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Louis T. Talbot

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The Thousand Years' Reign of Christ Over the Earth

The Characteristics of That Reign

The Sixth in a Series of Addresses

by

Louis T. Talbot
Pastor
The Church of the Open Door

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THE THOUSAND YEARS' REIGN OF CHRIST OVER THE EARTH

The Characteristics of That Reign

WHAT THE SCRIPTURES TELL

For our subject this evening, we are to consider the thousand years' reign of our Lord Jesus Christ over the earth, taking as our Bible lesson selected portions of Daniel and Revelation. In Daniel 2:43-45 we read these words:

"And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

And Daniel, speaking again about the same thing in the seventh chapter, verses 13 and 14, says:

"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Linking these verses with the following passage, found in Rev. 20:1-4, we are ready for our study of the millennial reign of Christ:

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his
image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

The Meaning and Use of the Word "Millennium"

The word "millennium" is not found in the Bible. It is a word which has for its root the Latin "mille," a thousand, and "annus," a year; hence we speak of the thousand years mentioned in the verses quoted above as the millennial reign of Christ, or the millennium. To us, the millennium represents the period of time when Christ shall reign over the earth in person, as set forth in Rev. 20:4 just read in your hearing: "And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

While we have come to use the word "millennium" in this sense, I think it is unfortunate that it is so used. I believe that many misconceptions which are in the minds of men and women regarding this period would never have been formed if we had always thought of it and referred to it in the language of the Scriptures. The Word of God always refers to it as "the kingdom age; that is, the age when the Kingdom of Christ shall be established, and the Lord Jesus shall be upon the earth, as King, reigning and ruling in righteousness. Jesus, when He told His disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," was referring to that Kingdom, and to the time when He should reign over the earth in person. The seat of the government of His Kingdom shall be the city of Jerusalem. From that city His Word shall go forth, and He shall govern the entire earth. The world shall know one King, and that King shall be none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God!

"When Shall These Things Be?"

Now, the question naturally arises: How and when is His Kingdom to be established upon the earth? It is the same question which the disciples asked our Lord, saying: "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the consummation of the age?" (Matt. 24:3, R.V.). A noted Bible teacher has pointed out that before Christ's Kingdom can be established upon the earth, five great events must transpire:

1. The Church Must Be Completed. The present Church age must come to a close; and before this can come to pass, the Church, which is the Body of Christ must be completed. This age, which began at Pentecost, will end with the Rapture of the saints. Every day the Church is growing; and while I do not know—neither does anyone know—how many people are to be in the Body of Christ; yet God knows just how many are to constitute that Body. We learn this truth from Rom. 11:25, where Paul writes: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." The Greek words translated "fulness of the Gentiles" refer to the full number of Gentiles who are to come into the Church; and when that "full number" is brought in, the Body of Christ will be translated. Then God will deal with Israel, and they shall again become a nation.

I know of nothing that will stir one's very soul, as does the thought that every time he preaches a sermon, or gives out a tract, or teaches a Sunday School class, or talks to an unconverted man or woman about his or her soul, he may be doing something that will add the last member to the Body of Christ, thereby making possible the translation of the Church. The business of those who have been saved is to cooperate with the Spirit of God, to help Him complete the real Church, to help hasten the coming of Christ's Kingdom. The business of the Church is not to amuse people; not to run a gymnasium; not to have oyster suppers, cantatas, and other such forms of activity. It is not the primary business of the Church to attend to the physical welfare of people, or to provide features for their entertainment. The duty of the Church is to preach the Gospel and win people to Christ! If every minister in every denomination throughout the Church age had been giving himself to the real task which is his, no doubt the Body of Christ would have been completed long ago!

2. The Church Must Be Translated. The next thing that must happen, before the Kingdom age can come in, is that the Church must be translated, caught away to be forever with Christ. This we call the Rapture of the Church.

3. The Anti-Christ Must Be Revealed. Following the Rapture of the Church, the Man of Sin must be revealed. He must take his place and rule over the nations. The apostate Church will continue for a time, the true Church having been translated. Then the devil will be in control, through the agency of the Anti-Christ.

4. Israel Must Return to Palestine. The fourth thing that must come to pass, before the Kingdom age can begin, is that the nation of Israel, or a portion of it, must be back in the land of
Palestine. The children of Israel are now going back to their homeland, even as all of these things which I have mentioned are in the process of completion in our own day. There are more Jews in Palestine today than there were in the days of our Lord’s ministry.

5. The Devil Must Be Bound. We shall never have a millennium while the devil is loose. And surely he is loose today! The only One who can bind him is the Lord Jesus Christ; and when He comes in His glory, He will do this very thing. Then He will set up His Kingdom on the earth.

