth before the end comes?* Jonathan Edwards, summed up what the prophets spoke about this Kingdom.²

1. *In this Kingdom the knowledge of the Lord and His Word will fill the whole world.* **Jeremiah 31:34** "...no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord." (cf. **Isaiah 11:9**)³

2. *In this Kingdom, Christ's church will be the object of love among the nations.* **Isaiah 49:23** "Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers."

¹ In Psalm 2 we saw that the Father gave Him the nations as His inheritance so that every nation that doesn't follow Him will perish in history (**Psalm 2**). That as the Second Adam, He will bring the earth under His dominion (**Psalm 8:6; 1 Cor. 15:27**). That He will not return but will reign until He puts all enemies under His feet (**Psalm 110**). That the nations will be converted to Him (**Psalm 22**). That He will have dominion from from sea to sea, and all the nations shall call Him blessed (**Psalm 72**).

² Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 1*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), pg. 609-610

³ Thus demonstrating that this Postmillennial hope was part of the covenant promises. See Keith Mathison, *Postmillennialism: An Eschatology of Hope*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.,: P & R Publishing, 1999), ch. 2

3. *In this Kingdom, war will cease and universal peace will abound.* **Isaiah 11:4** "... nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

4. *In this Kingdom, temporal prosperity and health will abound such that the world has never seen.* **Zechariah 8:12** "For there shall be a sowing of peace. The vine shall give its fruit, and the ground shall give its produce, and the heavens shall give their dew. And I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things."

Let's explore this country together.

The Big Idea...

The Prophets tell a story of a great future kingdom where the mountain of the Lord fills the earth and the nations learn war no more

★ Our Doctrine

★ Our Duty

★ Our Delight

I. Our Doctrine

A quick apologia

First I want to make a quick defense for *why* we are going to the prophets. Someone might ask: "Why are we leaving 1 Corinthians 15? I thought we preach verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter. Isn't this a topical sermon?" No it's not. We are asking the question: "What kind of a kingdom will Christ deliver to

the Father in v.24?” The answer is not as clear here as in other places in Scripture. The Westminster Confession of Faith (I.IX) says this:

“The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture...,⁴ *it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.*”

Our doctrine: Christ’s Kingdom of Peace

So we arrive at **our doctrine**: *The Prophets tell a story of a great future kingdom where the mountain of the Lord fills the earth and the nations learn war no more.*

Daniel 2:31-45

At this point in redemptive history, the Jews were exposed to the curses of Deuteronomy 28. Their temple was burned to the ground, Jerusalem was destroyed and they were in Babylonian captivity.⁵ Yet God in His infinite grace and love speaks of a future kingdom so that they would not lose hope. And He does it by giving Nebuchadnezzar a mysterious dream which encapsulated world history. In v.31-33 we discover that Nebuchadnezzar dreamt of a great image with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, stomach and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet mixed with iron and clay. Daniel interprets this statue as 4 global empires: Babylon followed by Media-Persia, Greece and Rome. These nations were frightening and terrible. But something happens. Look at v.34 “As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.” Now ask yourself: what is this “stone...cut out by no human hand?” It is the Lord Jesus Christ.⁶ Everyone admits that. Where does Christ hit this statue? In the feet of iron and clay—which is the last empire, the Roman Empire. That is

⁴ (which is not manifold, but one)

⁵ The northern kingdom of Israel was to fall to Assyrian captivity during his ministry in 722 B.C. and the southern kingdom of Judah was to follow in 587 B.C.

⁶ He is the stone that the builders rejected that has become the corner stone of the whole world (Psalm 118:22). He is the rock against which the gates of hell will not prevail (Matthew 16:18).

when Christ came into the world. In other words, when Christ came into the world, He dealt a death blow to the empires of this world. Look at v.35 “Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. *But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.*” When Christ came into the world, His Kingdom—though beginning as a stone—becomes a mountain that fills the whole world. And it will never give way to another kingdom. Look at v.44 “And in the days of those kings *the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed*, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever.” Stop. How do we interpret all the calamity and war in the world today in respect to this prophecy? As Christ’s mountain is growing and increasing, it is slowly breaking into pieces all the kingdoms that oppose Him. If Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome are no more, how can any other nation stand in opposition to Him? How could they? End of v.45 “A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.” Now let’s consider what this Great Mountain looks like elsewhere.

