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AN EXEGETICAL DEFENSE OF POSTMILLENNIALISM FROM I CORINTHIANS 15:24-26: *The Eschatology of the DIXIT DOMINUS*


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[The Greek and Hebrew Fonts are available from www.bibleworks.com]

Overview

The author seeks to exegete Paul's allusion to the first verse of the *Dixit Dominus* 

This title is the traditional title for Psalm 110 from the Latin Vulgate. Exegetical Summary: The *Dixit Dominus* is an announcement about a Ruler. The author (David) presents a picture of one greater than himself whom he addresses as his "Lord" (Psa 110:1). This Lord is called to sit enthroned beside the Covenant Lord (**hwhy**) while His enemies are being subdued (110:2). This enthroned ruler has dominion or "rule," but in the context of enemies (110:2). Still, His victory is assured because *all* His enemies shall be subdued (110:1). The later section of the Psalm teaches this "Lord" is more than a king; He is also a priest (110:4). He is a priest, not of Aaron, but eternally after the order of Melchizedek.


[Close](#) (Psa 110:1: "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.'" / 1Co 15:25: "For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet."). The study seeks to demonstrate that Christ is reigning in the exact sense of this verse during the interadvental period. The author demonstrates this by an exegesis of the passage, giving special attention to the chronology of the events of 1 Corinthians 15:22-26. The study is supported by the emphatic frequency of the NT teaching that Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father, in fulfillment of the expectations of the *Dixit Dominus*. Significant reflection is given to the chronological argument that death, the last enemy, is overcome at the parousia (coming) when those alive will be "changed" (1Co 15:23, cf 15:52-54). This "dates" Christ's mediatorial reign between the two advents. Hence, the eschatological

chronology of interadvental postmillennialism is supported. 

For recent and well documented study of postmillennialism see Keith A Mathison, *Postmillennialism: An Eschatology of Hope*(Phillipsburg: P&R, 1999).

[Close](#) The study concludes by noting the difficulties such an exegesis raises for (full) preterist, dispensational, premillennial, and pessimistic amillennial eschatologies.

The Dixit Dominus in the NT

The importance of the *Dixit Dominus* (Psa 110) and particularly the first two verses are paramount. 

The first verse of the Psalm is directly quoted six times in the New Testament (Mat 22:44, Mar 12:36, Luk 20:42-43, Acts 2:34-35, Heb1:13, Heb 10:12-13). A clear allusion to the verse is found in all three synoptics' report of Christ's interrogation, "You shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power" (Mat 26:64, Mar 14:62, Luk 22:69). The apostolic writers make use of the passage eleven othertimes in referring to Jesus' ascended to the right hand of the Father (Mar 16:19, Act 2:33, 5:31, 7:55-56, Heb 1:3, 8:1, 12:2, Rom 8:34, Eph 1:20, Col 3:1, 1Pe 3:22). Finally, Paul alludes to Psalm 110:1 when discussing the reign of Christ (1Co 15:25).

[Close](#) The first verse of Psalm 110 is directly quoted or referred to at least 21 times in the New Testament—more than any other Hebrew Scripture verse. Including references to the later verses of the Psalm in Hebrews (Heb 5:6, 7:17, 7:21, 5:10, 6:20, 7:11, 7:15), the Psalm is referred to some 28 times in the New Testament. It is quite an understatement, then, to say that this passage is highly significant for a theology of Messiah and His kingdom.


The Dixit Dominus in Paul's Resurrection Defense

One of the most significant theological expositions of Psalm 110:1 is found in 1 Corinthians 15:25 and the context.


For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. *For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.* The last enemy that will be abolished is death. (1Co 15:22-26)

Context and Purpose of 1 Corinthians 15:25-26


The entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 15 is directed to the question of the validity of bodily resurrection, as indicated in 15:12, “some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead.” In fact, the words for resurrection in their noun (avna, stasij) or verb (evgei, rw) forms are found 22 times in the passage (15:4-52). In developing his answer to this unorthodoxy, he provides an eschatological sequence moving from Christ’s resurrection to the te, loj (“end”). On first glance it might be curious that Paul’s defense of resurrection includes an explanation involving the kingdom and reign of Christ. But upon analysis the reader finds that it is precisely because resurrection regards death, and death is a kingdom enemy, that Paul must discuss the reign of Christ. Paul, the model apologist, argues evangelically (15:1-2), scripturally (15:3-4), evidentially (15:5-7), experientially (15:8) logically (15:9-19), theologically (15:20-22), eschatologically (15:23-27, 51-54), somatologically (15:35-49), and practically (15:58)—that there is a future bodily resurrection of believers!

