

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

SERIES: DOCTRINE | WEEK 16 | 12.12.2021

[Teaching today: Pastor Rob Mittuch]

Hey, good morning, good morning, you guys can be seated. Merry Christmas everybody! [AUDIENCE REPLIES: MERRY CHRISTMAS] Come on, a little bit louder than that for me. Merry Christmas. [AUDIENCE REPLIES LOUDER] Man, we were in that Christmas season, we had Christmas at Calvary last week, that was a wonderful time. Man, that train that we had in the gym with the kids, what a fantastic, fantastic time we had. And we're in the advent season which is a season of anticipation where we're looking forward to Christmas morning. You guys remember when you were just a little kid just waiting for Christmas morning? Just can't wait till that morning when the presents are going to be under the tree, can't wait. I remember getting up early and just a good hour before my parents and just sitting in the dark living room looking at the Christmas tree just waiting, just waiting for those presents.

So glad you guys are here this morning, so glad if you're joining in online; so just wonderful, wonderful morning. We've had a wonderful time going through the DOCTRINE series. I'm Pastor Rob, by the way, I'm the executive pastor here at the church, and looking forward to teaching you guys this morning on the Kingdom of God. More specifically the Millennial Kingdom, which there's quite a bit, there's probably quite a bit of confusion out there about the Millennial Kingdom. And it's quite a topic, but the biggest idea I want you guys to be thinking through is just like that little kid waiting on Christmas morning in anticipation, we can live in anticipation right now for the Millennial Kingdom of God to come. There's so much to learn, so much that we could discover, but it's a really complicated topic.

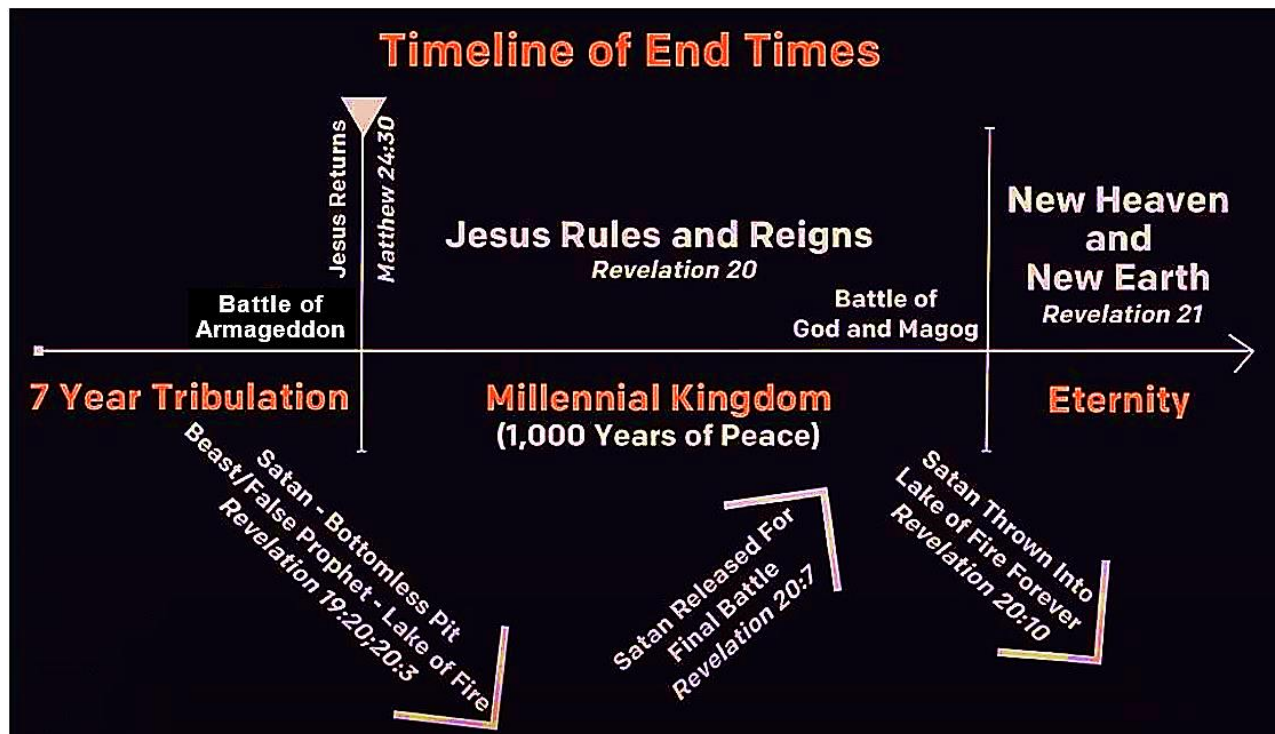
Can you guys pray with me before we get going?

