

## A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism

(Part VII)

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### Matthew 24

(Concluded)

Standing decisively against J. Marcellus Kik's interpretation of Matthew 24:3-35, particularly verse 34, in his book, *An Eschatology of Victory* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), are the following considerations drawn from the passage itself.

1) Kik's interpretation ignores that part of the disciples' question that asks about "the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world" (v.3). Again and again in his explanation of Matthew 24:4-31 Kik presents the question that Jesus is answering as though it were only the question, "When shall these things (of the destruction of Jerusalem) be?" Kik begins his treatment of Matthew 24:23-28, e.g., with the words, "The disciples desired to know when the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple would take place." Not surprisingly, Kik immediately adds, "In answer to that question Jesus first gave preliminary signs in verses 4-14." Kik then goes on to make Jesus' words in verses 23-28 also refer only to the destruction of Jerusalem (*An Eschatology of Victory*, pp. 121, 122).

But the question of the disciples was not only about the destruction of Jerusalem; it "blended," to use Calvin's term, two events: the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. In answering the disciples' question, Jesus also "blended" the two events, and He did so from the very outset of His answer. That His answer, already in verses 4-31, had in view, not only the destruction of Jerusalem but also the end of the world at His second coming is indisputably evident both in verse 6 and in verse 14, where He speaks of "the end."

2) Kik's interpretation is forced to make two different comings of Christ out of the (identical) mention of His coming (Greek: *parousia*) in verse 27 and in verse 37. In accordance with Kik's ironclad rule that everything before verse 34 refers only to the destruction of Jerusalem, the "coming of the Son of man" of verse 27 is only the judgment upon Jerusalem in A.D. 70, whereas the "coming of the Son of man" of verse 37 is His second, bodily coming at the end of the world. This is arbitrary, illegitimate exegesis, violating the canon of biblical interpretation that insists that the same word in the same context must mean the same thing, unless something clearly makes this

impossible. Kik's different explanation of "coming" in verse 27 and in verse 37 is especially irresponsible in light of the question of the disciples, "... and what shall be the sign of thy coming...?"

3) Similarly, Kik is forced to explain "angels" in the passage in completely different ways. In verse 31, "angels" have to be preachers of the gospel. But suddenly in verse 36, they are the heavenly spirits. Why? Because to let "angels" be 'angels' in verse 31 would imply that verse 31 is referring to the second coming of Jesus at the end of the world (which it surely is), and this would conflict with Kik's rule that everything preceding verse 34 refers only to the destruction of Jerusalem.

4) Kik's interpretation is demolished by the obvious, incontrovertible references in verses 4-31 to events that take place *after the destruction of Jerusalem*. Such is the reference in verse 14 to the preaching of the gospel "in all the inhabited earth (Greek: *oikoumenee*) for a witness to all nations." Such also is the reference in verses 29-31 to the catastrophes in the heavens; the sign of the Son of man; the mourning of all the tribes of the earth; the coming on the clouds of the Son of man, visible to all; and the gathering of the elect from the dead by the angels with the sound of the trumpet. Kik's explanation of these references, indicated earlier, is nothing but allegorizing in order to explain them all away.

5) Kik's interpretation founders on verse 36: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man...." "That day" refers to some "day" that has been the main topic of the entire preceding discourse. This is the "day" of the second, bodily coming of Jesus Christ, as verse 37 makes explicit. Jesus has been setting forth this "day" in verses 4-31, typically in the destruction of Jerusalem and really in His second coming. Kik's thesis, therefore, that Jesus begins to treat His second coming only at verse 36 is shattered by "that day" in verse 36. It is as if Jesus says in verse 36, "That day that you asked about in verse 3 — the day of my second coming at the end of the world, of which the destruction of Jerusalem is a type — and that I have been talking about in verses 4-31 is unknown as regards the exact time of it, except by my Father."

6) The device itself of separating Scripture's treatment of type and reality in a passage by a neat dividing-line, so that everything before the line is type and everything after the line is reality, is artificial. It is wholly foreign to the actual way in which Scripture presents its prophecies, especially its prophecies about the last days. Where in Psalm 2 is the neat dividing-line between David and the Messiah? Where in Psalm 72 is the neat dividing-line between the kingdom of Solomon and the kingdom of Jesus Christ? Where in the book of Revelation is the neat dividing-line between the persecuting Roman empire and the kingdom of the beast, antichrist? Scripture knows of no such neat dividing-lines. It presents its prophecy as one whole, with type and reality interwoven throughout. This is what makes exegesis difficult, as every Reformed minister knows by experience.

## **The Postmillennial Problem**

The interpretation of Matthew 24:34 by Kik and the Christian Reconstructionists is a daring, if desperate, attempt to save the postmillennial scheme of a future, earthly, carnal kingdom.

Against their postmillennial enterprise stands the entire, massive New Testament prophecy for the church of apostasy, persecution, antichrist, and great tribulation. This prophecy of the church's struggle and suffering in the last days originates in Jesus' eschatological discourse in Matthew 24, 25. How to deal with this? This is, indeed, the question for postmillennialism, especially that of the Christian Reconstructionist stripe.

Why, shove it all into the past upon the Jews!

But this demands a new and different interpretation of Matthew 24, an interpretation that delivers the New Testament church from last-days struggle with false doctrine and apostasy and from end-time persecution at the hands of antichrist.

Such an interpretation is provided in the explanation of verse 34 that holds that everything mentioned prior to verse 34 happened exhaustively, exclusively, and in reality in the destruction of Jerusalem.

A stunning coup, if it could be carried off.

It cannot.

In Matthew 24 our Lord Jesus Christ taught His church to expect spiritual struggle and physical persecution to the very end in a world that becomes increasingly evil and hostile.

Just as all the history of the church in the world proves.

Just as we see today with our very own, Scripture-enlightened eyes.

The Kikkian and Christian Reconstructionist interpretation of the chapter is a failure. Worse, it is grievous false doctrine that makes the Lord predict the very opposite for His true church of what He actually did forecast: earthly victory in a carnal kingdom rather than spiritual victory through tribulation.

Since postmillennialism, at least the Christian Reconstructionist brand, by its own admission stands or falls with its interpretation of Matthew 24, postmillennialism is now exposed as erroneous. Those holding this view should repent of it, and abandon it forthwith for amillennialism.

But postmillennialism is fundamental to theonomic Christian Reconstructionism. Gary North is certainly correct when he asserts, "Theonomy without postmillennialism is impotent" (Foreword, in Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion*, p. xxxvi). Therefore, Christian Reconstructionism hereby fails.

## A Practical Issue

The issue is practical.

Christ and the apostles warn the church that she must expect hard struggle in the last days - our days - with heretics, apostasy, antichrist, and the great tribulation.

The church needs this warning.

More often! Louder!

Her salvation is at stake.

This warning, with the encouraging comfort of the true church's preservation and spiritual victory, Reformed amillennialism can and does give.

*Only* Reformed amillennialism.

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