

Sunday, January 9, 2022 pm

PREMILLENNIALISM (9)

Will Jesus Reign on Earth for 1000 Years?

Revelation 20:1-6

Tonight, we continue our study of premillennialism. We have noted a number of topics associated with this doctrine about the end times. It is my hope that we have seen that this is a false doctrine based upon texts that are filled with symbolism (apocalyptic literature). We have discussed the theory of premillennialism with a chart that indicates we are living in the time prior to the rapture and Lord's return. We have addressed topics such as:

- 1) How the church was not an afterthought and how it is related to the kingdom – in essence they are the same;
- 2) The spiritual nature of the kingdom in which we noted that many of God's plans and prophecies had a spiritual overtone from the beginning.
- 3) We have discussed the rapture, the great tribulation – including an examination of Daniel 9 and Matthew 24;
- 4) We have talked about the book of revelation and the nature of apocalyptic literature – a genre that was prevalent at time Revelation was written. We noted that many details may be obscure to us because we were not the primary audience (the 7 churches of Asia were), the book clearly indicates its fulfillment was relevant to that generation, and we noted how some details may simply be "filler" in discussing the overall message of a specific vision and ultimately, the theme of book – "God wins" or "Jesus wins".
- 5) In our last lesson we addressed,
 - The antichrist – as a TYPE of person who rejects God and the person of Jesus
 - The battle of Armageddon which is symbolic of the battle between good and evil (numerous OT battles were fought in that area that demonstrate this). The point simply teaches us that God will WIN the war against Satan according to His will. It could be descriptive of the particular enemies of the 7 churches (Rome) or a description of His second and final coming when Satan will ultimately be crushed and judgment will take place.

This brings us to the final block of studies. I intend to conclude this study in 3 lessons: 1) Will Christ reign for 1000 years on earth? 2) What about the nation of Israel today? 3) Why this is a matter of fellowship. At some later point (possibly the first Sunday MORNING of February), we will address what will happen when the Lord does return? That is a FIRST principle lesson? So let's get started with today's lesson.

I. What about the 1000-year reign of Christ on earth?

- a. In past lessons we have noted how the Jews of Christ's day were anticipating a materialistic kingdom. It is how they interpreted various prophecies about the coming kingdom. When Jesus came, they rejected His spiritual application and crucified Him, and they continued to reject His apostles and disciples as well. TODAY, is no different, as the multitude of so-called Christendom (the conglomeration of all who believe in Jesus as the Messiah – whether right or wrong) believes in and are anticipating a materialistic kingdom. That is what premillennialism is about. And its focal point is Revelation 20 and the 1000 reign of Christ and binding of Satan. One source from a few years ago estimated that more than 70% of believers expect Christ to return and reign for 1000 years.
- b. This text is the ONLY place in scripture that addresses the 1000 reign of Christ. Yet, as much as it is touted by advocates of premillennialism you would think it would be found continually in scripture, much like discussions about the resurrection and 2nd coming of Jesus are.
- c. The 1000 reign of Christ MUST be understood with the realization that Christ is now reigning. We have already addressed this in our study, so here I simply want to mention some of these passages:

- i. First, it is in line with prophecies in Daniel about the Roman Empire (e.g. Daniel 2:44), and passages about Pentecost as its beginning (Isaiah 2:2-4, Joel 2:28-32, etc.)
 - ii. Both John and Jesus in their preaching declared the kingdom was at hand – Matthew 3:2, 4:17.
 - iii. During His ministry, Jesus spoke of it happening during that generation – Mark 9:1, Acts 1:8, etc. Matthew 16:18-19 – Jesus told His apostles they would be given the keys to the kingdom of heaven.
 - iv. Jesus is NOW reigning on the throne of David – Luke 1:30-33 – it was announced to Mary; Acts 2:25-36 – Peter boldly declared it on the day of Pentecost.
 - v. After Pentecost, the kingdom is spoken of as in existence – Colossians 1:13, Hebrews 12:28.
 - vi. Even John in Revelation 1:9 spoke of it in existence noting he was their companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.
 - vii. THEN there is the understanding that the kingdom is spiritual – John 18:36, Romans 14:17; Luke 17:20-21; We are citizens of this kingdom – Ephesians 2:19, Philippians 3:20.
 - viii. We MUST keep all of these thoughts in mind as we interpret Revelation 20. Remember – the Bible does NOT contradict itself. And this point alone defeats premillennialism.
- d. Let's now examine the text:
- i. NOTE: As we go through this text, we will notice some points that contradict premillennialism. There are details about this text that I do not know with certainty what they are, BUT we see what they are NOT and narrow down the possibilities. This is an effective method that ought to be part of studying anything in God's word that is a challenge.
 - ii. Vs. 1-3 – Satan is bound for 1000 years and cast into the bottomless pit
 - 1. NOTE: This is the emphasis of this 1000 years in this text. It is his defeat through which Christ reigns with greater authority. This text comes on the heels of “the battle of Armageddon” which we discussed in our last lesson – a place symbolic of battles between good and evil. Good wins.
 - 2. Question – how can a pit be bottomless? This is obviously figurative. Also is the **chain** (limiting power) literal – how do you literally chain a spirit being? Is there a literal **key** (authority) that opens this bottomless pit – what type of room can hold him? IF these are figurative, why cannot the 1000 years be figurative?
 - 3. Furthermore, consider that Jesus when He died on the cross defeated Satan – limited him in his abilities.
 - a. In Matthew 12:28-29 – Jesus alludes to binding a strong man after being accused of casting out demons in the name of Beelzebul. In context He is referring to what He intended to accomplish – LIMITING Satan.
 - b. Hebrews 2:14-15 speaks of Jesus in His life and death destroyed the devil. He limited him.
 - c. Colossians 2:13-15, esp. vs. 15 – having disarmed principalities and powers.
 - d. Ephesians 4:8, at His ascension “He led captivity captive” – He limited the powers of Satan
 - e. Add to this the authority of Christ over ALL things now – Matthew 28:18, Ephesians 1:19-23, etc.
 - f. No longer can Satan possess unlimited or greater power – his power is limited. In fact, we learn in scripture that the only power he has over us is what we give him – 1 Peter 5:8-9 – we can resist and he will flee. Consider the church: Unlike Rome which declared worldwide persecution against the church on earth, no worldly kingdom since then has been as

