

3 – The Seven-Mountain Mandate

Before I get too deep into this session, you need to know the Seven-Mountain Mandate is not a fringe teaching in some liberal seminary or flaky revival meeting. This teaching is sweeping through the Charismatic church. If I were to name those espousing this teaching, you would realize this eschatological view is becoming increasingly popular in the Charismatic church.

You can decide for yourself if this teaching is biblical. But as a student of Scripture, you need to separate unbiblical statements from what Scripture actually teaches.

As I detail the error of the Seven-Mountain Mandate, I hope to do this with the precision of a skilled surgeon. To correct the errors in this teaching requires meticulous attention to details, for there's some essential truths from this teaching the church needs to embrace. To scrape away the cancer without damaging what's vital, I will use a scalpel rather than a hammer.

As I will show in a minute, this teaching, in its modern form, often embodies a Partial Preterist and Postmillennial view of eschatology. To make this session easier to understand, let me quickly restate a simple definition of Partial Preterism, Postmillennialism, and Premillennialism.

1. Partial Preterism

Believes many of the prophecies in Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation were fulfilled in 70 A.D.

2. Postmillennialism/Dominionism

Believes we are currently living in the Millennial Kingdom and the church will bring Jesus back *after* she takes dominion over the nations through a great revival.

3. Premillennialism

Believes Jesus will return before the Millennial Kingdom and after a period of great tribulation on the earth. This class comes from a Premillennial perspective.

The Origins of the Seven-Mountain Mandate

The Seven-Mountain Mandate began, in my opinion, with a true revelation from the Lord. In 1975, two respected international leaders, Dr. Bill Bright and Loren Cunningham, received *independently* a revelation from the Holy Spirit about how to spread the gospel into the unreached segments of society.

Bill Bright founded Campus Crusade for Christ and Loren Cunningham founded Youth with a Mission (YWAM). Both of these ministries have brought the gospel to millions around the world.

Even though both leaders had brought the gospel to multitudes, the Lord revealed many areas of modern culture where the gospel had not penetrated. Both leaders referred to these areas of society as "mountains," which needed godly influence. These mountains are business, government, media, arts and entertainment, education, family, and religion. The strategy was to plant trained missionaries, who functioned as salt and light, into these sectors of society so the gospel would spread to unreached people.

When the two leaders got together, they were shocked to discover both had received the exact same revelation independently. Truly, the Lord had communicated an evangelistic strategy to win more people to Christ.

Later, another international leader, Francis Schaeffer, also received the same evangelistic strategy from the Lord, unaware of the revelation Bright and Cunningham had already received.

To me, this can't be a coincidence. The Lord was clearly revealing a strategy for the gospel to penetrate into unreached areas of society so the lost might be saved and the culture impacted by Christian values.

However, as is often the case, especially in the Charismatic church, a true revelation from the Lord was hijacked by leaders who cherry-picked certain verses to form an unbiblical doctrine. What began as a true Spirit-inspired strategy to win more people to Christ and influence the culture has morphed into a mandate to conquer Babylon and transform the nations so Christ can return. In essence, an evangelistic strategy to win multitudes to Christ was overtaken by dominion eschatology. The focus has shifted from a passion for the lost to a mandate for the nations to be Christianized so Jesus can come back.

With this in mind, I want to now explain Seven-Mountain teaching, detail what is good about it, and in the next session, I will describe nine errors of this teaching.

Not All Seven-Mountain Teachers Are Alike

It would be a misrepresentation to lump all Seven-Mountain teachers into the same category. Some Seven-Mountain teachers rightly use this paradigm to mobilize the church as salt and light to impact the culture. Others misinterpret a few Scriptures to support their teaching for the church to be salt and light. But it starts becoming dangerous when Seven-Mountain teachers twist many verses, taking them out of context, to form an unbiblical eschatological view.

Recall what Peter said about some of Paul’s end-time teachings. He stated that “some things [are] hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort” (2 Peter 3:16, emphasis mine).

Distort in the Greek means *to twist, turn awry, or to pervert*. This describes what some Seven-Mountain teachers do to verses about eschatology. They take the verse out of context to fit their preconceived doctrinal beliefs. This is when the Seven-Mountain teaching becomes dangerous.

