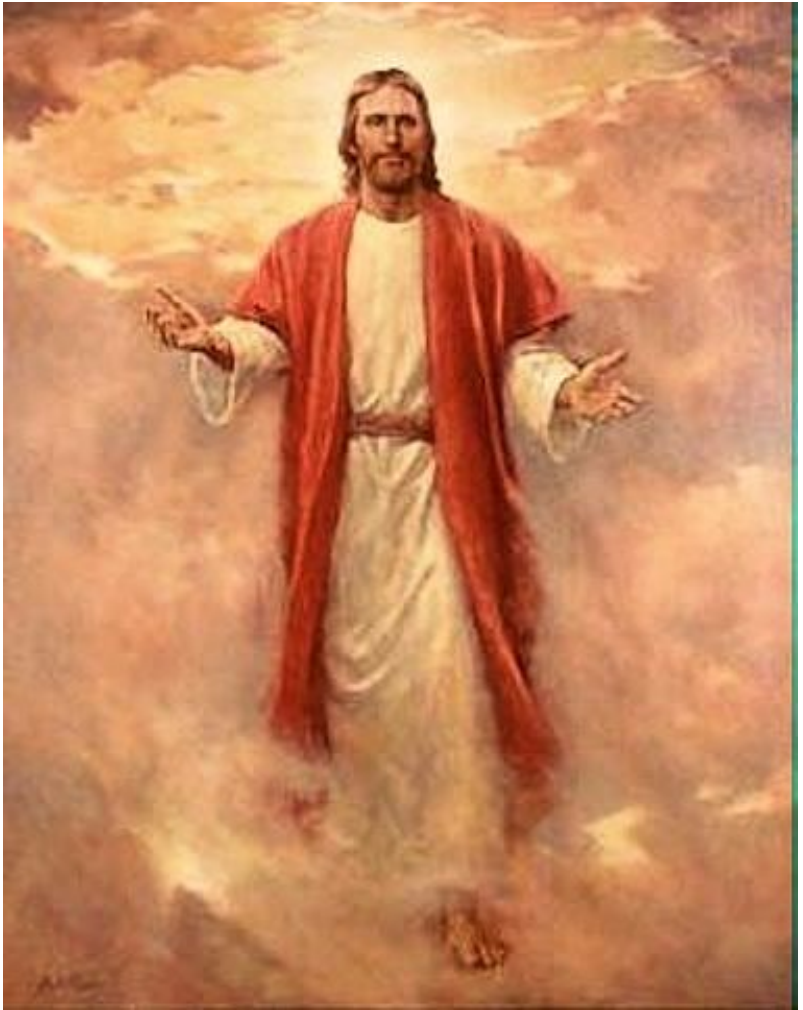


Volume 3: The Second Coming of Christ



*Things to Come
and Why They Matter*
An Introductory Study in Prophecy₁

Prophecy Series Sermons

Our sermon series for the summer of 2014 investigated the subject of prophecy. The response by the congregation at Vistoso Community Church was so encouraging, that we are publishing each of the sermons both in booklet form and online on our web site.

These first five sermons are being released in booklet form together with the final five sermons in the series to be added in 2015:

- Volume 1: Two Kinds of Wisdom
- Volume 2: The Kingdom Is Coming
- **Volume 3: The Second Coming of Christ**
- Volume 4: The Tribulation
- Volume 5: The Believing Will Be Leaving, Part 1