When all these things have come to pass—when the Church has been completed; when the Church has been translated; when the Anti-Christ has had his little time of power and authority; when Israel has returned to her native land; and when the devil has been bound—then, and not till then, will our Lord return in glory to set up His earthly rule. Then will begin the millennial reign of Christ on earth. These events can transpire quickly. In fact, the completion of one event will naturally and inevitably bring about the next. The Church completed means the Church translated; the Church translated means the beginning of the tribulation period and the rule of the Anti-Christ; the overthrow of the Anti-Christ will bring about the binding of the devil and the setting up of our Lord’s Kingdom. The children of Israel are now going back in large numbers to their native land. They are going back, still in blindness; nevertheless, they are turning their steps toward the land of their forefathers.

The Return of Christ in Glory

In a little while Heaven will open, and the Lord Jesus will come in clouds of glory. What a sight that will be! “Look up, for your redemption draweth nigh!” I often think of Rev. 1:7: “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him.” Now, that verse does not have reference to the translation of the Church, because every eye shall not behold that mysterious and awe-inspiring spectacle. The world will scarcely know that the Church has been taken. They will know only that some of their loved ones have disappeared and are seen no more in their midst. “Two shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come” (Matt. 24:40-42). But when He comes as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He will come with clouds, and every eye shall behold Him. What a glorious sight that will be!

I was walking along the streets of Chicago one day, when the airplane was in its infancy, when the sight of one soaring through the heavens was something new and wonderful. I noticed people staring upwards as I passed a corner, and wondered what the attraction was, for I saw nothing unusual. As I passed on, I saw more people, and still others, gazing up into the heavens with intent faces. Then I stopped, too, and looked in the same direction with them. Presently, a tiny dot appeared, black against the blue of the sky; then it grew larger and larger; and at last we could see the silver wings of the plane as it whirred its way through space. As I beheld this spectacle, I was impressed by the fact that there were literally thousands of people staring up at that airplane. Then suddenly there came to my mind the thought of that text, “Every eye shall see him”; and my whole being thrilled at the thought that, when He comes in clouds of glory, the men and women in China, in England, in America, in the islands of the sea, will behold Him in His majesty and splendour! What a marvellous time it will be, when He comes!

Characteristics of the Reign of Christ

1. Christ Shall Be the King of the Whole Earth. The Son of God will be on the earth in person. He will be King in as definite a sense as the world has ever known a king to be, only His Kingdom will have a wider sphere than that of any earthly king. His rule will be more autocratic; its sway will be limitless. And He will have a throne. Did you ever notice carefully those verses in the first chapter of Luke, where we read of how Gabriel came to announce to Mary the astounding news that she was to share with God in bringing into the world His Son? As recorded there, the angel said to her concerning the Lord Jesus: “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:32, 33). Have you ever thought of the fact that this prophecy has never been fulfilled? Christ has never yet sat upon the throne of David; He has never yet ruled over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Have you ever noticed how the children of Israel, though they do not have the same kind of king as we have, long to have a king of the blood of David? After all, it is long since that wonderful promise was made in the days of David that the Messiah, being a son of David, would reign on the throne of David. But when He returns in glory, Israel will “look upon him whom they have pierced”; and Jesus, as the Son of David, will sit upon the throne of David. Moreover, that throne will be located in the city of Jerusalem, which will be the metropolis of Christ’s Kingdom.
The extent of the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus is outlined in many Scriptures. For example, in Psalm 72:8, 9 we read: “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.” In that day the Lord Jesus Christ shall rule over every government in the world. Gentile dominion shall pass away. Kings and rulers shall pass away, because He whose right it is to rule will be on the earth; and He will have all power and authority. As we have already seen, Jerusalem will be the metropolis of Christ’s kingdom. Concerning this fact, the Psalmist says: “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion” (Psa. 2:6). Again and again we read of Zion; and we are told that “from Zion shall go forth the word of the Lord.” Zion is mentioned about one hundred and fifty times in the Old and New Testaments, and always this name refers to Jerusalem. We often sing: “We’re marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion. We’re marching upward to Zion, the beautiful city of God.” That song, too, has a pleasing swing, but we are going to a better place, to the New Jerusalem; whereas Zion always means the earthly city of Jerusalem. There the Son of God will reign. He will not adopt the Constitution of the United States, or that of England, or of any other earthly nation; but the Word of God will be authority, and He will govern the earth according to God’s laws. In our own day, when men of “science falsely so called” are mutilating the Word of God, when they are telling us that the first three chapters of Genesis are naught but old wives’ fables, people are turning away from the Word of God, ignoring its divine commands; but when the Son of God shall come into His own, there will be a change. This Book will be the basis upon which His rules and statutes shall rest; and His laws will regulate living throughout His whole dominion—“from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.”