Isaiah 2:1-4

“The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

² It shall come to pass in the *latter days*...”

Stop. These *latter days* here began at the coming of Jesus Christ. Peter, in his first sermon at Pentecost, proclaimed that when Jesus rose again and was

crowned King in His ascension, the *last days* began (Acts 2:17). We are in the last days that Isaiah is referring to.⁷ Continuing in v.2:

“...the *mountain* of the house of the Lord
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be lifted up above the hills;”

Stop. What is this *mountain*? The Mountain of Daniel 2! It is the Kingdom of Christ—the Church—where Christ is seated as King. Hebrews 12:22 says that when we were born again, we came to a Great Mountain: “...you have come to *Mount Zion* and to the city of the living God.”⁸ How will the world respond?
End of v.2

“...and all the *nations* shall flow to it,
³ and many peoples shall come, and say:
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

The vital question here is *what are these nations in view?* Some will say that “nations” here doesn’t mean nations as we know them, like America or China or

⁷ Hebrews 1:1-2 says “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these *last days* he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.” Also see Acts 2:24; 1 Corinthians 10:11; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 9:26; James 5:3; 1 Peter 1:20; 1 John 2:18; Jude 18

⁸ This mountain (v.2) “shall be established as the highest of mountains” meaning, as Calvin says “...she will be raised to the highest pitch of honor.” [John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries Vol. VII*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: BakerBooks, 2009), pg.96] This mountain (v.2) “shall be lifted up above the hills” meaning every other so-called “god” that had previously exalted itself against Christ, will be defeated. [“The mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains during this age, indicating that God will be victorious over all false gods.” Mathison, pg. 84]

Brazil. But rather, they say, Isaiah is using the term *nations* to describe *the small subgroup of Christians who are from each of these nations*.⁹ In other words, they say, the nations as a whole will not stream to Christ, but only that small subgroup of believers from each nation are streaming to Christ. But that won't do, because that is *not* how Isaiah uses the word *nations* throughout this book.¹⁰ Isaiah, like the other prophets,¹¹ is addressing the nations—meaning those strictly defined people groups within set boundaries possessing independent governments. Therefore the most natural interpretation is to assume Isaiah means the same thing he does elsewhere, these nations are actual nations.¹² So what does Isaiah prophecy the *nations* will do? They will flow like a stream to Christ (v.2). They will beckon all to come to Christ that they might be taught of Him, to walk in His ways, to know His righteous law (v.3). Continuing in v.4

“⁴ He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide *disputes* for many peoples;”

Stop. This is how we can know that Isaiah is *not* talking about Heaven here. There are still *disputes* that exist on earth that Christ through His Word must

⁹ i.e. those who God redeemed from every tongue, tribe, and nation - Rev. 5:9).

¹⁰ **First**, I would point of that if you look up the Hebrew word for *nations* in a Lexicon, the word means either ***nations generally***, meaning, those communities of people with a defined territory and government. That's how Isaiah uses it in **40:17** “All the *nations* are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness. Or *nations* refers to ***the whole Jewish nation*** as in **1:4** “Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity.” Or *nations* refers to ***the Gentiles*** as in **49:6** I will make you [Christ] as a light for the nations [*the Gentiles*], that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” Nowhere could I find Isaiah using the word *nations* to mean a subgroup of believers within a nation. **Secondly**, I would just ask the question: who did the prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel etc.) speak to? They didn't *merely* speak to God's people, or *merely* to individual believers, but their message was for every nation upon the earth. Isaiah prophesied not only to the nation of Judah (**ch. 3**); but to Assyria (**ch.10**); to Babylon (**ch.13**); to Moab (**ch.15**); to Damascus (**ch.17**); to Ethiopia (**ch. 18**); to Egypt (**ch. 19**).