The specific context of 15:25-26 is the origin of death (“for as in Adam all die”), the Messianic deliverance from death (“so also in Christ all shall be made alive”), and the sequence of this deliverance: “But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming.” The term “order” is from the root ta, gma. 

A hapax, the term carries the connotation of a military unit, class, or division. (cf. A. Robertson and A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, (T. & T. Clark: Edinburgh, 1982), p. 354.

[Close](#) The ta, gma (“proper order”) proceeds in the following manner: Christ was resurrected, 


It is also possible that the “first fruits of those who are asleep” indicates a group raised at the time of Christ’s resurrection (cf. Mt 27:52-53). Either view does not affect the discussion in view in this paper.

[Close](#) “after that” (e; peita) the resurrection of “those who are Christ’s at His coming” (parousi, a) (v. 23), “then comes the end” (ei=ta to. te, loj). It is clear that Paul is giving a chronological sequence of events because of his use such adverbs (e; peita, ei=ta) used for “marking the sequence of one thing after another.” 

Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament, Timothy and Barbara Friberg (1994), part of Bible Works/Hermeneutika (4.0) (hereafter, *ANLEX*).


[Close](#)

The Telos

The meaning of the phrase $\epsilon\iota=\tau\alpha\ \tau\omicron\ \tau\epsilon,\lambda\omicron\upsilon\acute{\jmath}$ (“then comes the end”) is elucidated by Paul contextually when he teaches that the “end” ($\tau\epsilon,\lambda\omicron\upsilon\acute{\jmath}$) is “*when* He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power” (15:24). Thus, the $\tau\epsilon,\lambda\omicron\upsilon\acute{\jmath}$ is “*when*” the kingdom is consummated. The “end” is not when the kingdom is initiated, but rather when it is finalized. The idea that the *telos* is an end period is not warranted by Paul’s grammar, contextual discussion, nor his use of the term. 


Observe that Paul uses $\tau\epsilon,\lambda\omicron\upsilon\acute{\jmath}$ 12 other times, never to indicate an “end period” (Rom 6:21, Rom 6:22, Rom 10:4, Rom 13:7, 1Co 1:8, 1Co 10:11, 1Co 15:24, 2Co 1:13, 2Co 3:13, 2Co 11:15, Phi 3:19, 1Th 2:16, 1Ti 1:5).

[Close](#) Neither does the syntax support the “end period” concept.

English translations (KJV, NKJV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, and NIV) of $\epsilon\iota=\tau\alpha\ \tau\omicron\ \tau\epsilon,\lambda\omicron\upsilon\acute{\jmath}$ (“then comes the end”) supply the verb, “comes.” The Greek text, however, has no verb in this phrase. Literally, it is “*then the end.*” Of the endless variety of verbs, phrases, or terms Paul could have employed to clarify that the *telos* is a 1000 year period of time, no such indication is present. The “end” is at the time “when” (1) “He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father,” and at the time when (2) “He has [already] abolished (katargh,sh--subjunctive aorist) all rule and all authority and power” (15:24). 

This point may be further demonstrated by a more precise grammatical consideration of the two $\omicron[\tau\alpha\upsilon\acute{\jmath}$ (when) clauses. “When” ($\omicron[\tau\alpha\upsilon\acute{\jmath}$) is atemporal conjunction “used to show indefinite time for repeated or contingent action *whenever, at the time that, when..* with the presentsubjunctive [it is used] to indicate action contemporaneous with the main clause *whenever, as long as, every time that* (Mt 6.2)” (ANLEX, likewise BAGD). In the first clause, since the verb $\rho\alpha\rho\iota\delta\iota\delta\omega\mu\iota$ (deliver, hand over) is a present subjunctive of $\rho\alpha\rho\iota\delta\omega\mu\iota$, $\omicron[\tau\alpha\upsilon\acute{\jmath}$ is correctly translated “when” and thus, signifies that the kingdom is delivered *at the time* of the $\tau\epsilon,\lambda\omicron\upsilon\acute{\jmath}$ (end). The second $\omicron[\tau\alpha\upsilon\acute{\jmath}$ clause, “when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power” employs the subjunctive aorist $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\rho\eta\gamma,\sigma\eta$ (abolished, destroyed, done away with). This is significant because $\omicron[\tau\alpha\upsilon\acute{\jmath}$ is used “with the aorist subjunctive to indicate action preceding the main clause *when* (Mt 5.11)” (ANLEX). Thus, He will have (*already*) abolished “all rule and all authority and power” *when* the $\tau\epsilon,\lambda\omicron\upsilon\acute{\jmath}$ comes. Christ “delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father” (15:24). He “hands over” (NIV, NRS) the kingdom.

