

GREAT BIBLE DOCTRINES - LESSON 14
THE DOCTRINE OF THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST,
RESURRECTION AND THE JUDGMENT

Introduction: Ever since Jesus ascended to heaven after His resurrection, Christians have been looking forward to His coming again (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Corinthians 11:26). His coming will mark the end of time and the end of the world. All outstanding accounts will be settled, all wrongs righted, and all evil defeated. It is the time when all of the hopes of God's people will be fulfilled. Peter calls it "the time...for God to restore everything" (Acts 3:21). Everything in our earthly experience has its culmination at Christ's coming. His coming is the most important event in our future. What does the Bible say about it?

1. Some events that were to happen between the time of the apostles and the coming of Christ:
 - A. The coming of the "man of sin" or antichrist - 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 1 John 2:18,22; 2 John 7; Daniel 7:8,20-26; Revelation 13:1-18. This possibly had its early fulfillment in the Roman emperor and/or the corrupt medieval papacy, but may have one or more additional fulfillments, including Islam.
 - B. The conversion of Israel - Romans 11:1-31, especially verses 25-27. Some believe this refers only to spiritual Israel, the church, but the language of Romans 11 certainly seems to indicate literal Israel.
 - C. The binding of Satan and the 1,000 year reign of the martyred saints with Christ - Revelation 20:1-6. This passage nowhere mentions an earthly reign or any return of Christ before the reign as is popularly taught. Christ's kingdom began at Pentecost - Daniel 2:44; Matthew 3:2; Colossians 1:13 - and He is now reigning on David's throne in heaven - Acts 2:29-36. Jesus said his kingdom is "not of this world" - John 18:36; 6:15; Luke 17:20, 21.
 - D. The last great battle at Armageddon - Revelation 16:13-16; 19:11-21; 20:7-10; Ezekiel 38 and 39. If this is a literal battle, it may happen at Christ's coming. If it is spiritual, it is a conflict between God's word and evil in the world - see Revelation 19:15.

2. Some other signs which point to the possible nearness of Christ's coming:
 - A. Wars, disasters, false teachings, persecutions, perplexity about the future, and the gospel being preached to all nations - Matthew 24:5-14; Luke 21:9-11,25-27; Mark 13:10
 - B. The world filling up with people
 - C. Wickedness becoming very great, as before the flood or at Sodom and Gomorrah - 2 Timothy 3:1-5; Luke 17:26-30
 - D. The power of nations today to destroy each other and mankind
 - E. Israel's return to Palestine, with the state established in 1948 and Jerusalem liberated from the Gentiles in 1967 - Luke 21:24-31

3. Scriptural teachings about Christ's coming:
 - A. Christ promised to come again - John 14:1-3; Matthew 24; 25:31; 26:64; John 21:21,22; Luke 21:27; Revelation 22:20; Acts 1:11; Hebrews 9:28.

