

The Reigning in the Kingdom

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

*Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 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 20:1-6 NASB

The first six verses in Revelation 20, above, are the only specific reference to the 1,000 in the Bible. From this one reference, numerous other scriptures have been attributed to this period, thus summing up what many have come to refer to as “The Thousand Year Reign of Christ”.

As sturdy as this title seems, let us examine a little more closely what is actually prophesied during this 1,000 years.

First of all, the passage does specify a period of 1,000 years. The text would seem to indicate that this is, indeed, a literal 1,000 year period for a variety of factors. First, it specifically mentions how long this period is FIVE times in these six verses (six times in the first seven verses), and not only that, it specifically speaks of the end of this period, refers to this time again and says “When the thousand years are completed”. While some still maintain that 1,000 simply means “a very long time”, the simple fact that other, specific events, such as the Gog Magog war, are after this period, gives strong indication that this period, is, in fact, complete.

The second thing that this 1,000 years denotes is the imprisonment of the dragon, satan, the devil, all three names here are presented for him. What is clear here is that satan is bound in the pit (abyss) for this 1,000 years. Now, no where in the text does it indicate that ALL demons are bound, although many have taken this to imply that. Rather, it speaks about an angel (singular), holding a great chain (singular), who lays hold of the dragon, or serpent (singular), and binds him for the duration of the sentence. The angel then threw him, satan, again singular, into the pit, and sealed it over him (singular), that he might not deceive the nations until the 1,000 years were over. The only thing the text itself actually points out is that the dragon himself is bound.

And, finally, we see the picture of the resurrection. First, is seen thrones, and judgment is given to those that sat upon them. Yet, of those resurrected, it is not clear that this is the group resurrected. Only those who are “beheaded” (the Greek word here is fairly specific—the word means “beheaded with an axe”, and so it would be hard to construe a different meaning) are specifically mentioned as being resurrected at this point. This is important, because many have come to interpret this as the

resurrection of the righteous. However, whether or not this is true in the text, all the Scripture says on this account is that it is those beheaded that are raised. This point is typically minimized by people who wish to show this to be the resurrection of all believers. It is also important to note that beheading was a typical Roman execution. Crucifixion was always employed, but beheading was a “more humane” alternative, for those prisoners who were deemed worthy of it, since it lacked the suffering. Church history holds that Paul was beheaded in Rome.

This first resurrection, then, whomever is included, are then given this promise. “they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years” (v6).

The promise given to this group is that they will reign with Christ. From this one statement, the concept of “The Thousand Year Reign of Christ” is built (with many other passages added in here to support the statement). But, what exactly does this verse promise?

First of all, the statement is concerning those of the first resurrection, not of Christ. They will reign with Christ for this period (1,000 years), and nothing is said of Christ's reign. Of course, we know that Christ will reign for these 1,000 years, because they are reigning with Him, but the verse says nothing of when Christ's reign starts or finishes.

To be clear, the reign of Christ is not clearly identified by this verse, and thus the claim of the the title “The Thousand Year Reign of Christ” is entirely misleading, taking the understanding of a merely textual approach.

What this can only be identified as is “A Thousand Years of the Reign of Christ”. Christ most certainly could be reigning before this period, and there is no guarantee that Christ, or even these saints, will cease to reign with Christ after this period. The verse simply does not say what the reign of Christ is, other than that Christ, of course, must be reigning at least during this time.

The distinction becomes essential in the wake of the multitude of scriptures typically ascribed to this period. In general, the idyllic and peaceful state of things that is usually connected with this period is called the reign of Christ, and hence, the Kingdom of God or Christ's Kingdom, but this flies in the face of the understanding of the Kingdom that Jesus Christ brought.

What is the Kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it? This was the question Jesus asked in Luke 13:18. His answer was a mustard seed and yeast. The mustard seed is the picture of faith in the Word spoken, and the yeast is the Holy Spirit within the heart of a believer.

Again, Jesus said in John 3:3, 5 that the Kingdom of God could not be seen nor entered unless one was born again. Hence, if it is visible or enterable to an unbeliever, it is not the Kingdom of God.

This distinction continues through Paul, who says that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom, that the perishable cannot inherit the imperishable. The perishable, flesh and blood, cannot inherit the imperishable, the Kingdom.

So, we can understand the Kingdom of Heaven to be like a weather pattern. Thinking of meteorology, what person would ever look to the sky and exclaim, “Oh! Look at that high pressure center!” No, rather, they would exclaim, look at that storm! Such clouds! Rain! Lightning and thunder...” Indeed, this is what we see.

When the Kingdom of God came upon those in Jesus' day (Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20), deliverances, miracles, signs, and wonders were the result. They demonstrated the Kingdom, were its manifestation in the Earth, and they were proof of its authenticity. No physical manifestation, of course, is sole proof of the authenticity of the Spiritual, but there is no Biblical precedent for the Kingdom showing up without it having an effect upon the physical.