[Close](#) Note that *hotan* (“when”) with the subjunctive aorist is correctly rendered “after,” according to BAGD. Thus, the second clause is correctly rendered by the NIV as, “after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.”


The point of this analysis is to show that what is meant by *te,loj* is explained by the two *o[tan* clauses. In the first clause, it is strictly contemporaneous: the *end* is precisely *when* (“at the time of”) 

BAGD, 588.


Close Christ delivers up the kingdom. The kingdom is therefore a reality prior to the “end.” In the second clause, the abolition of all authority has *already become a reality* – “He will have already abolished all rule and all authority and power” when the *te,loj* comes. The *te,loj* thus follows Christ’s reign and thus the *consummation* of the kingdom, since the subjection of his enemies has previously taken place. Therefore, no other rule, power, or authority persists following the *te,loj*. This view is affirmed even more in 15:25.

The Last Enemy

One could press 15:24 into the service of a variety of eschatological positions as is done in many quarters. However, further consideration of 15:25 and later sections of the chapter make the chronology of the Pauline eschatology definitive.

Paul explains, “For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet” (15:25). There is a *prima facie* relationship between 1 Corinthians 15:25 and Psalm 110:1b, “Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.” Paul uses the word “reign” in place of “sit at My right hand” and portrays Christ as active in the role of subduing His enemies. Conceptually 15:25 is identical to *Dixit Dominus* 1: the Lord is ruling until all enemies are subdued. It is important to note the *ga,r* is “introducing an explanation.” 

ANLEX.

Close Paul explains the kingdom actions of 15:24 by Christ’s reign. The “reign,” given contextual considerations is a present reality to Paul. 

Darrell Bock (not a postmillennialist) admits this clause is “indicating Christ’s current but ongoing rule. This rule has started but it is not finished. Some want to make verse 25 dependent on verse 24, thereby making Jesus’ reigning in verse 25 future. However, it is better to see verse 25 as explaining (*gavr*) all of verses 23 and 24, with Jesus’ reign beginning with His resurrection as ‘the firstfruits’ and continuing until the last enemy—death—is abolished (v. 26). So Paul also pointed to stages in God’s plan with initial fulfillments.” “The Son of David and the Saints’ Task: The Hermeneutics of Initial Fulfillment” (*BibSac*, V150 #600, Oct 93, 455).

[Close](#)

So, when does the reign of Christ (in the 15:25 sense) take place? Paul gives the chronological “key.” We are told *what* the “last enemy” (ε;scatoj evcqrō.j) is—“death” (qa,natoj) (15:26) and we are told *when* (o [tan] death is “swallowed up in victory” (15:54)—at the Resurrection (*parousia*). 🗨️

“Last” (ε;scatoj) is “pertaining to being the last in a series of objects or events,” says *The Greek-English Lexicon Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd Ed. Edited by J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, 1988 (in BWW). The *ANLEX* says, “last, final.”

[Close](#) Death (qa,natoj) is “abolished” (katargei/ta, 15:26) or “destroyed” (KJV, NKJ, NIV, RSV, ASV) “when this perishable (fqarto.n) will have put on the imperishable (avfqarsi,an), and this mortal (qnhto.n) will have put on immortality (avqanasi,an)” (15:54). *The conclusion is forceful and definitive for the millennial chronology debate.* Death is the poison of which resurrection is the antidote. Christ officially abolished death at *His resurrection* (2Ti 1:10, Heb 2:14) and will completely vanquish death at “*The Resurrection*” (1Co 15:54-55, Joh 5:29). *His (millennial) reign, in the terms of the Dixit Dominus, occurs between His resurrection and “The Resurrection” at which time the abolition of death, the last enemy, occurs.*

Paul’s rhetoric powerfully establishes that death is overcome at the *parousia*. In the first image (15:26), death is “abolished” or “nullified” (katargew cf. 2Co 3:14, Rom 4:14) and in the second context death is not merely “nullified,” it is “swallowed, overcome, destroy[ed]” (katapo,qh) (15:51-54) in victory. 🗨️

ANLEX.