When the Lord Jesus reigns, He will be the court of last appeal for the nations of the earth. When the people we now know as the English nation have trouble with those in that territory which we call Germany, instead of springing at each other’s throats, as nations do now, they will get in touch with Jerusalem; and the matter over which they have a controversy will be submitted to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He will speak and they will listen. What a time in which to live that will be! Our Lord Jesus Christ shall be the King of the whole earth.

2. The Church Will Share in Christ’s Glory. She will be caught away before the tribulation; and when He returns as King of Kings, she will return with Him, as His Bride, to share in the glory of His Kingdom. Again and again we read that, as members of His Church, we have been made “unto our God kings and priests,” and that we “shall reign on the earth.” Because we have shared in His sufferings, we shall also reign with Him. When you meet Jesus, my friend, if you have the scars of battle, if you have suffered for Him, if you have given up the things of the earth for His sake, if you have been faithful, I tell you that you are going to be a very rich person in that day; for if you have been loyal, He will reward you. And when we come back to rule and reign with Him, we shall have our resurrection bodies. The disfigurements, the blemishes, the limitations, will all be done away; and “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is!” Now our bodies are subject to the laws of gravitation. Then we shall be free. We shall be able to pass through walls, through doors that are shut; and yet, like our Lord after His resurrection, we shall have bodies of flesh and bone. As beings of another world, we shall return to this earth, where we have been vilified and persecuted and misunderstood. We shall have “packed our troubles in our old kit bags,” but we shall also have left the bags behind us! We shall look around and see the place of business of some big concern to whom we once owed money, and we shall say, “My, how I used to worry over those things!” Oh, it will be wonderful to come back in that day!

Once I heard of a man who, when a boy, wandered along a country lane until he came to a farmhouse. He was hungry and ragged and penniless. He had no home, nobody to whom to turn. He went to the door of the farmhouse and begged a meal; then he went away, crawled into a haystack, and went to sleep. Years later, when he was a successful business man, he took his family and drove away into the country, out to the site of the farmhouse, which was still standing, old and weatherbeaten though it was. Pointing to it, he said to his family, “There is the place where I begged a meal, and there is the place where the haystack stood in which I slept one night many years ago. That poverty and misery, which once afflicted me, inspired me to do what I did; and I like to look at the place which reminds me of how far I have risen.” One day we, as members of the Church, which is the Bride of Christ, shall come back to the place where we have struggled all our days on earth; and in that day we shall be “kings and priests,” and shall rule over the earth! And in that day we shall understand why we have had testings here—that we may the better enjoy the glory that awaits us, that we may the better serve our Lord throughout eternity.
The apostles, as the foundation stones of the Church, are to occupy a unique place in Christ’s Kingdom. They are to occupy the twelve thrones of Israel, and administer laws to the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus said to His disciples: “In the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28). That will be in fulfilment of Isaiah 1:26: “And I will restore thy judges as at the first.” Now, a judge in Israel was not the judiciary official we know; but, on the contrary, his was an administrative office. And these Scriptures shall be fulfilled when the twelve apostles sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

3. Israel Shall Be Honored Among the Nations. There are literally hundreds of verses that prophesy the glory of the nation of Israel in the time when Christ shall reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The Chosen People will in that day look upon Jesus, and recognize Him as the Son of God. They will be established in the land of Palestine; and God will put them to glory in every land where they have been put to shame. When Jews move into a section now, the Gentiles move out; but in that day God will make them the most honored nation. Their temple will be rebuilt, according to the specifications given by Ezekiel, far surpassing in glory the one built by Solomon. It will be the time of Israel’s glory!

4. The Gentile Nations Shall Be Blessed. You ask, “Which nations?” There are some Gentile nations upon the earth today for whom there will be no glory in the time of Christ’s Kingdom; there will be a time of terrific judgment for some of them. Those nations that are grinding down and oppressing the poor—monsters of selfishness and cruelty, feasting upon the blood of innocent people—such nations will be wiped off the face of the earth, because they will ally themselves with the Anti-Christ. The Holy Spirit, speaking through the Apostle Paul, tells us that this shall come to pass “because they received not the love of the truth; that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned (judged, R.V.) who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (II Thess. 2:10-12). If any man rejects the truth of God, if he rejects the claims of the Lord Jesus upon his heart, God will see to it that he accepts the delusions. Likewise, there will be judgment for those nations which reject Christ, but a time of blessing for other nations—so-called heathen nations, like China and the isles of the sea. These will enter into the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus in that day. They will share in the administrative part of Christ’s Kingdom. How? We read in the nineteenth chapter of Luke the story of the man who went into a far country. That man, who is a type of the Lord Jesus, when he returned, called his servants unto him for an accounting. To the one who had been given ten talents, and who had gained ten more with it, he said, “Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.” After the same manner, the other servants were rewarded, each according to his faithfulness. Let me ask you, how could that promised authority be exercised in Heaven? God is the authority there. That authority will be exercised on earth, when the Son of God returns in glory.