- B. In his final return, Christ will come personally, not just spiritually or in some event - 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Acts 1:11.
 - C. He will come openly and all will see Him - Revelation 1:7; Luke 17:24; 21:27.
 - D. He will come with power and great glory, accompanied by a host of angels, the sound of a trumpet, and a great shout - Luke 21:27; 2 Thessalonians 1:7,8; Mark 8:38; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Titus 2:13.
 - E. His coming will be sudden and unexpected, with no person knowing the time - Luke 12:40; Matthew 24:36-38, 44; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; Revelation 16:15.
 - F. At His coming, time will end and the earth will be destroyed - Matthew 24:3; 28:19,20; 13:39,49; 2 Peter 3:7,10-13; Psalm 102:25,26; Isaiah 34:4; Revelation 21:1; 1 Corinthians 7:31; 2 Corinthians 4:18; 1 John 2:17.
 - G. The day of His coming is called "the day of the Lord," "the great and terrible day," "the last day," "that day," and other names - Malachi 4:5; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10; John 12:48; Romans 2:5; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 10:25; Jude 6; Revelation 6:17; Joel 2:11,31.
 - H. The scriptures always regard the day as near - Philippians 4:5; Hebrews 10:37; James 5:8, 9; Revelation 3:11; 22:20.
 - 1) In terms of our preparation, the day is as near as our death - Hebrews 9:27.
 - 2) God does not count length of time as we do - 2 Peter 3:3-9. And Jesus' return is the next great salvation event after his ascension, and so in that sense, any time after the ascension, his coming is near.
 - 3) To be fair to all generations, God had to make preparation equally urgent to us all.
4. Purposes of Christ's coming:
- A. To raise the dead and destroy death - 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 1 Corinthians 15:22-26, 52-57; Revelation 20:13, 14; compare Hebrews 2:14, 15; 1 John 3:8
 - 1) The resurrection is promised throughout the scriptures - Psalm 16:9,10; 49:15; Isaiah 25:8; 26:19; Daniel 12:2; John 5:28,29; 6:40; 10:28,29; 1 Corinthians 15:26,52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16.
 - 2) The power of God raises the dead - Matthew 22:29-32; Romans 4:17; 2 Corinthians 1:9; Romans 8:11.
 - 3) This same resurrection power is previewed in the work of Christ, the prophets and apostles - 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:17-37; 13:20,21; Hebrews 11:35; John 5:21; Matthew 9:24-26; Luke 7:11-15; John 11:23-25,34-44; Matthew 11:5; 10:8; Acts 9:36-41; 20:9-12.
 - 4) Our hope of resurrection is based on Christ's resurrection - 1 Peter 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:20,22; Acts 26:33; Colossians 1:18; Romans 8:29; Hebrews 2:10; 2 Corinthians 4:14; John 11:25; 2 Timothy 1:10; Revelation 1:18.

- 5) All will rise, the good and the evil - Acts 24:15; John 5:28, 29; Daniel 12:2.
 - 6) The righteous will receive glorious, spiritual, heavenly bodies like Christ's glorified body - 1 Corinthians 15:42-52; Philippians 3:20, 21; 1 John 3:2; Romans 8:21-23, 29, 30; Revelation 21:4; Matthew 22:30.
 - 7) The Holy Spirit whom we have received is the guarantee of the redemption of our bodies - Romans 8:11, 23; 2 Corinthians 5:5; 1:22; Ephesians 1:13, 14.
- B. To judge the living and the dead - 2 Timothy 4:1; Jude 14, 15
- 1) All persons must stand before God and be judged - Romans 14:10; Matthew 25:32; 2 Corinthians 5:10.
 - 2) God is the judge of all - Genesis 18:25; Hebrews 12:23.
 - 3) God has committed the work of judgment to Christ - John 5:22; Matthew 25:32; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Romans 2:16.
 - 4) The criteria by which we will be judged:
 - a. The deeds or actions of our lives - Psalm 62:12; Matthew 16:27; 1 Peter 1:17; Revelation 20:12
 - b. Our treatment of those in trouble or need - Matthew 25:34-46
 - c. Our mercy toward others in our judgment or actions - Matthew 5:7; James 2:1
 - d. Our faithfulness in using for God the gifts left in our hands - Matthew 25:14-30
 - e. The names written in the Book of Life - Revelation 20:11-15; Exodus 32:33; Luke 10:20; Hebrews 12:23; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 21:27
 - 5) Judgment is not feared by those who love and obey God - 1 John 4:17, 18; 3:3.
 - 6) Sinful angels will also be judged - Jude 6; compare 1 Corinthians 6:3.
- C. To give to each person according to his actions (justice) - Matthew 16:27
- D. To reveal all hidden secrets - 1 Corinthians 4:5
- E. To separate the righteous and the wicked, so that the righteous may have rest and peace - Matthew 25:31-46
- F. To remove all offenses and sin from His kingdom - 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Matthew 13:40-42
- G. To restore all the good that God intended in creation - Acts 3:21; Romans 8:23; 1 John 3:8
- H. To cause Christ to be glorified by His saints who believe in Him, and to be confessed by all people - 2 Thessalonians 1:10; Philippians 2:9-11
- I. To give His people a home with God - John 14:1-3

5. Blessings for the God=s holy people at the coming of Christ (a summary):
 - A. The King will honor them - Luke 12:37, 38; Matthew 25:20, 21, 34-40; 1 Peter 5:4.
 - B. They will receive glory - Colossians 3:4; Romans 8:18.
 - C. They will have new bodies - Philippians 3:20, 21; 1 Corinthians 15:35, 42-54; Romans 8:23.
 - D. They will be like Christ - 1 John 3:2; Romans 8:29, 30.
 - E. They will be with the Lord forever and will reign with Him - 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17; Revelation 22:5.

