

Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow

It is a special privilege to be here today, but I know we will all be glad to have our pastor, Thomas Gardner, back next week.

As most of you know, I love music and had the privilege of growing up in one of the most influential decades for music- the 1970's. In 1977, one of my favorite groups, Fleetwood Mac, came out with one of the top 10 albums of all time entitled "Rumors." And, one of the songs from that album *just happened* to include the title of my message today. So, I would like to begin by reading some of the lyrics. They say:

Why not think about times to come? And not about the things that you've done?

If your life was bad to you, Just think what tomorrow will do

Don't stop thinking about tomorrow

Don't stop, it'll soon be here

It'll be here better than before

Yesterday's gone, yesterday's gone

Well, Fleetwood Mac may be onto something here, and today, I want to heed that advice and "don't stop thinking about tomorrow" and "think about times to come." I also want to take us on a history lesson- a history lesson into the future. That may sound contradictory, but in this case, it's our history into the future as given in God's Word. It's already settled history. It's guaranteed history. And, God has given us the privilege of knowing our history even before it starts.

Eschatology Slide

Today, I want to talk about Eschatology, or the study of "last" things, or End Time things. We don't talk about this very much- but we need to. When I was young, the only understanding I had of future things was that Jesus was going to come back some day and there would be a judgment. That's all I knew. And, I can tell you that if that's all you know now, things can get very confusing, especially if you start picking pieces from here and there throughout the Bible and especially the book of Revelation.

I don't know who said you can't know the future- because in truth, we can know the future, and we do know the future because it has been revealed in the Word of God. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians that we have received the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God. And it's important to realize that we need to look into the future to influence our present. Knowing our future and the future of this world should stir us to do certain things now as we live faithfully in the present. 1 John says that everyone who has the hope of Christ's return purifies himself. You see, the future affects our present if we believe it. The future hope of Christ coming, purifies us now.

So may we begin this morning asking God to show us things that we may know them and have confidence in them both now and for the future. Let's pray: Father thank you that You have given us Your Word that we may study it and know the things freely given to us by You. We have a glorious future awaiting us and we don't need to miss that in our present reality. May

we have confidence that You will do the very things that You said You would do. And may that influence us and shape us right now to bring You the glory and honor that you deserve as we walk in these Last Days. Please bless our time together I pray in Jesus name. Amen

So, to begin a journey, you have to know where you are when you start, and I want to start with eyes on our present Dispensation- the Church Age. Now as most of us all know, the Church began on the Day of Pentecost and continues to today. Those who believe in Jesus Christ are all members of this group- both Jew and Gentile. It is a privileged group, a distinctive group. We are also known as the Body and the Bride of Christ. That's very distinctive and special. Therefore, the Church was and is something different and separate from Israel. And as we move into this journey of future things, it is vitally important to understand this distinction. Israel is not the Church, and the Church is not Israel. Now let's define Israel. Israel as we mostly know it today is a nation, but it's also most importantly, a people. When we talk about Israel in the future, we are mostly talking about the descendants of Abraham preserved through the centuries through the 12 tribes of Jacob who both live in the land known as Israel as well as scattered around the world. As we move into this journey, we will see many future events relating to this people.

Books Picture

What I am going to talk about today comes straight from the Word of God, but as we all know, the Word can be interpreted in many different ways, and because of that there are many different views on End Time events. I want to be faithful to present a picture of End Time events from men whom we would trust as faithful expositors who hold, as we do, a Pre-Millennial view of Eschatology. And, here are the sources that I used in preparation for this message. Men like Charles Ryrie, Dwight Pentecost, Renald Showers, and Mark Hitchcock. I also want to do my best to give you an accurate timeline of all these events and how they relate to each other.

So, now we live in the Church age, but even in the Church age, we begin to see glimpses into the future- into the Last Days. And, I believe that we are now living in the "last of the last days." I also think we are beginning to experience what can be called the preliminary "birth pangs" of things to come. These would be like the false labor of a woman- not the real thing, but an early taste of it. Do you think that we are seeing things now on a global level that we have never seen before? The spirit of lawlessness seems to be getting greater and greater.

Headlines Slide

We literally see every day a refusal for men to believe the truth- if you can't define who a woman is- you have problems. And we know that God will judge men through the judgement of delusion which comes from choosing lies instead of truth, and I believe that we are certainly starting to see that in our generation. We have also recently gone through a global pandemic where we saw an exercise of unrestricted governmental power that we have never seen before. In our age, as in no other in world history, we have technology that literally links the world together. We are also at the advent of Artificial Intelligence which has the capability to

literally create artificial realities that make it impossible to determine what is real from what is artificially created. It allows for delusion beyond anything we have ever seen before. It also allows for the only time in world history when absolute control of people on a global basis is real possibility. We are now living in that day. Commerce and the flow of money can now be controlled, and we recently saw in Canada those who objected to governmental control have their bank accounts frozen during the pandemic.

