

The Millennium

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Lorain Avenue Church of Christ (06-30-2024)

Good morning.

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Today's lesson is the second ... of a two-part lesson.

Last Sunday's lesson was ... "The Kingdom and The Church."

Today's lesson is titled ... "The Millennium."

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Our main focus this morning is to expose the false doctrine of "Pre-Millennialism."

As I pointed out last week, the best way to expose and fight false doctrine ... is to teach the truth.

By this I mean ... teach, in full, what the Bible has to say ... and then see how well a doctrine ... or interpretation ... holds up under the light of the Gospel.

This is a far better way than trying to unravel a false doctrine ... thread by thread.

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Today, we'll examine a period of time the bible refers to as the 1000-year reign of Christ.

1000 years. The Millennium.

The Bible teaches that Christ is now reigning over His Kingdom, and will continue to do so until His second coming. The duration of His reign ... is a figurative 1000 years. At His second coming, Christ will Judge the world, sentence the unrighteous to hell, and deliver the Kingdom (containing the righteous) back to His Father.

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Pre-Millennialists teach that Christ failed to establish the Kingdom while on earth during His first coming. So, He put the Church in place until He would come again to establish His Kingdom. His reign would begin at His second coming. Not for a figurative 1000 years, but for a literal 1000 years. According to their reasoning, we are living in a period of time before the Millennium. Hence ... "Pre-Millennialism."

This is a simple overview. There are various versions of Premillennialism stemming from mis-interpretation of the scriptures pertaining to the reign of Christ.

There is no profit in examining any of them in great detail ... until we become settled and grounded in what Scripture actually DOES teach.

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Last week we proved that the Kingdom and the Church are identical. Two ways to describe the fullness and richness of the divine institution by which and in which we find salvation.

The Church is the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose, planned before the foundations of the world.

You can access last Sunday's lesson on our website. Not only is there a video and audio version, but there also is a text version you can download.

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On the screen is a graphic that shows a simplified depiction of Premillennial Doctrine. It's the same as the top picture on your handout.

Let's step through it.

Christ dies, rises, builds His Church (after failing to establish His Kingdom), and ascends to Heaven.

We are living in present times. People have been living in this "Church age," as it were, for nearly 2000 years.

At the appointed time, Christ will return to earth, successfully establish His Kingdom, and begin His reign. There will be a "first resurrection," in which only the righteous will be raised. In some variations, a rapture will take place where some of the righteous are plucked from the earth and taken to Heaven.

Christ will reign over the righteous for a literal 1000 years in an earthly kingdom. Some variations may limit the righteous to a predetermined, fixed number.

At the close of the Millennium, Christ will raise the unrighteous in a second resurrection, after which the saved will be taken to Heaven, while the lost will be sentenced to Hell.

Pre (before the) Millennium.

I don't pretend to be an expert in all that Premillennialists believe. But I do want to become an expert in all that the Bible teaches.

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I'm sure ... you can identify many of the errors being taught by this false doctrine

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Now, let's take a look at an overview of what the Bible actually does teach concerning the Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ.

Time will not permit great depth in any one of the items we'll discuss this morning. But let this be enough to squelch false teaching, at the same time opening the door for questions and further study.

Much of this will be familiar to many. Perhaps new to others. These are important foundational truths Christians, stirring up the hope that lies within us in Christ.

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Let's step through.

Christ died for all sins. He was buried but arose the third day. His resurrection bound Satan's power over us (Revelation 20:1-2). Satan has been limited ever since that day. Jesus ascended to His Father. God placed Him on the throne of the Kingdom. And as we studied last week, Jesus did build His Church as He proclaimed in Matthew 16. The Church had been established. Peter preached the first Gospel sermon on Pentecost. The Kingdom had come.

Christ is now reigning as King of the Kingdom. Jesus is Head of the Church, His Body. Those saved in baptism are being added by the Lord to the Church. Christians are members of the Body and Citizens of the Kingdom. And we are reigning with Christ right now. He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father (Revelation 1:6).

Jesus said, "My Kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Gabriel told Mary, "Your child will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end," (Luke 1:32-33).

David prophesied in Psalm 2:6-7 that God would raise His Son from the dead and crown Him King of the Kingdom. Peter confirmed that this had indeed already taken place when He preached on Pentecost (Acts 2:30-35). In Acts 2:36 Peter proclaimed, "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Not on David's earthly throne, but on David's spiritual throne.

Well then, how long will Christ's reign last? The answer is, "For a period of time described by a figurative 1000 years (Revelation 20:2-3). It's foolish to think that God would give mankind a "count-down clock." A figurative 1000 years means that it's quite a long while, and at the same time, it will someday come to an end. God is patient and longsuffering, not willing that anyone perish, but that all will come to repentance (2 Peter 3:8-9).

Christ is not going to return to establish a Kingdom on earth. He has already established His kingdom ... the spiritual kingdom that Daniel prophesied in Daniel 2:44 that the God of Heaven would establish in the days of the Roman empire. The Kingdom John the Baptist and Jesus preached that was "At Hand." The kingdom that Jesus promised a group of disciples that they would see coming in power within their own lifetimes.

No one knows when Christ will return. Not even Christ Himself. Only the Father. Jesus has been reigning for nearly 2000 years. But He will return. His promise is sure. "In my Father's house," He promised, "are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me so that you also may be where I am. (John 14:2-3).

When asked for a sign of His coming, He said the "instantaneous" nature of His arrival would be the sign. "So be prepared," He said. Stay pure. Be ready to go the heaven with Me when I return (2 Peter 3:10-11).

One day ... He will be here. Jesus will call all the dead of all time back to life, just as easily as He did long ago when He called out, "Lazarus, come forth."

John 5:25-29 ... "I tell you the truth," Jesus said, "an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment."

There will be no TWO resurrections ... one for the righteous ... and one for the unrighteous. There will be just one, and it od for both ... for all ... as this passage clearly says. Jesus will call the dead back to life and render judgment according to the deeds done in the flesh.

Revelation 20:12 ... "And I saw the dead," John wrote, "the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds."

Revelation 20:15 ... "If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Those judged to be righteous will go home to Heaven with Christ.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 ... Paul writes ... "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the

Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.

All this in the very same Day of resurrection and Judgement.

Christ will not be setting foot again upon the earth. Rather the earth will be destroyed.

The righteous will meet Him in the air ... and go with Him as He delivers the Kingdom back to God. 1 Corinthians 15:24-25 ... "Then comes the end, when Christ 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."

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One more important element here that exposes more of the error of Premillennialist doctrine.

Romans 6:4 tells us that when we are buried with Christ in baptism, the old man dies to the world and the new man begins to live in Christ. The first resurrection is rising from the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life ... free from sin and alive unto God.

In Eph 2:5-6 ... Paul says ... "Even when we were dead in our transgressions, God made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus."

Unless Christ returns in our life-times ... we will die. Our soul will go to Hades. Our body will go to the grave. The souls of the righteous will be comforted. The souls of the unrighteous will be tormented. This is the first death.

The second resurrection will take place when Jesus returns and calls the dead back to life. Bodies from the graves. Souls from Hades. And then the Judgement ... as we've just rehearsed.

Those who stand before the Judgment seat of Christ ... never having their sins forgiven in baptism ... will stand in great jeopardy.

If you want to meet your maker free from the power of Satan and sin ... you'd better have taken part in the first resurrection. Remember, He's been bound, not eliminated. We ARE able to overcome His power and choose life in Christ.

The second death is condemnation in Hell for all eternity. Revelation 2:11 ... "He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death." Revelation 20:6 ... "Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years."

Revelation 21:8 ... "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

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This concludes our lesson for today.

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Invitation.