successful, NOR has anyone or Satan STOPPED the church. We're still here.

iii. 4-6 – Thrones are set up for judgment –

1. NOTE: This is a challenging text to interpret – BUT that is because it is in the book of revelation which is apocalyptic – with figurative language. This is also the fulcrum of premillennial theory.
2. **John saw thrones** – notice the text does NOT say they were on earth (in Jerusalem). Nor are they necessarily literal. This could be spiritual, and is likely figurative like the rest of this text – representative of ruling or a place of honor, much like the place given to the apostles by Jesus – cf. Matthew 19:28 – they would be sitting on 12 thrones; cf. Matthew 16:19- keys to the kingdom, etc. The judgment of the apostles deals with how response to their message would determine eternal destiny (e.g. you accept it leading to salvation, you reject it leading to condemnation).
3. **The souls (NOT bodies) of martyrs lived and reigned with Christ for 1000 years.** They are specified - individuals who were martyred – beheaded for their witness to Jesus and His word – see Revelation 6:9 – the fifth seal, WHICH we have noted was likely reference to the persecutions the audience of Revelation and those around them were going through. Our current vision MUST include these martyred saints. And if it deals with those persecuted then, it conflicts with premillennialism. That is why premillennialism places all of Revelation, except ch. 1-3, as yet future. **Furthermore, notice there is NO mention of a bodily resurrection.**
Question: IF this is literal, what of saints that are executed by stoning or firing squad? Clearly the implication is all who are martyred for Christ.
4. **The rest of the dead did not live until the 1000 years was completed** – this would be all not included in the above. The ungodly have no cause when they die. They will not STOP God's plans and His church (something the Roman empire tried to do several times beginning with Domitian's persecution, and possibly Nero). All they have is the wait for eternity.
5. **This is the first resurrection** – premillennialists speak of multiple physical resurrections, but that is NOT necessary in this text and contrary to Bible teachings about the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of all – both righteous and wicked at the same time as previously noted. **Be reminded, this is souls, NOT bodies, being resurrection.** This could figuratively describe the victory of the saints over Satan. While martyred, they were NOW safe in the arms of Jesus as He rules. While we do not have time to develop this in this lesson, there are 2 resurrections and 2 deaths. Here is one possible scenario.
 - a. First death – physical death
 - b. Second resurrection – the second coming when ALL will be raised.
 - c. Second death – eternal condemnation – separation from God. Revelation 20:14. We KNOW this has to be the answer.
 - d. First resurrection – would be associated with those who die in the Lord.
 - i. Their victory in Him – cf. Revelation 14:13. Applied to the martyred saints – see Revelation 6:9-11. In vs 11, they are given a white robe and told to rest for a while. They would be avenged!
 - ii. The first resurrection of our text does NOT have to be a physical resurrection.
 - iii. One thing that comes to my mind is how our salvation is described as a resurrection – Colossians 2:11-13, Romans 6:3-4.

This is spiritual – as we are saved, and our sins are washed away. It is not just about getting wet – cf. 1 Peter 3:21.

While this might not be the first resurrection of Revelation 20:5-6, it is SIMILAR in type. For this to be the case, the first death would likely need to be spiritual death due to sin (Romans 6:23).