[Close](#) This rhetorical progression is completely within the structure of the chapter and its theme of resurrection. The text says all [pa/san] avrch.n (rule) kai. pa/san evxousi,an (authority) kai. du,namin (power) will be “nullified” prior to His *parousia*. 🗨️

Notice the precise parallel in Eph 1:19b-23.

[Close](#) Death is the final power to be abolished. Again, if the last enemy is overcome at the *parousi,a* (coming) when those alive will be “changed” (avlla,ssw) and the “dead will be raised imperishable” (1Co 15:23 cf 15:52-54), Christ’s reign is interadvental.

Paul's eschatology is *thanatological*. Christ's reign is the antidote to death, for He will certainly overcome all His enemies, the last of which is the most pertinent to the "resurrection" question of chapter 15. Irrespective of our millennial moorings, we should all rejoice that by God's free grace, because of the merits of Christ, through the gospel (15:3-4) one receives this power of God for salvation from death (Eph 2:1-9, 2Ti 1:10)—the effects of which will be gloriously visible at the last day. 🗨️

"Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2Ti 1:10).

[Close](#)

I believe in ... the resurrection of the body.

Some Polemics of Millennial Eschatology

Several polemical points issue forth from this analysis:

1. Preterism, the view that NT prophecies were fulfilled in the past, rightly values the importance of the time referents ("this generation," "quickly," etc.). Moreover, preterists see the significance of the destruction of Jerusalem (70 Anno Domini) for the Olivet Discourse (Mat 24). 🗨️

The most important full preterist text is the massive 19th century study by J. Stuart Russell's, *The Parousia* (recently reprinted by Baker) and perhaps E. Hampden-Cook's, *The Christ Has Come* (Kingdom Counsel: [1891]). Contemporary full preterists include Edward Stevens of the "Kingdom Counsel," Max King, and John Noe (an ETS member). Full (unorthodox) preterists (above) are to be distinguished from partial preterists such as J. Marcellus Kik, Ken Gentry, Gary DeMar, and R.C. Sproul.

[Close](#) Now certainly, the exegesis of 15:24-26 excludes full preterism (or as it is labeled, "Hymenaeism" [2Ti 2:17-18] or "pantelism"). Unorthodox (full) preterism teaches that even the Second Advent of Christ took place during the destruction of Jerusalem. Not only is this view unorthodox according to the creeds of the universal Church, East, West, Protestant, and Roman—many full preterist views may be refuted in the text we have considered.

a) While there is no consistent view regarding the resurrection of believers among full preterists, 🗨️


Some hold to the "Immortal Body at Death" view of resurrection (Curtis, Hibbard, Noe and Stevens),

others hold to the “collective body” view of Max King.

Close what is common to all is that the Second Advent happened in 70 A.D. On the contrary, the above exegesis requires that, regarding believers, death is abolished for believers following the parousia (of 1Co 15:23). It is untenable, to say the least, to believe that since 70 A.D. death is nullified for believers in any way different than it was for those before, especially for saints during the NT period. It is true that the text does not teach that death is abolished in the sense of no longer existing in any sense (annihilation). This is no doubt because the reality of “death” for the wicked, “the second death” (οὐρανός οὐκ ἀποθνήσκει, Rev 20:14) is never annihilated (Rev 21:8). Paul’s resurrection argument (in 1Co 15) never addresses the resurrection of the wicked, though he taught it elsewhere (Acts 24:15). Rather Paul’s discourse requires that no enemies need to be subdued after the parousia, especially death.

b) Christ’s resurrection is paralleled with those “at His coming” (15:23). Paul insisted that Christ’s resurrection is the “first fruits” of the resurrection harvest two times (15:20 & 23). This surely requires our resurrection to be of the same kind of harvest, a point that might be exegetically confirmed in elsewhere (Phi 3:21). But full preterism cannot maintain that post-70 A.D. believers’ resurrections will be substantially the same as that of Christ. Paul’s polemic rests, however, on the similarity of Christ’s resurrection and the resurrection of those at His coming. A central point of Paul’s defense is that Christ’s resurrection was verifiable, “He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time” (15:6). (To add, if the parousia-transformation-resurrection happened in 70 A.D., what shall we say of believers after that? Is there any biblical teaching which addresses their resurrection-transformation? Full preterism must postulate an unorthodox, radical non-physical understanding of resurrection in order to explain how the resurrection is a past event.)