6. The meaning Christ's coming for the wicked:
 - A. Terrible wrath and eternal punishment - Romans 2:5-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9
 - B. All secrets and hidden sins revealed - Matthew 10:26; Romans 2:16
 - C. Shame and rejection - Mark 8:38; Matthew 7:21-23
 - D. Weeping and grinding of teeth, facing an eternal future with no hope - Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7

Conclusion: Christ's coming is called the "blessed hope" of Christians (Titus 2:11-14). If we are really living in Him, there should be no dread, but only eagerness for His coming. We should say as the early Christians did, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus" - 1 Corinthians 16:22; Revelation 22:20.

8 By G.B. Shelburne, III (except for any graphics and scripture quotations). May be reproduced for non-profit, non-publishing instructional purposes provided document content is not altered and this copyright notice is included in full. Format may be altered. South Houston Bible Institute, 14325Crescent Landing, Houston, TX 77062-2178, U.S.A., tel. 281-990-8899, email <shbi@shbi.org>, web site <www.shbi.org>. Scriptures, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION 8 1978 and 1984 by the New York International Bible Society, used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

Note and Addendum: "What the Bible Says About Premillennialism"

The term "millennium" means "1,000 years" and is often used to refer to the 1,000-year reign mentioned in Revelation 20. The meaning of the millennium is controversial. Conservative believers hold at least three differing views about the millennium.

Premillennialists believe Christ will return *pre- or before* the millennium and reign a thousand years in earthly Jerusalem.

Postmillennialists believe Christ will return *post- or after* the millennium and that the millennial reign is in heaven.

Amillennialists believe the thousand years are symbolic and are not intended to be taken as a literal time period but as a state of things.

What the Bible Says About

PREMILLENNIALISM

By G.B. Shelburne, Jr.

The word millennium comes from a combination of two Latin words, mille (a thousand) and annum (a year). Hence the word means "a thousand years." The theory prevalent among many that the coming of Christ will precede his thousand years' reign upon the earth is called premillennialism.

There are variations of thought among those who hold to this theory. But, in general, they hold that when Christ comes, he will establish his kingdom and will sit on David's literal throne and will reign a literal thousand years in Jerusalem. The righteous dead will be raised and will reign with Christ on the earth, and the wicked dead will be raised and judged after the thousand years are finished.

This theory is very widespread in the religious world and cuts across denominational lines. Many good, honest, and pious persons believe it. This writer highly respects many who hold to this theory but cannot concur with them in accepting it. Here are some of the fallacies of premillennialism:

1. The kingdom of Christ is not an earthly kingdom and never will be. When Christ stood before Pilate on trial for his life, he said, "*My kingdom is not of this world.* If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." (John 18:36). He further indicated the spiritual nature of his kingdom when he said, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'there it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20-21). The rule of God is a spiritual reign within the hearts of people, and his kingdom is not as earthly power, such as human kingdoms.

Those who believe that Christ will establish an earthly kingdom make largely the same mistake that the Jews made at the time of the first advent of Christ. So widespread was their belief that the Messiah would be a conquering earthly ruler that they would have taken Christ by force and made him a king, had he allowed it (John 6:15). Even after the resurrection the

apostles were laboring under this belief when they asked, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). A great many today are still expecting Christ to return and set up an earthly kingdom - something he never will do.

