

THE REIGNING SAINTS

Read: 2 Thessalonians 1:5-19

"They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4).

These are the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus. They had not worshipped the beast..." They reigned with Christ then, and they are still reigning with Christ because He reigns in the hearts of all who love Him. Once He has begun reigning in a forgiven sinner's heart, He will not stop reigning there.

The period specified as 1,000 years occurs six time in these few verses. With all its blessings, it falls short of perfection. It does not reach either to **seven** or **twelve**. It is not the new heaven and the new earth. It is not the eternal dwelling place of God and His children. The Bible would be incomplete and the believer short changed if it carried us no further than the millennium.

Praise God there are more and greater truths yet to come. Whether we believe in a future earthly reign of 1,000 years, or whether we reject this interpretation, we know that Jesus is coming soon (Rev 22:7).

"This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power on the day He comes to be glorified in His holy people and to be marvelled at among all those who have believed" (2 Thess 1:7-10).

Be in time!
Be in Time!
While the voice of Jesus calls you
Be in time!

If in sin you longer wait,
You may find no open gate
And your cry be just too late!
Be in time!

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The meaning of . . .

**God
and
1,000 years
[Millenium]**



**Written
by
Fred Morris**

To the Reader: *Keep your Bible beside you. Read the Bible verses as you study. Most of the Bible verses are from the New International Version. You may have a King James Bible or another translation, so the words may be a little different, but the meaning will be the same. Ask God to guide your mind to know His truth. He has promised to do this for you (John 8:32).*

Ask a friend to join in the study with you. You may be able to help each other with something that you do not understand. Talk together about the questions. You will be blessed and so will your friend.

GOD KNOWS NO TIME

Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

King Solomon wrote these words about time: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven" (Eccl 3:1).

He had already written about the vanity or worthlessness of study, pleasure and business. Happiness is not found in the schools of learning, he concluded, so we should be glad to use the time God has given us to pursue Him.

Solomon said: "To know God is the beginning of wisdom". He was right, but knowing God takes effort and it takes time.

YOU HAVE TIME ON YOUR SIDE

Read: 2 Peter 3:18

It takes time for any living thing to grow. Look at the seeds you planted in your garden. It will be a week before they sprout and another week before you can tell what kind of plant they are. Then, if they are beans, it will be three months before you can harvest and eat them.

It is the same with your faith. Some Christians labor in prayer and wonder why God does not answer. He is waiting for their faith to grow, or testing their perseverance. "perseverance builds character and character hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by His Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:4-5).

You have time to wait on God. He is not in a hurry, even if you are. In my own Christian life, I have found that waiting on God is one of the hardest disciplines, but I do it anyway.

MAN MEASURES TIME

Read: 2 Peter 3:3-8

God does not set times. The writer said in the Psalms, "Our times are in His hands" (Psalm 31:15). He meant the days God gives us on this earth.

Jesus said He would come again and take all who loved Him to be with Him in Heaven (John 14:2-4). But when the people asked Him when that would be He said, "No one knows about the day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Matt 24:36).

one thousand years when Christ will reign on a renewed earth.

He tells us exactly why Jesus Christ has not already come to gather His people. It is not because God is tardy, as the scoffers say (2 Peter 3:4). Or because He has forgotten His promise. It is because "He (God) is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). And again, "Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation..." (2 Peter 3:15).

God's word is sure. By His word "the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water." At God's command, "the world of that time was deluged and destroyed" by the same waters (2 Peter 3:5-6).

By the same word, "the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment (Peter speaks of only **ONE** day of judgment) and destruction of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3:7).

Peter reminds us that God knows no time. All the cataclysmic events on earth and the years that led up to them are as "one day" to God (2 Peter 3:8).

On this impressive background, the apostle unfolds the glorious event that will precede the final day of judgment and destruction of "ungodly men." The glorious event is the promised second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:2-3). Peter assured his hearers that Paul gave the very same teaching in all his letters to the churches in Asia (2 Peter 3:15-16).

TALK ABOUT

1. From reading 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10, the judgment must come on the day Jesus comes again __ True __ False?
2. Did Paul teach this truth in all his letters to the churches?
3. Why has Jesus delayed His coming (2 Peter 3:9)?