Whole Foods Slide

Look no further than our local Whole Foods store to find palm scanners linked to payment. Technology now makes this and much more possible, and I believe that we are seeing a foretaste of things to come- and if we are seeing preliminary birth pangs- we know that the Rapture must be near.

Now, what do I mean by that? What exactly is the Rapture?

Comment: I will be using multiple images I created through Artificial Intelligence technology and Photoshop throughout this message to give a visual representation of some of these events. So, I believe this will give you some appreciation for how this technology is evolving and the power of it.

Now, none of the pictures will be completely accurate and some of them will be completely wrong because none of us really know exactly how everything will look when we experience them, but hopefully they will give you some basic sense of the actual events.

Rapture Picture

Now back to the Rapture. The concept of a Rapture is derived from the Latin verb *rapto*, which means to seize, or snatch, or carry off- it's also the Greek word *Harpazo*.

There are 3 key New Testament passages that deal with the Rapture of the Church, and these are found in John 14; 1 Corinthians 15; and 1 Thessalonians 4. When we put these three verses together, we learn that:

1. Christ will descend with a shout and the blast of a trumpet as He comes from Heaven to the clouds above the Earth- not the Earth itself.
2. The souls of dead Church saints will come with Christ and will be reunited with their newly raised and immortal transformed bodies.
3. Church saints who are alive at that time will also be changed in an instant into those same immortal transformed bodies.
4. Then all the saints will then be caught up together to meet Christ in the air.
5. We will go with Christ to Heaven to live with Him forever in dwelling places that He has prepared for us- so that we shall ever be with the Lord.

We also understand that the Rapture is an imminent event. The practical meaning is that it is always close at hand in the sense that it could happen at any moment. Other things *may* happen before the Rapture, but nothing else *must* happen before it happens.

The view I am presenting today is known as the Pre-Tribulation view of the Rapture, and we hold to that view here at Riverwood Bible Church. There are many many sound arguments for this view, and I would direct you to the very excellent book by Renald Showers- Maranatha: Our Lord Comes. But, today, we don't have time to discuss the different views, but we would strongly hold to verses that clearly teach that we, the Church, are not destined for wrath. Verses like 1 Thess. 1:10 that says, "Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come." And, 1 Thess. 5:9: "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." And, Revelation 3:10 "I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth." Have confidence that we will not go through the Tribulation.

So, the hope of the Rapture has practical implications for us today:

Rapture Implications Slide

- It should have a purifying influence on our lives
- We should live in the attitude of expectancy and constant abiding in Christ so we will not be ashamed before Him at His coming
- It should make us bold to confess Christ
- It should also be a comforting hope- our future is secure

Okay, now, what happens after the Rapture? This is a big fork in the road. All Believers will be removed from the world and only unbelievers are left. Let's look at the Believers. What happens next? Well, we know that we will be with Christ forever, and that initially, will be in Heaven. We also know that two events will await us when we get there: The first is the Judgment Seat of Christ, and the second, the Marriage of the Lamb. So, let's talk about the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Judgment Seat of Christ Picture

What is that all about? We learn of this from several New Testament passages including 1 Corinthians 3 and 2 Corinthians 5.

"Now if any man builds on the foundation (which is Christ) with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

There are two different words that are translated "judgment seat" in the NT. The first is the word "criterion" which refers to the standard where judgment is meted out. The second word is Bema, which refers to the platform on which the judge sat. In the Grecian games, all the winners were rewarded at the Bema, so it could be referred to as the "reward seat" - it was

never used as a judicial bench. The idea of the Bema is one of dignity, authority, honor, and reward rather than judgment. The issue here is not salvation, that's settled, (here me again- that is settled), but to reveal the character and motives of the individuals works in service to the Lord. This is an examination to determine that which was done for the Glory of God and that which is done for the glory of the flesh. There will either be a reward or loss of a reward. So, practically, the knowledge of this should spur us to listen to the Holy Spirit's leading in our lives to do those good works that God has prepared beforehand, and to not do them in the power of our flesh.

