

Dr. Meredith Kline, Prologue, Lecture 27

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Israel, the Church and Problems with Theonomy

Theonomy holds that Israel is not some sort of an intrusion into an otherwise common and non-holy world but Israel is just a continuation and a model of the way in which all the nations of the earth should have been operating. From the fall on it continued to be the objective of all of the nations of the world that would come into existence to take the form of committed to God holy theocratic institutions. So Israel becomes a paradigm to what all of the nations of the world should be doing, instead of being seen as an exception from that and as a type of something altogether different, namely the holy kingdom of God.

So then when you come to the New Covenant and you have the great commission now being given to the church. The dominion theology or the theonomic reconstructionists view is that the great commission, which we, I trust have understood as being a charge to go out and to preach the gospel to all the nations of the world, guarantees the conversion of the nations. However, God's people, here in the city of Corinth God has a people don't be afraid Paul preached "for I have much people in this city." He doesn't expect the whole city of Corinth or the whole nation of Greece or whatever to be converted and become Christianized or something. The task of the great commission is to go out there and win God's elect people by the preaching of the gospel through them which God will honor to win them and call them out. That's what's going on. That's what the great commission has in view.

But, according to theonomy, which we are now talking about, the great commission is a charge to use corporately. It is the task of Christian people to be dealing with nations corporately and Christianizing them, which is to say, to bring them as corporate institutional entities into a confessional acknowledgement of Jesus Christ and an enforcement of that religion. The great commission is telling us to theocratize all of the nations of the world. This, as I said, would be a total abrogation of the common grace covenant, but this is precisely what they are doing. This is one of my primary criticisms

of the whole theonomic movement. It has no concept of common grace. This thing that we have been belaboring here, this idea of common grace to heaven. They have no idea whatsoever of that principle of common grace and what they are advocating is total abrogation of the thing being of the norm and that is what we should be up to. So they think that is what the great commission told us to do, to go out and make theocratic nations out of all of the nations of the world.

Moreover, they think it is going to happen. I don't know how they allow it to take many many thousands of more years. It certainly doesn't look like it is about to happen but they are in no hurry about it. They do expect that. The dominion theology people are post-mills characteristically. The Christian reconstructionists, and theonomists are also post-mills. So they think the great commission will be fulfilled in the sense that all the nations of the world will become the kingdom of Christ and that is the millennium, post-millennium style. Then after that comes the consummation. So the kingdom of God sort of continues forever. What happens after that the parousia is sort of anti-climactic, the thing has already happened in the millennium, which is before the second coming of Christ.

The pre-mills have a better insight into what the church age is all about than the post-mills do. At least the pre-mills aren't expecting the kingdom to come in power and glory before Jesus returns. Then they see that up until that point the church is going to be suffering and so on. But post-mills have their heads screwed on completely wrong because they are expecting the kingdom is going to come in the power and glory before Jesus returns. So the pre-mills are closer to the truth at that point in their understanding of what the church age is than the post-mills. But here is where, what we are saying the effects are the understanding of eschatology are there. Any points anyone wants to throw in?

Student Interaction

[Student comment] The one thing that stuck me is the reconstructionists with the theonomic tendency when they talk about going to every nation they really see that as a

call to go to every nation as a geopolitical entity turning the geopolitical entity into a ... that geopolitical entity into a Christian political entity as opposed to seeing it as all those from all different tribes and nations and all these different divisions that naturally fall out among human beings to ignore those boundaries and go to the people of those nations...

[Kline's response]: Well that too.

[Student comment] ...you don't go to the people, you ignore them. Well you go to them but their primary thrust is you go to their people groups and in terms of also going to all of the nations...

[Kline's response] Well that's another dimension of it that I was not aware of but even if they are going to people groups within the nation according to the Scripture it would still only be to gather out the elect from them and not...

[Student response] But when they hear the word "nation," because they think so much of Israel as the ideal nation, when they hear the word "nations" they think nations as nations the political....

[Kline's response]: "Oh yeah, absolutely"

[Student comment] ...as I'm seeing all the different terms Scripture is using, like that Revelation reference, "people of every tribe and nation and tongue"...

[Kline's response] Yes, that is true."

[Student comment] ...different ways we get divided whether by language differences, or political boundaries, and all those kinds of things, they don't, primarily look at...

[Student question] You talked about the coming of the Lord. . . In which manner? Are you talking about.....or when he comes in the cloud in the rapture? What specifically do you mean when you talk about the coming of the Lord?"