In His grace,

Kevin Redig, Pastor
Vistoso Community Church

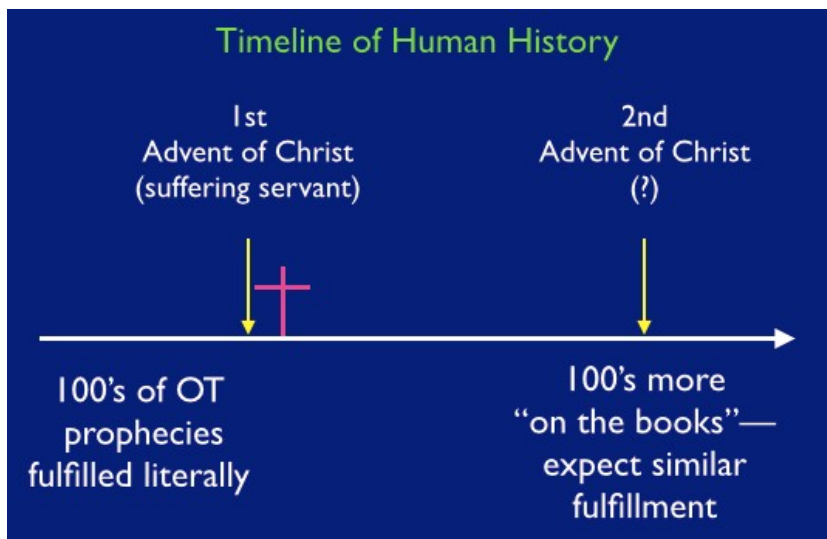
Volume 3: The Second Coming of Christ

An Introduction

Starting with today's date, and looking forward, what will be the most significant event to occur during the remaining history of mankind? I think we can answer this without considering how long human history may continue, and without regard to how lesser events unfold. So, I ask again: "What one, certain to occur, event is going to stand head and shoulders above every other possible event?"

The answer is **The Second Coming of Christ!** Let me put this on a timeline depicting human history.

Be careful to note a couple of things. First, I am not making any prediction as to when this is going to occur, but rather declaring to you the significance of the event when it does occur.



Second, we can add many other events to this timeline, events such as:

- The Creation, by God, of our world and the physical universe in which it exists
- The Noahic Flood,
- The Exodus



And if we do add events to our timeline, you know that the *natural man* (the unsaved man) would immediately begin to disagree with our selections. That just continues to prove the two-view thesis, we have been developing in this sermon series. There will always be man's ways of looking at things and God's ways—including assigning significance to the events of history. As Christians, we need to choose to seek God's ways and develop facility in identifying them while keeping man's ways at arm's length. For we have learned, God's ways are infinitely above man's because man's ways are foolishness to God's in contrast. So once again, no matter what else happens—political upheaval, terrorist attacks, the fall of Bagdad, economic collapse, global warming, nuclear war. . . the most significant event left on the timeline of human history is the return of Jesus Christ!

Let's pause to make sure you understand what I am saying. I am not saying that something like economic collapse isn't important or won't have dire consequences for many. And, of course, there are many other events which will have a major impact on mankind and lead to untold suffering. But my point is this: In contrast to any other event that might become part of the remaining

history of mankind, the Second Coming of Christ is something that is going to be more dramatic in every way. It is an event that is going to impact every single human being on the planet as well as the very environment of every locale

on the planet. Furthermore, the Second Coming of Christ is an event that is going to have eternal ramifications. For this reason, it is more important to be prepared for the Second Coming than to have adequate backup ammunition and rations stored in a shelter, holdings in other currencies, and the many other things we might do to be prepared for an unknown future. For you see:

“Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”

Philippians 2:11

The Second Coming in Daniel

We laid the foundation for this last week by looking at portions of the book of Daniel. In Chapters 2 and 7, we saw that an eternal kingdom is coming, and the Ancient of Days is going to give the eternal kingdom to one “like the Son of Man” who will reign forever. First, notice that we would have no idea what the future holds if it weren’t for God revealing and preserving it for us in His Word. Second, one of the reasons we started with the book of Daniel is to refute, right at the beginning of our study, those who try to say that this idea of Jesus coming again, and the things that go with it, are a recent concoction of wild-eyed Christians—those 20th century fundamentalists! By going to Daniel as a place to start, you can see the truth. The message of a coming Messiah has been the hope of the Jewish people for thousands of years. It is a basic part of what would be called Judeo-Christian heritage, and there is nothing new about it.

With the Second Coming of Christ in mind, here is where we are going to go in our series on prophecy. In our last study, we saw the prediction of the event in an interesting way: the most powerful ruler on the face of the planet was told that an eternal king is coming to establish an eternal kingdom and He will smash to pieces every other kingdom.

In this study, we are going to go right to the New Testament prophecy regarding the future coming of Christ—it is the most significant event left in the history of mankind, and we will use it as the focal



point for the rest of our study. Then, in the studies to follow, we will work our way forward from the Second Coming by looking at the events that follow it. We will also work backwards in time, and by that I mean take a look at the events that precede the return of Christ.

At this point you might be wondering, “Where are we on the timeline?” The answer is that we don’t really know, although it is possible to have some suspicions, and for this reason we will consider the “Signs of the Time” in one of our future studies. That might lead you to ask, “If we don’t know where we are on the timeline, why are we studying this?” Remember the expected outcomes of our study: to give us hope for the future; to have a purifying effect upon our lives; and to give us confidence that God is in control.

The Second Coming in the New Testament

Let us go directly to the Second Coming of Christ by turning to Revelation 19:11-f.

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. . .