- iv. Some sources refer to this resurrection as the “cause of Christ” for which many died at the hand of persecutions. While Rome tried to stamp out Christ and His church – they FAILED miserably and in the end the cause of Christ not only remained, but it flourished (even in the empire if you want to consider Constantine who made the Christian faith the religion of the empire). The Roman Empire CEASED to exist. In this, the righteous who suffered are vindicated and their cause is “resurrected”. The fact that we are here is testament to this living cause.
The rest of the dead THEN is everyone else who await the “second resurrection” which is the general resurrection we read of in scripture.

6. ***Those raised would be priests of God and Christ and reign with Jesus 1000 years.***

This describes the nature of their “reign” with Christ.

- iv. 7-9 - After the 1000 years, Satan will be released for a short time, deceive the nations, gather them together from all over the earth at God and Magog. BUT, they will be devoured. IN the book of Revelation this IS something that could be yet future, depending on what the 1000 reign actually is. IF Revelation is dealing with Rome persecuting Christians and the church, then the primary fulfillment of Revelation is the fall of Rome. The church survived and continues to this day. Historically, since Rome there has not been a world empire, though there have been many attempts (Hitler tried, Russia has tried, Islam is trying, etc.) The release of Satan COULD be a time of worldwide persecution of the church (even without a world empire). We are seeing what COULD be the development of this. So it is POSSIBLE that we are in the period of time after the 1000 years of Revelation 20. **NOTE: But this is mere speculation and if so, a warning to prepare for the end!** Something we must always be doing!
- e. Other considerations as we consider this 1000 year period of time.
 - i. There are also other Biblical concerns with making this text a literal physical reign of Jesus on earth for 1000 years.
 1. ***It implies that God has not fulfilled His promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3*** – because Israel does not have the land or nation promise in its completed form. But the Bible teaches God DID keep His promise and gave them their land and they became a great nation. I will address this in our next lesson. They want the Messianic promise completed, but NOT the physical land promise.
 2. ***It cannot be something that involves multiple judgments*** – Jesus was clear that both the righteous and wicked would be judged at the same time – John 5:28-29, So did Paul – Acts 24:15.
 3. ***It cannot be a physical reign on earth*** – because Jesus said His kingdom was spiritual as already noted (John 18:36, Luke 17:20-21; cf. Romans 14:17, etc.). 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 – says that Jesus will reign (which we have established is NOW taking place) until “the end” at which time He will deliver His (spiritual) kingdom to the Father, and death will be destroyed. This all happens at ONE TIME! If Jesus is reigning now – the kingdom is spiritual – PERIOD!

- ii. The number 1000 could be symbolic for a complete and uninterrupted period of time. It need not be a literal number, as is the case with various numbers in Revelation. Consider Psalm 50:10 which says of God, *“For every beast of the forest is Mine, And the cattle of a thousand hills.”* This number is obviously figurative. Does the 1001st hill NOT belong to Him?
 - iii. Finally, there are several things about our text that are NOT mentioned:
 - 1. The second coming of Christ
 - 2. A bodily resurrection
 - 3. Jesus or the saints reigning on earth
 - 4. The literal throne of David
 - 5. Jerusalem or Palestine
 - 6. “Us” – notice those reigning is described as “they” – a specific group.
Premillennialism includes “us” if we are the faithful at rapture or after His return.
 - iv. READ the text and you will see these things are lacking. Remove them and the premillennial doctrine of His 1000-year reign falls apart.
- II. Why bring Christ back to earth? <http://www.bibleanswer.com/xtoearth.htm>, Harkrider, Lesson 3, God’s prophetic word pgs. 193-199.
- a. He completed His mission – Col 1:13-14, John 17:1-5
 - b. His authority is complete – Matt. 28:18
 - c. His revelation is complete – Jude 3, Hebrews 1:1-3
 - d. His glory is complete – Philippians 2:9-11, 1 Peter 1:20-21
 - e. He is NOW reigning on His throne in heaven – “seated at the right hand of God” - Acts 2:33, 7:56, Romans 8:34, Hebrews 12:2, 1 Peter 3:22, etc. NOTE: There is also another line of reasoning that says Jesus CANNOT physically reign on earth on the throne of David – it has to do with Coniah (Jeconiah), the final king of Jerusalem in Jeremiah 22:30. No descendant of his would proper sitting on the throne of David in Judah. Matthew 1:11 – Jesus, as a descendant of Coniah, cannot sit on David’s throne on earth!

What more does Jesus need to do? WHY does He need to come back to this earth?

There is much in this lesson, and I have just given some of the highlights. As with so much of Revelation, I do not claim to have all the answers. There are visions and details that I cannot with certainty determine (and neither can anyone else alive today) – all we can do is speculate. BUT, as we have seen in this lesson, because of that which is plainly revealed in scripture, the premillennial interpretation CANNOT be true. Thus I continue to reject it. AND as I have noted in most, if not all, of our lessons on this subject – what is important for us to emphasize is that the Lord IS going to return, and it could be at any time. When He does, we need to be ready to face our eternal destiny. What about you? Do you want to live with Him for eternity (not a materialistic 1000 year period of time followed by eternity)? Are you ready for His return? Think about it!