

Book Summary Report: *He Shall Have Dominion*

He Shall Have Dominion is a modern day scholarly work explaining and defending the postmillennial eschatological system. The Bible presents us with a theme of sure expectancy of gospel victory in time and on earth. When one considers the Scriptural evidence, a strong case can be made that postmillennialism is indeed the eschatology of Scripture.

Eschatology is the study of the last things. Cosmic eschatology deals with the consummational history of the world system and the human race, whereas personal eschatology deals with the destiny of an individual at death. Eschatological matters have always been a subject of study within the church but it is only recently that they have become an area of systematic inquiry.

Eschatology stems from God's purpose and plan for creation. Eschatology is thoroughly teleological, and thus embraces the entire history of the world as the outworking of God's plan. The direction of history and the goal of the universe bear strongly on eschatology.

Eschatology has far-reaching cultural implications. Will the church have a great impact on culture or not? Will the nations be converted to Christ or will evil continue to grow ever stronger? One's eschatological outlook on the future will impact one's view of the Christian's social enterprise and will lead one to withdraw from or engage culture.

There are many misconceptions about the eschatological system of Postmillennialism. Some say the system is dead, but this is one of greatest of misconceptions. It is true that in the mid 1900's its adherents had dropped significantly from its almost complete

dominance in the 1600-1800's, but there have always been advocates and today the system is becoming more popular.

Amillennialism and Premillennialism are essentially pessimistic in their eschatological outlook. This is in direct contrast to Postmillennialism's optimistic and victorious expectation for world history. Amillennialism holds that evil will continue to exist alongside of the Kingdom of God until the end of the world. There will be a parallel development of the kingdom of evil and of the kingdom of God. There will be an intensified form of tribulation, general apostasy, and appearance of a personal Anti-Christ before Christ's Second Advent. History will gradually grow worse and worse. Premillennialism also holds that evil will continually grow stronger and more widespread over time, and the church will have little influence in culture.

Postmillennialism holds the Messianic kingdom was founded upon the earth during the earthly ministry and redemptive labors of the Lord Jesus Christ. In postmillennialism the Church becomes the fulfilled or transformed Israel. The nature of the Messianic kingdom is spiritual and redemptive in contrast to a merely political and temporal kingdom. Because it is spiritual and redemptive in nature, it will exercise a transformational socio-cultural influence in history. Postmillennialism expects the gradual, developmental expansion of the kingdom of Christ in time and on earth. It also anticipates a time when the gospel will be completely victorious in the earth, fulfilling the Great Commission. In this time the majority of men will be converted and the nations Christianized. Peace will ensue, and prosperity, both physical and spiritual, will abound. Christianity shall enter into a golden age that will last for a very considerable length of

time. After this long period of complete gospel victory, earth history will draw to a close with the personal and bodily return of Jesus Christ followed by a general resurrection and judgment and the eternal state.

The origins of Postmillennialism can be found in the early church. Origen, Eusebius, Athanasius, and Augustine can all be cited as holding to an early form of the doctrine. Adherents of the view can also be found in the medieval period, and it was the standard eschatological view of the Puritans.

The Biblical view of history and of eschatology go hand in hand, for eschatology is the end of history! In the Christian worldview, history is “His” story. The whole concept of predictive prophecy presupposes that God is in control of this world and is bringing His plans to fruition. God’s interaction with man throughout history has always been structured according to covenants. The redemptive covenant structure insures the success of God’s divine program for history because God is covenanting to perform all that is required for the salvation of man. Postmillennialism is a system that is rooted in the concept of God’s redemptive covenant.

Christianity teaches the redemption of man, but this implies the redemption of man’s culture as well, since culture is an extension of man’s beliefs and affections. There have been three approaches to culture in Christian history, the Identificationist Model (compromise), the Separationist Model (complete disconnect), and the Transformationist Model (renewing of culture). Dr. Gentry argues that all of culture is to be renewed as the gospel is victorious, including government. The governments of the nations will espouse a Biblical or theonomic ethic.