[Kline's response]: "That there will be a visible returning of Jesus and which, as I see it follows in the church age which itself ends with the appearance of the man of sin, the anti-Christ, and a particular crisis, which Revelation 20 also then describes as the Gog-Magog development where the camp of the saints is besieged. So that I see the church age as ending with a crisis in which it ceases to be able to function anymore as an

effective evangelizing missionary outreach in the world but where, to use the imagery of Revelation 20, it is a besieged camp from which influence can't go out. Or to use the imagery of Revelation 11 where the church has been symbolized in terms of a two prophetic witnesses, the crisis is one where the two witnesses are slain. This is another way of saying that the testimony, the witness of their church gets silenced.

So in any case, the church age ends after successfully advancing with the gospel into all of the nations. It ends then with this relatively brief crisis in which, once again, Satan becomes the deceiver of the nation and the world as he had been before Christ came. But immediately after, or in response to this crisis, our Lord returns from heaven executing judgment against Satan and all his hordes delivering his own people from this persecution but also from the judgment of God. He then introduces the eternal state. So the 1000 years is the whole church age leading up to that final crisis which precipitates the speedy return of Jesus visibly.

Now, what was the alternative to that, which you were asking?

[Student response]: Well I was, I think it was the rapture of the church.

[Kline's response]: Yeah. Which happens at that time but the Lord returns visibly and the saints have gone up to be with him and it is attended by the resurrection, and so these things happen at that time.

[Student comment] And that was my question...

[Kline's response] These are not separate. This is one complex of events. This is also then the inauguration eternal kingdom of glory, but not before that point is my emphasis because to have it before that would be an abrogation of the common grace.

[Student question] The question I would ask then is in Revelation it talks about two resurrections. The first resurrection is the resurrection of the righteous, which I would see that as the rapture because you are still alive at that time. The second death has no power over them, so I'm trying to tie that in with the...

[Kline's response] Yeah. About 20 years ago I wrote an article about that called, "The first resurrection" and I don't know if we have copies of that available. The first

resurrection is not the resurrection of the righteous from the dead with the second resurrection of somebody else from the dead. Actually the way it works out is that the first resurrection describes the death of believers and it is a marvelous thing. We haven't got the time to go into it and I hate to rush through it because it is such a wonderful passage on the whole concept of what is going on there, but since you asked about it...

Resurrection and the second death: unbelievers and believers

What you have paired there is the first and second resurrection and the first and second death. So you have believers and you have unbelievers. Now you have bodily death and you have bodily resurrection. Now within this passage it deals then with believers and unbelievers. For unbelievers bodily death is the first death and bodily resurrection is the second death. The wicked will be raised from the dead you know we just said then the parousia takes place the saints are caught up but there is also the general resurrection of believers and unbelievers that takes place. For the believers, of course, they're raised to go to heaven but the unbelievers are raised to be cast into fire, which is the second death. So bodily resurrection means for them, not life, but death--the second death.

Now when you come to believers, what's bodily resurrection mean for believers? That's the second resurrection, that's really life for the believers to be raised up bodily, that is life but it happens to be the second resurrection. So what is bodily death for believers? Well just as for unbelievers, physical resurrection isn't life because it leads you to the pit of hell, so bodily resurrection for an unbeliever is the second death. So for a believer, bodily death because it leads you to be with Christ, which is very far better. I'd rather be gone, Paul says, to be with the Lord because it is so far better. So for a believer bodily death is already the first resurrection. That is what the text says the souls of those who have been beheaded. So it's the saints who have died and he sees them and they are there to be reigning with Christ which is far better than death that is the first resurrection. And of course, those that have experienced the first resurrection they are not to be afraid of the final judgment of the second death at all because they are heaven bound. So the language then in this intricate pattern involves this sort of unusual idea

that matches up these two ideas for the one bodily life amounts to death but for the other bodily death amounts to life.

The whole thing revolves also around the language there with the Greek word *protos* which means “first.” The term *protos* is the opposite of the text of the “second” or the last things. *Protos* doesn’t mean “the first in a series of things of the same kind” so that if there is a first and a second resurrection they are both bodily resurrections that’s not the force of *protos*. *Protos* is referring to things that have happened in this world history. Then the second things are the last things. Those are things that will happen in the consummation and beyond. So first and second don’t refer to similar things they refer to very different kind things. The first resurrection is one that belongs to what is going on in this world of which death is a part. So first resurrection is death and in Revelation 21 for example, he speaks about the *protos* things, the first thing is death, crying and so on. So the first resurrection is one of those *protos* things--specifically death. Whereas the second resurrection is something that goes beyond this present order of death and it is the order of heaven and so on. And in a nut shell that what that passage...

[Student comment] And that goes along with what Paul said about the first and the last...

[Kline’s response] Yes, there is a whole series of first and seconds that I tried to bring out of this article where first and second are not series of same things, but representing eschatologically different stages of things.

[Student comment]: I need to get copies of that article.