Theologian Donald A. Carson attributes his father saying, “A text without a context is a pretext for a proof text.”¹ In other words, whenever a teacher removes a verse of Scripture from its original context—including the author’s intended meaning, the historical setting, the timeframe it was written, to whom the author was speaking, the culture of the day, the author’s purpose for writing the chapter and the book, the overall narrative of Scripture, and how the verse has been understood throughout church history—beware. This is when Bible teachers form a *pretext* and use a verse as a *prooftext* to support their preconceived doctrine. This is when serious, dangerous, and destructive doctrines are established. The most dangerous Seven-Mountain teaching is an expression of Partial Preterism and Postmillennialism.

The chart below illustrates the spectrum of Seven-Mountain teaching.

The Spectrum of 7 Mountain Teaching



Please note when I detail the errors of Seven-Mountain Theology in this session and the next, I will be describing the errors which range from the *medium* to *serious*. So it’s easier to read, I will not preface each statement with “some,” “many,” or “several.” I will just state “Seven-Mountain teachers” to imply those in the spectrum who are teaching medium to serious errors.

Seven-Mountain Theology

According to Seven-Mountain teachers, the Great Commission was not only a mandate to disciple individuals but to disciple entire nations. This includes the seven mountains of culture, which are government, economics, education, family, religion, arts and entertainment, and media.

According to this view, when Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,” He was not referring to individuals but to the systems establishing culture in the nations. In their minds, preaching the gospel of the kingdom is synonymous with transforming cities and nations before Christ returns. The idea is the gospel must penetrate and influence the mind molders of nations if the culture is to be transformed.

Proponents of the Seven-Mountain Mandate believe the church is to invade Babylon, bring heaven to earth, and take dominion of the seven mountains of culture. After all, Jesus gave us a mandate to “occupy” until He comes (Luke 19:13, KJV).

Seven-Mountain teachers claim Christ can’t return until “the period of restoration of all things . . . which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets” (Acts 3:21). Two of their favorite Scriptures from the holy prophets, to be fulfilled through the church before Christ returns, are: God’s glory will cover the earth like

the waters cover the sea and the nations will stream to the mountain of the Lord's house, which will become the chief of the mountains (Hab. 2:14; Isa. 2:2).

They also use Psalm 110:1, claiming the Lord Jesus will remain in heaven "until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." How will Jesus' enemies become His footstool? Through the church, the *ekklēsia*—God's government in the earth. It's through the *ekklēsia*, commissioned to exercise the authority of the resurrected Christ, who will take dominion over the seven mountains of culture. When this happens, God's mandate given to Adam, to take dominion over the earth, will be fulfilled (Gen. 1:28).

How, exactly, will this massive city-transforming, nation-invading conquest take place? Through the greatest revival in history—a revival marked by dramatic and pervasive signs, wonders, and miracles. This revival will be so extensive a billion souls will be saved. As a result, the nations will be transformed, God's enemies conquered (including the antichrist and false prophet), and the church will hand Jesus the nations as His inheritance. As the kingdom of God advances through revival and miracles, the kingdoms of the world progressively bow in surrender to the kingdom of Christ, fulfilling Revelation 11:15.

One prominent Seven-Mountain teacher said, "The Lamb was slain, making the ultimate sacrifice, to enable us to disciple, or instruct, the nations in these seven foundations of culture so that we would in turn deliver them to Him, thus fulfilling Revelation 11:15: 'The kingdom of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'"

He goes on to say, "Revelation 17 describes a 'harlot' who sits on a 'beast with seven heads' that are 'seven mountains.' This demonic entity, described as a woman, must be displaced from the mountains, or seats of power. This is our mission that we were co-missioned by Jesus to do."

According to this teaching, not only will the church overthrow the harlot Babylon, but we will also "take on the false prophet and the beast, and we're going to annihilate both of them. When they are crushed, we will come to the Lord and say, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God' (Rev. 11:15)."

Going further, this teacher states, "We will present the nations of the world to the Lord as His possessions. They will be the dowry that the Father is providing for us to present to the Bridegroom."

To be clear, not all Seven-Mountain teachers would agree with these statements. But this gives you an idea of the thought process.