c) It is evident that the overcoming of enemies and abolition of powers results in an observable change in the world 15:25-26 (cf Heb 2:8). This is confirmed, moreover, by the fact that Paul speaks of a future “when (ο[ταν) he shall deliver up the kingdom to God” (15:24); a future “when (ο[ταν) all things are subjected to Him” (15:28); a future “when (ο[ταν) this perishable will have put on the imperishable” (15:54). Unorthodox preterism requires the orthodox to believe that the actual subjugation of all in the (observable) sense of 15:24-28 became a reality in 70 A.D. But would the Roman Christians of 71 A.D. “see” “all things subjected to him” (Heb 2:8)?

d) Unorthodox preterism requires us to believe that the kingdom of Christ (His reign) lasted only about 37 years. But the concept of a “millennium” is also a time reference to be taken literally. Milton Terry, I believe, rightly relates the kingdom to Jerusalem’s fall: “The entire New Testament teaching concerning the kingdom of Christ contemplates a long period, and the abolishing of all opposing authority and power; ‘for he must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet’ (I Cor. xv, 25). The overthrow of Jerusalem was one of the first triumphs of the Messiah’s reign, and a sign that he was truly ‘seated at the right hand of power.’” 

Apocalypse of the Gospels, out of print, but available at <http://www.PreteristArchive.com/ChurchHistory/ch-terry.html>.


Close If full preterism is true, all post-70 A.D. church history (including the 51st Annual ETS meeting), turns out to be after “the end.” This makes church history the encore (?) to the kingdom, rather than the expansion of the kingdom. Thus, we no longer enter the kingdom, proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, are transferred into the kingdom, work for the advance of the kingdom, or pray for Thy kingdom to come. The kingdom is gone. (?) So even apart from specific resurrection problems, considering the nature of the kingdom leads us to a full rejection of full preterism.

e) Unorthodox preterism is unsatisfying on the basic worldview level, the level at which Paul frames the discussion of resurrection. When Christians of all sub-creeds affirm, “I believe... in the resurrection of the body,” what is being affirmed satisfies a profound worldview demand, the redemption of the body (Rom 8:23) in world which is permeated by death. Will the evil of the world be a perpetual enemy without actual subjugation, world without end, Amen? Unorthodox preterism is unsatisfying too on a theological level, it makes no sense of the perennial kingdom of God motifs, reducing the fulness of that kingdom to less than a generation. Unorthodox preterism is unsatisfying in the biblical theology level, considering the development of sin, death, kingdom, and the advance of the gospel. Unorthodox preterism is unsatisfying on an exegetical level in view of the key didactic passages addressing the Second Advent and resurrection of believers (especially 1Co 15:22-26 & 1Th 4:16-17).

2. The above exegesis presents difficulties for our dispensational-pretribulational brethren. Pretribulationalism teaches a separation of (seven) years between the Rapture-transformation of believers (1Co 15:51-55) and the Second Coming of Christ. Contrary to this, the parousia of Christ is “when” death is overcome and those alive are transformed (1Co 15:51-55, cf 1Th 4:15-17). Such a reading does not permit a separation between the “Rapture” and the Second Coming. If there were such a separation, then Christ’s victory over death would not be gloriously demonstrated in the resurrection of believers at any one time. However, verses 15:51-55, speak definitively of a “then” (to, te “at that time”) which is grammatically correlative to the *hotan* of the same verse. 


See Louw-Nida.

Close Since the transformation is a definitive point in time, the demonstrable victory putting down the last enemy is likewise punctiliar. Death is the “last enemy” and is overcome at Christ’s (one) coming (15:26).

