

Session Seven

Revelation

The Summation



Five Major Themes:

1. **The Return of Jesus.**
2. **Overcoming and Persevering: The Call to Followers until the Day of the Lord comes.**
3. **The Power of Love, rather than the Love of Power; this is the fulfilment of the core message of Jesus Christ on earth, and is the most radical subversion of the most fundamental historical activity of mankind on earth.**
4. **Judgement: the righteous and just judgement of a holy God, whose wrath is legitimate and real.**
5. **The establishment of God's kingdom.**

The Certain Return of Christ:

1. He will return in the same way that he left;
2. He will come in Glory and Power as King of Kings;
3. He will establish his kingdom with his righteous people;
4. There will be a final judgement of those who have rejected him;
5. There will be an eternity of unimaginable peace, beauty, joy and delight, all bathed in worship of the One who is indescribably worthy;
6. This will involve a reconstituted earth and heavens.

Historical Pre-millennialism:

- Held by some, but not all Christians in the first 350 years of the Church;
- Imagined a physical, cubical city, 2200 km on each side coming down from heaven;
- Declared to be a heresy at the Council of Ephesus, 350AD;
- Augustine put it to rest with his theological brilliance.

Dispensational Pre-millennialism:

- seven years of tribulation followed by a Rapture of the church (some believe it is only 3½ years before the Rapture, and another 3½ years after the Rapture);
- the Rapture of the church, where all the Christians are instantly snatched away to heaven;
- a 1000 year-long Millennial reign of Christ;
- a restoration of Israel as the Promised land and holy people of God, with a new temple built in Jerusalem;
- The Second Coming and final judgment follows the millennium.

Signs and Clues:

- The collapse of the monetary system;
- The emergence of a world leader who will promise peace, global order and a safe and prosperous global economy (Antichrist, 666);
- The rapid expansion of knowledge and learning;
- A rapid increase in global travel and globalism;
- A worldwide breakdown in moral standards, especially marriage and sexual relationships;
- A general breakdown of law and order;
- A return of Israeli people to their homeland;
- Constant threats of war, especially in relation to the Middle East;
- The emergence of Russia and China as major world powers;
- The emergence of a powerful, dominating European commonwealth;
- Significant increases in earthquakes, plagues and natural disasters;
- The preaching of the Gospel to the entire world.

How shall we then live?

- **Actively support the State of Israel, politically, militarily, socially;**
- **Focus on short term goals, not long term planning;**
- **Preference for evangelism rather than social or political action, or study.**

Why I do not support Pre-Millennialism:

- It contains an internal logical conflict that defies rational thought: Christ will return when things get bad enough, but we are called to work hard at being salt and light and improve society;
- It demands two Returns of Christ; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26 and 51-54;

1 Corinthians 15: ²⁰But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²²For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ²⁴Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

⁵¹Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—
⁵²in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

Why I do not support Pre-Millennialism:

- An internal logical conflict that defies rational thought;
- It demands two Returns of Christ; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26 and 51-54;
- It demands 1000 years of sin and death after the Rapture, with very unclear conditions for salvation, possibly different for Jews and non-Jews;
- The New Testament seems to support a view that the Old Testament prophecies about Israel have been fulfilled in Christ, with some being fulfilled in the Church;

²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:28-29

⁶It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. ⁷Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." ⁸In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. Romans 9:6-8

First Difficult Proposition: That the advent and sacrifice of Jesus Christ was not sufficient to save all mankind, and that it needs to be supplemented by Old Testament practices for some people.

- **Hebrews 7: 18-22** ¹⁸*The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless* ¹⁹*(for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God. ... Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.*
- **Hebrews 8: 13** ¹³*By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.*

¹Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary....

⁶When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. ⁷But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.

⁸The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. ⁹This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshipper. ¹⁰They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings – external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

¹¹When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. ¹²He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. ... Hebrews 9

¹⁵For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. ...

But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, ²⁸so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Second Difficult Proposition: That there are two ways of being saved, one set of rules for gentiles and another set for Jews.

The temple was entirely and absolutely devoted to pre-figuring the coming Messiah – it is now 100% obsolete. For God to be planning to re-build it just seems to destroy the work of the Cross.

Why I do not support Pre-Millennialism (cont'd):

- The word “Rapture” appears nowhere in scripture.
- The clear and consistent teaching of Jesus is that at his return, both the saved and the unsaved will be dealt with at the same time.
- The recentness of this view is a concern, as are the circumstances of its founding.
- To follow this view is often to narrow one’s focus on the world.

Amillennialism:

- 'A' is a prefix here that means 'no' or 'none'.
- Held by easily the largest number of Christians over by far the longest period of time.
- Christ is reigning now over the earth, in a reign referred to in Revelation as 1000 years; this is the Age of the Church.
- At the end of this Age, Christ will return, and all evil will be defeated forever.
- We are to be fulfilling the Great Commission.
- We must expect trouble, suffering and persecution.

How shall we then live?

- We will actively support the Church in all places, but not necessarily any nation;
- We will focus on long term planning, while recognising that the Second Coming could occur at any time;
- We will have a theology that accounts sensibly for the problem of suffering and death.