The late Peter Wagner, who was instrumental in promoting the Seven-Mountain Mandate, said, "The Holy Spirit is now speaking to the churches and saying that God's people must do what it takes to transform society, segment by segment, until God's kingdom is seen on earth as it is in heaven."²

This idea has inspired some Seven-Mountain teachers to purport that the government of the church will rise up, spread God's light to the nations, and overcome all other governments. The church will even have the authority to command the governments of the earth to come into alignment with the kingdom of God.

One prominent Charismatic leader said, "As fanatical as it may sound to fundamental evangelical Christians, the church is destined to subdue all things and put all things under Christ's feet before He literally returns from heaven."

Here's a quick summary of the Seven-Mountain Mandate:

The seven mountains of culture, which includes government, economics, education, family, religion, arts and entertainment, and media, must come under the influence of the King and His kingdom. For this to happen, the church must invade the culture. Kingdom-oriented believers must invade these mountains of influence so society can be completely transformed. The church is to invade the culture for its total and complete transformation. When this takes place, Revelation 11:15 will be fulfilled: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ."

Seven-Mountain teachers sometimes make statements such as "stop looking into the clouds for His coming (Acts 1:11). We are not commissioned to wait for the Lord's return. Instead, we are called to 'occupy' until He comes (Luke 19:13, KJV)." They say "occupy" is a military term; therefore, we occupy for the purpose of advancement.

This involves invading every system of culture with kingdom influence, liberating it to fulfill its greatest potential. When this happens, Isaiah 2:2 will be fulfilled, which states, "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it" (Isaiah 2:2 NKJV).

The Seven-Mountain Mandate to Be Salt and Light

Though I categorically reject the idea of the church invading and conquering the seven mountains of culture, we are called to be salt and light which influences it (Matt. 5:13-16). We are called as a preserving agent to the culture, preventing it from rotting away. We are called as shining lights, like Daniel and Joseph, in a dark and depraved world. We can experience the kingdom now in a measure. So, I applaud the Seven-Mountain teachers for mobilizing the church to be salt and light in society.

Like Jesus said, if the church doesn't start preserving this depraved society, the culture will be "trampled under foot by men" (Matt. 5:13). When the church abdicates its responsibility to preserve the culture from decay, a vacuum is created. This means lawless, ungodly, depraved men and women will take advantage. This includes evil systems of government, such as socialism and communism, which always seize every opportunity to completely destroy freedom and establish minute control of our lives.

When believers flee to the mountains and retreat to the bunkers, waiting for Jesus to rapture us to heaven, antichrist systems of government will fill the vacuum and make lawlessness the rule of the day.

Many former Premillennialists shifted to Seven-Mountain theology after they witnessed the church abdicate their responsibility to be salt and light. They watched their friends and family forsake education, a successful career, a blessed family, and leaving a legacy to their children because they were swept into an end-time frenzy. They experienced the fatalist mindset of believers waiting for Jesus to come at any moment to rapture them to heaven. For many Partial Preterists and Postmillennialists, it wasn't Scripture that shifted their beliefs. Rather, negative experiences soured their view toward popular end-time teachings.

A few years ago, I heard a prominent Seven-Mountain advocate explain why he shifted from Premillennialism to Partial Preterism and Postmillennialism. He was saved during the Jesus People Movement. And during this time, Hal Lindsey's book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, became a best-seller. This book taught a Premillennial view of the end times. As he explained, many people believed Jesus was coming back at any moment. Because of this expectation, they became irresponsible. Why spend the time and money to get an education if Jesus is coming back soon? Why train to become a skilled worker with a successful career if we will be raptured out of this depraved world at any moment? Yet, as this man explained, some forty years later, here we are. Jesus didn't return. The rapture didn't happen. And many who embraced a Premillennial view became disillusioned, poor, and failures in life.

For many, they didn't embrace an alternative view because they first saw it in Scripture. Instead, irresponsible, unbalanced, and extreme Christians left a bad taste in their mouth. These experiences planted seeds of doubt toward Premillennialism, which eventually lead them to embrace Partial Preterism and Postmillennialism. To them, Premillennialism created too much fear, negativity, pessimism, and defeatism. Therefore, they looked for a more hopeful, positive, optimistic, and victorious eschatology. Unfortunately, this required much Scripture-twisting and interpretive gymnastics to fit their preferences.