Lord,



I thank You so much for this time in your Word. I thank You for your Scripture. I thank You, Lord, that You just give us direction, You give us clarity. Lord, we pray for wisdom right now, fill us with your Spirit, go before us and use us. Amen.

So Pastor Lee last week spoke of The Tribulation, end times, if we see that slide, let's slide that back up there right now.



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So you recall this very interesting and very informational slide where Lee was talking about the seven years leading up to the battle of Armageddon. We're going to take a look at this 1,000-year reign of God. It's not Heaven, friends, this isn't Heaven, this is the next age of the earth. It could get a little confusing, seven years of tribulation ends with the battle of Armageddon and then we'll see later on that there's certain people of faith, the people of God who make it through The Tribulation and come into the Millennial Kingdom. It's going to be a lot to digest we're going to spend most of our time in Revelation 20:1-6, don't turn there just yet.



When you get a difficult topic in Scripture you really gotta look at context. You really have to understand what that passage – anything about Scripture – but this one in particular we have to start asking a lot of questions of context. Where is this passage, in what book? What's the main topic of the book? How does this book fit into the overarching story of all Scripture? We're going to take a look at both of those things, we're going to ramp ourselves up before we even jump into Revelation 20:1-6 and see what it teaches us about the Millennial Kingdom.

But picture this, it's almost as though—imagine if we were the people of God in the Old Testament right now—imagine if we were Jewish believers a couple thousand years ago reading prophecy and trying to understand what it was going to be like to be in the new covenant and to be sitting here in today's church. What was it going to look like for Messiah to return and to institute His church here on earth, where it's not just Jews but it's the entire nation. And so they were sitting there trying to understand what the future was going to look like. We're sitting here right now in the Age of Grace where Jesus has come, Messiah has come, not like the Jewish people thought, but in a very different way. We're sitting here experiencing—if you have received Jesus—He's living in our hearts. The Kingdom of God is already here in our hearts but it's not yet fully consummated, so we're sitting here just like the Jewish people were trying to understand the new covenant to come, we're sitting here trying to understand what the next thousand year age will look like. And it could be difficult, it could be difficult to understand, and so we need to start with some context.

Let's take a look, before we even get into Revelation 20, we're going to take a look at Revelation 1 and a few key passages for you to take a look at. We're going to look at Revelation, then we're going to jump back and we're going to look at some Old Testament before we get to Revelation 20, and then we're going to end. And what are some implications? What does an understanding of Millennial Kingdom really do for me today, which we're going to see in this passage. It says:

³ Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

– REVELATION 1:3 (ESV)

The word revelation is apocalypse. Apocalypse is a type of prophecy where apocalypse is like a ramped up form of prophecy, an intensified prophecy with graphic images, it's still prophecy nonetheless but it's prophecy. So this, what this passage tells us in Revelation 1:3, it's worth studying Revelation and it's those blessings found in studying this prophecy and understanding the end times. So we should not just shrug our shoulders and just say, you know, just be cynical, "There's no way to know. I'm just going to see when it happens." This passage is telling no, it's blessed, you're blessed to study this.

Strong's Concordance

apokalupsis: an uncovering

Original Word: ἀποκάλυψις, εως, ἡ

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: apokalupsis

Phonetic Spelling: (ap-ok-al'-oop-sis)

Definition: an uncovering

Usage: an unveiling, uncovering, revealing, revelation.

Source: <https://biblehub.com/greek/602.htm>

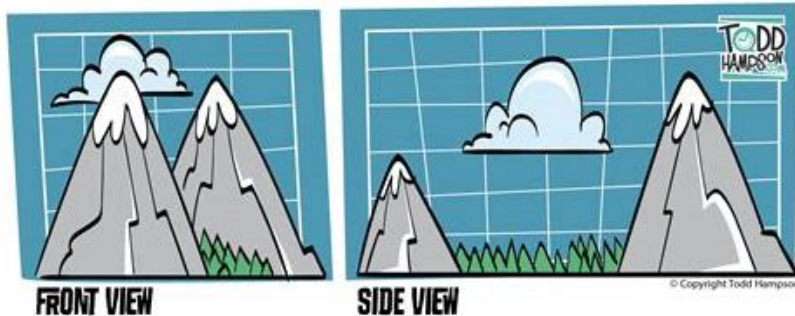
But it's also, with prophecy, there's unwarranted speculation where people see everything and they think they understand every little jot and tittle and how things are going to work out. That's also not the case. So you gotta find a middle ground where we're going to study it, we're going to look at it, we're going to better understand it because it's complicated. This is future we haven't experienced yet. It's kind of like when you're about ready to have a kid and you read all the books in the world about parenting and you learn everything that you can but it's not until that little baby comes that you have any idea really what it's going to look like. You can study all that you can, but until you're living and experiencing it... so that's kind of where we're at right now. We're doing our best to understand this next 1,000-year age.