[Kline’s response] That article appeared along with an attempt of a New Testament colleague of mine who is a pre-mill that responded to it and then I had a response to his. His name is Ramsey Michaels. My response then would be a second article called “A First Resurrection Reaffirmation.” Do you have both of them by chance?”

[Student comment] Are they both around 1979?

Intrusion breaking into common grace history

[Kline's response] Okay. We talked about intrusion, so let's get back to that quickly. Just a quick overview of intrusion. We saw that intrusion was heaven breaking through into earthly common grace history in a variety of ways. It was the future breaking in before hand; it was heaven coming down from above. We saw that that included real things, like the presence of the person of Christ, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the presence of the power of the Holy Spirit working salvation of God in people's hearts. It included the benefits, the healings of heaven coming in beforehand. It involves symbolically, as we said, the Israelite theocracy. Here was a symbolic intrusion of heaven to earth. I did make the point along the line that just as the heavenly kingdom is introduced by a final judgment that involves the destruction of the wicked and the cleansing of the temple of God for God to occupy. So it was here in the days of Moses and Joshua, that establishment of Israelite theocracy involved a similar mandate. So what the Israelites were doing, what Joshua was did was an anticipation of what the Lord Jesus does when he comes in his final judgment.

So here God is commanding his people to a certain course of conduct and it is a course of conduct then that baffles people through the generations as they read this and are troubled by it. It appears to them that what we have in biblical religion is some sort of an evolution, some early primitive type of barbaric stuff like the God of the Jews wanting them to kill their neighbors and so on. But happily we have moved beyond that to the God of Jesus who is merciful and kind. So you have all of this nonsense that this is what is going on in the Bible.

Conquest, imprecations and other difficulties

So what we have in the case of the mandate of conquest would be a case of arrested evolution. So here is this progressive thing happening. The world of religious ideas are moving upward and onward all the time. But things got stuck at a rather barbaric level back there and we have moved beyond it. What else can you do with it because certainly you don't want to say that that kind of thing is normative for Christians

today, is it? How can it be normative for Christians today? Jesus tells us to pray for our enemies and those who hate us and spitefully use us, to do good unto them and show love unto them and to pray for them. How would that comport with this? There are all kinds of other things besides the killing of the Canaanites, such as taking all of their property away, or the Israelites coming out of Egypt and borrowing stuff from their neighbors with no intention of ever giving it back. So in fact they are stealing stuff from the others. Or you lie to them and the mid-wives say the Israelite wives are too lively and we can't kill the children because they are delivered before we get there and so they lie. Rahab lies about the spies and you have all of these things. In Psalms you have the Psalmist praying that his enemies should have widows, which means that the enemies should be killed, leaving their wives widowed, and their children orphaned. May their prayers not be, and you have all the imprecations in the Psalms and on and on and on.

Are these things normative? They don't seem to agree with our understanding, let alone our standard of ethics. Our standard of ethics, if we are looking at the New Testament, it would seem to be suggesting that we don't carry on in that way. So how does one solve this problem? Different suggestions have been made through the years. Someone like C. S. Lewis would suggest that we should distinguish between a revelation and response. For example, in the Psalms, you might have imprecations there but you should not understand that as part of the revelation that is the human response. So you have to sort of somehow unravel what is the uninspired human response from inspired material in the Psalms. Thus get rid of the imprecations. This won't do. There are words like the words of Satan in the Bible but context tells you these are the words of Satan. But in Psalms these are the inspired words of the Psalmist, beside which the New Testament quotes from some of these Psalms approvingly and so on. So that won't do.

Rahab's and mid-wives lying?

Others say you have to distinguish the methods from the motives. So in the case of Rahab's lying and the mid-wives lying God doesn't intend to bless the methods but only the motives. You know they were trying to do the right thing by the people of God. So their motives were right but you know that won't do either, because, for example,

when James appeals to this he says the methods demonstrate the validity of the motives. It's the words that demonstrate the faith. Moreover there are places among these problems where God definitely commands that the deception takes place. When God commands the Israelites go in and conquer the land and he says I have set up an ambush over here. They will go out there and you go in and clobber them from the ambush. What is an ambush? An ambush is a lie. It's a lie, an action, a deception, and God commands it. Here is Saul and he has Samuel who is going up to anoint David. He is afraid of what Saul will do. "Tell him you are going up to do a sacrifice," God tells him and, of course, you know, that would be deceiving Saul and God commands it. You can't get around it by saying the methods are condemned and only the motives approved because that doesn't work.