Heaven is open and here comes the King! Let me give you some background. The situation on the earth at this point is bad—really bad! Billions have died and the earth has been devastated.

So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death and by the beasts of the earth.

Revelation 6:8

As man has attempted to manage his affairs completely independently of God, the judgment of God has fallen on mankind's rebellion and there has been a time of terrible scarcity, cosmic disturbances, and the world's oceans and waters devastated. Shortly after the death of the world's population described above, yet another third will die as the earth goes through the time of greatest "tribulation" it has ever known!

Not only this, but God's people are going to be persecuted and martyred in unprecedented numbers.

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring. . .

Revelation 12:17

When He opened the 5th seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God and for the testimony which they held.

Revelation 6:9

This time of tribulation, from a spiritual standpoint, is a period of both great evangelism and great hardening of heart. First, the hardening of heart:

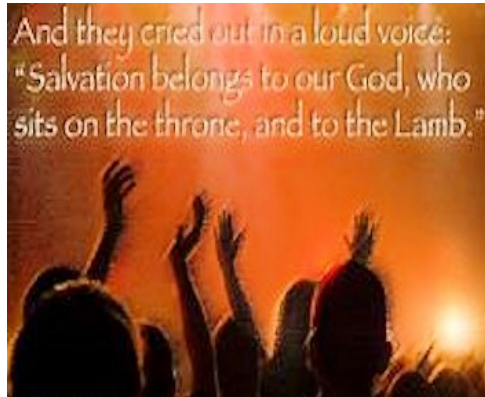
And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.

Revelation 16:9

And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall upon us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"

Revelation 6:15-16

Are you grasping this? Despite their suffering, there remain many who will not bend the knee to God and give Him the glory. Furthermore, they know they are in rebellion against the King of Glory, but rather than repent, they would rather die. How could man's hearts be so hard?



But, remember, this same time period is also a time of great evangelism:

. . . I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, people, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. . . crying out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb! . . . "Who are these. . . These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation. . ."

Revelation 7:9-14

Strangest of all, is the situation on earth at the exact time heaven opens for the Lord's return.

Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. . . the kings of earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God almighty. . . And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

Revelation 16:12-16

And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

Revelation 19:19

Christ is coming—and the unbelieving world is gathered together to make war against Him! Has man fallen so far, and been so duped, that he can possibly think this is going to turn out well? This can be so difficult to get our *minds around*, that it is necessary to break it down into smaller pieces.

Second Coming Essentials

There are three things you should know about Christ's Second Coming: it will be spectacular, you will be an observer, and it will involve a decisive battle.

It Will Be Spectacular. Christ's second coming will be sudden, observable, personal and physical. In short—supernaturally spectacular!

- It will be sudden:

For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Matthew 24:27

Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

Matthew 24:42

- It will be observable:

Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

Revelation 1:7

- It will be personal and physical:

And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem to the east.

Zechariah 14:4

This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven. Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet. . .

Acts 1:11-12



And, to put these all together, and see the full majesty of His coming, I suggest you continue reading where we began earlier in Revelation 19:11-16.

You are going to be an observer. Did you know that as a church-age believer in Jesus Christ, you are going to be an observer of His return?

Furthermore, you are going to be in some very special company!

- The saints of the church-age:

...at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. 1 Thessalonians 3:13

- God's holy angels:

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him. . . . Matthew 25:31

When we do return with Him, Revelation 19:14 says we will be:

... clothed in fine linen, white and clean following Him on white horses.

This has got to be the all-time strangest clothing and equipment issue for an army. What army has ever fought in white? Fighting battles is a messy, bloody business—but not in this case as we shall see.

Furthermore, Revelation 19:8 tells us that the fine linen represents “*the righteous acts of the saints.*” We will develop this in much greater detail later, but even now we can see the grace of God at work:

- The saints are called and enabled by God to do certain good works. (Ephesians 2:10)
- He then enables us to do those works. (Philippians 2:13)
- He then dresses us in fine white linen as a symbol of what He has accomplished through us, His saints. (Revelations 19:8)
- Finally, while leading an immense army from heaven, He accomplishes victory solely by His own hand.

It will involve a decisive battle. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ will lead to the shortest and most decisive battle in history! Let's see the text and then interpret some of the details.

“. . . and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. . . And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

Right here, battle is joined.

Then (Right here its over!) ***the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.***

Revelation 19:11-21

Let me draw your attention to a number of things:

First, you have probably seen, as I have, an artist's rendition of Christ's return in which they illustrate a sword coming from the mouth of Jesus.