This might even be news to you all. You might have thought that The Tribulation and then Heaven. We're going to see no, it's not, it's The Tribulation, and then another 1,000-year age that's going to look very differently. Just like what we're living right now in the age of the church looks differently than the Old Testament, there's going to be another age that looks different than right now. Did you guys know that? It's very surprising, it's very interesting, there's a lot to pull from it. Take a look at Revelation 1:19 as well. This might be the summary of the book of Revelation that brings us context and clear understanding.

¹⁹ Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.

– REVELATION 1:19 (ESV)

So as well, this is prophecy, this is a great little picture of prophecy and what the Apostle John is doing in the book of Revelation. Prophecy is kind of like looking at a mountain range. Revelation, Old Testament prophets, Revelation actually feels a lot more like Ezekiel, some of the apocalyptic Old Testament



Source: <https://toddhampson.com>

prophets. Prophecy is kind of like looking at a mountain range where you're describing this mountain range in the distance and you're trying to describe the peaks and the valleys and the snow-capped mountains and you're looking at both mountains and they look like they're right next to each other, but then when you look over top of it you realize that it's separated by miles.

So prophecy can be different. So a prophet might be speaking and writing about current events that are taking place, things that you have seen, but He also might be speaking about those things that are to take place. So it makes it complicated and it takes work, it takes our brains, it takes study, it takes insight, and that's why we need to continue to give you guys some context before we jump into Revelation 20 to look at the Millennial Kingdom because there's a lot of story. We have a good and gracious God. God our Father – just like if you were going to go on a road trip across the country you might tell your child, "Hey, we're going to go to this state. Hey, we're going to see Mount Rushmore, and then we're going to end up at the Pacific Ocean." You give them big brushstrokes of information. So God has given us the big picture of what history is about, but He hasn't given us every minute detail. You may not tell your child, hey, we're going to stay at this hotel, we got a restaurant that we're going to here, this is how many miles it is, this is how many days, how much how many hours it's going to take between stops. You might not tell them all of those details, but as a good Father—think about this—God has given us the ability to gaze into the mysteries of the history of the world and we have to have a running start if we want to understand the end of that story.

I get goosebumps thinking about this that we are gazing into the mysteries of *the story of all history*—the story that since the beginning of time, since the fall of man, our hero – God – has been redeeming our

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hearts and drawing us back into a right relationship with Him. Take a look at this definition from one of my professors, I love this definition:

"The sole transcendent creator and king is **redeeming** his rebellious creation, consuming sin and death, in order to build is **perfected** heavens and earth for blessing, to the praise of His glory."

Just like if you were trying to explain what the big story is of the *Star Wars* saga. You might talk about Anakin turning into, you know, the evil empire, you know, into Lord Vader. This is the story, friends, in the man in the words of one of my professors how we would sum up the story of all history and the entire story of Scripture from the very beginning. "The soul transcendent creator and king is redeeming" – He's changing our hearts, He's fixing the world. We have to understand the story because Revelation 20 through 22 is the book end on the end of the story. The bookend on the other side, which is quite interesting, is that Revelation 20-22, Revelation 20 is where you find the Millennial Kingdom, it's parallel to Genesis 1-3.

Take a look at this slide —

Genesis 3	— The Snake —	Revelation 20:2-3, 7-10
Genesis 2	— Rule of Man —	Revelation 20:4-6
Genesis 3:8	— God Dwells With Man —	Revelation 21:3
Genesis 3:22	— Death —	Revelation 21:4
Genesis 1:1	— Creator God —	Revelation 21:5
Genesis 1:2	— Night & Day —	Revelation 21:23-25
Genesis 2	— Tree of Life —	Revelation 21:2
Genesis 2	— Worship —	Revelation 22:3

you see The Snake is Genesis 3 and it's resolved; Rule of Man, God Dwells With Man, Death, Creator God – all these different topics that started in Genesis are being resolved in the Millennial Kingdom and the Great White Throne

Judgment, and then the new heavens and the new earth arise. All these different issues are being resolved book ended on the story of God's redemption of solving and redeeming the world from the fall of man. So if we want to understand Revelation 20, first of all we know the Millennial Kingdom is a *literal* kingdom because Genesis, the Garden of Eden was a literal place. And we'll also know that it was a literal kingdom because God made promises throughout the Old Testament to resolve the issues of man's heart, to draw men's hearts back to Himself. He made promises that haven't fully been realized. It's already, but not yet.