No doubt, the fact that Christ refused to set up an earthly kingdom was one of the chief causes of his rejection by his people. They could not conceive of a suffering, dying Messiah; so he became to the Jews a stumbling block (1 Corinthians 1:23). Some premillennialists say that Christ would have established his kingdom when he came the first time, had he not been rejected by the Jews, but that since they rejected him the church was introduced and the kingdom was postponed. Such a view as this makes the church an after-thought and causes the prophecies to fail. In other words, when the prophets foretold the establishment of the kingdom at the time of Christ's first coming, they were mistaken! The truth is that the church (also called the kingdom, Matthew 16:18-19) was according to God's eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:10-11), and the prophets foretold the setting up of the kingdom in the days of the Roman kings, who ruled when Christ came (Daniel 2:44; Isaiah 2:2, 3).

2. The kingdom of Christ has been established. The Scriptures clearly teach that the kingdom of Christ has been established and that we do not have to wait until the second coming of Christ for it to be set up. In his interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar Daniel said, "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed..." (Daniel 2:44). A careful look at the context of this statement and the facts of history reveals that "those kings" in this text were the Roman kings. It was in the days of these very kings that John came preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." (Matthew 3:1-2). After John was put into prison, Christ preached, "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near." (Mark 1:15) The twelve and the seventy, under the limited commission, preached the same message (Matthew 10:7; Luke 10:9).

Passages like these cannot be explained on the ground that the kingdom has not yet been established and will not be set up until Christ comes. But if we understand that in the days of the Roman kings, soon after these statements were made, the kingdom was established, all is clear. Christ said, as recorded in Mark 9:1, "Some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1). You will recall that the apostles were to wait in Jerusalem for the promised power (Luke 24:49). This power did come on the apostles in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:1-4), and on that day Peter, who had been given the "keys of the kingdom" (Matthew 16:19), declared for the first time the terms of entrance into it. Thus, the kingdom "came with power" on that day.

There are various other passages which show that the kingdom has been established. For example, Paul wrote to the Colossians, "He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves..." (Colossians 1:13). Obviously, they could not have been in a kingdom which did not exist. The writer of Hebrews said, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe" (Hebrews 12:28). John referred to himself in these words: "I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus..." (Revelation 1:9). So the early disciples had received the kingdom and were in it.

3. The throne of Christ is in heaven and cannot be on the earth. In Zechariah 6:12-13, we find a prophecy concerning "the man whose name is the branch." This undoubtedly is a prophecy concerning Christ (compare Jeremiah 23:5-6). It is said concerning him, "It is he who will build the temple of the Lord, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne." In his great sermon on the first Pentecost after the resurrection, Peter referred to the resurrection of Christ and to his exaltation at the right hand of God. He said that this was in fulfillment of the prophecy of David, "he Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." (See Acts 2:29-36; Psalm 110:1).

So Christ is now exalted as both Lord and Christ (the anointed king) and seated at the right hand of God in heaven. But he was to "sit and rule upon his throne." He is therefore now on his throne in heaven. Moreover, he was to be "a priest upon his throne." Just as surely as he is now our great high priest, he is now on his throne. We read in Hebrews 4:14, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess." Christ is now a priest upon his throne in heaven, and his throne cannot be on earth. "If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law." (Hebrews 8:4).

4. Christ is now on David's throne. A long time ago God made a promise to David that he would raise up his seed after him and establish his kingdom. This prophecy was no doubt fulfilled in part in the life of Solomon, David's son. But there are parts of it that could not have been fulfilled by Solomon. For example, the Lord said, "He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever...Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever." (2 Samuel 7:12-16). That this prophecy refers to Christ is made very clear in the words of Gabriel to Mary before the birth of Christ: "You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name

Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." (Luke 1:31-33).

Peter said on the day of Pentecost that the promise made to David so long ago was fulfilled in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ at the right hand of God in heaven (Acts 2:29-36). Among other things, he said, "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ...Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear." In the plainest of language, Peter affirms that Christ was raised up from the grave to sit on David's throne and that he is now spiritually seated on that throne in heaven. The promise to David of one to sit on his throne forever is thus spiritually fulfilled in Christ, who is now on David's throne. It is not waiting to be fulfilled in a temporal kingdom on earth.