3. The above exegesis presents difficulties for premillennialism, generally. The common premill view of the passage sees stages of development in the telos, the reign of 15:25 as the millennial reign, and death being abolished at the end of the millennium. For example, Jeffrey Townsend says, “So in discussing the order of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:23–24 Paul sets forth a premillennial chronology: (1) Christ’s resurrection; (2) “after that” (e[peita, indicating a period of at least 1,900 years) the resurrection of believers (those that are Christ’s) at His coming; (3) “then” (eita, allowing for the millennial age of Rev 20:4–6) the end of the mediatorial kingdom (cf. 1 Cor 15:25) followed by (4) the eternal state.” 

“Is the Present Age the Millennium?” (*Biblio Theo Sacra*, V140 #559, Jul 83, 212).


Close In other words the premill interpreter’s verse 23-24 reads: “But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming, ETC., IBID, AND SO FORTH, SEVERAL OTHER RESURRECTIONS TO OCCUR, [E.G., HERE’S THE 1000 YEAR MILLENNIAL KINGDOM IMPORTED FROM JOHN, SINCE PAUL KNEW NOT OF IT], Then LATER comes the end” [emphasis added]. This does not seem to be the intention of Paul. At the very least, this kind of reading should admit that Paul was not cognizant of the premill millennial kingdom.

a) Further, with consistent premill interpreters that identify the reign of 15:25 as following the resurrection, they must deny that this “He must reign” clause is a citation-interpretation of Psalm 110:1. Because if it is an allusion to Psalm 110:1, then there can be no question that Christ is presently acting in fulfillment of it (Act 2:33, 34, 5:31, 7:55-56, Rom 8:34, Eph 1:20, Col 3:1, Heb 1:3, 13, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2, 1Pe 3:22). First Corinthians 15:27 affords even greater support for this, since it connects this reign with the exalted place of Christ and particularly putting all things in “subjection” to Him (Psa 8:6). “For he has put (u`pe,taxen, an indicative aorist) all things in subjection under his feet” (15:27a). Christ’s position over all things is not only written grammatically as a past event in 15:27 (with a progressive element, see 15:28), several other New Testament passages state this plainly and catenate His position at the “right hand” (Psa 110:1) with “all things under...” (Psa 8:6), just Paul does in 15:25-27 (Eph 1:20-22, Phi 3:21, Col 2:10; 1Pe 3:22). For example: Eph 1:20-21 the Father “seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion...” Hebrews 2:8 is probably the most complete commentary on this idea. It includes both the present preeminent position of Christ and the future consummation: the familiar already and not yet. 


Hebrews 2:8b does not mean that the subjugation is not a present reality; rather we do not now “see” the reality of His position. This tension is best explained (as above) as a positional-progressive reality with a future consummation. The same tension is true of Christ’s victory over death and our resurrection.

Close “Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.” Surely no one can deny that to Paul, Peter, and the writer of Hebrews these are present realities which began with the Ascension.

b) As an ad hoc response premillennialists may claim that Christ is presently “seated” but not “reigning.” However, this distinction is not only out of sorts with 15:25 as a parallel to Psalm 110:1 (note here Paul interprets sitting as reigning), but it is simply mistaken about the meaning of Psalm 110:1. “Sit at my right hand” means “sit enthroned.” The term for “sit” in Psalm 110:1 (the Qal imperative of yashav, bvy) may mean “reign.” “Reign as king” (malak %lm) is paralleled with “sit” (bvy) in many passages (e. g., 1Ki 1:17, 24, 30). In such contexts, “sitting” is the concrete image of enthronement. Such a sense is reinforced in 110:2, since this “Lord” “rules” with the “scepter/rod of your might.” Hence, Dahood

translates it, “sit enthroned.” 

Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III (101-150)* (Doubleday, 1970), 113. He “cites biblical and Ugaritic evidence for the majestic sense” of the use of this imperative (113).

[Close](#) Allen, who also translates this as “sit enthroned” uses this as evidence that the entire Psalm relates to “the concluding phase of the enthronement ceremony.” 

P. 83.

[Close](#) After all, the concept of sitting on a throne is not distinguishable from reigning. 

Neither does Hebrews 10:12-13 teach that Christ is passively “waiting” (NAS) for His enemies to be subdued, rather He is “expecting” it (KJV, ASV). Not only would passive waiting be inconsistent with 1Co 15:25, but also the writer’s other use of *evkde,comai* (“waiting”) (“looking forward to,” 11:10).

[Close](#)

c) The eschatological sequence of chapter 15 does not permit any period following the overcoming of the “last enemy” for other enemies to arise, especially death. But, premillennialism requires a post-parousia period for other enemies and death. As has been argued, neither is the *telos* an end period.