So you have to think through Genesis for a second—you guys with me? We're going to ramp up before we jump into the Millennial Kingdom because that's a big topic to understand the Millennial Kingdom and understand really what's coming. So think about Genesis, just want you to think about it with me, I'm not going to turn there, I'm just going to big, broad brush strokes as we're looking at this. I want us to reflect on Genesis for just a moment. So often when we read Genesis, often when we read Genesis we think about it being a set of facts and an explanation about the beginning of time. That is true, it is; it is an explanation, a literal explanation about how the world began. That is true and that's very valuable, but it's not only that.

As we're talking about understanding a text you not only need to know the context, like I explained earlier, but another extremely valuable thing to do in understanding complicated pieces of Scripture—all Scripture, mind you—is who is the recipient of that Scripture? So don't think about Genesis for a second just as an explanation of the beginning of time, about the beginning of creation, think about Genesis in terms of the beginning of Scripture – it's a very different time frame. Who was Genesis written to? Think about that for a second because it'll bring us some color that helps us understand the Millennial Kingdom. Genesis was written to the people of Israel, and the people of Israel had just spent over 400 years in Egypt; 430 years, much of it was in bondage.

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Think about how different the people of Israel will be thinking when they're hearing how the Egyptians viewed the world. The Egyptians' worldview of creation was very different than what Genesis has to say. The Egyptians would have said multiple gods, who at some point created themselves, and man was made to be in service to the gods. That's very different than what we understand Genesis to be, and the reason I'm sinking in here just for a moment is this is going to be resolved in the Millennial Kingdom. What we find in Genesis is that God is eternal and that He makes man in his image, Genesis 1:26.

GENESIS 1:26 (ESV)

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

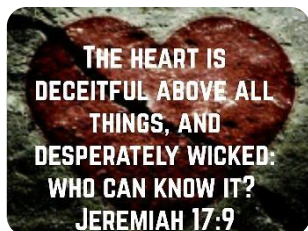
Many people even today picture God being this deistic God far away and that we're here to serve Him and do His bidding—or else. Genesis gives us a very different picture of this. Genesis tells us no, friends, you are royalty. Mankind was made as loyalty to represent God and to have dominion over the earth. Mankind was made in God's image. Mankind in Genesis 2 was made to be worshipers of God. Now picture the beginning was that man was in a face-to-face relationship with the loving Creator of the universe. Something else a person, an Israelite would have known being in Egypt, they would have known exactly what it meant when He said it was done in a garden. We don't – we may not realize this but you could probably picture it if you've seen any movies, a garden was the place that the king would go. It would be outside his temple, Eden, and it'd be a place of beauty, a place of peace, a place of joy. I'm setting this tone because if we want to understand the metanarrative of all Scripture, you have to understand what the foundation of it is.

So no, we were not created just as, like, little peons that were just servants of God, we were created as royal priests. We are made in His image and we are objects of His joy. Now imagine turning your back on Him and listening to the snake in Genesis 3. The nature of sin and its desperate effects on the heart of mankind will take all of history for God to redeem—but God's not stopped, He's been relentless. Man could have kicked the snake out and instead He listened to the lies of the snake. There's a desperate problem. We had this opportunity to be in a loving relationship with God and we turned our backs on Him. There is a desperate problem that God has to solve and ramping them up to get to Jesus. And we're going to see Jesus coming to rule and reign in the Millennial Kingdom.



God's not stopped, He's been relentless

We know the desperate nature of this problem and we know it was an issue of the heart because this transcendent meta-story of the entire Scripture has to do with God coming after our hearts; God redeeming and drawing mankind's hearts back to Himself. We know this right after seeing what happens. Man is left to his own devices—murder, Cain kills Abel—and then they continue to get desperately worse and worse. When men, when we are left to our own devices, friends, our hearts are wicked and evil and mankind becomes so desperately evil that God says in Genesis 6, He says because their hearts are so evil I'm going to judge them and wipe them out—and He does.



⁵ The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually . . .

¹³ And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh . . ."

– GENESIS 6:5 (ESV)

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And I'm telling you this because God makes a very interesting statement on the other side of Genesis 6 in Genesis 8 where He says I will never again judge the world. You see His heart for the entire world right in Genesis, not just Jewish people, He says I will never wipe out the entire world because of the wickedness of their hearts. Before the flood and after the flood there's an issue of the heart and I'm honing in on that because in the Millennial Kingdom there is still a heart issue. That's what we're going to take away from the Millennial Kingdom. But God said I am not going to judge the whole world anymore because it's an issue of the heart – because you know what, judgment doesn't change hearts. We're going to see as He works out His plan there is such a desperate issue for the hearts of men that God is fighting for them.

