

# Reigning With Christ

## Understanding the Millennial Kingdom

### Revelation 20:4-6

#### I. Introduction: Two Reminders

1. First up is a reminder that John is an eyewitness to what he is recording. **He is not a stenographer reporting what others say. He has not been given the words by divine revelation.** He is a witness. **I can't imagine all that he must have been feeling...excitement, confusion, sorrow, shock, hope, love, joy, awe, and much more.**
  - A. Thousands of years of history coming to a climatic (at least in some sense) ending. **Prophecy from Ezekiel, Malachi, Thessalonians, Matthew, Isaiah, Daniel, Psalms, and others all coming alive right in front of him.**
2. Next up is what I believe to be an essential doctrine of the Christian faith – the second coming. **If Christ is not returning, then we do not have the hope He promises.** He died and rose again in defeating death, but if he won't come back to get us (as He promises He will), we remain NOT in His presence for evermore.

As we have journeyed through the book of Revelation, we have touched upon some of the dominant historical interpretive frameworks for eschatology specifically along with the Bible more generally. These include:

- A. **Premillennialism** which was adopted by the church for the first 2 ½ centuries AD. **This is the most-literal interpretive approach to studying God's word** AND includes understanding allegories and other figures of speech to be explaining literal truth.
- B. **Postmillennialism** which was based on figurative interpretation founded in Origen's work came into its own as part of the reformation and was especially influential in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

While elements remain alive-and-well under a branch of **Amillennialism**, postmillennialism lost favor as some of its major tenets were thoroughly debunked through the lens of history along with inherent weaknesses in unsupported spiritualizing principles and other factors making an incoherent framework for understanding Scripture.

C. **Amillennialism** rose in the fifth century with the contribution of Augustine in systematizing Origen's more figurative approach. **There are two broad camps to this movement.** The first one (including the Roman Catholic Church) draws from Augustine's views and finds the fulfillment of God's covenant promises concerning the kingdom and Christ's reign as being fulfilled in the church **AND (2) the second which views God's promises regarding Christ's ruling over the saints as being in heaven exclusively.** Some broad-brush considerations of Amillennialism include:

- i. Amillennialists selectively interpret prophecies spiritually to support their views (or to discredit premillennialists) rather than letting Scripture speak for itself;
- ii. **All saints are members of the church, with all this implies** (note, that dispensational premillennialist see that God has different plans for different groups...for example Israel, the church, and Tribulation saints);
- iii. **Amillennialists are a fractured tribe on substantial issues of judgment, resurrection, the timing and nature of the 2nd advent, eternal punishment, and others.**

3. Okay...so What? I am glad you asked.

A. Given that here at CCA we hold to a dispensational premillennialist framework, our interpretive framing means that we believe the Second Coming is premillennial. **That, of necessity, in literally fulfilling Biblical prophecy, the second coming is a literal event.** Finally, we believe the fulfillment of

literal prophesy is the foundation for many other clear and central doctrines...for example, we are to<sup>1</sup>:

- i. Be Watchful (Mt 24:42-44);
- ii. Repent (Acts 3:19-21);
- iii. Have Fidelity (Mt 25:19-21);
- iv. Be Unashamed of Christ (Mk 8:38);
- v. Be against Worldliness (Mt 16:26-27)
- vi. Abide in Christ (1 Jn 2:28) AND MANY, MANY MORE.

B. The second, but related reason, is that the topics of replacement theology and Christian Zionism are no longer academic exercises, but are creating heated division within politically and within the church. While we are not directly addressing these in this teaching, they are certainly evident.

4. Before moving into our passage, I want to emphasize that sharing all of this is about us knowing what we believe and why we believe it. It is about strengthening our faith and the expressions (like grace) of our faith. Because we teach eschatology from a dispensational pre-mil view does NOT make us better Christians than Amillennialists. There are many Godly men and women who differ on their views in this matter. But even if we don't agree with them, we do NOT stand against them, but with them in worshipping the Jesus of the Bible. Where things get sticky is when they and/or we are making Jesus into our image or our desires for justice, compassion, love, grace, and forgiveness.