Let me give you something else to consider that takes into account the full scope of Scripture.

The Bible describes Jesus as the "Living Word" (John 1).



It also makes clear that He spoke this universe into being, that is, He used words (Psalm 33:9). Recall John 18:6, when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus. They asked Him, "Are you Jesus of Nazareth?" He said, ***"I am He!"*** and the soldiers were blown off their feet.

The "sword of the Spirit" is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). The Word of God is living and powerful (Hebrews 4:12), and—when it comes from the mouth of the King of kings and Lord of lords—powerful beyond measure. So the sword that is said to come out of Jesus' mouth is the words He is going to speak, that is when He speaks it is the Word of God!

We have been saying prophecy will be fulfilled literally, does this discussion of the "sword of the spirit" change that? Not at all!

When I use the term “literal” pertaining to Bible interpretation, what I really mean is a method that takes into account the historical setting, issues of language, context, scope of Scripture, use of rhetoric, and so on. I could better refer to this approach as the “normal” method of interpretation, because that is how good interpreters interpret all historical documents.

So we now understand that when He comes face to face with the vast army arrayed against Him, He need do nothing more than speak from His mouth, “Drop dead,” and the battle is over.



There is no long drawn out campaign, no great battle, rather, we see by the words of His mouth who the real King is!

Understanding God’s Character

Now perhaps you are thinking, “Wow, that doesn’t sound like a very loving God!” There are two aspects of responding to this important issue.

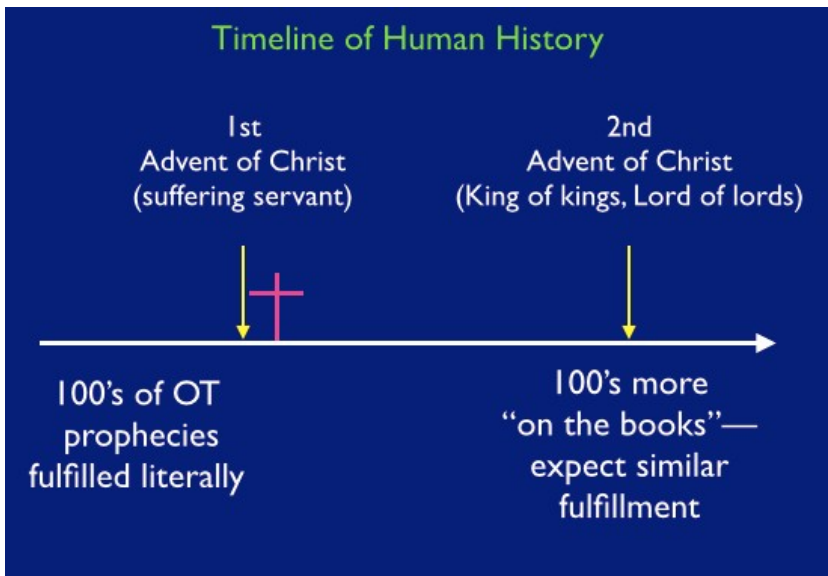
Not Loving? First, can anyone really accuse Jesus Christ of not being loving?

The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise...but is longsuffering toward us, not “*willing that any should perish, but all should come to repentance.*”

II Peter 3:9

Jesus was the Son given at His first Advent to pay our sin debt upon the cross; He is the one who has been patiently waiting to judge evil until the “*full number of Gentiles has come in*” (Romans 11:25). Unless this great period of tribulation we have covered is cut short, none would have survived. (Matthew 24:22).

Not One-dimensional. The second part of answering the issue of God’s character is to make sure we understand that God is not one-dimensional. In other words, we cannot reduce Him to just the characteristic of love, as we define it. It is true that He came at His first Advent as the “*suffering servant*” of Isaiah 53, but it is equally clear that when he comes again it will be “*in righteousness He judges and makes war.*” (Revelation 19:11) For He has a title when he returns that we can now add to our graphic—King of kings and Lord of lords!



We cannot make Jesus into an image that is pleasing to us. Rather, we must come to grips with who He is and what He is like. He is holy, as well as loving, and the foundation of His throne is Righteousness and Justice! (Psalm 97:2) That means, a time will come—His love has caused Him to hold off as long as possible, but it is coming—when He is going to judge rebellion and evil.

What I am suggesting is that, rather than question God's love when He judges those hardened rebels who have sided with Satan, we should stand in awe that He has waited so long and patiently and allowed so many to escape the clutches of Satan and enter the Kingdom of Jesus Christ!