GENESIS 8:21a (ESV)

And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth."

GENESIS 9:8a & 11 (ESV)

Then God said to Noah . . . "I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."

Judgment of Noah doesn't do it, following rules of Moses doesn't do it, allowing the people just to reign in the books of Judges we see that when you leave the people to go as a community they just spiral out of control. Even if you put a king, a man at the throne – David had like a hint of being able to stand – but still the people even with kings and leaders and given obedience that doesn't change men's hearts. God has been in the business of changing and reconciling the hearts of men and women since the beginning of time. That is the story. Now listen, we're peering into things of God. We're looking at *the* story of mankind in history. God has done everything and He's redeeming the world and He loves us so desperately that He will do everything and anything. That's the story of the Old Testament, that's the story of the new covenant – Him in our hearts, that will be the story of the Millennial Kingdom as well.

Let me do a little tangent here though. In Genesis He says to Abram, Genesis 12, the Abrahamic covenant—if there's one covenant in all of Scripture I would like you to study and remember it's Genesis 12 and you could read the couple chapters after that as well, it gives you a lot of color to it—Abram, a man of faith. God says you know what, I can't judge them, judgment doesn't help. Noah, that didn't help because they immediately went and turned to the tower of Babel. Can you imagine God destroying the world and then the next thing we decided to do is, like, let's build a tower for ourselves, to make a great name for us.¹ We didn't learn anything. Humankind didn't learn anything because our hearts are desperate and wicked.

The very next chapter says I'm going to make a great name for myself. God says no, I'm going to intercede, and He says I'm going to make the great name of Abram. Listen to this:

¹ Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

– GENESIS 12:1-3 (ESV)

And Abram, God says, I am going to redeem the world starting with this one man, Abraham², and from Abraham came the nation of Israel, from Israel came Jesus, came Jesus came the church, and we're a worldwide phenomenon of the grace of God reaching all corners of the world. How could you not believe in this story? If you're sitting here wondering, it is beyond doubt that this was written about this man Abram, Abraham, this promise that God made to him that almost certainly has been fulfilled, not in

¹ Tower of Babel – Genesis 11:1-9

² Abram's name changed to Abraham by God – Genesis 17:5

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completion but there's no doubt. That God used the people of Abram, his seed, to become a blessing for the entire world and that was written about thousands of years ago and that's why we're sitting here today. It was documented that God was going to do it and He did it, but there's still more because all the promises haven't been fulfilled yet.

This is the way a covenant works for Abraham, this is exciting and amazing and one of the biggest covenants; a covenant is basically a contract, it's an Old Testament contract. Today we would get out lawyers and we would sign it and – if you don't do this, I get this, and if you don't do this, you know, this is the repercussion. An Old Testament covenant was like that but instead they'd rip an animal apart and if I'm having a contract or covenant with somebody else I'd say I promise to do this and to show you that I promise I'll walk between these dead animals because if I don't fulfill my promise let me become like these animals, and then you would do the same thing and that would be us signing a contract.

What God did with Abraham, God didn't let Abraham walk through³ because God said I'm the hero that's going to save you all. The story of Scripture is one of mankind not being able to do anything to resolve the problems of their hearts and God saying *unconditionally* I will do what I say I will do. I promise you the land. I promise you the blessing. And ultimately through David He says I promise you a King that will sit on this earth on His throne. You catch what I'm saying here about the Millennial Kingdom? That's where we're getting to; we're getting to the point where there will be a literal king and God in Genesis said that He will crush the head of the snake and the snake Satan will be crushed.⁴ But there's still a lesson to be learned from the Millennial Kingdom.



Unconditional Abrahamic Covenant
– Genesis 15:17 –

Okay, so we're ramping our way up here and I think about it, too, let me think about it this way, let me digress for a moment. If you've ever—you know, many of us are parents, many of us are bosses, many of us own companies, or we're executives and we have people underneath them—when you're coaching somebody and you're leading people the best leaders don't lead by fear, the best bosses don't just force compliance, the best parents don't just make rules and discipline, discipline, discipline, discipline. We're going after the hearts of people, God has written that in us, we know that's the right thing. We want to help people mature, we want to help people grow.

As Christ's representatives how much more should we be that in this world? Just like God is taking all this time and energy to change the hearts of men and draw humankind back to Himself, how much more are we to do that with the people who follow us, whether it's our kids or the people at work, to be desperately helping their hearts get closer to Jesus and to grow in maturity. That's what God's doing for us, isn't that neat? That's kind of like a neat little connection to our own world here.

