

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #80
4/30/2008

Following Armageddon Comes the Millennium: Part 16
19:21-20:10

We have attempted to grasp what our Lord means when He says in Revelation 20:3 that Satan is to be bound **“till the thousand years should be fulfilled”** by studying the expressions of **His Theocracy** on this earth. We now continue with what He tells us about **His Millennial Kingdom**. In Revelation 20:4 we read what John tells us:

“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.”

God’s revelation to John is now given visually — God shows him a scene in which he first sees:

1. Thrones
2. Some sitting upon the thrones
3. Judging taking place
4. Martyrs from the Tribulation Period

First, we consider the **“thrones and they that sat upon them.”** In the first verses of his Revelation of Jesus Christ, in telling us about what our Lord Jesus has done for us, John tells us that He **“... hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.”** Then in Rev. 5:10 the KJV also has **“And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”** In both places the correct reading should be **“a kingdom of priests”** not **“kings and priests.”**

This is more in keeping with how God both describes the nation of Israel in Exodus 19:6 and the church in 1 Peter 2:9. In God’s establishment of **His Theocracy** on this earth, God used priests to represent Him to the people. **His Theocracy** was always the expression of His spiritual rule in the temporal, material world, whether He did it through His organizational structure of the nation of Israel, through the throne of David or through **the Spiritual Kingdom** which our Lord came to establish (Matthew 4:17). God told the nation of Israel: **“And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel”** (Exodus 19:6). This was directed to the entire nation, but they, because of their rebellion against His rule over them, never fulfilled God’s plans for them. Then, to the church, God also said, **“... ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”** (1 Peter 2:9). It can also be asserted that the church, like Israel, has to a large degree failed to fulfill God’s purpose.

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However, in the **Millennial Kingdom**, God's plans are to be perfectly fulfilled. John sees it and it is so. In **His Millennial Kingdom**, Jesus Christ is the King and He assigns His own to serve as His priests. In such a plan they sit upon thrones assisting Him, carrying out His rule.

There is more than one group of people whom John sees upon these thrones. Who are these? The first group that John sees are the raptured, resurrected saints.

Jesus twice told His twelve disciples that they would be greatly blessed in His Kingdom. In Matthew 19 following Jesus' conversation with the rich young ruler in which to follow Jesus, it would be necessary for him to be willing to give up his dependence upon his earthly wealth, Peter said:

"... Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" Jesus replied: *"... Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"* (Matthew 19:27-28).

Again, at a later time, on the evening just before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus had to deal with an immature and sinful attitude that was dividing His disciples. It was about who was greatest among them. As Jesus instructed and chided them for their behavior, in addition to telling them that they were acting as if they were not even His disciples, He compared their sinful earthly ambitions to what He had waiting for them in **His future Millennial Kingdom**:

"And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29-30).

Both of these passages record almost identical words from our Lord spoken on two separate occasions and emphasize the same truth. In each instance, Jesus' disciples had their minds on earthly possessions and position, but something far greater was already planned for them. Their attitudes have often been repeated by those who claim to follow Jesus — a fixation on the here and now, a hunger for the things which must be, and will be, left behind, things totally unworthy and unfit for the glorious future God has planned for His children. For these twelve Jewish disciples whom we know as the Twelve Apostles Jesus already determined that they will one day actually rule over and judge those of their earthly brethren in the **Millennial Kingdom**.

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We know that, during the **Tribulation Period**, many Israelites will be converted to Jesus Christ and accept Him as their Messiah as they recognize the One whom their ancestors crucified:

“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon” (Zechariah 12:10-11).

We know that at least 144,000 of these will survive the wrath of Anti-Christ during the **Tribulation Period** and enter the **Millennial Kingdom** in their natural bodies (Revelation 7:4) for they are to be sealed and protected by God. These will become residents in the **Millennial Kingdom** and, because of the perfect conditions there, produce innumerable descendants to repopulate the earth. Likely these 144,000 will be joined by other Israelites and Gentiles who also follow Jesus and, surviving the Tribulation Period, enter the Millennial Kingdom in their natural bodies. Over these descendants of Jacob the Twelve Apostles will rule and judge.

However, we know that, in addition to the Twelve, there are also others who are to be raptured and resurrected and are seen by John sitting upon thrones for in Revelation 1:6, in his opening message to the church, John described what the Lord had done for the saints and what He had prepared for those whose sins He had washed away with His blood:

“And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:6). John also describes the blood-purchased multitude who have been raptured as saying *“And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth”* (Revelation 5:10).

This is in harmony with what Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, squabbling among themselves over minor differences, as he tried to turn their attention to the Lord’s glorious provision and plans for His followers:

“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?” (1 Corinthians 6:2-3).

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In addition, Paul describes the suddenness of this marvelous transformation God has planned for His own in 1 Corinthians 15:52-53:

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

These have all been removed from this earth so that He could apply **“Jacob’s trouble”** (Jeremiah 30:7), His chastisement and discipline of the rebellious descendants of Jacob, and judge and punish the wicked followers of Satan.

These raptured, resurrected saints, in their new bodies, are not bound to this earth. Their resurrected bodies are not subject to God’s laws which govern the material and temporal; therefore, they are not residents here on this material - temporal earth, but they can come and go as Jesus Himself did in His resurrected body. While it is beyond our ability to comprehend much of the life that is to be lived in a newly resurrected body, we know that it is outside of and beyond the limitations now known by anyone living on this earth.

Where do these live? With Jesus! Where He is His resurrected followers will also be found, apparently able to come to this earth or free to leave it at will.

John further describes some others he sees on the thrones: **“... 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”** (Rev. 20:4).

They **“were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God.”** These are thus identified as those who were converted to Jesus Christ during the Tribulation Period and then martyred, or **“beheaded,”** for their uncompromising faith. In their passionate commitment to their new Lord and King, they had withstood the Anti-Christ and his henchmen, courageously refusing to compromise their convictions for the sake of expediency or survival. Some of these were seen in the great multitude already martyred during the Tribulation Period and already in heaven worshipping the Lord:

“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to

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me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes”(Revelation 7:13-17).

They will undoubtedly be joined by thousands of others martyred because they followed Jesus later during the Tribulation Period. For such, God has wonderful, almost indescribable blessings waiting, blessings which they could never receive on this earth.

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