**Today if you hear His voice,
harden not your hearts. . .**

Hebrews 4:7

**Now is the time of God's
favor, now is the day of
salvation. . .**

II Corinthians 6:2



This prepares us to call out, as we should, to the lost souls around us, "Come to Him while there is still time!"

His Kingdom

We now have a victorious King, what about His Kingdom? There are a few things that need to be done before the kingdom begins: there will be sorting and judging, the binding of Satan, and the resurrection of believers who have died.

Sorting and Judging. First, there is going to be a sorting and judging of those left alive on the earth at the time of Christ's coming. We know this from the following passage in Matthew:

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. . . . sheep on His right hand, goats on the left. . . . to those on His right, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the World. . . ." Then He will also say to those on the left hand, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. . . ."

Matthew 25:31-41

This passage represents the sorting and judging of the remaining gentiles, something similar will occur for the Jews according to Ezekiel 20:33-f. Here is the point to grasp—the Kingdom prophesied back in Daniel and being established in Revelation 20—is going to start solely with believers: Jew and Gentile.

Binding of Satan. Next, following the Beast and False Prophets being cast into the Lake of Fire, Satan himself is bound and cast into the bottomless pit for a period of time (Revelation 20:1-3).

Resurrection of Believers. Finally, there is an amazing resurrection of believers who have died. This includes those who have died during the period of tribulation described in the book of Revelation:

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.

Revelation 20:4

In addition, all the Old Testament saints will be resurrected as well:

At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation. . . at that time your people shall be delivered. . . and many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake. . . those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

Daniel 12:1-3

Five Things You Should Know about the Millennial Kingdom

Even now this poses some very interesting questions about the subjects of the Kingdom that Jesus Christ has come to establish. Let's investigate a few of the specifics of this coming Kingdom.

1. It's Going to Last for 1000 Years. There are six references to its length of 1000 years in Revelation Chapter 20. You will find that authors find many ways of describing the length to be something other than 1000 literal years if you do any reading at all on this subject. However, I want to be clear, a duration of something other than 1000 years is dependent upon an approach to interpretation that is fraught with problems across the scope of what we believe as Christians.



You should be very wary of any such approach. Read chapter 20 yourself, and see if the most *normal* way to interpret what it says is anything other than a literal 1000-year time period.

I want to make sure that you know there are three widely held views of this Kingdom described in Revelation 20. Let me briefly describe them for you:

- **The a millennial view** sees the Kingdom as primarily symbolic in nature and not a literal kingdom. Furthermore, it sees this symbolic kingdom in the process of unfolding ever since the start of the Church. It also holds that Satan is currently bound (this is enough to sink this view all by itself), and that Christ is currently reigning—but in heaven.
- **The post millennial view** also sees the kingdom of Revelation 20 as principally symbolic in nature. The kingdom in this view is a golden-age of righteous behavior and spiritual prosperity that is ushered in by the impact the Church has on human society. And once the Church brings about this earthly spiritualized kingdom—Christ will return.
- **The premillennial view** that holds that the second Advent of our Lord occurs before the Millennial Kingdom; and in fact, He is the one who Himself establishes a literal Kingdom on earth.

You will know where I stand when I tell you that the premillennial view is the view best supported by the text of Scripture. I am choosing to not get into a lengthy discussion of the pros and cons of each view. However, I will provide a few questions for you to ask yourself after you once more review Revelation chapters 19 and 20.

After you review Chapters 19 and 20 in Revelation, ask yourself these questions:

- Does the Kingdom described in these chapters seem like something that is real or symbolic?
- Does Satan currently seem like he is bound?
- Does the kind of kingdom described in Scripture seem like something man—even man aided by the Holy Spirit—could pull off?
- Does it really seem to you like human society is headed toward a “golden-age,” or does it seem like it is winding down toward apostasy?

The Bible describes the winding down toward apostasy view of human society in many places—and, in fact, the only thing that is going to arrest its decline is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only one who can set things to right, as He alone is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

2. The Millennial Kingdom is going to have a very interesting population. Have you been keeping track of who is going to be there? The Kingdom will start with those who return with Christ (believers from the time of the Church) and angels; add to that saved Gentiles and Jews still alive at the end of the period of tribulation; and then those resurrected saints from Old Testament times as well as out of the period of tribulation. How exactly is this going to work, and how are all of these groups going to interact in Christ’s Kingdom? I have no idea! However, I do believe the Lord will be able to manage it perfectly. Again, the important thing to note is that the Kingdom is going to start with only believers, resurrected saints and elect angels.