Okay, so Revelation, now let's jump in. Are you guys ready? You ready to jump into Revelation 20:1-6? Why don't you open it up, I'm going to read it for you. So we had Old Testament, the problem happened in the Old Testament, God showed all that judgment doesn't work and fear doesn't work and following rules don't work. The climax of history was Jesus came, Messiah came, that's the climax, and now He's here in our hearts, but we're still looking forward to the final act. Let's read Revelation 20:1-6, I did not put it on the screen, I'd like us to open up our Bibles and get right there. There's a number of things we're gonna point out.

¹ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. ² And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent,

³ Unconditional Abrahamic Covenant made – Genesis 15

⁴ Romans 16:20a (ESV): **The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.**

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who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,

— this is Genesis 3 —

³ and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

— There's a question and there's a hint here, if you're anything like me you start asking the question why would God release Satan again? Why didn't He just deal with him once? Why is He releasing him? There's something we're going to learn —

⁴ Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

– REVELATION 20:1-6 (ESV)

Let's go verse by verse. "**Then I saw**" – he saw something, this is apocalypse [UNVEILING], this is prophecy, he's looking at those mountains, John saw something. There's something going on in the church at that time, there was persecution happening under Domitian, there were people actually dying and getting beheaded, but he's also looking ahead to another mountain. Somebody else did this, Jesus did this very clearly when He opened up the scroll in Isaiah 61. Do you remember when Jesus went into the temple and He read from the scroll in Isaiah 61? Jesus did this little thing about prophecy that is very, very interesting. Isaiah 61, this is the mountain illustration and it happens in one sentence that you can't know which mountain is being spoken of, and Jesus reads it at the temple⁵:

¹ The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news

— He's anointed Me to bring the Gospel —

to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives,

— that's what He's talking about, that's what He did for us, that's the Gospel —

and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,

— if you're there with me, He doesn't finish that sentence because the very next sentence is speaking still of what's to come. Jesus rolls up the scroll and doesn't finish the sentence. He said to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor:

and the day of vengeance of our God;

– ISAIAH 61:1-2a (ESV)

Jesus in the same sentence didn't finish, didn't finish what was going on with this prophecy. We're talking about the day of vengeance that is coming, and John is speaking of it, and other Old Testament prophets speak of it as well. And you have to do work, you have to understand it, you have to go after it. So some

⁵ Cross-reference: Luke 4

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of the main things that we see in this passage, we see Satan is dealt with, we see that the world is now ruled by Jesus, and we see that there's people there and we'll see that the people still have the sin issue going on. They still have the issue of the heart that we've been talking about since the beginning of time. This isn't Heaven yet, this is the next age.

It's amazing that we've been talking about this and I get goosebumps that we even think about this. A few weeks ago where Lee did the sermon on "Satan and Demons" and He talked about the three biggest obstacles in the world that come against us—Satan, the world, and sin. Isn't that interesting about the Millennial Kingdom? First of all, Satan is dealt with. Could you imagine sitting here right now and there were no lies of Satan that were going on around you in your life? It's really hard to pinpoint what that looks like, it's really hard to understand what Satan's lies, how they come to fruition in our everyday life.

I was talking a good close friend of mine who's a Christian counselor and after he listened to Lee's sermon he's like, "I see that every day in my counseling." The amount of torment in people's marriages that he's like, "I bet that's Satan telling them lies about each other. They're not true and they're listening to Satan's lies about one another. Or the past torments that Satan brings back up," he says, "those are the two biggest ones." He's like, "I think marriages would be so much different and people would be able to deal with their past hurts so much differently as well because Satan wouldn't be continuing to put it in their face." I don't know exactly what it's going to look like but I think it's going to look and feel, I think it would feel a lot different if we didn't have Satan on the prowl around us like a roaring lion. So that's going to be true in the Millennial Kingdom.

The other thing that's going to be true in the Millennial Kingdom—remember these three things?—so Satan has been dealt with and now the predominant leader in the world is going to be Jesus. Think about that, yeah, we could clap for that, man, holy cow, that would be a great place to clap, whistle, scream, applaud, [APPLAUSE, MAN SCREAMS "YEAH!"] yeah, seriously. Can you imagine being in a place, in a world where all of these difficult questions that we're trying to navigate are resolved by our king? Could you imagine having a righteous king who explains how to deal with racism, who explains and leads us in our economy, who gives us direction for gender identity issues, how to resolve those and what that looks like, all these difficult things that cause us tension, the political strife, and all the different things that we're like, "Man, man, what's the answer? How do we deal with this?" The [INAUDIBLE 0.13.46.1] all that we have a king who tells us the right answer.