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## II. Revelation 20:4-6: One-Thousand Years is One-Thousand Years

1. The opening of v4 begs the question of who is sitting on these thrones of judgment. The immediate context of Revelation 19:8, 14, 19 along with other NT and OT passages suggesting these thrones are for the church-age resurrected saints (1 Cor 6:2-3, Dan 7:22) and NOT the angels (Hebrews 2:5) and NOT the apostles as they have already been given their jurisdiction (Mt

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<sup>1</sup> Things to Come, J. Dwight Pentecost, chapters 23-24

19:28). Some have suggested they would include OT saints, but we need be reminded that they have not yet been resurrected (an 12:1-2; Is 26:19; 20:4-6). Yet others have suggested that it is the 24 elders, but that would force their unnecessary insertion into a passage that already offers a clear solution.

2. Next up the text indicates two different groups of Tribulation saints. The first is those that were martyred as John sees (and recognizes) their souls. The second of these groups are those that were faithful to Christ during the Tribulation period yet did not die.
3. Finally, at the end of v4 we have a definitive statement about all of these groups living and reigning with Christ during His 1,000-yr reign. It's here I want to note a couple of things:
  - A. That because most Amillennialists view the saints of every age to be part of the church, they ignore any possible distinctions. This shows up most vividly with respect to their view that the church has become spiritual Israel for the purposes of God fulfilling His OT covenantal promises to Israel; and
  - B. Under Christ's leadership in the millennial period, there will be no war, no disease, little crime, and therefore, little death. Much of the population will flourish to never-before seen numbers with few actually dying during this period.
4. In verse 5, we read of the resurrection of those dead-in-Christ to come at the end of, again, Christ's literal 1,000-yr reign. More on this later in chapter 20 here in Revelation.
5. Taken together, I believe the natural, plain reading of these verses (especially in light of Christ and His church returning to earth with no mention of them leaving at this point AND because it is in this period that He fulfills the remainder of His covenantal promises to Israel) make clear it will be a literal 1,000 year reign occurring here on earth and NOT in the heavenlies. Amillennialists generally suggest that the term "they lived" at the end of v4 is relating to a spiritual resurrection or regeneration and NOT an actual

resurrection and yet the end of v5 indicates quite clearly this is a physical resurrection. Indeed, it seems natural to read that for those being priests (spiritual) and ruling (civil) with Jesus, as we read at the end of v6, they will have literal glorified bodies (like Jesus) to rule over those having literal physical bodies.<sup>2</sup>

It's here I want to offer you what I believe the be the Biblical Resurrection Program.

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### **The First Resurrection of The Resurrection to Life (Rev 20:6)**

- A. Resurrection of Christ as the firstfruits (1 Cor 15:23);
- B. Resurrection of the church age saints (1 Thes 4:16);
- C. Resurrection of the tribulation period saints (Rev 20:3-5) **AND**
- D. Resurrection of the OT saints at the same time (Dan 12:2; Isa 26:19) at Christ's 2nd coming.

### **The Second Resurrection or The Resurrection to Death**

- E. This resurrection is for the unsaved (Rev 20:5; 11-15)
- 6. Lastly, for those that have heard others say this is the only place in the Bible where the 1,000 years is mentioned, this is correct. While that does not make it invalid, we are also confronted with the reality of many OT prophets speaking clearly of the kingdom age. Some examples include Is 2:2, 11:6, 19:23-25, 35:1-2, 62 along with Acts 1:6 in the NT.<sup>3</sup>

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### **III. Closing: Jesus is Trustworthy**

1. As He promises, He is coming back;
2. We will judge then rule and reign with Him for a 1,000 years;
3. Satan and his new army raised from the ranks of the millennial families, will be vanquished;

<sup>2</sup> Things to Come, J. Dwight Pentecost, chapters 23-24

<sup>3</sup> Paige Patterson, *Revelation*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 39, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2012), 355.

## Revelation 20:4-6 Discussion Prompts

Don't be shy or embarrassed, this is a safe place to talk, learn, and grow. All of us should walk with an attitude of grace and Godly love in encouraging one another to contribute to our shared growth in the Lord.

***For more discussion questions helping your faith to grow, please download the sermon documents typically posted the day after each sermon on the watch tab of our App or website.***

1. Discuss ways to walk in grace and unity with brothers and sisters in Christ having a different interpretive approach to prophesy (emphasis on eschatology).
2. How does or how could your eschatological framework (Premillennialism vs Amillennialism, or even Postmillennialism) inform your daily living experience?
3. Share what you envision life will be like when you as a saint will be “priests of God and of Christ as well as reigning with Him” during His millennial kingdom.