5. Christ is now king as much as he ever will be. After his resurrection and before his ascension to heaven, Christ said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18). As we read that statement, the question comes: How much more than **all authority** could he ever have? He now has all authority in heaven and in earth. Further, we read of him, "who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him" (1 Peter 3:22). In Revelation 17:14 he is called "Lord of lords, and King of kings." If Christ ever will be king, he is now; and he is king now as much as he ever will be.

6. Christ will close, not begin, the earthly phase of his reign when he comes. This is to say that the earthly phase of his kingdom will end at that time, and that he will not then begin to reign on earth. He now reigns over his kingdom on earth as he sits enthroned at the right hand of God in heaven. This reign will continue until he has put all enemies under his feet. Let us read the words of Paul: "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power" (1 Corinthians 15:22-24). We know from other passages that the final victory over death will be won at the coming of the Lord, when the righteous dead shall be raised in imperishable, immortal bodies (1 Corinthians 15:51-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17).

7. There is no scriptural indication of more than one bodily resurrection in the

future. Christ said, "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned" (John 5:28-29). Notice that it is indicated here that both the righteous and the wicked will be raised at the same time. Further, Christ indicated that the righteous will be raised "at the last day" (John 6:44). So there is no indication of two bodily resurrections in the future, such as premillennialism requires.

8. There is no room in God's plan for a future age of 1,000 years after Christ comes. We have just seen that all of the dead will be raised "at the last day". Earlier, we saw that the dead will be raised when Christ comes, and that "then the end will come" (1 Corinthians 15:22-24). We are told that Christ will judge the living and the dead "at his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:1 KJV), and, further, that the judgment will be "at the last day" (John 12:48). From all of these passages we can see that the coming of Christ, the resurrection of all the dead, the judgment, and the end of time will converge on one great day - that they will take place at the same time. All things earthly will come to a close, and there will not be a future age of 1,000 years in which Christ will reign on the earth. The gospel age, in which we are living, is called "the last days" (Hebrews 1:2). We are in the last age of time.

9. The premillennial theory is not taught in Revelation 20. This is perhaps the major proof text of premillennialists. They think they see in it a clear portrayal of their theory. But, to me, this could not be true. As we have seen, the premillennial theory is out of harmony with many other passages of Scripture. This being true, any interpretation of Revelation 20 that would support this theory is erroneous.

Further, there are certain things that are essential to the premillennial theory that are not mentioned in Revelation 20. The second coming of Christ is not mentioned in this passage, and his reign on earth is not mentioned. There is no mention of a bodily resurrection. John saw "the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus." The passage does not say that all of the righteous will live and reign with Christ. It says that "they (the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus) came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

Another consideration is that Revelation 20 is a highly figurative passage, as everyone admits. For example, it mentions "the key to the Abyss" "a great chain," "the dragon, that ancient serpent," "threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him," "thrones," "saw the souls," "the beast," "his image" "his mark on their foreheads or their hands," "first resurrection," "second death," and "reigned with Christ a thousand years." It is highly

inconsistent to accept many expressions in this passage as figurative, but to pick out one of them, "reigned with Christ a thousand years," and insist that it must be taken literally. Why should this expression have to literally understood, while all of these others are manifestly figurative?

In his Commentary, Adam Clarke said, "How many visions have been seen on this subject both in ancient and modern times! This, and what is said in verses 3, 4 and 5 no doubt refer to a time in which the influence of Satan will be greatly restrained, and the true church of God enjoy great prosperity, which will endure for a long time. But it is not likely that the number, a thousand years, is to be taken literally here....It may signify that there shall be a long and undisturbed state of Christianity; and so universally shall the gospel spirit prevail, that it will appear as if Christ reigned upon the earth; which will in effect be the case, because his Spirit shall rule in the hearts of men; and in this time the martyrs are represented as living again, their testimony being revived, and the truth for which they died, and which they confirmed by their blood, being now everywhere prevalent. As to the term, thousand years, it is a mystic number among the Jews."

We may not know exactly the nature of the millennium, but to this writer the premillennial theory is wholly untenable as an explanation of it. It is not good to accept and promote a theory that seems to contradict so many plain passages of Scripture. We need to busy ourselves in the Lord's work and to be about his business now, and he will take care of the future.