Could you imagine if the predominant flow of culture right now was toward righteousness? Could you imagine sitting right here—it's harder to imagine what it would look like not to have Satan tormenting us, I think it's a little bit easier to imagine—imagine if right now you were sitting in a culture that esteemed righteousness. It would be very different, it would be a very different place. We'll come back to this in a second, but what the Millennial Kingdom teaches us when we see that Satan returns and people turn from Jesus, is when you take away the excuse of Satan, you take away the excuse of the culture made me do it, we're still left with our sinful hearts—which is the story of the redemption of mankind since the beginning of time. It's still in the Millennial Kingdom, it's still there, it's not resolved.

Who's in this Millennial Kingdom? We go on we see this in, uh, are we there? I don't know, guys, listen, this is one of those... *whooo!!!* [GESTURES NOT GOING THERE –CONTROVERSIAL TOPIC] you know, uh, you know, like, I'm trying to get, I'm trying to give like a good perspective here depending on how much you listen to Lee last week with The Tribulation and when, you know, when the Rapture is and get taken away. But we do know, a couple things we know, is that anyone who takes the mark of the beast gets wiped out, so people of faith, people believe in Jesus, some of those get into the Millennial Kingdom and we see this in Zechariah. I want you guys to turn to Zechariah, it gives us some real good insight here. We see

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Zechariah, I think I got it on the screen and it should be [verses] 16-21, by the way, not 16-11.
Zechariah 14:16-21:

¹⁶ Then everyone who survives of all the nations

— everyone who survives The Tribulation is what this is talking about —

that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths. ¹⁷ And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them. ¹⁸ And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain; there shall be the plague with which the Lord afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths. ¹⁹ This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths.

– ZECHARIAH 14:16-19 (ESV)

So there's people still keeping the Feast of Booths. There are people there who are still remembering God, there's still celebrations, but obviously there's people who aren't following the Feasts the Booths. There's people who aren't following God expressly. This is starting to hint at sin, that there is sin there, there's people who still – it'd be like right now. If these two things were taken away—Satan and the world—we're still sitting here dealing with our own sinfulness of our hearts, and there's going to be people there who deal with that.

A couple other things we know about the Millennial Kingdom, let me just reference them. We see in Isaiah 2, it's a picture of Jesus leading, and it says all of the weapons are going to turn into plowshares, so there'll be no war. It talks about suffering in Isaiah 35, that there'll be healing, that people – there's not going to be suffering, there's going to be no wars. I think about this for my son, I've got a disabled son, what it's going to be like, will he be healed? Will he be made whole?

ISAIAH 2:4 (ESV)

He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

All of this is ramping up, friends, all of this is ramping up that there are no excuses. The hearts of men is what the main issue is. There'll be no more excuses from people that are saying "Man, if God would just reveal Himself to me, I'd believe in Him." God had revealed Himself and God was present. There'll be no more people saying, "Man, if there was just no suffering in the world. Man, I can't believe in God and I can't turn to Him because of all the suffering." All the suffering is going to be gone.⁶ *I can't believe in Him because of my disabled son . . . I can't believe in Him because my grandmother got cancer . . . I can't believe in Him because of all the sex trafficking happening in the world . . . I cannot believe in Him for all these different reasons.* What the Millennial Kingdom teaches us is that even if all those obstacles were removed people are still going to turn from Jesus. Hearts, the hearts of men is the story of redemption, that is the story of the Millennial Kingdom, that is a story that we're all wrapped up in.

If you've placed your faith in Jesus you are part of the epic story of all history of God redeeming hearts and the next age will show the same thing. Right now we might still make excuses, *Oh, I'm feeling tormented*

⁶ Transcriber Edit: This is inaccurate. Revelation 21:1-4 states it is not until the new heaven/new earth arrive (i.e., eternity) when pain/suffering is removed: ¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

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from my old lies and my past, that's why I'm not spending time with Jesus . . . Oh man, the world is so messed up . . . Oh, I don't know who to believe in the political nature of things . . . or this issue or that issue . . . it's so hard at work, no one wants me to act righteously, that's why I'm not spending time and loving Jesus and walking with Him. All those excuses are away, that's the message, we know that the Millennial Kingdom there's still sin because Satan is released again and people still—with a righteous king, with God present on earth and no suffering and no Satan—people's hearts still turn away, that's the message for us today. The Kingdom's already here, but it's not yet.

So, some more context, let's think about one more little piece of context. We just read Revelation 20. We just saw the Millennial Kingdom. We're trying our best to make sense of what this next age is, this next thousand years, but how does that affect us today? So before Revelation 20, hopefully it doesn't take us to be Bible scholars to know what came right before Revelation 20 – Revelation 19 – and so Revelation 19 came right before Revelation 20. Thanks, thanks Pastor Rob, that's a great little piece of insight. So we see rejoicing in Heaven, we see the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and then we see the bridegroom returning on His white horse. This reminds me of the parable of the ten virgins. The ten virgins are waiting for the bridegroom to return. Marriages back then looked a little bit different than they do today. The bridegroom would go away and make a place, would build a home for his bride before coming back. We're waiting for our bridegroom to come back. Those ten virgins, they were supposed to get ready, they were supposed to trim their oil and have enough prepared; some did, some didn't. Anticipation, that's our takeaway for today. Are we living in anticipation? Are we living with urgency?