¹¹ God told Jeremiah “I appointed you a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5).

¹² If we were to assume here that *nations* refers to a subgroup of believers in each nation, we would be importing a meaning that Isaiah doesn't use elsewhere.

correct.¹³ The curse is still present. Yet in spite of this, a universal peace is prophesied. Continuing in v.4

“...and 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.”

Clearly this prophecy began to be fulfilled when Christ came into the world. Jews and Gentiles who for 2,000 years have warred against each other have been put at peace through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. **Ephesians 2:14** “...he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.” But Isaiah is looking forward to a time when this peace will be the norm for every nation. There is coming a time when nations will no longer build weapons, but will instead build tools that would advance culture and human flourishing. All wars will cease. How? Because Christ’s dominion over world history is irresistible.¹⁴

Isaiah 9:1-7

Here Isaiah contrasts the former times of Israel’s trouble with this future kingdom. Halfway through v.1 he says “but in the *latter time*” — same language as Isaiah 2 pointing to the last days Christ ushered in through His ascension — v.2 “The people who walked in darkness [referring to the Gentiles] have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.” The Gentiles will be grafted into True Israel. As a result they will reap a harvest of joy (v.3); their burden will be broken (v.4) and they will also learn war no more. Look at v.5 “For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and

¹³ cf. Calvin pg. 99

¹⁴ How can we look at this passage and conclude that it has yet been fulfilled? Look at Russia and Ukraine right now. It seems transparent that the Christians in both countries don’t want war. They have already taken on the mind of Christ. Yet their respective leaders still kill and destroy each other. Is this what the prophet means by “...neither shall they learn war anymore”, merely that the Christians in those countries don’t want the war? The “they” and “their” here is referring to the nation as a whole.

every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.” Soldier’s uniforms will be cast in the fire because there will no longer be a need for them. How can the prophet promise this? v.6

“For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and *the government shall be upon his shoulder*;
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷ *Of the increase of his government and of peace*
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.”

This is perhaps the most famous Christmas passage, but how often have we missed the promise that is here? Notice it doesn’t tell us that Christ will start reigning at some later time, at His second coming. The government of the world was put on His shoulder at His *first coming*. And v.7 says His government of peace has been increasing ever since. The peace of Christ has been growing and growing and growing in the world. This contradicts the view of world history that things are getting worse and worse. How can things be getting worse and worse if Christ is increasing His peace in the world? Don’t get me wrong. I’m not advocating a Pollyannaish view. I’m not saying that tomorrow is always better than the day before. The transformation of the world is like our own personal sanctification. As individuals, we still sin, we still backslide, we often lose spiritual ground we once gained. But because Christ has guaranteed our sanctification (**Phil. 2:13**), we are as the Shorter Catechism says being “enabled

more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.”¹⁵ Yes we have spiritual highs and lows, but over the long haul the trajectory is upward. That’s what’s happening in the world! Because the government of the world is on the shoulders of King Jesus, even though there are highs and lows in world history, the overall trajectory is that Christ’s government of peace is increasing in the world. That’s not my opinion. That’s what Isaiah says.

Isaiah 11:1-10

Clearly v.1-2 here is talking about Jesus Christ. As King David’s greatest Son, He is the shoot that came forth from Jesse (v.1). It is Christ whom the Spirit of the Lord rested (v.2). Like **ch. 9**, this is speaking about His first coming. We know this is not speaking about Heaven because there is still opposition that Christ is overcoming. Look at v.4 “...but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth [Psalm 2 language], and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.” Clearly this is not describing the eternal state. It’s describing what will happen in this age. Look at v.6

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
 and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
 and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
 and a little child shall lead them.
⁷The cow and the bear shall graze;
 their young shall lie down together;
 and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
 and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

What’s going on here? The prophet isn’t talking about literal animals here. It’s metaphor. Unrighteous princes are called *wolves* who kill and destroy their

