

“Ready to Give a Defense”

Answering Our Friends’ Religious Questions

Lesson Fourteen - Premillennialism

Introduction. 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 try and interpret ongoing political events in light of this anticipated tribulation and earthly kingdom. In this lesson we will consider what the Bible teaches about these doctrines.

I. The Promises of Revelation Chapters Twenty.

A. The Binding of Satan (Revelation 20:1-3).

1. Old Testament prophecy associated the restriction of demonic power with the reign of the Messiah (Zechariah 13:1-6).
2. Jesus described the work of the Apostles as conquering Satan (Luke 10:17-20).

B. The 1000 Year Reign (Revelation 20:4-6).

1. 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.
2. Nothing is said about Jesus reigning upon the earth. Before His ascension His universal authority was declared (Matthew 28:18-20).

C. Final Judgment (Revelation 20:7-15).

1. All opposition to the reign of Christ will be brought to a complete end. [Note: If this passage describes Jesus reigning upon the earth in a future kingdom, will He allow rebellion on the earth while He sits on the throne prior to this final victory?]
2. Satan and all who follow him will be cast into the lake of fire - i.e. Hell.
3. All will be resurrected and judged. [Note: I Corinthians 15:20-25 teach that Christ will deliver the kingdom over to the Father when death is brought to an end.]

II. The Nature of the Kingdom.

A. The Prophecy of Daniel.

1. The prophet Daniel prophesied that during the third kingdom to reign after Babylon an eternal kingdom would be set up (Daniel 2:28-44).
2. The Roman Empire was the 3rd kingdom to rule after Babylon and Jesus established the church during this reign (Luke 3:1-6).

B. Jesus’ Statements about the Kingdom.

1. Jesus declared that His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:33-38).
2. He declared the kingdom would not come with observation but was within (Luke 17:20-21).
3. Jesus declared that some who were then alive would not die until they saw the kingdom come with power (Mark 9:1).
4. Thus Jesus declares plainly that His kingdom is not earthly, observable nor to be established later than the lifetime of some who were alive in the First Century.

C. The Apostles’ Statements About the Kingdom.

1. Paul told the Colossians that Christ had already translated them into the kingdom (Col 1:13,14).
2. John spoke of those alive when he lived who were his brothers and companions in the kingdom (Revelation 1:9).
3. It is clear that the very Apostle who wrote the promises of the 1000 year reign already understood Christ to be reigning over him and others.

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III. When Will the Saints Be “Caught Up to Meet Him?” (I Thessalonians 4:13-5:5).

A. The resurrection and Jesus’ coming.

1. When Jesus returns He will bring with Him those who “sleep in Jesus” not just the martyrs.
2. When Jesus returns the dead in Christ will rise. This must be what Revelation 20 calls “the second resurrection.”

B. “Meet the Lord in the air.”

1. The saved will “meet the Lord in the air” and “always be with the Lord.” There is no indication that Jesus will return to the earth itself. The heaven and earth will be destroyed at His return (II Peter 3:10-13).
2. There is no indication that those “caught up” will be separated from Jesus thus being spared from some tribulation or awaiting some earthly kingdom. [Note: Passages that refer to some taken and some left properly refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and those taken captive, not final judgment or some pre-kingdom rapture - cf. Matthew 24 & Luke 21:20-24.]

Conclusion. The Bible teaches that Jesus established His kingdom when He came to this earth and was established as King. The Bible teaches that the church is Christ’s kingdom. The Bible promises that when Jesus returns He will return for 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.