## Revelation 20:4-6

# Reigning With Christ: Understanding the Millennial Kingdom

### I. Introduction: Two Reminders

- John is an eyewitness
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming is an essential doctrine
- Seeing eschatology through the lens of Premillennialism or Amillennialism

Additional Scripture References: Mt 24:42-44; Acts 3:19-21; Mt 25:19-21; Mk 8:38; Mt 16:26-27; 1 Jn 2:28; 1 Cor 15:23; Dan 12:2; Isa 26:19;

### II. Revelation 20:4-6: One-Thousand Years is One-Thousand Years

- The First Resurrection (and Second)

Additional Scripture References: Rev 19:8, 14, 19; 1 Cor 6:2-3, Dan 7:22; Hebrews 2:5; Mt 19:28; 12:1-2; Is 26:19; 20:4-6; 1 Thes 4:16; Is 2:2, 11:6, 19:23-25, 35:1-2, 62; Acts 1:6

### III. Closing: Jesus is Trustworthy

## 5-Day Devotional

### Revelation 20:4-6

### Reigning With Christ: Understanding the Millennial Kingdom

#### Day 1: The Promise of His Return

Reading: 1 Thes 4:13-18

**Devotional:** The certainty of Christ's second coming anchors our faith in turbulent times. Just as John witnessed prophetic visions becoming reality, we stand on the promises of Scripture that Jesus will return. This is not wishful thinking but historical fact waiting to unfold. The same Jesus who conquered death and rose victorious will come again to gather His people.

This promise transforms how we live today. Are you living watchfully, expecting His return? Does this hope shape your daily decisions? Let the reality of Christ's coming return fill you with anticipation and motivate holy living. Our future with Him is not uncertain speculation but guaranteed hope.

#### Day 2: Faithful Stewardship While We Wait

Reading: Matt 25:14-30

**Devotional:** Christ's return demands our faithful stewardship today. Like servants entrusted with their master's resources, we have been given gifts, time, and opportunities to invest for His kingdom. The question is not if He returns, but how He will find us when He does. Will we be found faithful, actively serving, or ashamed and unprepared? Our calling is not passive waiting but active engagement in His mission.

Evaluate your life honestly: Are you using your gifts to advance God's kingdom? Are you abiding in Christ daily, drawing strength from Him? The reward for faithfulness is not merely commendation but the privilege of reigning with Him eternally.

#### Day 3: The Hope of Resurrection

Reading: 1 Cor 15:20-28 & 15:50-58

**Devotional:** Death has been defeated. Christ's resurrection guarantees ours. This magnificent truth separates Christianity from every other worldview. We do not face annihilation or endless reincarnation, but bodily resurrection to eternal life. The first resurrection includes all who belong to Christ, from church-age saints to tribulation martyrs to Old Testament believers. This is our blessed hope. When grief threatens to overwhelm, when mortality weighs heavy, remember: death is not the end. Your labor in the Lord is never in vain because resurrection awaits.

Live today with resurrection confidence. Let this hope energize your service, comfort your sorrows, and fuel your perseverance through trials.

**Day 4: Citizens of the Coming Kingdom      Reading: Isa 11:1-10, Rev 20:4-6**

**Devotional:** The prophets spoke of a coming kingdom where Christ reigns in perfect justice and peace. This is not mere metaphor but future reality. A literal thousand-year reign where swords become plowshares, the wolf dwells with the lamb, and righteousness covers the earth. More remarkably, believers will participate in this reign as priests and rulers with Christ. This future should radically reorient our present. We are not merely saved from something but saved for something, called to eternal partnership with Jesus in His cosmic restoration project.

How does knowing your future role as a ruler with Christ change your perspective on current struggles? Live as a citizen of that coming kingdom today.

**Day 5: Living Unashamed Until He Comes      Reading: Mk 8:34-38, 1 Jn 2:28-3:3**

**Devotional:** Christ warns against being ashamed of Him in this adulterous generation. The temptation to compromise, to blend in, to soften our witness is real and persistent. But those who will reign with Christ must first identify with Him fully, even when costly. Abiding in Christ produces confidence, not shame, at His appearing. This abiding is not mystical but practical: remaining in His Word, obeying His commands, walking in His love.

