

## Week 11 End Times Study

Revelation 20:4-22:21

Seven lampstands, seals, trumpets, tableaux, bowls of wrath, judgments, & promises.

### Act VII Seven Promises

#### 20:4-10 1<sup>st</sup> Promise - The Millennium

Hotly debated between interpretive views, is the millennium (1000 years) literal or figurative. If literal, where how and where will Jesus reign with the martyrs of the tribulation who were beheaded and have been resurrected? If figurative, where do you draw the line between the real and symbolic? There is a danger of applying that same method of interpretation to the whole Bible.

Before we get worked up on defending one view over another, remember that two whole chapters are devoted to the fall of our materialistic world represented by Babylon and a pagan world system, versus three verse to the millennium.

Two major millennial views: Premillennialism and Amillennialism

1. Premillennialists - Literal 1000 years. Premillennialism has two camps.

(A) Dispensational - it gets its name from the teaching that the seven churches represent seven ages or dispensations. Originated in 1827 by Miss Margaret McDonald, and copied by her pastor Dr. John N. Darby and made popular by the *Scofield Bible*, *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey, the *Left Behind* Series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins and others like David Jeremiah.

In Revelation the churches represent seven church ages. We do not all agree on when the rapture will take place, and there are pre-trib, mid-trib, and post-trib theories about when the church is taken out and Israel once again becomes the people of God. The church returns with Christ. See handout by Bruce A. Ware

(B) Historical - Christ returns in 19:11 and reigns on earth for 1k years. Then comes the judgment. At no point in Revelation is there an absence of saints. In Romans 10-11 we learn there will be a coming time of blessing of Jewish believers; but also learn in Ephesians 2:13-22 that there is a new people of God, believers in Christ, members of God's household with no division between Jews and Gentiles. Ephesians 3:6 *This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.*

If you take out all the Christians before, during or after the tribulation who will give witness to the Jews. If we are the temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19 & 2 Cor. 6:16), why is there a need for a new temple which is governed by laws that have been replaced by grace? Why is there a return to an old covenant that is obsolete Heb. 8:13, and why is there a need for sacrifices again since Jesus sacrifice was once for all Heb. 10:10 and his shed blood has given us a new righteousness 2 Cor. 5:21?

2. Amillennialists - Figurative/Symbolic. The millennium is a complete period that represents Christ's reign with His church until he returns. You might call the cross Armageddon. Jesus will return to bring salvation to the church and judge the world.

Review of the place of the martyrs. In 7:14-17 they are cared for under the throne of God. See 11:7,11; 12:11; 13:4, 8-10; 14:12 to understand these martyrs resisted Satan and the anti-Christ and paid for it with their lives. Now in 20:4 they are resurrected and honored to reign with Christ for 1k years, these who have "conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; for they did not love their lives to the point of death (12:11)."

If all the theories of the millennium confuse you, you might like the simple theology of a country preacher who declared himself a Panmillennialist, "Because it is all going to pan out in the end anyway."

### **20:11-15 2<sup>nd</sup> Promise - Great White Throne**

There are three judgments mentioned in the New Testament. Matthew 25:31-46 Sheep & Goats; Judgment Seat of Christ 2 Corinthians 5:10; and the Great White Throne. All religions and even atheists speak of an accounting or judgment of our lives. It is sad that many believe in a civil religion that ascribes to a judgment of goodness, when Jesus said that there is no one who is good except God alone (Mk. 10:18). Others try and push it away believing that God is so loving or merciful that he would not hold anyone accountable to the point of casting them in hell.

Judgment is based on whether a person is a believer in Christ - 2 Thes. 2:10 *They perish because they did not accept the love of the truth and so be saved.* John 3:16 *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.* - and their name is in the Lamb's Book of Life. The book is mentioned nine times in the Bible. (Ps. 69:28, Ps. 139:16; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27; 22:15). At Christmas, Santa's fabled naughty and nice list is modeled after the Book of Life. What a sad imitation and an anti-Christ spirit. The n & n list teaches kids that they won't really be held accountable and they will continue believing they can get away with being bad. They laugh about it and have even flipped the truth saying "bad is good." The Lake of Fire will be there end, where "*the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.*" Isaiah 66:24; Mk 9:48. (Cf. parable of rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31)

### **21:1-3 3<sup>rd</sup> Promise - New Heaven and New Earth**

The old heaven and earth are destroyed by fire 2 Peter 3:10 and heaven and earth will no longer be separate places, but joined together as the New Jerusalem, which is the dwelling place (home Jn. 14:2-3) of God and the faithful. "*Behold the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God, himself, will be with them.*" There is no more separation, but one place where God and humankind live together forever. There is no sea, Is. 65:17, which means evil is no longer present.