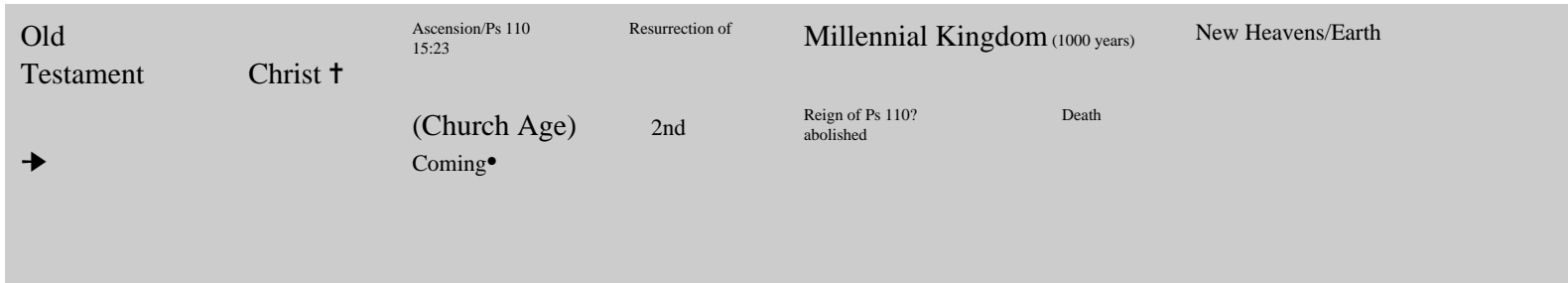
D. Edmond Heibert, “Evidence from 1 Corinthians 15” in *A Case for Premillennialism*, argues, “Therefore, by ‘the end’ Paul means an end period, which includes Christ’s conquest of enemy powers followed by the handing over of the kingdom to the Father” (230-31). While it is clear that “the delivering follows the subjugation” — to deduce that “Paul means an end period” is precisely contradictory to Heibert’s own analysis of the second *hotan* clause. Namely, “the destruction of Christ’s enemies is **prior** to the event of the first *hotan* clause, the delivering over of the kingdom **at the telos**” (231, bold emphasis mine). The subjugation cannot be both *the telos* (thus, a *telos* period) and *prior to the telos*. Heibert’s grammatical analysis is incoherent at this point. Even more, he fails to date the abolishing of the “last enemy.”

[Close](#)

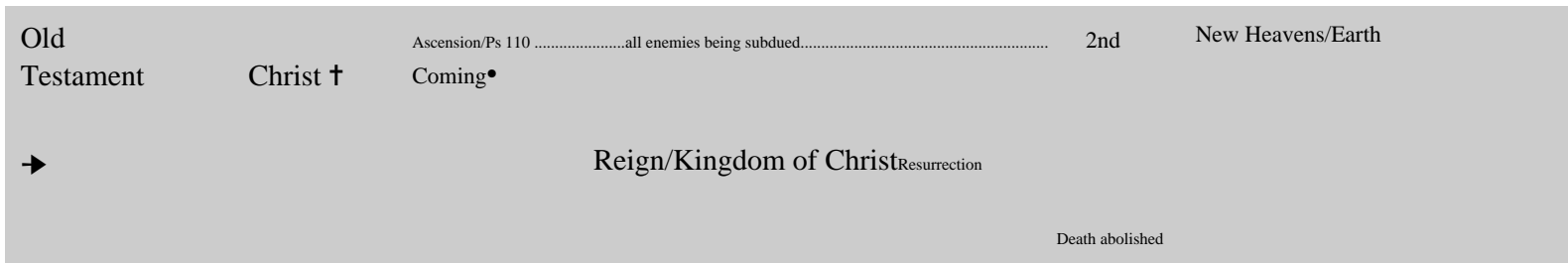
d) Connecting the earlier section (15:22ff) and the later section of the chapter (15:51ff) are necessary to a complete treatment of the implications for the millennial issue. Overlooking this connection is a serious weakness in premillennial treatments of the passage. The premillennial view fails to account

for the fuller context of 1 Corinthians 15 where the time-frame of the reign is clearly disclosed, i.e., we are taught when the “last enemy” is to be abolished, at the parousia which is when “death is swallowed up in victory” (at the “rapture,” of 15:54). It follows necessarily that the other enemies are subdued prior to the last enemy. Hence, Christ’s reign must begin prior to the parousia.