Examine your life: Are there areas where you hide your faith? Where worldliness has crept in? Purify yourself as He is pure. Live boldly for Christ, unashamed and uncompromising. His approval matters infinitely more than cultural acceptance.

## Small Group Study Guide

### Revelation 20:4-6

#### Reigning With Christ: Understanding the Millennial Kingdom

**Opening Prayer:** Begin your time together by asking God to open your hearts to His Word and give you wisdom to apply His truth to your lives.

**Opening Question:** What's one promise someone made to you that they kept, and how did that strengthen your trust in them?

#### **Sermon Recap:**

This sermon explores Christ's literal 1,000-year reign on earth, the resurrection program, and what it means for believers to reign with Christ. We examined different interpretive frameworks (Pre-millennialism, Post-millennialism, and Amillennialism) and why our church holds to a dispensational premillennial view.

**Discussion Questions:** Did the Holy Spirit prompt any questions with you? Start with those.

1. What stood out to you most from this passage in Revelation 20:4-6? Why?
2. The sermon mentioned John as an eyewitness. How does knowing John personally witnessed these visions affect how you read Revelation?
3. Review the three interpretive frameworks (Pre-millennialism, Post-millennialism, Amillennialism). Were you familiar with these before? What questions do you have about them?
4. Why is the literal Second Coming of Christ considered "essential doctrine"? What would be lost if we spiritualized it away?
5. The sermon listed several practical implications of believing in Christ's return (being watchful, repentant, faithful, unashamed, anti-worldly, abiding in Christ). Which of these resonates most with your current season of life?
6. Revelation 20:4 describes two groups of Tribulation saints - martyrs and those who remained faithful without dying. What does this teach us about faithfulness in difficult times?
7. What does it mean practically that believers will serve as both "priests" (spiritual role) and "rulers" (civil role) during the Millennium?
8. How does the promise of reigning with Christ for 1,000 years impact how you view current suffering or trials?

9. The sermon emphasized that disagreeing on eschatology doesn't make us better Christians than others. How can we hold firmly to our beliefs while extending grace to those who interpret differently?
10. Looking at the Biblical Resurrection Program, where do you see yourself in God's plan? How does this give you hope?

### **Key Takeaways:**

- John was an eyewitness - He saw these events unfold, experiencing the full range of human emotions as thousands of years of prophecy came alive before him.
- The Second Coming is essential doctrine - Without Christ's return, we lack the hope He promises and remain separated from His presence.
- The 1,000-year reign is literal - Christ will physically reign on earth, fulfilling His covenantal promises to Israel and the church.
- Two resurrections exist - The First Resurrection (to life) occurs in stages; the Second Resurrection (to death) occurs for the unsaved.
- We will reign with Christ - Church-age saints and Tribulation saints will have glorified bodies and serve as priests and rulers during the Millennium.

**Practical Applications:** Query the group for applications first...you may explore one or more of those.

1. Be Watchful: Matthew 24:42-44
  - Set a daily reminder to pause and remember Christ is returning
  - Journal about how this awareness changes your priorities
2. Abide in Christ: 1 John 2:28
  - Spend 10 minutes daily in prayer, focusing on your relationship with Jesus
  - Ask yourself: "Am I living in a way that I'd be unashamed if He returned today?"
3. Be Unashamed of Christ: Mark 8:38
  - Identify one relationship where you've been hesitant to share your faith
  - Pray for an opportunity and courage to speak about Jesus this week

#### 4. Study Deeper

- Read one of the Old Testament passages mentioned (Isaiah 2:2, 11:6, 19:23-25, 35:1-2, or Isaiah 62)
- Write down what you learn about the kingdom age

#### **Closing Prayer Points:**

- Pray for a deeper understanding of God's Word and His prophetic plan
- Ask for grace toward those who interpret Scripture differently
- Request boldness to live watchfully and faithfully in light of Christ's return