Marriage of the Lamb Picture

The second event after the Rapture, for Believers, is the Marriage of the Lamb. The Marriage occurs between the Judgment Seat of Christ and Christ's Second Coming, and this takes place in Heaven. This is when the Bride of Christ, the Church, will be united with Christ for all eternity. (We know from Daniel and Isaiah that the resurrection of the Old Testament saints will not take place until the Second Coming of Christ, so this Marriage is only between the Church and Christ.) This fulfills what is spoken of in Ephesians 5- that "He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless." It will be a time of great celebration, but the Wedding Supper itself will take place on the Earth after Christ's 2nd Coming at the start of the Millennium, and commentators believe that this will likely continue through the entire Millennium, which we'll get to in a few minutes.

Now, let's change gears and look at the events that will take place on the Earth immediately after the Rapture. Think for a moment what will happen in the days following the sudden disappearance of millions of people from the Earth.

Earth Dwellers Picture

Can you imagine the utter panic that will take place; the confusion; the devastation. There will be nothing in world history to compare to. The Bible says that the restraining presence of the Holy Spirit will be removed from the Earth so that a spirit of delusion will come over those who remain. No Christian will be found on the entire Earth. And, at this point, the Bible refers to those people who are left as the "Earth dweller's."

I don't know if you've noticed lately an increased interest in UFO's- Unidentified Flying Objects, and the interest in Aliens. Do you think that many would be brought under the delusion in thinking that millions of people have been suddenly taken away by Aliens? I think that could be a real possibility. And, can you imagine the panic that that would bring? Can you imagine that people would be crying out for someone to save them- to protect them from what had just happened? I think they would be desperate to do so. They would be looking to a man to unite the world against this threat. That man will be the Antichrist, and that time will be the 7 years of Tribulation also known as the 70th week of Daniel or the time of Jacob's Trouble. Both are described as the unparalleled time of trouble on the Earth.

So, what is the Tribulation period? It is the time when the judgments of God are poured out on the Earth to such an extent that there has never been a time on Earth like it, nor ever will be. They will be the blackest days of all world history.

Scroll Picture

It is the time when Jesus Himself, in full sovereign control, takes the scroll from God the Father in Heaven and directs the terrible judgments of God on everyone living on Earth at that time. This is the reclaiming and redeeming of the Earth for Himself. It is also the end of the rule of Satan and rebellious mankind and the eviction of them from the Earth. In Adams sin, he gave over the rule of the Earth to Satan, and during the Tribulation, God is taking it back. It is also the time that God will turn the nation of Israel to Himself so that they recognize the Savior they rejected.

The period of the Tribulation can be divided into two time periods: the first 3 ½ years just known simply as the Tribulation, and the last 3 ½ years known as the Great Tribulation.

Days Slide

You will find see the terms "The Day of the Lord," "that day," "the day," "the great day," "the great and terrible day," "Day of wrath," "day of distress," "day of desolation," "day of vengeance," and "day of Jacob's Trouble." These terms are found all throughout the Bible and, all of these have to do with judgment and this time.

Now, there has to be some period of time that occurs between the Rapture of the Church and the Tribulation period, but we don't know exactly how long that will be. The Rapture itself does not start the Tribulation. Remember there will be mass panic on the Earth after the Rapture and multiple pieces must come into place before the Tribulation actually begins. There must be the federation of European states to create the revived Roman Empire (And, today we already have some pieces of that in the European Union). There must also be the rise of the political ruler of this empire- the Antichrist.

So, what initiates or starts the time period of the Tribulation? We know from Daniel 9 it is when the Antichrist makes a strong 7-year covenant with Israel- that they will be protected by him from their enemies. And, there will be the claim that the world has finally established peace and safety. The signing of the covenant will be the elusive goal of mankind- that through man's efforts, peace has come to the Earth, but it actually starts the time clock of the 7 years of tribulation.

Antichrist Picture

So, who is the Antichrist? In Zechariah 11:15-17 God declared that He would raise up a "foolish" and "idol" shepherd. He is one who is morally perverted, insolent, impatient, who has no fear of God. A liar. A murderer. "One who shall do according to his own will." Who shall exalt himself,

and magnify himself, and demand worship of himself. Through deceit will convince people to put their trust in him as a god, and he will claim to be God. And, most of the world will worship him.

God has specific purposes for bringing Antichrist into the world, and one will be for the punishment of Israel for rejecting Jesus as Messiah. A second purpose will be the repentance of Israel through the desolation of the nation and the threat of total annihilation. A third will be the judgment of the world. God gives people the kind of rulers they deserve. And he will be the worst the world has ever known. The Antichrist will designate his right-hand man to oversee the apostate church that remains on Earth and to direct the worship of himself. He is the False Prophet. The two together have absolute control over all the peoples of the Earth.