¹⁵ Q.35

enemies (**Ezekiel 22:27**). *Lions* and *bears* are compared to wicked rulers. **Proverbs 28:15** “Like a roaring lion or a charging bear is a wicked ruler over a poor people.” That’s how Daniel described the wicked empires in world history in Daniel 7 as a lion, a bear, and a leopard. All the predatory animals listed here are personified in Scripture as wicked nations or rulers that devouring those weaker than them, the lambs, the cows and the little children.¹⁶ Therefore what Isaiah is saying here, is that a time is coming when that will altogether cease. Look at **v.9** “They shall not hurt or destroy *in all my holy mountain.*” Stop. Remember Daniel 2 and Isaiah 2 showed us that this mountain isn’t limited to *merely* the 4 walls of a church, because this mountain fills the whole earth and all the nations stream to it. Isaiah is speaking about world peace here. How can that ever come about? End of **v.9** “...for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” As one author says here:

“God one day flooded the world in judgment in the days of Noah. He now, in the days of Christ, is flooding the world with the knowledge of Him in salvation. How thorough will it be? Is it adequate for us to say there is always going to be a few converts here and there—a few righteous remnants in this city and that, in this country and that? No! The knowledge of the Lord is going to cover the earth in the same way that water covers the sea. How does the water cover the sea? In little puddles, a little puddle here, a little puddle there? No! The water inundates the

¹⁶Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion* 3rd Edition, (Chesnee, SC.,: Victorious Hope Publishing, 2021), pg. 212, fn.65

sea. Isaiah says this is what we should expect—the knowledge of the Lord is going to be just that thorough. It will flood the world.”¹⁷

Isaiah 65:17-25

“For behold, I create new heavens
and a new earth,
and the former things shall not be remembered
or come into mind.

¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever
in that which I create;
for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy,
and her people to be a gladness.

¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem
and be glad in my people;
no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping
and the cry of distress.

²⁰ No more shall there be in it
an infant who lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not fill out his days,
for the young man shall die a hundred years old,
and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.

Some will look at this passage, specifically **v.17** and say this is clearly reserved for Heaven. Here’s the problem. Birth and death are both described here in

¹⁷ Greg L. Bahnsen, *Victory in Jesus: The Bright Hope of Postmillennialism, 3rd Edition*, (Nacogdoches, TX.,: Covenant Media Press, 2020), pg.62

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Do we have any indication from the Apostle Paul as to what he thinks about this passage? Yes! He quotes **v.10** in **Romans 15:12**. He’s saying that when the Gentiles began to put their hope in Christ 2,000 years ago, these promises began to be fulfilled. Notice how **v.10** begins “*In that day...*”—meaning in that day when the wolf nations no longer devour the lamb nations, in that day when the earth is flooded with the knowledge of the Lord—in *that day* the Gentiles will hope in the Lord (**Romans 15:12**). Paul is essentially saying, that age is happening now. cf. Douglas Wilson, *Heaven Misplaced: Christ’s Kingdom on Earth*, (Moscow, ID.,: Canon Press, 2008), pg. 16

(v.20). Those things don't belong in Heaven. Further more we see the same language from Isaiah 11 of the wolf and the lamb grazing together and the elimination of war on Christ's holy mountain in v.25—things that we've already shown to be expected in this age. So then, what do we do with v.17 which says "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth?" This is new creation language. Exactly. What are Christians called? A new creation. Paul uses nearly this exact language in **2 Corinthians 5:17** "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is *a new creation*. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." Or **Galatians 6:15** "For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but *a new creation*." This is the principle of the "already and not yet." Keith Mathison says here "...there is an element of the new creation that is "already" fulfilled in the New Testament age as well as an element that is "not yet" fulfilled."¹⁸ Isaiah is talking about the future of the world when the nations will be converted (**Psalms 22:27**). If most of the world is made up of people who Paul calls "new creations" it will be like the world is a new creation. What will it then be like? Well Isaiah tells us. v.20 "No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed."¹⁹ Why will life spans be increased? Well imagine a world where there is no war. Imagine a world where the trillions of dollars spent on defense go to medicine. Imagine a world where all soldiers are employed in different fields, in science, in medicine, in culture building. Imagine God's curse