3. It is going to be a Kingdom unlike any other kingdom the earth has ever seen! Consider these insights:

- It is going to be a time of great agricultural abundance (Isaiah 4:2, 35:6-7)
- There will be no more war: swords will be turned into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks (Isaiah 2)
- There will be many changes in the environment upon the earth. There will be no more natural disasters, the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat. . . the calf and the young lion shall be led by the child (Isaiah 11)
- There will be an absence of sickness or deformity (Isaiah 35:5-6)
- Jesus is going to rule with a scepter of iron—there will be perfect justice! Think of what this means in terms of crime, the business world, and so on.



4. Why can't we all just go to heaven? In other words, it is one thing to explain to people, "Place your faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and you will spend eternity in heaven." It is another thing altogether to hold a position that includes "faith in Jesus" in order to secure your eternal destiny, but also the literal return of Jesus Christ to this earth to establish a completely unique

Kingdom with an awe-inspiring range of subjects. In short, isn't this fantastic event likely to make us bashful apologists? This is a very real issue, especially if your church background is such that the return of Christ and the establishment of an earthly kingdom is something that was rarely mentioned and is relatively new to you. Perhaps you are thinking, "I believe in Jesus, but do I have to explain this as well?"

I want to conclude with two suggestions for you to consider, and then provide a *take-home* principle.

- First, keep reminding yourself of the source of the information we are using to build an understanding of God's plans for the future. It is right from the Word of God, and without any sort of interpretational trickery. We have interpreted God's Word in the most



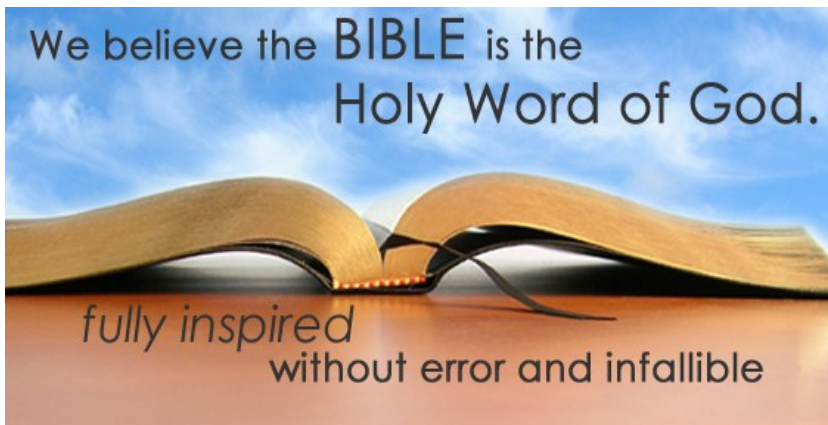
- taking Him at His Word, and so we have nothing to be bashful about.
- Second, you should never find yourself in the middle of defending prophecy with a lost person. There is only one message for such a person—the Gospel! Specifically, who Jesus is and what He has done for them. Once you have communicated these truths, let the Holy Spirit go to work on the soul of the individual. Too much additional information just gives them a reason to reject the Gospel.

Now for the *take-home* principle—the big picture—I want to impress upon you several points with respect to the return of Jesus Christ:

- **The bookends of history.** The creation of this world and the material universe in which it exists is absolutely a fantastic and supernatural event. God spoke and the material universe came into being. He continued His creative efforts by shaping the universe, fine-tuning it, and filling our planet with a host of living things. The other end of the spectrum is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to establish His earthly Kingdom, and the even more fantastic events to follow (which we will cover in future lessons). We need to consider these two fantastic and clearly supernatural events as the *bookends* of human history.
- **The bookends are essential.** Now if you remove either or both of these two bookends because they seem just too fantastic to believe, too outside the realm of the laws of science and nature, what does that ultimately do to our confidence about events that occurred between those books? Specifically, what does it do to our belief in the death of Jesus Christ to pay for our sins and satisfy the justice of the Father? What does it do to Christ's resurrection from the dead which shows both the Father's acceptance of the Son's work and is an illustration of what is in store for those who believe? The fact and message of our redemption, reconciliation, justification, and so on are equally fantastic and supernatural in origin. If you take away the bookends, does not the middle start to crumble?