LIKE A THIEF IN THE NIGHT

"The day of the Lord will come like a thief..." (2 Peter 3:10). The day will not only come suddenly and unexpectedly, but it will be followed at once by the judgment scene described by the apostle John (Rev 20:11-15).

Peter describes a series of events that will happen at the same time. If God intended a millennium of bliss for Jews and Gentiles, ushered in by the coming of Jesus Christ as King, Peter would have spoken of it here. The passage excludes all such interpretations.

James also writes concerning "the last days" and "the Lord's coming" (James 5:3, 7). Judgment of the earth is delayed because "the Lord is full of compassion and mercy" (James 5:11).

DECEIVING THE NATIONS

When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison – only long enough to "deceive the nations" into thinking he will give them a political victory over God's people, and to gather the nations under one anti-Christ leader (Rev. 20:7-8).

The great design of prophecy was **NOT** to point to a glorious future of the nation of Israel, but to bear testimony to Jesus Christ and the business of His Kingdom (Psa 40:7). The objective: “that we be made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb 10:7).

“The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy” (Rev 19:10). The prophet’s testimony of Jesus Christ – His sufferings and His glory – is the real scope and spirit of the prophetic era.

LITERAL INTERPRETATION

A literal interpretation of Revelation 20 creates as many problems as it attempts to solve. If a literal “chain” could not bind the demon possessed man, neither could it hold Satan (Mark 5:3-4).

Christ reigning with His people on earth presents enormous problems as Floyd Hamilton points out in his book, “The basis of Millennial Faith.”

From the writings of pre-tribulation advocates we can divide God’s people during the millennium into groups:

- a) Kingdom citizens with resurrected, glorified bodies (or spirits?).
- b) Glorified Jewish believers who were martyred during the tribulation.
- c) Gentile saints who had been raised at the end of the tribulation, but did not join the Church in the heavenly places.
- d) Jewish believers who entered the millennium with natural bodies.
- e) Gentile believers who entered the millennium with natural bodies.
- f) Jewish believers who die during the millennium.
- g) Gentile believers who die during the millennium.

Hamilton concludes that the dispensationalists have confused each other (as well as thousands of sincere believers) with their theories of seven dispensations of time, three comings of Jesus Christ, three resurrections, four judgment days, etc. none of which he could find in his Bible..

TALK ABOUT

1. Is a literal interpretation of The Revelation chapter 20 useful?
2. Name some of ‘bodies’ that would be present if Jesus brought saints with Him to reign on the earth.
3. Jesus only spoke once of a specific period of time (Matt 12:40)?

FINAL JUDGMENT AND GOD’S FOREBEARANCE

Peter sets the stage for the last events in the history of mankind (2 Peter 3: 1-18). The sweep of history, from the beginning of creation to the final judgment, are covered in just a few verses.

Peter speaks of the heavens and the earth that were before the flood, and then the same heavens and earth being destroyed by fire. He uses this climax to call on all believers to “live holy and godly lives” (2 Peter 3:11).

The second coming of Jesus Christ is tied securely to the judgment of the present earth and heavens. Peter does not tell of any intervening period of

Why? Because the Father does not keep a calendar or a time clock. There is no time in heaven. It is always ‘now.’

Paul said, “I tell you, **now** is the time of God’s favor, **now** is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2).

TIME AND THE PROPHETS

We have to start with the interpretation of prophecy because man has taken so much liberty in how he interprets Scripture.

“The days to come,” is a familiar phrase in the Bible

(Gen 49:1; Num 24:14-25; Deut 31:29). So is “In later days” (Deut 4:30) and “In the last days” (Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1). Some writers just say “and afterward” (Joel 2:28) or “In that day” (Amos 9:11).

Old Testament writers divided time into a number of eras:

The time then present, God’s grace rejected and His judgment pending (Acts 17:30-31).

The coming Messianic age - a new era pictured as glorious “days to come.”

The prophets saw a third age, beyond “the last days” which is signified by the word “forever” (1 Sam 7:29; 2 Chron 7:16; 33:4; Psa 132:14; Isaiah 60:21)

As nothing physical lasts forever, we believe this ‘age’ to be spiritual.

Even the present creation groans, waiting for the glorious coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. At His coming, God will provide a new heavens and a new earth (Isaiah 66:22; The Revelation 21:1).

NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS

The New Testament revelation builds on this structure in the Old Testament: By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Joel’s “And afterwards” (Joel 2:28-32) becomes in the New Testament “in the last days.” Peter also said the Christians he was writing to were living in “the last days” (Acts 2:16-21)..

Again, the prophet’s used the words “In that day” (Amos 9:11-12). In the New Testament this became “After this...” The apostle James applied Amos’ prophecy of “the last days” to the time and activity then at hand (Acts 15:1-21).

Luke applies God’s promise to “restore (Israel) or raise up David’s fallen tent” to the gospel church and the spiritual Kingdom which God was even then building by the preaching of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:12, 16).

The writer of Hebrews retains the distinction between “in the past” when God spoke to Israel’s forefathers through the prophets and “in these last days” when “He has spoken to us by His Son” (Heb 1:1).

Paul took words from Isaiah 49:8 and said to the Christians at Corinth, “this is the day of God’s favor, the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2).

Because God is still speaking to us and offering His salvations through the gospel of Jesus Christ, we must conclude that the day the prophet spoke of is the NOW!

“The Old Testament patterns were good, but they were only ‘shadows’ of the good things that are to come. The heavenly things are the privileges of the gospel and having our own High Priest and Mediator (Hebrews 8:1-2)

TALK ABOUT

1. How does God speak to us today?
2. Who was the last prophet (Matt 11:9-10)?
3. Every symbol used by the writers of the Old Testament points forward to something real in the New Testament ___ True ___ False?

GOD’S WORD TO ISRAEL

Debbie spoke up: “We believe the Jews must come to Christ to be saved, just like everyone else. We believe the Old Testament Church and the New Testament Church are “one body” (Eph 2:15-16).” Debbie knew her Reformed Theology.

Paul said “God chose US from eternity.” (Eph 1:4). He was speaking to Jews. And to the Galatians he said, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all **ONE** in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). And, “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed...” (Gal 3:29).

Romans 9:11 is not the only key verse in this section of Paul’s letter, but also Romans 9:8 which states, “It is not the natural children (of Abraham) who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring”. If that was not enough, Paul added, “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:29).

Some believe there will be a great ingathering of Jews in the last days. This is based on their interpretation of Romans 11:25-26. That may well be, but if it is so, they will come into the Christian Church – of which there is only one – by the blood of Jesus. There is no other way. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

NO SPECIAL STATUS

Israel as a nation forfeited its special status when it turned its back on God. God fulfilled all His promises to the world and to Israel in Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:20). And He brought the nation to an end in AD 70 when the Roman General Titus destroyed the holy city and the temple.

Moreover, God will fulfill all the curses He spoke against Israel’s enemies because they are enemies of Christ’s body, the Christian Church: Moses wrote, “He will take vengeance on His enemies.”

Covenant has made the first Covenant obsolete (Heb 8:13), “The ministry Jesus has received is as superior... as the (New) Covenant of which He is Mediator is superior to the old one (Covenant), and it is founded on better promises” (Heb 8:6).

“He (God) sets aside the first (Covenant) to establish the second (Covenant)” (Heb 10:9).

So by establishing a new Covenant with the whole world, the special relationship God had with national Israel was dissolved forever. It was replaced by the Kingdom of God, a worshipping community of loyal citizens. Paul made this distinction very clear with an analogy of the two women, the two mountains and the two cities (Gal.4:21-31). When we understand his analogy, we are a long way toward understanding the difference between the old Israel after the flesh (the house of David) and the new Israel after the Spirit, “the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16).

Christ’s last words to His disciples commanded them to offer the gospel to individual Jews and Gentiles on an equal basis and the same terms: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved” (Acts 16:31).

Scripture states categorically that “the whole world (Jew and Gentile) is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe” (Gal 3:22). Those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are indeed “children of the promise” (Acts 2:39).

TALK ABOUT

1. Are we told to offer the gospel to Jew and Gentile on equal terms?
2. What makes a person “a child of the promise?”
3. Do you understand Paul’s analogy in Galatians 4:21-31?
4. Did Jesus ever speak of reigning on this earth for 1,000 years?

THE END AND OBJECT OF THE PROPHETIC ERA

Read: 1 Peter 1:10-11

The object and end of the prophetic era was “concerning this salvation, the prophets who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently... trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow” (1 Peter 1:10-11).