Postmillennialism:

- Also known as "Christian Reconstruction", or "Kingdom Now Theology";
- Rushdooney, Van Til, Franky Schaeffer, Whitehead...
- Through God's sovereign grace, the entire world (including Jews) will eventually be Christianised and saved;
- Once this occurs, the world will enjoy a long period of peace and righteousness which they regard as the millennium;
- Christ will return at the end of this period;
- In the meantime, all Christians should be working as hard as possible, using Biblical law as their guide, to establish God's kingdom.
- <http://chalcedon.edu/topics/>

How shall we then live?

- **Work very hard at restructuring the world according to godly principles;**
- **Engage in politics and commerce and industry**
- **Study the Bible deeply and get as much formal education as we can;**
- **Work at building strong Christian family life and community life;**
- **Expect and anticipate success on this earth.**

Preterism:

- **Most prophetic events have already occurred;**
- **There will be a Second Coming, but impossible to know when;**
- **We will respond by living in as faithful a way as possible, enjoying this world.**

The Kingdom of God

¹⁴After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, **proclaiming the good news of God.** ¹⁵“The time has come,” he said. **“The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”** Mark 1:14-15

¹²When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. ¹³Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali ¹⁴to fulfil what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁵ “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— ¹⁶ the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

¹⁷From that time on Jesus began to preach, **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”**

²³ Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, **preaching the good news of the kingdom,** and healing every disease and sickness among the people. Matthew 4

Evangelion: Good News

The idea was that what comes from the emperor is a saving message, that it is not just a piece of news, but a change of the world for the better. When the Evangelists adopt this word, ... what they mean to tell us is this:

What the emperors, who pretend to be gods, illegitimately claim, really occurs here – a message endowed with plenary authority, a message that is not just talk, but reality. ... the Gospel is not just informative speech, but performative speech – not just the imparting of information, but action, efficacious power that enters into the world to save and transform. ...

It is here that that what the emperors merely assert, but cannot actually perform, truly takes place. For here it is the real Lord of the world – the living God – who goes into action.

(Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* p 47)

The Kingdom is a Spiritual Kingdom

- *I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. John 3:5-6*
- *²⁰Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, ²¹nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.” Luke 17:20-21*

The Kingdom of God cannot be fully understood without **both** this interior location **as well as** reference to the end of the age, to the creation of a new world, a new heaven and a new earth, where all will be renewed and made perfect. We live in the Now but Not Yet.

Major Christian Worldview #1

- Earthlife is grubby and the best you can hope to do is to make it bearable.
- The goal is to get away from it as soon as possible.
- Jesus made that possible, by dying for us and all we have to do to receive that is to say “the sinner’s prayer” and then he will forgive us and guarantee us eternal life.
- Eternal life consists in going to heaven to be re-united with family and friends and being happy ever after.

Major Christian Worldview #2

- God expects us to establish his kingdom here on earth by our own hard work although with his help.
- Christians are to anticipate the final “kingdom on earth as it is in heaven” by working to construct it here and now. This will be accomplished by enacting changes in law, society, agriculture, economics, politics and family life, all of which will faithfully reflect God’s kingdom.

Major Christian Worldview #3

- The endgame that we all look forward to is the renewed heaven and earth, with human beings ruling and managing the show, under the overall headship of Christ.
- Jesus inaugurated this kingdom, demonstrated how people who will succeed in it need to live, and enabled its establishment by his sacrificial death on the cross, disarming the forces of evil and renewing humanity into the glorious freedom of the children of God.
- Before we get to this point, Christians are expected to practise living according to the standards of that kingdom. Although we live in this world, we are not to be conformed to it, but are to be transformed to live according to the standards of the Kingdom of Heaven.
- Our living in this way acts as beacons to everyone else in the world. By showing the light, and living in the light, we demonstrate the beauty, truth and goodness of this kingdom to the rest of the world, and invite them to join it with us.
- Our life in this kingdom now is largely spiritual; after the Second Coming, this will change. It is not that we will get all new things in a new playground, but that all things will become new, in a renovated earth and heaven.

Priests and Rulers:

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and **let them rule** over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; **fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.**”

Gen. 1:26-28

- ¹ O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! ...
- ⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him,
the son of man that you care for him?
- ⁵ **You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honour.**
- ⁶ **You made him ruler over the works of your hands;
you put everything under his feet: ...**
- ⁹ O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Psalm 8

**This is the goal of a genuinely human existence.
Forget “happiness”; you are called to a *throne*.**

N.T. Wright

How then shall we live?

We will become active and expert in every aspect of human endeavour –
we will develop the gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit.

And we will practise living in ways that reflect the kingdom –
we will demonstrate the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 7:14 ¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Isaiah 9:6-7 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Reigning and Priesting

*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶and has made us to be a **kingdom and priests** to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. Revelation 1:5-6*

*You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a **kingdom and priests** to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth. Revelation 5:9-10*

*⁶Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be **priests of God and of Christ** and will reign with him for a thousand years.*

Revelation 20:6

⁹But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:9

**Was it God's plan,
with the creation of humankind,
to flush out and destroy evil for ever?**

**9 Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion!
Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem!
See, your king comes to you,
righteous and having salvation,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**

**10 I will take away the chariots from Ephraim
and the war-horses from Jerusalem,
and the battle bow will be broken.
He will proclaim peace to the nations.
His rule will extend from sea to sea
and from the River to the ends of the earth.**

Zechariah: (9:9-10)

⁹I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, ¹¹which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea." Revelation 1:9-11

¹⁴But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. ¹⁵For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. ¹⁶To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.

2 Corinthians 2: 14 – 16