What's Good About the Seven-Mountain Mandate

With all this in mind, here's what I appreciate about the Seven-Mountain Mandate. This teaching mobilizes the church to be salt and light in the culture. It helps a Christian worldview penetrate into government, education, media, arts and entertainment, family, economics, and religion. Honestly, who can argue with that? Would you rather have legalized abortion or see it outlawed? Would you rather have freedom of religion or persecution? Would you rather have our kids trained in Marxist ideology or Christian values?

Think about it. What would the world look like if our founding fathers shunned the need for a government of the people by the people for the people, established upon Christian principles, because they expected Jesus to return at any moment? There would be no Bill of Rights or Constitution. The greatest nation in the world would never have existed. It's likely the gospel would not have spread and multiplied in the nations like it has today.

What if William Wilberforce abandoned his mandate to be salt and light and fled to the mountains, waiting for Jesus to return? Would slavery still exist?

What if Martin Luther King Jr. decided, since the world is going to hell and Jesus is coming back at any moment, to not waste time on solving racial injustice? Why bother with civil rights? Why push for racial equality? Jesus is coming soon and He will right all the wrongs.

So, I appreciate how Seven-Mountain advocates want to see our culture transformed, revival to spread, Christian values to penetrate into the culture, and for the church to be salt and light. I also appreciate their

positive outlook on life and the future. All who hold a Premillennial view of the end times, myself included, can learn valuable lessons from Seven-Mountain teaching.

If we were living 100 to 200 years ago, a Postmillennial view of the end times would definitely have a more positive impact in culture than Premillennialism. Most of the revivalists of the First and Second Great Awakening were Postmillennialists, including Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield, the Wesley brothers, and Charles Finney. From a practical viewpoint, a Postmillennial mindset has done much good to reform culture. This is something we have all benefited from.

The Influence of Christianity in America’s Founding

Perhaps there is no greater example of how Christians are to be salt and light, who influence and impact culture, than America in her beginnings. Recently, I have been reading *The Light and the Glory* by Peter Marshall and David Manuel. I highly recommend this book, which traces America’s history from 1492 to 1793.

Reading this book, you see clearly God’s plan for America. It began with the Pilgrims, also known as Separatists. Heavily influenced by the Reformation spearheaded by Martin Luther, the Separatists in England believed their congregations should separate from the state-church of England, which was virtually identical to the Roman Catholic Church. Because the Separatists severed ties with the Church of England, they experienced heavy persecution, which led them to flee to Holland for several years. However, when the living conditions became too burdensome, they decided to move to America.

In 1620, these Separatists came to America and established Plymouth Colony. One of their main reasons for coming to America was their desire for religious freedom. The Pilgrims’ courageous obedience to the sovereign will of God was the seed which eventually led to the Puritans, the First Great Awakening, the Revolutionary War, and the writing of the Constitution. God honored the Pilgrims’ great sacrifices and courage to establish America.

About a decade later, John Winthrop led the Puritans to establish Massachusetts Bay Colony. The main difference between the Puritans and the Pilgrims was their connection to the Church of England. The Puritans stayed in the Church of England, believing they could reform it from the inside while the Separatists broke away from the church, believing reform was impossible because of the depth of corruption.

The Puritans were devout believers and the Puritan Movement in New England was the multiplication of the Pilgrims’ initial seed in the wilderness of America, for the Lord was moving to establish a nation set apart for Him and His purposes.

When Winthrop was praying about whether to move to America, here’s a few things he journaled:³

1. It will be a service to the church of great consequence to carry the gospel into those parts of the world . . . and to raise a bulwark against the kingdom of antichrist which the Jesuits labor to rear up in those parts.
2. All other churches of Europe are brought to desolation [due to persecution] . . . who knows, but that God has provided this place to be a refuge for many whom he means to save out of the general calamity, and seeing the Church has no place left to fly into but the wilderness, what better work can there be, then to go and provide tabernacles and food for her against she comes thither [what comes against her].

For centuries, historians have attempted to articulate the purpose and destiny of America. They have debated what, exactly, this nation was intended to be. In my opinion, Winthrop is the one who truly carried God’s vision for this nation. In God’s heart, America was created to resist the antichrist, be a refuge from persecution for His people, and to carry the gospel into the nations.

The Puritan movement grew in New England, but overtime, the fire began to wane and the light grew dim. That is when God sent one of the greatest outpourings of the Spirit in history—the First Great Awakening. Led by preachers Jonathan Edwards and George Whitfield, the First Great Awakening was called by some historians the national conversion of America.