Four Horses Picture

We see the opening of the first 4 Seal Judgments in Heaven by Jesus himself: the four horses of the Apocalypse- the rider on the white horse supposedly bringing peace- the Antichrist, the red horse bringing war to the world, the black horse of famine, and the ashen horse of death from war, famine, pestilence (plague), and death by wild animals. At this time, one fourth of the world's population will be killed. Imagine that- death on a scale we have never seen before.

Tribulation Saints Slide

The fifth seal reveals the death of the Tribulation saints- those who have been saved during the Tribulation and have been martyred. There will likely be more people saved during those 7 years than any other comparable time in world history. However, there is some indication that those who had the opportunity for salvation prior to the Tribulation, but rejected Christ, will receive a spirit of delusion and will not be able to be saved during the Tribulation. Nevertheless, millions will be saved during that time, and we can make the distinction that those who are crying out from under the alter in Heaven are not the Church but are Tribulation Saints who have been martyred. This group will be resurrected at the Second Coming of Christ. The sixth seal causes a great earthquake and supernatural events that lead to people trying to hide themselves from God. And, the breaking of the seventh seal releases the next round of judgments- the Trumpet Judgments. It's an unparalleled time of terror on the Earth.

Now, it's important to designate the first half of the Tribulation from the second half, and it's believed that probably the first six seal judgments make up the first half. But, what else is happening in the first half of the Tribulation? Well, we know that Antichrist has taken power over much of the world, not only political power but military power. The False Prophet has control of all commerce of the Earth through the mark of the Beast. Those who receive the mark will be able to buy and sell, and those who refuse will not, and will likely die. It is also very clear that those who take the mark can never be saved.

144,000 Witnesses

We also have the calling out of 144,000 witnesses- 12,000 Jewish men from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. God will “seal” these men and protect them in their ministry of evangelism to the world and many will hear and receive the Gospel through these men.

Two Witnesses Picture

We also have the ministry of two special witnesses. One is likely to be the resurrected Elijah, and the other has been the subject of great debate including Moses, John the Baptist, and Enoch. These witnesses will have supernatural power to kill their enemies with fire, to prevent rain, and to bring plagues as often as they want. They will be immortal until God permits them to be killed. They will also be resurrected after 3 ½ days and taken to Heaven. It says all the world will witness this- probably through television.

Around the mid portion of the Tribulation, it is speculated that the nation of Egypt will be defeated militarily by the forces of the Antichrist, and the invasion by Gog and Magog takes place.

Gog and Magog Picture

Gog and Magog likely refer to the area of Russia & Ukraine with their allies of Iran, Sudan, Libya, and Turkey. This massive army will literally be on the doorsteps of Israel to totally destroy her when God suddenly steps in and supernaturally destroys the whole army with hail, fire, and brimstone. It says that it takes seven months to bury all the corpses. This event, by the direct hand of God, will be something that’s used to remove some of the blindness of Israel and start to bring many to a saving knowledge of the Lord.

Now at the exact midpoint of the Tribulation, a very significant event takes place and it ushers in what’s known as the Great Tribulation.

Antichrist Picture

That event is the Abomination of Desolation and occurs when Antichrist enters the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and announces to the world that He is God and will be the object of all worship. It is said that the Antichrist was wounded unto death and his deadly wound was healed so that all the world will wonder at the Beast. This is to simulate the resurrection of Christ, and at this point he will be indwelt by Satan. An image of the Antichrist will also be erected in the Temple and will have supernatural power given by Satan to simulate a living image. The Antichrist will then renounce the covenant he had made with Israel and will try to crush and eliminate Israel once and for all. Also, at this same time, a war takes place in Heaven, and Satan and all his demons are cast out and thrown to the Earth.

If you can imagine for a moment the world turned upside down. Satan and all his demonic forces are on Earth. One out of four people you know are dead. You don’t have access to your bank account. You are starving and running for your life. Crime is rampant. There is no one to

help you. And, right now, life is going to be much much worse. It's unimaginable. The next judgments are starting- The Trumpet judgments.

Trumpet Angel Picture

The last three of these judgments are described as "woes," which imply that they are even worse. The Trumpet judgments probably extend to the last year of the Great Tribulation.

The first Trumpet judgment is hail and fire mingled with blood and a third part of the trees and grass are burned up. The second Trumpet judgment is something like a great mountain burning with fire that falls into the sea and a third part of the sea becomes blood, and a third of the world's ships will be destroyed. The third judgment makes fresh water bitter and many people will die from it. The fourth judgment affects the sun, moon, and stars and the day-night cycle. The fifth Trumpet judgment is also the first woe.

