

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #70

2/20/2008

Following Armageddon Comes the Millennium: Part 6

19:21-20:10

REVIEW

The Tribulation Period has been completed.

Christ Jesus has returned in complete victory as **“King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”**

The enemies of Christ have been totally vanquished, defeated and dispatched.

The thousand-year millennial Kingdom of Christ has been ushered in by Satan being bound and cast into **“the bottomless pit”** for a thousand years **“till the thousand years should be FULFILLED.”**

In Revelation twenty God has not given us many details about the **“thousand years.”** Instead, by using the word **“fulfilled”** God has indicated that some things would happen during this period which had been prophesied and introduced elsewhere in the Scripture. We have been trying to discover some of the valuable truths suggested by the word **“fulfilled”** so that we might understand what will happen during the **“thousand-year”** reign of Christ on this earth.

Satan is seen being bound, and saints are seen sitting on thrones and judging (20:3-4). Why does this happen and what is involved in this? The secret to understanding the thousand years and the entire history of the created world is bound up in the word **Theocracy, the reign of God over His created universe.** Consider the following known truths:

1. **God created a perfect world over which He reigned in a Theocracy, pouring out His blessings upon His creation in the Garden of Eden.**
2. **Lucifer rebelled against God's throne, God's Theocracy, in heaven.**
Lucifer/Satan was cast down to the earth where he seduced man and spread his rebellion to this earth, thereby separating man from God and inhibiting the flow of God's blessings to man.
3. **In the Millennial Kingdom God, i.e., Christ, will once again establish a perfect Theocracy in which He will not only rule but also pour out His blessings upon man.**
4. **Between, the perfect Theocracies of the Garden of Eden and the Millennial Kingdom, are five limited expressions of God's Theocracy.** Each of these provided a way for God to pour out His blessings upon man. The first four are: 1. Human Government; 2. The Abrahamic Covenants to his descendants; 3. The Judges; and 4. The Throne of King David. Today we consider the fifth of these limited expressions of God's Theocracy — God's Spiritual Theocracy.

Revelation 20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

Revelation 20:2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

Revelation 20:3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, TILL THE THOUSAND YEARS SHOULD BE FULFILLED: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

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 worshiped 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 20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

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.

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The fifth form of God's Theocracy which He instituted between the Garden of Eden and the Millennial Kingdom is a Spiritual Theocracy. It is a Kingdom in which Christ Jesus rules in the hearts of men as their King.

Before we proceed to describe **God's Theocracy of a Spiritual Kingdom**, we need to address a couple of related matters. It has long been held by those who hold to the Amillennialist position on eschatology, or "last things," that the Scriptures related to the **Millennial Kingdom** are to be interpreted symbolically, thus spiritualizing away the literal meaning of "**the thousand years**" mentioned in Revelation twenty. Those, who hold to this view of interpretation, see the promises of God regarding the nation of Israel as being fulfilled in a spiritual kingdom instituted by Jesus. They are wrong. This is an incorrect view. "**The thousand years**" of Revelation twenty are literal years and *God has not set aside His promises to Abraham and to David and to the nation of Israel.*

There is another view that is also incorrect. This view holds forth that God has replaced the nation of Israel with the church and that the promises of God to Abraham and David, and thus to Israel, are fulfilled in the church. This is sometimes called "substitutionary" or "replacement" theology. Some of those who are so identified say that Jesus first came to be the King of the Jew, i.e., King over the nation of Israel and to reestablish the supremacy of God's rule on earth through Israel. Such a view claims that Israel, as a nation, rejected Jesus as their king and that God replaced the nation of Israel with the church and will fulfill His promises to Israel through the church. This view is also wrong, God has not replaced Israel with the church. First, God's promises to Israel are eternal and will be fulfilled. Second, as we shall see, Jesus did not offer Himself to be the King of the nation of Israel, even though that is exactly what many Jews expected, including His own disciples.

Now, we shall continue with exploring the concept of God's Theocracy expressed as a Spiritual Kingdom. Since such a concept is based on the person and work of Jesus Christ, it is in examining His life and teachings in the Gospels, that we can understand what God is telling us.

First, this Spiritual Kingdom is to be internal, in the hearts and minds of men. It is not a physical earthly Kingdom concerning earthly rule and territory or land or earthly conflicts.

The phrases "**kingdom of heaven**," appearing 127 times in the New Testament, with all but two of these being in the Gospel of Matthew, and the "**kingdom of God**," appearing 292 times in the New Testament, are most often used synonymously, and almost always refer to a Spiritual Kingdom over which Christ rules in the hearts of men.

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Lesson #70
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19:21-20:10

In Matthew 10:7 we read that Jesus sent out the twelve disciples telling them, “... *as you go, preach, saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand,*” referring to His coming as their Savior, Messiah and King. Then, in Luke 17:20-21, in response to the Pharisees demand to know when “*the kingdom of God should come*” Jesus said, “*The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*” Jesus was saying to Jewish leaders, that they were looking for the wrong kind of a kingdom, a visible and earthly kingdom. He was not saying to these ungodly, unbelieving Jews that the kingdom of God was already existing within them, for obviously they had not allowed Him into their lives as their King. What Jesus was saying, as expressed in the Greek vernacular, was that the “*Kingdom of God,*” rather than being an external, visible, geographical, earthly kingdom, was an internal, spiritual kingdom that could not be seen with the eyes, but had to be experienced in the heart, and that He, as King, was offering this type of kingdom to them.