¹⁸ Mathison, pg. 87

¹⁹ I have huge respect and love for fellow brother Sam Storms (an amillennialist) especially for his extremely gracious and just treatment of postmillennialism. I didn't detect one straw man in his representation of the view that I hold. I would like to comment on the way that he deals with these passages in Isaiah. He says "Amillennialists read them as describing either a great harvest of souls just preceding the second coming of Christ or what will occur in the new heaven and the new earth, which is to say, during the eternal state. *The language and imagery employed likely reflects the limited perspective of the Old Testament prophet and is therefore couched in terms that were familiar to the people of his day.*" [Sam Storms, *Kingdom Come: An Amillennial Alternative*, (Scotland, UK.,: Christian Focus Publishing, 2012), pg. 373. I don't think this is a good argument saying that this imagery "likely reflects the perspective the Old Testament prophet." The prophets were inspired by God and didn't depend upon their own fallible and limited perspective (2 Peter 1:20-21). God gave them exactly what they were to write down. Other inspired writers when speaking about the eternal state did not include birth and death. They simply used negation, e.g. Revelation 21:1-4

being lifted off every nation, and instead His blessings rain on every nation. The language here is that of Christ fulfilling and advancing the cultural mandate. Spiritual united to His global Church, He is fruitful and multiplying, He's filling the earth with peace, and having dominion over every part of it. We see the fulfillment of dominion blessings in **v.21-22**. Everyone has shelter, there is an abundance of food, oppression has ceased, God's people flourish like a tree planted by streams of water, and generations after them are blessed in the Lord.

The story of the Prophets²⁰

In summary we have seen how each of these prophecies tell a story about the success of Christ's kingdom before the 2nd Coming. **Daniel 2** shows us that when Christ entered history, He struck down the kingdoms of this world, and now His mountain is filling the whole earth. **Isaiah 2** shows us how the nations are streaming to this mountain, and one day the nations will learn war no more. **Isaiah 9** shows us how when Christ came into the world, the government was put on His shoulders and ever since His peace has been increasing in the world. **Isaiah 11** shows us that one day the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. **Isaiah 65** shows us what the prosperity of the world will look like when Christ exercises His full dominion. That's **our doctrine**: The Prophets tell a story of a great future kingdom where the mountain of the Lord fills the earth and the nations learn war no more.

II. Our Duty

One duty...

1. Informatory Use

We have the same duty as last week, to simply *consider* why eschatology (the study of last things) is an important doctrine to study. There are two

²⁰ Many more prophecies could be given than what is offered here. See Edwards, pg. 609-610

extremes we can arrive at when talking about eschatology. The **first extreme** is to treat this secondary doctrine as a primary doctrine. It's not. Beloved my interpretation could be wrong.²¹ I told a brother this week, "If I'm wrong I'll mow your lawn in Heaven for a year." If I'm wrong, it will because God had a better plan. Paul says "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."²² The **second extreme** is to ignore eschatology and treat it as if it doesn't matter at all. Beloved, God put these things in the Bible. And the truth is, that all of us have some sort of vision of how world history is going to end. And that vision will affect the way you live your life.²³

The imminent return of Christ?²⁴

I grew up under the premillennial assumption of **the imminent return** of Christ, meaning there was no prophecies that need to fulfilled before Christ could return. His return was imminent, it could happen at any moment. In the mean time, the world was getting worse and worse every moment and nothing the Church could do would change that course. What does that type of

²¹ "All this, however, is said with diffidence and submission. It may prove to be otherwise." See Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2018), pg.328-329

²² 1 Corinthians 2:9

²³ "Don't be a Thessalonians" cf. <https://www.theologyofwork.org/new-testament/thessalonians/1-thess-49-12-2-thess-36-16-faithful-work>

²⁴ I haven't read this whole article yet, but it shows the untrue claim of the imminent return of Christ doctrine: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/christ-return-any-moment/>

thinking produce?²⁵ John Nelson Darby the founder of Dispensationalism²⁶ said this: “Instead of permitting ourselves to hope for a continued progress of good, we must expect a progress of evil;...the hope of the earth being filled with the knowledge of the Lord before the exercise of His judgment...is delusive. Truly Christendom has become completely corrupted...can it be restored? No! Impossible.²⁷” How did Darby apply this to Christian living? “The importance of this doctrine, is that it *totally forbids* all working for earthly objects distant in time.”²⁸ Disengage from culture, they say, the only thing you should be concerned is warning others of the imminent return of Christ in hopes they would convert. Iain Murray the great Puritan historian chronicles how this doctrine infected the 19th century Church in England.