Holy War and the Intrusion Concept

Obviously, you have to distinguish between individuals and institutions. So, for example, the taking of vengeance is wrong for an individual, Romans 12:19. But right away a few verses later that the state, the institution can indeed exact vengeance. In fact, it is set up for that very purpose. There is a big element of truth in that that a state can do some things which are analogous, they are not the same, but they are analogous to this kind thing which the individual should not do. But that won't work either because if you try to justify what Israel did in terms of what the state in Romans 13 is set up to do, they are not the same. The state of Romans 13 nowadays would be functioning according to the general code of the United Nations or the League of Nations earlier on or whatever, according to the Geneva Conventions. What the state of God has set up is not to be an aggressor nation and to go in and take away other people's property and lives, that's not what the institution of the state is for, but that is what Israel did.

So the institution of the state is to conduct a just war, We're not talking about a just war, we are talking about a holy war. Here's what we were saying earlier about this thing where you have the holy and the common function. It is not the function of the state to be engaging in holy things, such as holy wars, that's not what it is doing. In fact, here is Israel, they didn't own the land, they had been there for hundreds of years before.

Even when they were on the land before they didn't own it. Abraham buys a parcel of land to bury his wife and he had to pay for it. He doesn't own the whole thing. For four hundred years the patriarchs had been out of the land then they come back, that's longer than the history of our whole country. Now they come back and say this land is our land because God promised it to us. If some nation came and acted that way in front of the United Nations that wouldn't cut any ice with them. That is not the same thing at all. In any normal, common grace terms, Israel was the aggressor. They were murderers, they were butchers, they were thieves, they were deceivers, and every other terrible thing.

But that's not the right view of it according to the Scripture this was an intrusion. That's the whole thing. See this is the importance of recognizing the exception from the common. There is the common grace arrangement, but here was an intrusion you can't appeal to the exception or an intrusion as a norm anymore. So you shouldn't be trying to find some explanation that's going to whitewash the thing and make it look as though the same thing was going on there that is going on here. It is a completely different thing. The only proper explanation then is to see it in intrusion terms. This is a typological anticipation of final judgment which is a complete contradiction of all of these things.

So you don't appeal to intrusion ethics. When this typological thing is going on then it is proper to take the land that God claims and take it away from the others. It is right to put them to death. It is right to deceive them and so forth and so on. It is right to have imprecatory Psalms against them but we are not there. Now we are under the New Covenant and under the New Covenant there is not an intrusion theocratic situation. How important it is to understand these structures. Now we are here in a church living in a common grace world where we do what Jesus told us to do and we pray for these people and preach the gospel to them.

Some say, for example, in the case of the imprecation in the Psalms, "O, look, David isn't praying for personal vengeance, he is praying because he is a representative of the Lord and in opposing the representative of the Lord is the offence of David's enemies. So when he is praying for imprecation he is praying because of the honor of God's name because David is able to represent the Lord. He was the Lord's anointed,

how could they thus deal with him. So he was justified in praying. While there is an element of truth in that. But you have to see too that Jesus, if David was the anointed representative of the Lord then certainly Jesus was. In spite of the fact that he was the representative anointed of the Lord, when they are abusing him Jesus does not pray imprecations but he prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." So don't try to show that there is no difference between what is going on. There is a tremendous difference between what is going on in the so called problem materials in the Old Covenant. They are not material for us today.

Who is my neighbor?

Instead of seeing it as a problem, however, we should see it as an insight of what God is doing in history and we should see that what is going on here is an anticipation of heaven. It is teaching us what is going to happen when God decides to do it again. Meanwhile, you live on planet Earth. The common grace arrangement, is to love your neighbors. The day will come when the definition of neighbor changes and in heaven and those who are in hell are not your neighbors. Even before you get to heaven in that intermediate state introduced by that first resurrection when you're up there. Even in the intermediate state things have changed. So Lazarus, in Jesus' parable is up there in heaven and the rich man is in torments. He wants Lazarus to come and minister a bit to his torment. No, you are no longer Lazarus' neighbor rich man. The neighbor definition has changed when you get beyond this common grace world. Even into the intermediate state and the hereafter in heaven, the unbelievers are no longer the neighbors of the righteous.

So the Good Samaritan principle has to do with who is your neighbor. Now the Good Samaritan principle applies to us today. And who is your neighbor? Whoever is in need, you don't ask questions. As opportunity affords if a person is in need, God's providence, he is your neighbor. But up there in heaven and beyond final judgment the person in need, the person in torment, the rich man down there in torment, the reprobate in hell and their torments, the parable of the Good Samaritan doesn't apply there because the neighbor concept has changed.

So what we're pleading for here is just to see how the understanding of a structures of biblical theologies, the different covenantal orders, the whole arrangement of the coming of the kingdom, you have to have that straight in order to deal with such a fundamental key thing as what is the will of God for me. What is the right thing to do and to avoid, without falling into the horrendous blunder of the theonomous that just boggles your mind. They want you to take these intrusion ethics as normative for today in defiance of everything, that the Lord tells us in terms of the ethic of love for our neighbor here in this world at this time.

Having some love for my neighbors I will let them go home now.

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