## Discussion Questions

### Revelation 20:4-6

#### Reigning With Christ: Understanding the Millennial Kingdom

4. How does understanding John as an eyewitness rather than a mere stenographer change the way you read and interpret the book of Revelation?
5. Why is the doctrine of the Second Coming essential to Christian hope, and what would be missing from our faith if Christ did not return as promised?
6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the different millennial frameworks (premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism), and how does your interpretive framework affect your daily Christian walk?
7. How should Christians respond to the practical commands that flow from belief in Christ's literal second coming, such as being watchful, repentant, faithful, and unashamed?
8. In what ways does the debate about replacement theology and Christian Zionism impact both political discourse and church unity today?
9. How can believers maintain unity and grace with other Christians who hold different eschatological views while remaining firm in their own convictions?
10. What does it mean for church-age saints to sit on thrones of judgment and reign with Christ for a thousand years, and how should this future reality shape our present lives?
11. How does the distinction between different groups of saints (Old Testament, church-age, and Tribulation saints) help us better understand God's covenantal promises and His faithfulness?
12. What implications does the biblical resurrection program have for our understanding of death, eternal life, and the ultimate fate of believers versus unbelievers?
13. How does the promise of Christ's millennial reign, characterized by peace, righteousness, and flourishing life, inform our current efforts to pursue justice and compassion in a broken world?

## **Dinner Conversation Starters**

### **Revelation 20:4-6**

### **Reigning With Christ: Understanding the Millennial Kingdom**

#### **1. Role of a Witness**

The sermon mentions that John was an eyewitness and not just reporting what he heard. How do you think witnessing something firsthand impacts how you share it with others? Can you think of a time when being a witness to an event changed your perspective or opinion?

#### **2. The Concept of Hope**

The second coming of Christ is presented as a fundamental hope in Christianity. What are some things you hope for in your life, and how do they guide your daily actions and decisions?

#### **3. Different Interpretations**

The sermon discusses different beliefs about the end times, like premillennialism and amillennialism. How do you think differing interpretations of the same event or idea can coexist? Have you experienced situations where different perspectives were beneficial?

#### **4. Prophecies and Fulfillment**

The speaker mentioned that biblical prophecies are being fulfilled. Do you know of any prophecies, biblical or otherwise, that you find intriguing? What do you think about the idea of prophecy and its impact on belief?

#### **5. Reigning with Christ**

The sermon talks about ruling with Christ for a thousand years. What qualities do you think are important for someone who has the responsibility of leadership or governance? Can you identify these qualities in someone you admire?

# Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

## Revelation 20:4-6

### Reigning With Christ: Understanding the Millennial Kingdom

#### AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Understanding Hope:** Just as we hope for Christ's return, we can have hope in everyday situations.

*Discussion Questions:*

Can you think of something you are hoping for, like a birthday or holiday? How does having something to look forward to make you feel?

In what ways can we be hopeful when things don't go our way, maybe when you're upset at school or with a friend?

#### AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Being a Good Leader:** Reigning with Christ teaches us the importance of leadership through service and kindness.

*Discussion Questions:*

How can you be a good leader in your friend group? What qualities do you think are important, like kindness or honesty?

If you see someone being left out or teased online or in person, how might you step in as a leader to help the situation?

#### AGES 11-15: DEEPENING THE CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Handling Different Opinions:** Just like different interpretations of biblical prophecies exist, we will encounter different viewpoints in life.

*Discussion Questions:*

How do you deal with situations where your friends have different opinions from your own, maybe on social media or during group projects?

Can you recall a time when listening to someone else's perspective changed the way you thought about an issue? How can respecting other viewpoints lead to better relationships both online and offline?

# **Family Conversation Guide for Teenagers**

## **Revelation 20:4-6**

### **Reigning With Christ: Understanding the Millennial Kingdom**

#### **1. Respecting and Engaging with Differing Viewpoints**

Biblical Application: James 1:19 - "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."

Scenario: When participating in a group discussion where opinions vary, practice active listening and seek to understand before responding. This approach reflects biblical wisdom and promotes respectful dialogue.

#### **2. Cultivating Trust and Hope**

Biblical Application: Hebrews 11:1 - "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

Scenario: In friendships or dating, embody hope and trust by being reliable and transparent. When misunderstandings occur, focus on the positives and the potential for reconciliation, infusing hope into the relationship.

#### **3. Christ-Like Character Online**

Biblical Application: Colossians 3:17 - "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Scenario: When engaging in social media activities, ensure your posts, comments, and interactions reflect kindness and integrity. Be mindful of how your online presence aligns with your faith, using your platform to uplift rather than divide.