“Political and social [labors], such as marked the lives of a number of prominent Christians in the Reformation and Puritan period, and...[in men like] William Wilberforce [the great abolitionist] was no longer regarded as legitimate evangelical activity.”²⁹

Thus men like John Calvin were attacked because he wasted valuable time writing letters to secular authorities informing them of their duty to follow God’s

²⁵ “Our beliefs concerning the manner and time of the Second Coming of Christ will not change that event by one iota, but what we believe concerning those matters will very definitely affect our lives and conduct while we are waiting for that event.” Loraine Boettner, *The Millenium*, (Philadelphia, PA.: P & R Publishing Co., 1958), pg. 99-100

²⁶ Charles Spurgeon a contemporary of Darby said this in exposition of Psalm 86:9 “David was not a believer in the theory that the world will grow worse and worse, and that the dispensation will wind up with general darkness and idolatry. Earth’s sun is to go down amid tenfold night if some of our prophetic brethren are to be believed. Not so do we expect, but we look for a day when the dwellers in all lands shall learn righteousness, shall trust in the Savior, shall worship thee alone, O God, ‘and shall glorify thy name.’ The modern notion has greatly damped the zeal of the church for missions, and the sooner it is show to be unscriptural the better for the cause of God. It neither consorts with prophecy, honors God, nor inspires the church with ardor. Far hence be it driven.” Quoted in Iain Murray’s *The Puritan Hope: Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), pg. xiv

²⁷ *Ibid*, pg. 201

²⁸ *Ibid*, pg. 203

²⁹ *Ibid*, pg. 203-204

law in civil matters.³⁰ Furthermore this pessimistic view of the future changed the landscape of foreign missions. Charles Hodge noted “Their theory effects their [missionary] work [such that] they seek exclusively, or chiefly, the conversion of individual souls. [Indeed] the true and efficient missionary method is, to aim directly...at soul winning, but at the same time [we must] plant Christian institutions.”³¹ Bad eschatology affects child-rearing. I’ve heard stories of Christian couples who lived in the states during WW2. They decided not to have any children because the world looked so dark, and Jesus must be returning at any moment. They abandoned the clear command to be fruitful and multiple and have dominion, because of their errant view of eschatology. Bad eschatology affects higher education. Scores of Christian parents stopped sending their kids to university in the 70’s and 80’s because rapture fever had gripped the nation.³² What happens to science and education and economics when Christians retreat from the world because of bad eschatology? Just look at the world today for that answer.³³ Is it any wonder why the world is decaying around us? What did Jesus say that we are? Salt and light.³⁴ Salt to preserve and prevent the culture from rotting. Light to lead others out of darkness. But if the Church retreats from the culture, corruption and darkness become the norm.

The contingent return of Christ

May I suggest to you a better way? I would argue the Western Civilization has been shaped by this eschatology of dominion I have been

³⁰ *Ibid*, pg. 204

³¹ *Ibid*, pg. 205

³² “For instance, if a youth had a natural aptitude for mathematics, and he asked, ought he to give himself to the study, in hope that he might diffuse a serviceable knowledge or it, or possibly even enlarge the boundaries of science? My friend would have replied, that such a purpose was very proper, if entertained by a worldly man. Let the dead but their own dead; and let the world study the things of the world...But such studies cannot be eagerly followed by the Christian, except when he yield to unbelief.” *Ibid*, pg. 203

³³ Here’s the troubling thing: pessimism over Christianity’s advancement in the world today has been the ‘orthodox’ view for the last 150 years, such that to be optimistic about the future of the world is to be viewed as a liberal.