- **Two approaches to the Bible.** You see there are two ways to approach what the Bible has to say. First, we can say, “Be good, live a good life, do the best you can—pay attention to what the ‘good’ book says without really bothering to read it. If you do, everything will come out alright in the end.” The other approach is to start with the Bible as the sole source of God’s revelation to man. He authored it and He has preserved it! It is this Word that documents the desperate plight of mankind as a rebel against his Creator. It also documents the one and very unique way in which God has addressed man’s desperate need and provided a way for us to avoid the judgment that is our due. For He wants to redeem, reconcile, and restore His creation.

So, what is hanging in the balance is whether or not mankind—one person at a time— will respond to what God has done on their behalf. Do you see what is at stake? I pray that God will give me the same zeal for both His creative works and coming Kingdom, as I have for His saving work accomplished through the cross of Jesus. The Word of God is very clear about all three, and I believe they all stand together.



- **Consequences of compromise for people.** Let me show you what happens if you start to compromise the content of the Word of God in order to satisfy the sensibilities of man. By the way, this is the reason I decided a long time ago to hold fast to every truth God reveals to me from His Word—the ones I like, as well as the ones I struggle with.

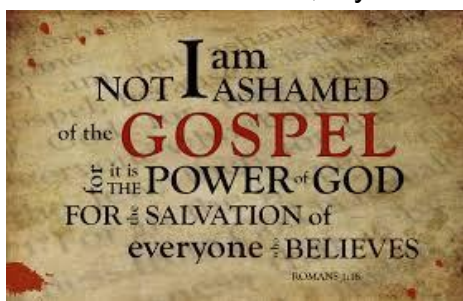
A friend in the ministry relayed the following story to me, which perfectly illustrates my concerns. He mentioned an unmarried couple who were living together and regularly attending his church. The woman expressed a clear Christian testimony, while the man, though unsaved, was very interested. They came to my friend, their pastor, expressing a desire to get married. Holding fast to the Biblical guidance of II Corinthians 6:14, he told them he could not do so, as the man was not yet ready to be the head of his household as God intended. The man, very successful professionally, became quite angry, and from that time on both were conspicuously absent from church.

About six months later he dropped in on this couple to wish them a Merry Christmas. They expressed their anger, but also how much they missed his teaching and gathering with other believers. They asked if it would be okay to come back to church. Shortly after they did, the man placed his faith in the person and work of Christ, the two were married, and in time became very active disciple-makers.

Now here is the lesson from this story—what if the pastor, rather than holding his ground on Biblical truth, had compromised in order to keep this couple coming to church? Right now you are probably thinking that the lesson I want to teach you is that the man would not have been saved. Not at all!

I think it is likely that he would have been saved, for he was obviously drawn to God through His Word. The real lesson is that had he been saved, he would have done so knowing that the Word of God can be bent to suit one's circumstances. And although he would have been saved, what kind of witness would he have been to those who had their own issues, that is his children, his co-workers, and so on.

You see, the Gospel is: ***“the power of God unto salvation for all who believe.”*** However, if you start to chip away at the Gospel message, it starts to lose its power. And if you lose too much of its power, you don't have salvation any more.



- **Even greater consequences.** I think that the chipping away at the Gospel message is the explanation behind much of what has happened in America. We have compromised on too much of what the Bible actually has to say, and in doing so, have given away much of the power of the Gospel and of the Word of God. We have a lot of people who have a sense of who God is, but they are not new creatures in Christ and are not living by faith in the Son of God who died for them. This chipping away has occurred with the Biblical account of Creation. It has occurred with the Biblical account of the future. And, it is, right now, occurring with the content of the Gospel!

Before moving on to the fifth thing you should know about the Millennial Kingdom, let me give you two reasons why something like the Millennial Reign of Christ has to occur.

- **To restore what was lost!** When Adam sinned by rebelling against the clear command of God, it had consequences for every member of the human race who followed him—consequences in terms of imputed sin, changed environment and death! Jesus is referred to in Scripture as a second or “last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45), and, as such, He begins by living a life of perfect obedience and fellowship with the Father. Furthermore, as sovereign ruler of this earth, He is going to begin the process of undoing the results of the fall—a setting of things right—a process that will have its complete fulfillment in the new heavens, new earth and new Jerusalem which we will study in a future lesson. In short, if God really is sovereign and transcendent, then something like the Millennial Kingdom is the only fitting and meaningful end to human history!
- **To fulfill God’s promises!** God made many promises to His chosen people, for that’s what the covenants God made to the Jews really are—promises. Do you remember one of the names given to Jesus upon His return? “Faithful and True!” God has not forgotten His promises nor His chosen people—the Jews! The Millennial Kingdom will be a time when God fulfills all of his promises, when the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic and New Covenants all will be fulfilled.