So, when the Kingdom, the high pressure center, comes in, and pushes out the dominion of darkness, the low, we see the storm. But, long after the storm has passed by, the sky remains clear because of the high pressure. This, then, is the Kingdom. Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost are what the Kingdom is made of, and the miracles are merely the lightnings, thunders, and rain as the “works of darkness” are destroyed.

So, too, when we look at the various promises of the Kingdom, especially in the Old Testament.

When we begin to look through the prophecies, we see exactly the manifestation of Heaven upon the Earth. But, as we have seen how the New Testament identifies the Kingdom, that it is indeed spiritual, and is in the heavens (Matthew 6:10 also describes that Kingdom that is in heaven right now, and we pray for it to come here), the effect upon the Earth when it comes is exactly what we would expect: Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Spirit.

So, while some wrongly attribute the “Thousand Years of the Reign of Christ” as the “Thousand Year Reign of Christ”, for Christ's reign certainly is not limited to that period, many also then wrongly ascribe the period of peace as a physical Kingdom of Christ.

Now, we must, again, clearly differentiate. Just as the miracles, signs, and wonders were only the manifestation of the Kingdom, so too, there will be a time of marked, physical change upon the Earth. However, as we read in Matthew 25:34, this was the Kingdom that was prepared from the foundation, or creation, of the world. This Kingdom has always existed since the world did, and, according to Psalm 145:13, it is “everlasting”. “Your Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom”, the psalmist wrote. So, even after this current heaven and earth are consumed, and there are new ones, the Kingdom will still remain.

And, that is just it. Long after even the rain, long after the flood, and long after the winds, the high pressure center will remain right where it's at. And, after all the things that can cause disturbance are forever removed, there will be no more night, and no more day, and no more anything, but only His Kingdom.

Is it any wonder, then, that the Earth should be marked by such conditions that are described as what consists the Kingdom of God? Righteousness, Peace, and Joy? Of course not. But, while the effects are profound, and universal, let us not forget that these, like the storm, are merely the manifestation of the Eternal, an demonstration of the divine.

The Kingdom itself does not consist in these things. If they were, they would not be the Kingdom, because the Kingdom is itself invisible, like the wind. The wind blows where it listeth, and you hear the sound of it, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it goes. So are all who are led by the Spirit.

No, while the Kingdom effects a change upon the Earth, the imperishable will never change and become perishable. Perish the thought! It would then, as well, have to revert back to being

imperishable when the world ended.

Rather, the Kingdom itself, is the eternal reign of God. Its effects upon the Earth, while they affect us now, will at some point cover the entire world.

While this is not the period of the Revelation 20:1-6 passage, as many of these do not apply to this 1,000 year period, they are quite literal, and are yet to come, perhaps fitting into the period of time between Revelation 20:10-11, between the Gog Magog conflict, and the Great White Throne.

So, while many have attributed the 1,000 years of Revelation 20 to be the time of ultimate peace, there is not textual basis for why the times described of Idyllic peace must fall in that period. Furthermore, there is also no reason to expect a physical Kingdom of God, either here, or anywhere, for the reign of God is in the heavens, and isn't going to change.

The many verses which speak of the great time of healing upon this earth is indeed yet to come, although the Millennium of Revelation 20:1-6, in my opinion, is already passed.

Below are many of the verses commonly attributed to the “Millennial” time of peace. Jesus already sits upon the throne of David now, and while we see the Millennium as occurring during the “Middle Ages”, this period, while not technically a “physical Kingdom of God”, will have profound physical and real effect upon the Earth.

The “Thousand Years of the Reign of Christ”, as we call it, is but 1,000 years of the near 2,000 years and counting of Christ's reign. And, as 1 Corinthians 15 says, when the last enemy, death itself, is defeated, then Christ will come back and hand the Kingdom back to the Father.

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:14

Below are an assortment of the “Reign of Christ” Scriptures.

Micah 4:2-4 “And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 3 And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. 4 But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.”

Isaiah 32:17-18 “And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. 18 And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places;”

Isaiah 2:2-4 “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be

established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

Romans 8:18-23 “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, 21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

Zechariah 8:4 “Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age.”

Isaiah 65:25 “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.”

Isaiah 11:7 “And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.”

Isaiah 11:6 “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them”

Isaiah 65:20 “There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.”

Zechariah 14:16 “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.”

Revelation 20:4 “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

Revelation 5:10 “And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

Revelation 20:6 “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Job 36:7 “He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous: but with kings are they on the throne; yea, he doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted.”

Isaiah 60:17 “For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.”

Micah 4:2-4 “And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 3 And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. 4 But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.”

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I have no problem believing Jesus Christ will be the perfect king during the 1,000 year reign. He created this world, I think He overqualified for the job position. He will do just fine. He is incorruptible and will put those of us in incorruptible bodies in positions of government.

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