

WHY THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM CANNOT COME WITH LEADERSHIP OF FALLEN MAN by Charles Clough

In this political year in the U.S. we Christians are challenged to seek wisdom in how we exercise our citizenship responsibility. How do we decide who to vote for? Do we refrain from voting until the “perfect” candidate gets on our ballot? What should be our expectations?

I think it helps to zoom out and see the big picture of global culture today. The Bible Framework gives us tools to do that.¹ The Bible promises us that the Kingdom of God will finally be victorious. But there has been debate within Christianity about how that victory is achieved. Some believe that the Church will bring about the Kingdom on earth directly by becoming the dominant religion in every nation. This belief is called post-millennialism, that is, Christ will come after (“post”) the Church brings in the Kingdom.

Post-millennial belief at the end of the nineteenth century was high-jacked by critics of the Bible who liked the idea of historical “progress” but disliked the supernatural requirements the Bible insisted upon. So non-Christian leaders like Hegel (who borrowed the idea of progress from the book of Daniel) and Marx (who borrowed from Hegel) created a progressive view of history culminating in various anti-supernatural counterfeits of the millennium. For example, one of the leading social progressives in the early twentieth century, Walter Rauschenbusch, stated the matter clearly in 1922: “We need a restoration of the millennial hope which the Catholic Church dropped out of eschatology. It was crude in its form but wholly right in its substance. . . .We hope for such an order for humanity as we hope for heaven for ourselves.”² He meant by the term “crude” the supernatural view of the cosmos given in the Bible. So the glorious hope of a future godly, global civilization revealed through the prophets and Jesus was downgraded into a vague ideal of so-called “progressive” political policies that continues to this day.

Having suppressed the truths of man’s depravity and God’s standards of justice, progressive attempts of Marxism and Fascism to achieve social utopias only accomplished unprecedented slaughter and economic destruction. As we now pass through the early decades of the twenty-first century we watch the pseudo-millennial vision being transformed by the worldwide environmental movement into the ancient pagan notion of humanity subservient to nature. The previous tendency toward destructive tyrannical social orders now becomes married to policies that will deprive humanity of low-cost, readily-available energy for food, warmth, and transportation of every necessity.

Contrary to the Babel event when man first attempted to define his existence by making civil government the tool of redemption, God defined through Abram what would become an opposing counter-culture and exclusive source of all redemptive blessings to the end of history.³ According to Biblical prophecy the Kingdom of God cannot come until certain conditions are met. These conditions can’t be met until Jesus returns to earth. The nation Israel must repent and officially welcome Jesus as the Messiah because Israel’s election in history is to be the priestly nation through which

¹ For an approach to managing these kind of issues with the information God has provided in history see <http://www.bibleframework.com/>.

² Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1922), 88.

³ Note the word play on “name” in Gen 11:4 and 12:2.

comes worldwide blessing (Gen 12:3; Matt 23:39). In light of Biblical history, we learn that all levels of human society are corruptible—whether believers or not. In spite of regeneration and sanctification every one of us still has sin (1 John 1:8). We still are a fallen, mortal (subject-to-death) race. Passages like Deuteronomy 17 and I Samuel 8 warn readers that all levels of social leadership—religious, judicial, and executive—face the likelihood of corruption.

How, then, does the Kingdom of God come to this planet materially, politically, and spiritually? When Jesus comes back, He does so as an immortal (not subject to death) resurrected human as well as the divine Son of God. Moreover, he returns with an administration entirely made up of resurrected believers (1 John 3:2; Rev 19-20). And, of course, He alters the geophysical environment beyond anything that environmentalists can conceive (Isa 65:25; 66:17). He incarcerates Satan and the fallen angels (Rev 19:20). These radical conditions have never existed before in world history. There will be for the first time a global civilization with the strange situation where un-resurrected mortals coexist with resurrected immortals much like after His resurrection Jesus temporally and locally coexisted with his still mortal disciples.

Because the millennium cannot come about with the leadership of fallen, mortal, un-resurrected man, we have a “big picture” to help evaluate how we should participate politically. In a participatory political order that gives us responsibilities like selection of leaders, doing jury duty, paying taxes, and praying for all those in authority, we have to inject our influence in a wise and winsome way. Sitting at home waiting for Jesus to be on the ballot isn’t going to help build relationships with those in our community to whom we’ve been told to be witnesses for our Lord. But we must reject the notion that political leaders are going to be able to bring in the Kingdom of God. Not in a society made up of fallen mortals who are continuously vulnerable to the evil principalities and powers (Isa 14:12; Eph 2:2; Rev 20:3). Prior to the millennium, therefore, we never want to concentrate the entire responsibility for society in the hands of a political elite for the simple reason that regardless of their good intentions they are always corruptible as un-resurrected mortals! The biblical framework surrounding the millennium thus teaches limited government for now. Pray for opportunities at local and state levels, not just at federal levels, to exercise Biblical influence along with other Christians. And don’t neglect the social power of strong marriages and families that by godly training of the young can determine the culture for decades into the future!