

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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~ All articles are written by Terry Carter unless otherwise stated ~

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Christian Utopia

Question: Will the spread of the Gospel ever lead to a time when the vast majority of people in this world are living according to Christian, or at least, Biblical principles?

Answer: It would certainly be a wonderful thing for all of mankind if such a world could ever be achieved.

Furthermore, there are some who believe that such might actually be the case at some point in the future. However, the Bible is also pretty plain that it will not happen. The only time when we can ever hope to live in a place without sin, selfishness, and the curse of a fallen world is in Heaven.

The origin of the word "utopia" is interesting in this regard. Thomas More coined the word for the title of his book *Utopia* published in 1516.

In the book, he describes what he considers as an ideal society. He came up with the word "utopia" from the Greek "*ou-topos*" literally meaning "no place". This is also close to "*eu-topos*" which would mean "a good place". He was saying that this "good place" was really "no place".

As Christians, we know that there was such a place at one time called "the Garden of Eden". Since that was lost in the fall, the only way we can regain what we had there is in Heaven. Thomas More apparently understood that there was no place on this earth like that and never would be again.

The doctrine of postmillennialism was quite common and popular in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. The basic idea of this teaching is that as the Gospel spreads around the world, it will usher in a golden age in which Christian principles would dominate the actions of the vast majority of people.

Most who held this position believed that that golden era would correspond to the thousand-year reign of **Revelation 20**.

"1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 **He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished.** But after these things he must be released for a little while." **Rev. 20:1-3 (NKJV)**

Other prophecies were included in this teaching, but the passage above was the primary one and from that was where the name "postmillennialism" was taken.

While this teaching existed prior to the 19th century, it seemed to reach the height of its popularity towards the end of that time.

It was the main view among the abolitionists, as well as proponents of the so-called "social gospel". At that

time in the Western World the spread of the Gospel was certainly improving the lives of people in very practical ways.

Real living conditions were improved for a vast multitude of people. You can surely understand why people thought the spread of Christianity would usher in a golden millennium.

As you read the writings of Restoration Movement authors, you can see that it was a commonly accepted teaching among some of them. You can see as you read men like Alexander Campbell and B.W. Johnson, as well as others.

Rather than quote examples of it, I will simply point out that Alexander Campbell called his periodical the *Millennial Harbinger*.

I think it is fair to say that he expected the restoration of the ancient order of Christianity to facilitate the ushering in of the millennium.

Why did postmillennialism fall out of favor with the majority of Christians? The answer is that after World War I and World War II, it became clear that despite the spread of the Gospel and Christianity around the world, neither the world as a whole, nor mankind as a whole, was getting better. There were still plenty of evil men who were capable of almost unthinkable atrocities.

Even with the spread of the Gospel, the devil was still the "god of this world" and he was still blinding the minds of men.

“Whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” II Cor. 4:4 (NKJV)

However, this really should not have been a surprise to anyone who was a student of Scripture. Consider the following: Jesus said that many would travel the broad road to destruction, but few would walk the narrow way to life.

“13 Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Matt. 7:13-14 (NKJV)

In the Parable of the tares in **Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43**, He teaches the following truths:

1. There is an enemy who sows tares among the wheat while men sleep.
2. The field is the world.
3. The good seeds (resulting in wheat) are the sons of the Kingdom.
4. The tares are the sons of the wicked one.
5. They will both grow together until the harvest – the end of the age.
6. At the end, the tares are gathered and burned.

This is teaching that the Kingdom will not usher in a utopia in this world. The sons of the wicked one will co-exist with the sons of the Kingdom until the end of the age.

Likewise, the Parable of the Mustard Seed and the Parable of the Leaven Hidden in Meal, **Matt. 13:31-33**, He is teaching that even within the Kingdom there will be evil and corruption.

The Parable of the Dragnet, **Matt. 13:47-50**, shows that there will be wicked among the just at the end of the age, even within the Kingdom. Jesus told His apostles that if they called Him “Beelzebub”, they would also do so to those of His household.

“It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. **If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!**” **Matt. 10:25 (NKJV)**

“Remember the word that I said to you, A servant is not greater than his master. **If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.** If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.” **John 15:20 (NKJV)**

Paul said that all who live Godly would suffer persecution.

“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” II Tim. 3:12 (NKJV)

He goes on to say that evil men would get worse and worse.

“But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” II Tim. 3:13 (NKJV)

Even the chosen nation of Israel failed to listen to the prophets of God.

“9 And He said, Go, and tell this people: Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive. 10 Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed.” Isa. 6:9-10 (NKJV)

“To whom He said, This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest, And, This is the refreshing; Yet they would not hear.” Isa. 28:12 (NKJV)

“23 But this is what I commanded them, saying, Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you. 24 Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward. 25 Since the day that your fathers came

out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them. 26 Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers. 27 Therefore you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not obey you. You shall also call to them, but they will not answer you.” Jer. 7:23-27 (NKJV)

“But the house of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to Me; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted.” Ezek. 3:7 (NKJV)

“31 So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. 32 Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them.” Ezek. 33:31-32 (NKJV)

Such examples could be multiplied many times over. One thing ought to be clear from all these passages. Though the message of God is preached faithfully, many will refuse to heed it. History has shown this to be true in every day and age. The present age is no different.

The spread of the Gospel can certainly improve the lives of untold numbers of people. More importantly, it can save their souls for all of eternity. But the overall message of Scripture is that mankind will continue to get worse until the Lord returns. He will return to destroy the wicked and reward His saints.

“7 And to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” II Thess. 1:7-8 (NKJV)

Jesus Himself asked whether there would be faith on the earth when He comes. "I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, **when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:8 (NKJV)**

Should this discourage us from preaching the Gospel and trying to fulfill the Great Commission? Absolutely not! These things are written so that we are not discouraged when many refuse the Gospel.

In the Parable of the Sower, only one of the four kinds of soil bore any fruit at all. This is meant to encourage us when we do not see the response to the Gospel that we would like. That is what we should expect in any age, including our own.

How should we react to such things? What should we do in the face of such opposition? The best answer is found in the words of Paul to the young evangelist Timothy.

"Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." I Tim. 4:16 (NKJV)

"2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. 5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." I Tim. 4:2-5 (NKJV)

Preaching the Gospel may not bring about a utopia on this earth, but it will save your soul and the souls of those that hear (listen to) you.

Regardless of how many turn away from the truth, we need to continue in the truth and fulfill our ministry.