³⁴ Matthew 5:13-16

presenting.³⁵ I 100% affirm that Jesus Christ will return. But He has promised to convert the world through His gospel before He does. Christopher Columbus believed this. Contrary to historical revisionism, that's why he set off to explore the new world. On author notes:

“Columbus crammed his journals with quotations from Isaiah and other Biblical writers, in which he detailed the numerous prophecies that the Great Commission to disciple all nations *would be successful*. He figured that if the Indies were to be converted, a sea route would be a much more efficient way to bring them the gospel; and he credited his discoveries not to the use of mathematics or maps but to the Holy Spirit, who was bringing to pass what Isaiah foretold.³⁶

Beloved, do you see how your eschatology can have tremendous effects on how you live in the world? Yes it is a secondary doctrine, but it worms it's way into everything we do. If the Church expects great things from the Lord, we just will attempt great things for Him. That is one thing that distinguishes postmillennialism from the other views. It holds forth the belief that that Christ will succeed in the Great Commission. The nations will be made His disciples in this age, and then the end will come.

³⁵ “For example, think about the great cathedrals of Europe, and compare them to the church building of today. Those old cathedrals, magnificent works of art constructed over decades and sometimes generations, were built to last for centuries—and they have. But modern evangelical churches are usually built to last a generation at most. We don't expect to be around long enough to get much use out of them, and we certainly don't expect our great-grandchildren to worship in them. We don't even expect to have great-grandchildren. It is safe to say that the thought of descendants living five hundred years from now has never even entered the minds of most evangelicals today. Yet, for many Christians of previous generations, the idea of further generations benefiting from their labors was not strange in the slightest degree. They built for the ages.” David Chilton, *Paradise Restored: A Biblical Theology of Dominion*, (Horn Lake, MS.: Dominion Press, 2007), pg. 6

³⁶ “We must remember that America had been discovered numerous times, by other cultures; yet successful colonization and development took place only in the age of exploration begun by Columbus. Why? Because these explorers were bearers of the gospel, and their goal was to conquer the world for the kingdom of God. They came expecting that the New World would be Christianized.” *Ibid*, pg. 6

III. Our Delight

Why did God create the world?

Loved ones, why did God create the world? Jonathan Edwards answers: “God created the world to provide a spouse and a kingdom for his Son.”³⁷ This world is Christ’s world, it’s not the devil’s world. Yes there is still much darkness, and evil, and suffering left. But the prophets have seen a brighter day. The Mountain of the Lord is growing. His government of peace is increasing. One day all the nations will stream to this Mountain, and they will learn war no more. And the earth will be filled with the knowledge of Christ, as the waters cover the sea. “All other kingdoms fall, but his kingdom is the [final kingdom], and never gives place to any other (**Daniel 2:44**).”³⁸

Christ suffered to achieve victory

Beloved, consider what Christ has done in order achieve this victory. The Son of God became man! Creator became creature. Almighty Jehovah united Himself with the body and soul of a human being. He made Himself subject to the law. He undertook all the miseries of this life, the wrath of God and the cursed death on the cross. And on the third day He rose again from the dead. And He ascended into Heaven and right now He is sitting at the right hand of God ruling, reigning, interceding, overturning empires, shaking the nations, pouring out His Spirit, accomplishing His good pleasure in the earth. Loved ones, Christ will not fail in history. Nor will He fail in your life. He has loved *you* with an everlasting love. He has held nothing back from *you*. He poured out His life blood for *you*. He earned all righteousness for *you*. He made *you* His very own possession. If you have taken ahold of Him by faith, then you already have the victory that has overcome the world. And now you are on the winning side. Don’t believe the modern myth that says the Church is doomed to failure, that she will not win until after Jesus returns. Christ will hand the kingdom to

³⁷ Edwards, pg. 616

³⁸ *Ibid*, pg. 617

the Father, only after He has destroyed every rule and every authority and power. "For He must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet."