

Rom. 14:19
So then let
us follow
after things
which make
for peace,
and things
whereby we
may edify
one another.



John 8:32
And
ye shall
know the
truth and
the truth
shall make
you free.

August 12
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PREMILLENNIALISM

by Kyle Pope

Throughout history there have been religious groups that have believed that the promises of Christ reigning for 1000 years, described in **Revelation chapter 20**, speak of a coming earthly kingdom. Those who hold to this view believe that there will be a “rapture” of the saints, sparing them from a period of severe tribulation. This view has led many to interpret ongoing political events in light of this anticipated tribulation and earthly kingdom. Let’s consider what the Bible teaches about these doctrines.

The Promises of Revelation Chapter Twenty

Revelation chapter 20 refers to Christ reigning for 1000 years, but a close study of the text shows that it is not describing a future earthly reign of Christ on the earth, but Christ reigning over His church even though persecution was poured out on His people.

The chapter begins:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while (Rev. 20:1-3, NKJV).

We note from this text that the period of 1000 years is connected with the binding of Satan. Old Testament prophecy associated the restriction of demonic power with the reign of the Messiah (**Zech. 13:1-6**). During Jesus’ ministry He described the work of the apostles as conquering Satan (**Luke 10:17-20**). This suggests that Jesus’ work while on earth should reasonably be connected with this description of the binding of Satan.

The text continues:

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark

on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years (Rev. 20:4-6).

We should note, the text speaks of the “souls” of those martyred for Christ living with Christ. There is no indication that this “first resurrection” is a bodily earthly resurrection. Further, nothing is said about Jesus reigning upon the earth. Much of the focus of the book of Revelation concerns the persecution of Christians under the Roman Empire. This persecution would not last forever, nor would it succeed in destroying the church. The cause of Christ would survive and rise again. The souls who died for this cause did not die in vain. They reign with Christ, even in the death of their bodies.

If we interpret this as a future earthly reign, wouldn’t that mean that Christ isn’t reigning now? The Bible shows us He now reigns as King. Before Jesus’ ascension His universal authority was declared. He now has all authority “in heaven and on earth” (**Matt. 28:18-20**). When He returns it will not be to begin reigning, but for judgment.

The text continues:

Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and Him who

sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:7-15).

Much of the book of Revelation is comprised of signs, symbols, and figurative language expressing the broad message of Christ's victory over all enemies. The first verse says that things that would "*shortly come to pass*" God "*signified them to his servant John*" (Rev. 1:1, LO). In light of this, it is reasonable to conclude that this period of a "*thousand years*" should not be taken literally, but of a long period of time during which Christ reigns from heaven. However we interpret the "*thousand years*" it is clear that final judgment comes after this period of Christ's reign.

The Bible teaches that when Christ returns, all opposition to His reign will be brought to a complete end. If this passage describes Jesus reigning upon the earth in a future earthly kingdom, will He allow rebellion on the earth while He sits on the throne prior to this final victory? This text tells us Satan and all who follow him will be cast into the lake of fire (i.e. hell). When He returns all will be resurrected and judged. 1

Corinthians 15:20-25 teaches at that time Christ will deliver the kingdom over to the Father when death is brought to an end. This makes it reasonable to conclude that Christ's reign is happening now. When He returns it will be for final judgment.

The Nature of Christ's Kingdom

A fundamental error of Premillennialism is its misrepresentation of what the Bible teaches about the nature of Christ's kingdom. The prophet Daniel prophesied that during the third kingdom after Babylon an eternal kingdom would be set up (**Dan. 2:28-44**). This prophecy identifies when the Messiah's kingdom would be established. The Roman Empire was the third kingdom after Babylon and Jesus established the church during this reign (**Luke 3:1-6**). Premillennialists argue that the church is something separate and distinct from the Lord's kingdom, but Scripture teaches that the church is the spiritual kingdom of souls in submission to Christ as King. Jesus declared that His kingdom was not of this world (**John 18:33-38**). He declared the kingdom would not come with observation, but was within (**Luke 17:20-21**). Jesus declared that some who were alive when He spoke would not die until they saw the kingdom come with power (**Mk. 9:1**).

With this Jesus declared plainly that His kingdom is not earthly, observable, or to be established later than the lifetime of some who were alive in the first century.

The apostles' statements about the kingdom make it clear that they believed the kingdom had already come. Paul told the Colossians that Christ had already translated them into the kingdom (**Col. 1:13-14**). John spoke of those alive when he lived who were his brothers and companions in the kingdom (**Rev. 1:9**). It is clear that the very apostle who wrote the promises of the thousand-year reign already understood Christ to be reigning over him and others.

When Will the Saints Be "Caught Up" to Meet Jesus?

A passage often used to defend the notion of a "rapture" of the saved, sparing them from a period of tribulation comes in Paul's first epistle to the church in Thessalonica.

It reads:

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:13-17, NKJV).

We should note from this text that when Jesus returns He will bring with Him those who "*sleep in Jesus.*" This is not a resurrection separate from final judgment. When Jesus returns the dead in Christ will rise. Paul says the saved will "*meet the Lord in the air*" and "*always be with the Lord,*" not raptured away while Christ sets up an earthly kingdom.

There is no indication that Jesus will return to the earth itself. The heaven and earth will be destroyed at His return (**2 Pet. 3:10-13**). There is no indication that those "*caught up*" will be separated from Jesus, in order to be spared from some tribulation while awaiting an earthly kingdom. Passages that refer to some taken and some left properly refer to either the destruction of Jerusalem and those taken captive or being "*taken*" in judgment, not to some pre-kingdom rapture (**cf. Matt. 24:40-41 and Luke 21:20-24**).

Conclusion

The Bible teaches that Jesus established His kingdom when He came to this earth and was exalted as King. The Bible teaches that the church is Christ's kingdom. The Bible promises that when Jesus returns He will bring the resurrection and the final judgment.

Living saints will be “*caught up*” to meet Jesus in the air, but the end of this world will come when this takes place.

SALT

On my last trip to Ethiopia, salt vendors (those who sell salt in the markets, on the streets, etc) experienced a major trauma when salt traders (the middlemen) raised the price of salt to greatly inflated prices. A kilogram of salt that sold for one birr (Ethiopian currency; about 10 cents), now sold for ten birr (or, one dollar). The effect was felt throughout Ethiopia; the larger cities were hit the hardest. The government quickly stepped in and forced salt prices back to fair market values.

Regardless of the country, the need for salt is understood. In Ethiopia, salt is used in coffee (yes, coffee), in preparing kitfo (a meat dish, sometimes served raw), and wat (a general term for many dishes). Importantly, salt is used to make *injera*, a pancake-like bread that is made from teff (wheat). Injera is the staple of life for Ethiopians, comprising 2/3rds of their daily diet. From a nutritional standpoint, injera has a high iron content; this helps prevent anemia. The poor, as always, suffered the most from the rise in salt prices.

Religion is an inextricable part of Ethiopian society and dictates nutritional habits. Ethiopian Orthodox do not eat meat, eggs or dairy products on Wednesdays and Fridays. They observe a number of fasts; the longest is the Easter fast or “Kudade Tsom” which lasts 55 days. Salt is needed to prepare the foods they *can* eat. Even if we cannot appreciate the “religious nature” of salt as it pertains to the Eastern Orthodox religion, we can appreciate salt’s pragmatic value.

Jesus said: *“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men” (Matthew 5:13)*. The world is the sphere of influence for the Christian. Unquestionably, the influence of Christians has made a difference for good wherever that influence may be. The world may lose its savor; the savor of the faithful Christian can ignite a revival for good.

If we lose our savor—our saltiness—our influence for good, what happens? Our own spiritual lives are hindered. We become ineffective in helping others, whether our loved ones, neighbors, or anyone who might be watching us. When we lose our saltiness, we are fit only for the garbage heap. Because of our actions others may blaspheme the name of God rather than glorify the name of God (**1 Timothy 6:1**).

Our challenge to be salt is greater than ever before. Our morally decadent culture, with its ever-changing values, needs the influence of every Christian. The opportunities are around us— school, work, play, in the family circle. Is it perverting the message of this brief article to say: We need to make sure we do not inflate

the true value of salt? We do not want to make salt scarce; we want salt to be everywhere.

Randy Harshbarger

Be a Fruit Tester!

Jesus said in **Matthew 7:15-20**, *“Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits.”*

It seems like such a simple thing that it ought to be obvious to everybody, but Jesus wants to make sure His people are not caught unaware. Look at the outcome of a person’s life. Do they do good deeds or bad? Are they obedient to the gospel or not? Does their life make you aware that they are following Jesus or not? When Peter and John were held before the High Council in Acts four they *“began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.” (13)*

John later told us in **1 John 2:3-6**, *“By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, I have come to know Him, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”* Instead, today, too many believers are excusing wolfish behavior rather than holding leaders accountable. We should be better than that!

Cleveland Reddinger

Double Talk: A Tool of False Teachers

Congressman addressing House of Representatives: “Never before have I heard such ill-informed, wimpy, back-stabbing drivel as that just uttered by my respected colleague, the distinguished gentleman from Ohio.”

E.E. Smith in the Wall Street Journal.

Have you checked the labels on your grocery items lately? You may be getting less than you thought. According to *U.S. News & World Report*, some manufacturers are selling us the same size packages we are accustomed to, but they are putting less of the product in the box. For example, a box of well-known detergent that once held 61 ounces now contains only 55. Same size box, less soap.

How something is wrapped doesn’t always show us what’s on the inside. That’s true of people as well. We can wrap ourselves up in the same packaging every day - nice clothes, big smile, friendly demeanor -- yet still be less than what we appear to be.

Daily Bread, June 22, 1992.

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

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Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship
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JIM STAUFFER

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OF THE PRINCIPLES OF GIVING



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10