

Testament predictions concerning external peace and safety and righteousness on the earth be understood to refer to the eternal state (following the creation of the new heavens and earth) in a literal-historical fashion has severe problem with Isaiah 65 and Revelation 20. Isaiah 65 speaks of the death of non-believers in the Millennial kingdom; Hoekema wants to refer this passage to the eternal state but admits that there will be no death there. Revelation 20 clearly speaks of events before the thousand years and events after the thousand years, and Hoekema cannot explain this sequence away. Nevertheless, his efforts to pull amillennialism to a more literal-historical interpretive approach is highly commendable. When we take note of the fact that some Amillennialists speak of a literal period of tribulation before our Lord's return, of the revelation of a literal Man of Lawlessness (the Antichrist) at the end of the present age, and of a literal salvation of ethnic Israel at Christ's coming, we begin to get the impression that this view has internal inconsistencies, and that its hermeneutical stance in recent years is beginning to undermine its basic distinctives.

The Postmillennial view employs basically the same special set of interpretive principles as the Amillennial view, and thus opens itself to the same criticisms. In addition, it has difficulty squaring with the facts of history. In the second half of the nineteenth century, with its seemingly endless progress and boundless optimism, it was easy to believe that the world was on the brink of a golden age and that men had it in his grasp to overcome all problem. But in the twentieth century, with the coming of World War I, the Great Depression, World War II and the Holocaust, and the threat of nuclear catastrophe, it is much more difficult to believe that the world is getting better and better, and that the gospel is permeating the structures of society and transforming the major part of humanity into godlikeness! And although there is a mini-revival of Postmillennialism in the United States today, with such prominent proponents as Rousas Rushdoony, Gary North, Greg Bahnsen, and John Jefferson Davis, and a significant journal (The Journal of Christian Reconstruction) to disseminate its viewpoint, this movement seems to be more expressive of a desire for what should be, than a description of what is.

The Premillennial view has much to commend it. It attempts to maintain consistency in its application of literal-historical principles of interpretation to its understanding of predictive prophecy, the meanwhile recognizing the same need to correctly understand figurative language in predictive prophecy as in other genres of Scripture. its philosophy of history seems to fit the pattern of the present century, with its slide toward pervasive unbelief, immorality, materialism, and apostasy. And its literal-historical reading of Scripture has received tremendous encouragement from one of the most significant events of modern history: the emergence of the modern State of Israel and the reclaiming of Jerusalem as its capital. For the first time since A.D. 70 the nation of Israel has been reconstituted, occupies her own land, and is in control of her holy city and the temple area!

Jesus is coming again! He will establish His Millennial Kingdom! And He will rule with His saints!

And we must ask ourselves the question: Are we ready for these events? Are we joyously looking forward to His Coming and His kingdom?