George Whitfield, a young English preacher, had a voice that fully captured people’s attention. Without the technology of microphones and speakers, Whitfield could be heard by 30,000 people at a time.

After a brief time of preaching in England, the Lord sent Whitfield to America. Whitfield's vision was to make the 13 colonies one nation under God. Whitfield was devoted to preaching the gospel and proclaiming the new birth resulting from faith in Jesus Christ. When his preaching career ended, Whitfield had preached over 18,000 sermons. He poured his life out as a drink offering so the entire nation of America could be saved. Even with his health failing, Whitfield preached to the very end.

After Whitfield's ministry from 1740 to 1770, his vision was realized. America was one nation under God. America had experienced a national conversion. This doesn't mean every single person was born again. But many were.

One crown-appointed governor said this about the Americans: "If you ask an American, who is his master? He will tell you he has none, nor any governor but Jesus Christ."⁴ This gave rise to the cry up and down America by the Committee of Correspondence: "No king but Jesus."⁵ The First Great Awakening converted a nation. For the first time, the 13 colonies became "one nation under God."

What many don't realize, however, is the First Great Awakening led directly to the Revolutionary War. And leading the charge for freedom from tyranny were America's fiery preachers of righteousness. Up and down the 13 colonies, America's preachers were calling their people to throw off the shackles of tyranny and fight for freedom. They would frequently proclaim Galatians 5:1, declaring from their pulpits, "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery." Here was their logic:

God moved in a great outpouring of His Spirit. A nation was born again. Therefore, we cannot come under England's oppressive yoke of tyranny and slavery. God wants this nation to be free.

Having experienced a national conversion, most of America's founding fathers were born-again believers in Jesus Christ. Notice what Patrick Henry said in his famous speech, given in the Virginia House of Burgesses, as they contemplated a declaration of independence from England:

There is no longer room for hope. If we wish to be free, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of Hosts is all that is left us!

They tell me that we are weak, but shall we gather strength by irresolution? We are not weak. Three million people, armed in the holy cause of liberty and in such a country, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. We shall not fight alone. God presides over the destinies of nations, and will raise up friends for us. The battle is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave

Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!⁶

This type of absolute surrender to the Almighty by America's founding fathers led them to war against the crown. Without going into the details, there is no doubt God gave America a miraculous victory over England. Against all odds, the Lord of Hosts was with our founding fathers in the war for independence, freedom, and liberty.

Then, when the war was over, the Holy Spirit led America's founding fathers in drafting the Constitution—the most brilliant creation of government in history. So much of this Spirit-led document was based upon the Scriptures. Even the three branches of government—the executive, legislative, and judicial branches—were inspired by Isaiah 33:22, which states, "For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; He will save us."

There are so many more details I could list, but the main point is this: America's founding and America becoming a free and independent nation is perhaps the greatest example of how Christians can function as salt and light to influence a nation.

This doesn't mean America and the kingdom of God are synonymous. Nor does it mean the kingdom of God invaded and took over America. But it does mean America was heavily influenced by the kingdom of God and Christians who fulfilled their role as salt and light to impact culture.

Conclusion

I believe all Premillennialists, including myself, can learn a lot from our Postmillennial brothers and sisters in Christ, especially what it means to be salt and light that impacts culture, the desire for revival, an optimistic outlook of the future, and fighting in prayer for the destiny of our nation.

From a practical standpoint, I agree with many aspects of Seven-Mountain teaching, especially how it mobilizes the church to be salt and light in the culture. But from a theological standpoint, I disagree strongly with the verses used to establish Seven-Mountain teaching as a doctrine. We will look at these in the next session.

¹ <https://www.365christcenteredleadership.com/bible-study-101-part-1-text-without-context-is-a-pretext>, referenced on 1/6/2021.

² Peter Wagner, "Transform Society," *Global Prayer News*, Vol. 6, No. 3, Jul-Sep 2000, cited in PJ Hanley, *They Call Themselves Apostles* (2017), loc. 1511 in the Kindle app.

³ <http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/bdorsey1/41docs/15-win.html>, referenced on 1/5/2021.

⁴ Peter Marshall and David Manuel, *The Light and the Glory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1977), p 267.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 269.