The study of eschatology requires the student to ascertain the proper Scripture hermeneutic. Does the Bible only allow for a complete and consistent literalism as the Dispensationalists teach (and contradict themselves)? It will become apparent that the Bible is replete with figurative language, and the proper approach to the Scripture's interpretation is "literal, when possible." Another important principle in Biblical interpretation is that of interpreting the Old Testament in light of the New Testament. The Bible is Christ-centered.

Eschatology must be related to creation, since the end times are the decreed ending of creation. The purpose of history can be found in its origin. We see that man from creation was to exercise the cultural or dominion mandate, bringing all of life under the rule of God. Postmillennialism accords well with this creation ordinance because it expects the world as a system to be brought under God's rule. Gen. 3:15 is the first eschatological statement in Scripture, and it teaches that Christ's redemptive work will destroy the works of the devil in history. It is the first gospel promise, and one of victorious nature. This promise was expanded upon throughout the Old Testament. It was made more specific by the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants. In the New Testament Christ is portrayed as a King who comes to sovereignly establish His kingdom. Christ is now at the right hand of God ruling through spiritual means and by spiritual and ethical power. He will rule until all enemies are placed under His feet. The New Testament expectation is that Christ's gospel will be triumphant among the nations. The Lord's Prayer will be answered progressively.

The Christian view of history is that history is linear in its movement, having a certain and fixed starting point at Creation and concluding point in the Second Advent.

Christianity is an historical faith, for it is intertwined with objective reality. God not only creates, but also governs and acts in His creation. Consummational events such as the Second Advent, general resurrection, and general judgment, also indicate a personal involvement of God in the operation of the universe and its history. Postmillennialism teaches not only a linear movement of history, but also an upward progression of Christianity in history.

There are a number of prophetic time frames important for each eschatological system to address. An exegetical understanding of these time frames can help in interpretation of other eschatological Scripture prophecies.

The Seventy Weeks prophecy of Daniel has long been fulfilled. It does not involve any future events, and cannot be made to appear to do so without introducing some completely unjustified and arbitrary time factor or gap eisogetically into the text. Chronologically, it begins with the restoration of the city of Jerusalem in the middle of the fifth century B.C., speaks of the baptism and death of Christ, and ends perhaps with the stoning of Stephen. The destruction of Jerusalem is also implied in the prophecy as happening after these events.

When the Scripture speaks of the last days, it refers to the final era of history. It is significant to note that the Scripture indicates that the gospel era is the last days. A misunderstanding of this truth can lead to the doctrine of the immanent return of Christ. On the contrary, the Scripture teaches that although the specific time of the return of

Christ is unknowable, it will be in the distant future. The return can be known in general to be after the triumphant victory of His gospel, i.e. after the millennium. The millennium is not to be thought of as a literal 1,000 years, but rather symbolically, and represents a long and glorious era.

There are a number of other prophetic events and personages that Dr. Gentry helps the student to properly interpret and identify. The Great Tribulation is not a future event, but rather refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (as does most of the Olivet Discourse). The rebuilding of the temple is a prominent event discussed in Dispensationalism, but is entirely without merit. Nowhere in the New Testament does such a prophecy exist, and Ezekiel's temple vision is symbolic and not literal. The Antichrist was not so much a single individual person as it was an event, a heretical movement in the first century church. John teaches the antichrist was in the present (first century), was a multitude, and was a teaching or heresy (not a future individual person). The beast of Revelation 13 is to be understood as ancient first century Rome, specifically as personified in the emperor Nero. Nero is also considered to be the Man of Lawlessness in 1 Thessalonians 2. The Great Harlot of Revelation 17 is first century Jerusalem/Judaism.

Regarding the Book of Revelation, Dr. Gentry approaches its interpretation preteristically. He espouses an early date for the book, circa A.D. 65-66. The basic theme of Revelation is one of judgment upon apostate Judaism. Dr. Gentry claims that the Book of Revelation "...really does not speak to postmillennialism until its *last three chapters*."

Dr. Gentry ends his work with a consideration of the major objections made against the doctrine of postmillennialism. Clearly history itself and the present moral and political situation cannot be used to undermine the teaching of postmillennialism, because postmillennialism is rooted in the sovereign, supernatural, regenerating work of the Spirit.