## **21:4-8 4<sup>th</sup> Promise – Assurance for Believers**

One of the most beloved passages in the Bible, it encourages believers and brings great comfort to many at funerals. Previously we are told there is no more evil, and now there is no more pain or any other consequence of sin. Even tears are wiped away. A euphemism for death is that a person has passed away. Here we learn that death itself along with the tears and grief have passed away. Hallelujah!

A whole new existence will be experienced in our new eternal home. People speak of their forever home on earth. That is wrong. Our forever home is not of this earth, but in heaven.

God speaks and guarantees that all who have "Conquered" (Rev. 12:11; Romans 8:37) will enjoy a new heavenly home, but the cowards who are detestable = polluted with evil, and having no faith, 21:8 (cf. Mt. 24:51; 25:30, 46; 1 Cor. 6:9-11) will not. They will experience the second death which is eternal condemnation brought on by their own actions or choices.

## **21:9-21 5<sup>th</sup> Promise – The New Jerusalem**

The New Jerusalem is portrayed in glorious phrases. It has dimensions = real, and is a place of beauty constructed with pearls, jewels and gold. While knowing it is real, do not be too materialistic in your understanding. It will be more than we can imagine in beauty and glory, just like God, its creator. The wall is made of Jasper, the same substance that describes God in 4:3. The city is the very presence of God. It has twelve foundations and twelve entrances. In Ezekiel 48 the prophet has a vision of heaven with twelve gates so the people can go out and claim their land. Here the twelve gates allow the entrance of all who believe from every nation.

The source of the city is the love of God for us. Some want to literally translate it in size as 1500 miles by 1500 miles. It will be plenty big for all the saints. The better number to focus on are the twelves representing the people of God made up of the twelve tribes of Israel and the followers of the twelve apostles. They are the complete family of God, 12000 stadia times 12000 stadia = 144,000 = the complete family of God.

The twelve foundation stones come from the breastplate of the high priest in the OT (Ex. 39:10-13). The twelve foundations though have the names of the apostles. The people of God are one.

## **21:22-27 6<sup>th</sup> Promise – City's Lights**

No more sun or moon which are our measures of time, but only eternity. For procrastinators it truly will be heaven. For people who are OCD about time and details, they can rest and let God be in control. Yes, it will be heaven.

There is no temple for the temple was a place to come experience the presence of God for there is no leaving the presence of the light of God upon us. No more darkness, no need to hide, no more night when deception takes place. Only light and truth, forever.

## **21:1-5 7<sup>th</sup> Promise – The River of Life**

The throne has remained at center stage throughout this revelation and now it is the source of the river of life, for it is the throne of God. Jesus had used the same description of himself as the source of the water of life in John 4:14. The picture is not of a busy main street, but a garden. The Bible opens and closes with a garden. There was also a garden where Jesus was betrayed and arrested, bound and taken away. But, that garden is long past, and now the garden of heaven is available to the saints.

Now the trees of life produce fruit for all to eat. Nothing is held back, and Satan has been cast into hell so he can't tempt anyone. The order of creation has been restored.

## **22:6-21 Epilogue**

With this picture of beauty and the reign of God forever, the revelation closes with a reminder once again to worship God. John gets it wrong one more time in 22:9 and he is reminded who it is that we worship in 22:12-16. We worship the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. No one is like Him!!

One final blessing in 22:14 for all who believe and are pure with clean robes. They are given the right to the tree of life and entrance into the city of God.

A final warning says, do not change anything. Speake this truth of prophecy and continue to believe, "Jesus is coming soon". "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!