If the prophets searched the Scriptures “intently,” the pious Jews did not and Jesus blamed two of them for their slowness “to believe all that the prophets have spoken” (Luke 24:25). He had told the disciples, while He was with them, that “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44).

Jesus Christ told the disciples what had been written about Him “in all the Scriptures.” And He presented Himself, crucified and risen again from the dead, as the proof that all had been fulfilled. All the prophets “from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days” (Acts 3:24).

TEMPLE WORSHIP IN THE LAST DAYS

Israel's worship at the Temple had symbolic meaning only. When Christ died, the veil separating the Holy of Holies from the other parts of the temple was torn from top to bottom. The way into God's presence was made open, to all men and women, by faith in Jesus Christ. This is what the prophets said, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Joel 2:32).

When the temple was destroyed in 70 AD, Israel as a nation came to an end. What God began in symbol and type was fulfilled in spiritual reality. Paul wrote, "Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things which are to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ" (Col 2:16-17).

God will not turn back the clock. What He began in the physical passed into the spiritual and He will not go back to or accept physical sacrifices in an earthly temple (1 Cor 15:45). God dwells in His people who have become His temple (1 Cor 3:9; 1 Peter 2:5). Those "weak and miserable" which enslaved the people were left behind (Gal 4:9-11) had been left for "freedom in the spirit," and no true believer wants to return to them.

A return to animal sacrifices would be a denial of the blood of Christ, shed once-for-all, to take away the sin that could only be 'covered' by the blood of bulls and goats (Heb 9:12-15).

TALK ABOUT

1. Will God turn back the clock and accept temple worship again?
2. Why was Jesus the perfect sacrifice for sin?
3. When Jesus comes on the clouds of heaven, will that be the end of this world?

PEACE FOR 1000 YEARS?

Read: Galatians 4:21-31

The doctrine of the earthly reign of Christ for 1,000 years stands or falls on the interpretation of Scripture.

One must remember that which was concealed in the Old Testament is revealed in the New. What Christ and His apostles taught by the Holy Spirit is final, has the full authority of God behind it and is infallible. We cannot turn to the prophets to build a case for the millennium.

The Pharisees and teachers of the law were condemned. "The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning Him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath... We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers He has fulfilled in us, their children, by raising up Jesus..." (Acts 27-33).

Divine revelation is progressive. What began in the natural, moved on to the spiritual (1 Cor 15:46). God will not turn back the clock. The New

At the same time, He calls the nation of Israel and all mankind to repentance, as He did in the days of John the Baptist (Mal 4:5-6; Acts 17:30). When men and women repent of their sins and receive the death of Jesus as their own death to sin, He will bind men together as one (Eph 2:14-18). He binds them to each other and to their God.

So Malachi looks back to the Law (Mal 4:4), which God gave for the benefit of the nation, and he looks forward to the Messiah, who would fulfill the role of Elijah. He would call the nation to repent and be saved, BEFORE the great and terrible day of the Lord.

God was ready to smite the nation with the terrible curses spoken under the Law (Deut 27:9-26), but He appealed to them once more to return to the Lord. He sent John the Baptist "to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers..."

Those who repented, had their hearts changed. Those who did not repent came under the curse of God as did Edom (Mal 1:3-4; Isa 34:5; Deut 32:22). None will escape destruction (2 Peter 3:10).

TALK ABOUT

1. When Paul said the Church was ONE BODY, what did he mean (Gal 3:28)?
2. Did God choose Israel, the nation (Deut 7:9)?
3. What happened to the promises God made to them?
4. God said all His promises were fulfilled in J.....C.....(2 Cor 1:20)?

THE LAST DAYS

The New Testament writers divided "the last days" into two parts:

- a) The present world which is temporal and passing (1 Tim 4:8; 6:17-19) and
- b) The world to come which is spiritual and permanent. The world to come is subjected to Jesus Christ (Heb 9:26).

New Testament writers concluded that there was no age that comes between these two.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

Read: Acts 1:6-9

Man has always hoped for a "golden age," or a millennium. There are both Christian and non-Christian theories of "the millennium." Many world rulers have embarked on schemes to bring about such a golden age.

The Rabbis and Pharisees of Jesus' day taught that the nation of Israel would rise to its former glory. They taught that Israel's Messiah would bring in a glorious age and rule the nations from Jerusalem. When Jesus disappointed them, they killed Him.