I love it that our church is building this church in Senegal. I love that we're coming together to do that. There's another church in Paoli that we're coming alongside and there'll be more information to come, but there's a good Gospel church in Paoli that needs our help. How can we build God's Kingdom with urgency? How can we live now? What we do now, how we lead now, how we draw people's hearts to God and get involved in His overarching metanarrative of history. We are His royal priests sent to represent Him with Jesus in our hearts to draw people's hearts to Himself, not to force obedience, not to live in judgment. Don't teach our kids these things. I'm not saying don't discipline, discipline is a good thing, it's part of the equation, it's not the entire equation, but how do we help people's hearts be drawn to Jesus?

The story of the waiting, the ten virgins, see this one line, the watch line, this is what we're called to do in Matthew 25, wait for it, it's gonna be a good one, it's gonna be a good one if you just wait just one moment, it will show up there, there we go:

¹³ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

– MATTHEW 25:13 (ESV)

This is how we are to respond today, but don't lose sight – it's about the heart. Are you giving everything to the Lord today – your hearts? Are there areas of your life right now that you ought to give to Him that you're refusing to? There's so many that we want to hold onto. Are we living with urgency? This is a drop in the bucket today. There's a grand story a thousand years from now or two thousand years ago, wherever we're at, we're gonna look back on this little life that we had here and it's gonna be a drop in the bucket. Are we investing in eternity with our lives and our hearts? Is there some area in your life right now that you need to turn over to Him, one day at a time? Is there somebody out there who you need to make a plea for them to understand that God wants their hearts back?

Christianity is not just a world philosophy or religion, it is a relationship where God—if you know Jesus—He's touched you in the core and is changing your life day by day. It's a relationship full of emotion and life and joy and peace and how can we let the nations understand that? Are we living in anticipation and urgency for Christ's return? Are we watching? It's a joy to participate in the story of all history. This is *the* story and it's not done with yet.

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We're going to take communion, this is how we're going to respond. Right after the ten virgins – worship team, why don't you guys come up here and join me? Right after the ten virgins in Matthew 25, guys, what comes right after Matthew 25? Matthew 26. Bible scholars. Matthew 26 we have communion. Let me say a few words about the Lord's Supper before I read this. The Lord's Supper is a time to remember Jesus on the cross and remember that He came into our hearts and is redeeming our lives and our hearts. This is the time. It's a time to release issues of our hearts to Him, things that we're holding on to; it's also a time of anticipation that we look forward to the end of the story, we look forward to the next saga. What I'm gonna have you guys do, you guys are jumping up here early, that's okay, no one has them yet, it's okay. If you don't have one it's okay, not everyone has it, you guys are ready for communion, they can't wait. They're like the little kids, I told you not to go look for the presents, you know, I had them hidden in the closet.

I'm gonna give you an opportunity here during the next worship set, when you're ready come take communion. Stand up here, pray, kneel, whatever you need to do, go back to your seats with your families, but I want you to live with anticipation. Ask yourself – is there something that there should be more urgency in your life? Is there something in your hearts that you're refusing to give to Jesus and you know you need to, you need to trust Him with? That's what we're going to do for communion. Let me read this to you, Institution of the Lord's Supper, Matthew 26:26:

²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." ²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

– MATTHEW 26:26-29 (ESV)

Christmas is coming. Jesus is coming. The final context, Revelation 22, the very end of history, 22:20:

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen.

— it's our prayer —

Come, Lord Jesus!

– REVELATION 22:20 (ESV)

Amen.

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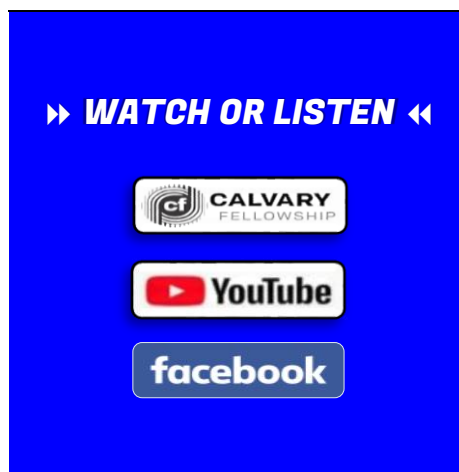


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