A Premillennial Chronology: Based on Rev 19-20, OT promises to ethnic Israel, and distinct purpose for church/Israel



A Postmillennial Chronology: 1 Cor 15:22ff, NT two-age model (“this world /and the world to come”), general resurrection-judgment



4. The difficulty this exegesis presents to amillennialism is not chronological. Postmills & amills differ regarding the nature of the reign/millennium, not the chronology of the millennium/reign of Christ. As such “optimist amillennialism” is really not disputed in this paper. The friction comes exegetically when some amills insist that the enemies of Christ are not subdued until the Second Coming. This would be inconsistent with the second hotan clause: the kingdom is consummated “after He has (aorist subjunctive) abolished all rule and all authority and power” (ASV). As noted above, the aorist subjunctive with hotan is used to indicate action preceding the main clause. The premills are right about these phrases indicating a process (contra certain forms of amillennialism), they are wrong about the chronology which dates the reign as beginning Christ at right hand and ending with the abolition of death at the Resurrection. Moreover, the expression of victory is as clear as Christ’s resurrection is victorious: all His enemies shall be put under his feet. The Resurrection marks the final victory, not the only victory. Death entered at the fall and will be visibly subjugated at the time when those who hold fast the gospel of resurrection are themselves raised (15:1-4). The reign is not a mere conflict with evil, it is a conquest over evil. If death’s vanquishing is the last victory, then there were many prior victories. This supports the expectation that Christ’s reign effects real change in the real world. The gospel changes the world! We preach another king, one Jesus! (Acts 17:7)

Summary

“For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet” (15:25). When is Christ reigning in the exact sense of this verse? — Precisely *when* Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father. Identifying the reign of Christ with the *Dixit Dominus* confirms the interadvental time-frame of His reign (1Co 15:25 is citation of Psa 110:1). Emphatically and repeatedly we are taught that Christ is at the right hand of God the Father (Psa 110:1; Mar 16:19, Act 2:33, 34, 5:31, 7:55-56, Rom 8:34, Eph 1:20, Col 3:1, Heb 1:3, 13, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2, 1Pe 3:22), and thus on a throne (Acts 2:30), reigning over His kingdom (Col 1:13), having dominion (1 Ti 6:16, 1Pe 4:11, 5:11, Rev 1:6), and even ruling “the kings of the earth” (Rev 1:5). Thus, Christ’s return is *postmillennial*. The New Testament abundantly confirms that Christ is reigning presently and is thus, progressively putting His enemies under His feet. In the words of Psalm 110:2, during the interadvent, Christ is “ruling in the midst of his enemies.”

Is it not clear that as Christ reigns, such a reign consists of subduing enemies (15:25). Sometimes the conquest of Prince of Peace requires the death of a Herod, even with worms (Act 12:23), or vengeance on a Lamb-less Temple (Mar 13:2), or the desolation of a Christ-rejecting Jerusalem (Mat 23:38). The blessedness of His reign, however, is that He also conquers His enemies with the gospel of grace and makes a Christless Pharisee like Saul of Tarsus into the Christ-filled Paul, the very apostle to the Gentiles he once despised, a dear co-laboring brother to those whom he once murdered. Whatever else is entailed in the conquest of the king of kings, we are assured that there will be “a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues” of former enemies, hostile in nature to God, who will fill heaven with their praises of the Lamb who sits on the throne (Rev 7:9). As the Psalm says, He is able to cause His people to “volunteer freely in the day of [His] power” (Psa 110:3, Mat 28:19-20). We are promised that “the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isa 11:9). Based on the present exegesis the interadvental expectation is general and universal advancement of Messiah’s kingdom with a final consummation of this victory at His coming when even death will be utterly and completely abolished. 🗨️

Such a view is creedalized in the carefully worded and comprehensive statements of the Westminster Larger Catechism, questions 45 (on the office of king) and 191 (on Thy kingdom come). Psalm 110 is cited as a proof for the phrase that Christ is “restraining and overcoming all their [the Church] enemies.”

[Close](#) *Maranatha!*

And remember to rejoice in postmillennial hope in a few weeks, when you sing: “The Kingdom of this world, has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign forever.”