5. **The eternal reign of Christ has a most unexpected interruption!** (Or is it really that unexpected?)

There is a real shocker contained in the following Scripture:

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.

Revelation 20:7-10

How could this possibly come about? Satan once again deceives man, drawing a huge host to take his side even in the midst of a perfect environment and against the perfect ruler! Once again we see an illustration of man's ways versus God's ways:

- For man has long declared: If we just had the right environment, equitable distribution of resources, true social justice. . . then everything would be good, and the earth would be a perfect place.
- The Millennial Kingdom puts this claim to the test, and shows it to be what it is once and for all—a lie of Satan and the foolishness of man. How could this be? God has told us very plainly in Scriptures like these:

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my sinful nature.

Romans 7:18

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

Jeremiah 17:9

But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘*unclean*.’

Matthew 15:18

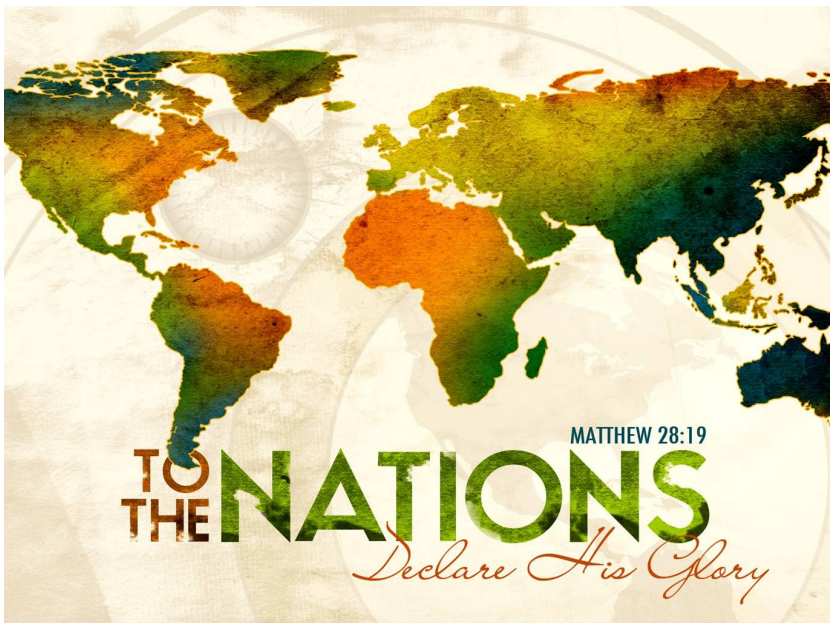
Do you see? Even in a perfect environment, lost man will rebel and align himself with the Rebel. Man doesn't have an environment or a resource problem—he has a heart and nature problem. We don't need the right conditions or blessings; we need to be new creatures in Christ and to be separated from who and what we are in Adam.

Here is the really good news—if any man is “in Christ” he is a new creature; and born again, clothed in the righteousness of Christ and the recipient of eternal life!



Do you see the application? As God's people, now you know why we innately distrust self, for even in a perfect environment, under a perfect ruler, our rebellious heart will get the best of us. That is why God has provided, and why we desperately need, the walk of the Spirit, the Word of God, and why we look forward to the redemption of our bodies.

In the meantime, what a great mission we have! While the Lord tarries, we have the privilege to hold out the Word of truth, the only answer that can save mankind. We can be Christ's ambassadors and bring the message of faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ—that just one more might come into the Kingdom of God.



In Closing

In closing this lesson, let me appeal to you on two counts. First, if you are a child of God, then know that you are going to have a *front row seat* on the return of Jesus Christ. You are going to have a role to play in His future Kingdom. We are not just going to go to heaven, but are going to return with Him. By virtue of being His children we have become intimately tied to His future. Oh the glories of the grace of our God, and how it should draw us close to Him and keep our gaze upon Him. I encourage you to continue to ponder these things, meditate upon the Scriptures we have covered, and allow them to impact your heart.

Second, the one thing these passages about the future make absolutely clear is that there is a dividing line between “the sheep and the goats;” between those saved and those unsaved; between those who will not taste the second death and those who will.

Joining the great multitude that is going to return with Christ, joining the family of God, is open to all. Don’t wait, for there comes a time when it is too late. As the Scriptures say:

“And the Spirit and the bride say come. Let him who thirsts come, Whoever desires, let him take the water of life without cost.”

Revelation 22:17

Believe in Jesus Christ and His act of paying for your sins on the cross and you will be saved! You can do so right now in the quiet of your own heart.



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