John’s Gospel tells us of a confrontation between Jesus and Pilate at the trial of Jesus. Pilate, a Gentile, having heard the talk of the Jews concerning Jesus as a king, asked Him a very specific question: “*Art thou the King of the Jews?*” (John 18:33). In other words, did Jesus come to establish an ethnic or earthly kingdom over which He would reign as King, as a fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham and to David? Since this is a direct question with a direct answer, and the only place in Scripture where it is found is worth our careful examination.

Jesus replied: “*MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence*” (John 18:36). Not having received a satisfactory answer or understanding what Jesus said, Pilate persisted and repeated his question: “*Art thou a king then?*” and Jesus replied: “*Thou sayest that I am a king. TO THIS END WAS I BORN, AND FOR THIS CAUSE CAME I INTO THE WORLD, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice*” (18:37).

When Jesus said, “*My kingdom is not of this world,*” He used the word **kosmos** (2889) for “*world*” which refers to the arrangement or adornment of the created universe. Jesus was speaking of something, a kingdom, totally different from anything that was familiar to Pilate. If there were any Jews listening, and there probably were, they did not understand Jesus any better than Pilate. They wanted Him to be their earthly king who would fight for them, protect them, enlarge their boundaries and provide for them.

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #70
2/20/2008

Following Armageddon Comes the Millennium: Part 6
19:21-20:10

Two specific incidents indicate that this is what the Jews expected and wanted from Jesus. The first one is found in John, chapter six, when Jesus fed the five thousand with the few items found in the little boy's lunch basket. After Jesus had fed them, we are told that *"Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world"* (John 6:14). They were looking for, and would have gladly followed, a worldly king and one whom they expected to be a political Messiah, particularly if He fulfilled Moses' prophecy about one coming who would be like Moses (Deu. 18:15).

If Jesus had come into this world to fulfill the Jews expectations and desires for a political, earthly king, then all that He had to do to be accepted as such was to continue what He had just done. Had this been His purpose and the type of kingdom over which He came to reign, it is reasonable to assume that He would not have responded as He did: *"When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone"* (John 6:15). Obviously, Jesus did not come to establish an earthly kingdom over which He would reign as King, though that is what most of the Jews were expecting and prepared to welcome.

If such had been His purpose, then He would have certainly been well received, not rejected, and His following would have grown in size. There should be no question in any person's mind that Jesus had the ability to do whatever was necessary to achieve such a result. However, later in the chapter we are told of a totally different response as Jesus explained what He offered to them: *"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him"* (John 6:66). Jesus' actions and teaching in this passage certainly do not support the supposition that He came to establish an earthly rule over the Jews and reign as their king. He rejected what they wanted when He had a great opportunity to become their earthly king. Surely this reinforces the meaning of what He later told Pilate.

To supplement our understanding we turn to Acts 1:3-8 and consider the question asked by Jesus' own disciples and His response to their question. Even after spending three years teaching them, living with them, dying for them, and rising from the dead, just prior to His ascension back into glory, they still did not understand about His kingdom:

"To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and SPEAKING OF THE THINGS PERTAINING TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD. And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith

Revelation
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Lesson #70
2/20/2008

Following Armageddon Comes the Millennium: Part 6
19:21-20:10

he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, THEY ASKED OF HIM, SAYING, LORD, WILT THOU AT THIS TIME RESTORE AGAIN THE KINGDOM TO ISRAEL? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Yes, they still did not comprehend what He had taught them about His Kingdom, and could not until they were enabled by the indwelling Holy Spirit Who came at Pentecost. It is clear that when Jesus taught His disciples about "**the Kingdom of God**" that He was teaching about something other than an earthly kingdom. He had not come to establish an earthly kingdom. He had not been rejected as the earthly king of the Jewish nation, even if the Jews thought that they were rejecting Him as such. This was in spite of the fact that He had never offered Himself as their earthly king.

What is the nature of this Spiritual Theocracy?

Most of the other places where Jesus used either the phrase, "**the kingdom of heaven**" or "**the kingdom of God**" describe the nature of this **Theocracy** as being spiritual in nature. These references describe how life "**in the kingdom of God**" is lived on this earth by the subjects of the King, those who have been "**born again**" with God's eternal life from above (John 3:3-5). In the beatitudes, Jesus further describes how His subjects' lives will reflect His character as they live on this earth. His "Sermon on the Mount," Matthew 5-7, was given by Jesus to His disciples to instruct them in how to live in the midst of a society under the influence of Satan. The miraculous and precious nature of life in "**the kingdom of heaven,**" when the King's subjects live a heavenly life on this earth, are set forth in the "parables of the kingdom" found in Matthew thirteen.

When the Apostles went about "preaching the kingdom of God," as recorded in Acts, they were presenting the Gospel of salvation to the lost inviting them to receive Christ as Savior. Each time the Gospel is so presented, the invitation to the lost person is phrased as "**believing on the Lord Jesus Christ**" because when they were invited to be saved, they were being invited to become citizens in "**the kingdom of God.**" Many of the important aspects of this **Spiritual Theocracy**, this rule of Christ in the hearts of men, are to be incorporated more fully into life as it is to be lived in the **Millennial Kingdom**.