It was probably this fable, rooted in Jewish apocalyptic writings, that Paul called “Jewish myths” (Titus 1:14).

Neither the Gospels nor the apostles (Acts) speak of a thousand-year kingdom on earth, where both mortals and immortals will live together in perfect peace and harmony. The Epistles were written to counter this false belief which was at the heart of Judaism (see 2 Peter 3).

The Revelation does not speak of a return of Jews to Palestine to reign with Christ. There is no thought of Christ, “reigning on a physical throne in Jerusalem over mortal Jews and Gentiles, still on probation, living and dying and begetting their kind.”

Not one Bible verse speaks of Christ, after His second Coming, reigning as ‘king’ over a temporary world power.

Neither Christ nor the apostles predicted that the temple would be rebuilt, animal sacrifices begun again and Jerusalem made the centre of the world’s worship. No such theory came from their lips.

The disciples, who were caught up with this popular idea, asked Jesus, “Are You at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

Jesus pointed them to His own second coming and to the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:7-8). He turned their eyes away from world supremacy to the Holy Spirit and their responsibility to preach the gospel “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

After Pentecost, the disciples no longer held this false idea.

TALK ABOUT

1. How did New Testament writers speak of “the last days”?
2. What did the Pharisees teach about Israel?
3. What question did the disciples ask Jesus (Acts 1:8)?
4. How did He answer them?

NOT A POLITICAL RULER

Read: John 6:5-15

If Christ had set out to fulfil Jewish nationalistic dreams, He would have had a huge following. When He fed the 5,000 men plus women and children, the people wanted to take Him by force and “make Him king,” He left them and went up a mountain to pray (John 6:15).

The next day, when He came down, He taught the people the true meaning of His ministry among them (John 6:22-59). On hearing this, many of His followers said, “This is hard teaching. Who can accept it?”

Immediately after this Jesus spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit. He did not offer the Jews a physical kingdom, but the Spirit of Life. He said, “The time has come. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the Good News” (Mark 1:15). The good news of the Kingdom was the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christ’s Kingdom was preached on the earth in the last of Daniel’s four kingdoms: The Roman Empire (Dan 2:44). So Daniel’s prophecy has been fulfilled.

The people of Israel were a type of God’s Kingdom. Their relevance passed away when Jesus announced the New Covenant which He sealed with His own blood (Luke 22:19-22).

CHRIST’S NEW COVENANT KINGDOM

Jesus distinguished His New Covenant Kingdom when He said to Pilate, “My Kingdom is not of this world. If it were, My servants would fight to prevent My arrest by the Jews... My Kingdom is from another place” (John 18:36-37). Christ’s Kingdom is not a kingdom of this world.

Only those who are “born of the Spirit” and who “keep in step” with the Spirit can enter God’s Kingdom (John 3:5; Gal 5:25).

The Kingdom embraces all those who lived and died before the cross. By faith they looked forward to Christ’s death and resurrection. While all those who lived and died after the cross look back to it (Heb 9:15; 11:39-40). All are counted as “sons of Abraham” by faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:29).

The Christian community, which gathers to worship in various buildings and homes, is the visible form of God’s Kingdom. It is governed by the “royal law of love” and made up of all those citizens who love the Lord “with all of their hearts” (Deut 6:5).

TALK ABOUT

1. What did the people want to do to Jesus after He fed them (John 6:15)?
2. What did Jesus mean when He said His Kingdom was ‘near’?
3. The Kingdom of God embraces all people who have.....in Jesus.

THE LAST OF THE LAST DAYS

Paul said the people in Corinth were living in the last of the last days (1 Cor 10:11; Heb 1:1-2). There will no days remaining for this earth after Christ comes again in the clouds of heaven and catches away His bride (1 Thess 4:16-18; Matt 24:30-31).

Peter wrote, “He (Christ) was chosen before the foundation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.” The writer of Hebrews agreed with Peter (1 Peter 1:20; Heb 9:26).

The entire message of the New Testament is that Christ came and died, the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world (John 1:29). When He comes again, He will gather together “in Himself” all things pertaining to the Kingdom. “Then the end will come, when He hands over the Kingdom to God the Father...” (Eph 1:10; 5:27; 1 Cor 15:24).

The end will be the end; there will be no more kingdoms of any kind, in heaven or on the earth, after that final, victorious event.