5. Justice and Peace Shall Prevail. No man in that day shall own anything, for Jesus will own everything. There will be no piling up of wealth. The Son of God shall mete out to every man his portion. Conditions today are tragic. Men are starving to death for lack of food, while others are accumulating masses of wealth which they cannot possibly use. Some today are worth billions of dollars, while countless others cannot find employment. Jesus is going to solve that problem! It is not going to be solved by Socialism or Communism, but by the Son of God Himself! Someone once asked, “What is the difference between Communism and Christianity?” And the answer was this: “Communism says, ‘All you have is mine’; while Christianity says, ‘All I have is yours’.” And that is true, too; and when Christ rules, there will be justice for all.

When Christ reigns on earth, we shall not need such places as West Point and Annapolis; for “he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isa. 2:4). The Prince of Peace will be ruling and reigning.

6. “And There Shall Be No More Curse.” The millennial period will also be a time of blessing to all creation; that is, it shall be once more as it was before the first Adam sinned and caused the earth to be cursed. “Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off” (Isa. 55:13). In that day the desert shall
blossom as the rose. I could not help thinking of this as I was going through the Suez Canal some years ago, and looked out over the vast, undulating wastes, with miles and miles of sand. The vast Sahara, with its heat and its barrenness; the wilderness in the heart of Australia—all such desert places shall be transformed; for when the Son of God comes to earth, He will lift the curse. We are told in the third chapter of Genesis that God cursed the ground and said, “Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth.” But when our Lord bore the Cross all the way to Calvary, He wore on His brow the emblem of creation’s curse, thus purchasing redemption not only for humanity, but for the earth as well. And when He comes again, He will lift that curse.

The animal kingdom also will be changed in that day, when the curse is removed. In the beginning, when God gave Adam dominion over beast, fish, and fowl, things were not as they are now. Oxen ate straw, but so did the lion; for the animals did not feed upon one another. And when the last Adam comes, the curse will be lifted. The serpent alone shall remain under the curse; for in Isaiah 65:25, we read: “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat.” The serpent will continue to crawl upon the earth, with his face to the ground, because he will be left as a reminder of the fact that it was sin which brought the curse upon the earth. Therefore, for a thousand years, this instrument of Satan will be as a warning to the nations. But because Christ shall rule over all creation, the prophet’s message shall be fully realized: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:6-9). Contemplate the picture painted by the prophet: a child playing on the hole of the deadly asp, and putting his hand on the cockatrice’ den—all without harm!

One of the most beautiful pictures the prophets paint for us of that day, when the curse is removed, is that portrayed in Zech. 8:5: “And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.” Go to Jerusalem today, and you will see the boys and girls on the streets, but they are not playing! Most of them do not know what it is to play. They are pitiful, scrawny, hopeless little specimens of humanity, many of them going to bed at night without food. You could not get those children to play; but the day will come when they will play in the streets of Jerusalem. They will no longer be emaciated and listless and forlorn, when the “Sun of Righteousness” arises “with healing in his wings”! Then they will be happy and light-hearted and gay, as children should be; and they will play and sing in the streets of the cities.

In that day when Christ reigns, He will lift from the earth the curse of death, except for those who rebel against Him. Those who rebel against the King will die, like Ananias and Sapphira; but those who yield allegiance shall live on and on. Men shall live for a thousand years then.

**AFTER THE MILLENNIUM—WHAT?**

At the close of the Thousand Years, Christ shall surrender the Kingdom back to the Father in accordance with I Corinthians 15th chapter, verses 24 to 28, but before doing so, it will be necessary for Him to purify the earth once again. During the Millennial Reign of Christ children will be born into the world and it will be just as necessary for these to be born again as it is for children in this age to receive a new birth. That children will be born into the world during the reign of Christ is made clear from the 11th chapter of Isaiah, verse 8, “And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den.” Many children of godly parents during this age are gospel hardened, and many children in that day will take a similar attitude toward the things of God. They will render, however, feigned obedience to the King and will submit to His rule, simply because they must. Satan is loosed from his prison and the King veils His glory in order that these may openly declare themselves. That rebellion is described in Revelation 20:7 and 8. “Fire will then be rained down from heaven and will devour them.” “And the devil that deceived them” will then be “cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are” (Revelation 20:10). Then will take place the Judgment of the Great White Throne, after which the earth itself will be purified, and “a new heaven and a new earth” will appear; “for the first heaven and the first earth” will have passed away (Rev. 21:1). There will be no more sea. And after the earth has been purified and made new, The Lord Jesus shall hand it back to the Father, and God shall be all in all.