Locusts Picture

From the shaft of the Abyss, demonic locusts are released and cause a sting like a scorpion's that is so intense that men try to commit suicide but will be unable. The sixth Trumpet (2nd woe) reduces the world's population by one third, so that by this time, one half of the population will be dead.

Horse Army Picture

This will be through a supernatural demonic army of horsemen numbering 200 million. The seventh Trumpet judgment (3rd woe) is the pouring out of the 7 Bowl or Vial judgments in short succession probably during the last year or months of the Great Tribulation.

Bowl Angel Picture

Hang on. The first Bowl judgment brings a "loathsome and malignant" sore on the body of unbelievers. This could be some aggressive cancer that's impossible to treat. The second Bowl judgement is the turning of the seas to blood so that every living creature in the sea dies. Can you even imagine the stench that would cause worldwide?

The third turns all the freshwater supply to blood so that no one can drink it- no water to drink in all the world. The fourth brings great intensity of the sun so that it scorches with intense heat. The fifth brings total darkness, and it says that men will gnaw their tongues and blaspheme God for their pains and sores. Everything is worse in darkness. The sixth judgment dries up the Euphrates River and allows the crossing of the armies of the East as they move to the war of Armageddon. And, the seventh Bowl judgment brings massive destruction including the greatest earthquake the Earth has ever known- all mountains and islands will disappear and hailstones over a hundred pounds will kill untold numbers. Yet, in spite of all these judgments people will continue to blaspheme God rather than turning to Him for mercy.

I read all these to remind myself that I know people, right now, who could experience all this because they do not know Jesus Christ. And, it spurs me to have compassion for them to come to know the Lord before it's too late.

It's also in the last half of the Tribulation that the campaign of Armageddon will begin- when the great armies of the world will gather in Israel to fight against each other and the nation of Israel. Armageddon is not one battle but a series of battles that will lead to the great battle.

2nd Coming Picture

But before the great and final battle there appears a sign in the Heavens, the sign of the Son of Man that ultimately leads all these armies to unite together to fight against the Lord Himself. And, it's at this very point that we see the Second Coming of Christ and the national repentance of the surviving remnant of Israel. All of Israel, at its darkest moment in history, awaiting annihilation, will see and recognize the Savior they had rejected- and be saved.

Let me read from Revelation 19: And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

This war will be won by Christ alone. All the armies will be utterly destroyed, the nation of Israel will be saved, and the Antichrist and False Prophet will be thrown in the Lake of Fire. They will be the first two, and will have to wait another 1000 years for the others to join them. And then we read one of my favorite verses in Revelation.

Chain Angel Picture

It says: "Then I saw an angel (not a great angel, not a mighty angel) coming down from heaven, holding the key of the Abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations

any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.”

Now we know from Daniel that from this point to the Millennium, there is a period of 75 days. A lot has happened, and there needs to be some time to tidy up and prepare for the Millennium. At this time, there will be the resurrection of the Old Testament saints and the Tribulation saints. There will also be a supernatural gathering of unbelievers from around the world by the angels for judgment. Matthew 24:40 tells us: “Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.” That is not talking about the Rapture- it is talking about gathering the unsaved for judgment.

Jewish Wilderness Judgment Picture

Ezekiel 20 tells us that the surviving Jews will be regathered in the wilderness, and it says, “I will enter into judgment with you face to face.” And, “I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.” Here, Jesus, will examine every Jew to see who will enter into the Millennium.

Sheep and Goat Judgment Picture

Gentile survivors of the Tribulation will also be gathered before Jesus for what is known as the Sheep and Goat Judgment. Matt. 25:31 says: “He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.” And the Sheep, who are Gentile believers, will be invited into the Millennium. And, all unbelievers, Goats, will then be gathered by the angels and will be sent to Hades to await their final judgment 1000 years later.

Now, this marks the end of the Tribulation period and the extra 75 days.

God has now judged the world and He has turned the nation of Israel back to Himself.

This also marks the beginning of the next phase in God’s plan: the Millennium.

Temple Picture

Millennium means 1000 years, and the phrase “a thousand years” is used six times in the first 7 verses of Revelation 20. It’s hard to miss- and it must mean what it says. When you read portions of the Old Testament that speak of Messiah ruling and reigning on Earth, this is the Millennium. This is Christ’s Kingdom on Earth, and He rules with a “rod of iron” as King of Kings and Lord of Lords for 1000 years. It’s the time that the Earth will be restored to its natural glory, and Paradise will come to Earth again. It’s a time of unlimited peace and prosperity, and Christ will rule from His earthly throne in the Temple in Jerusalem. Everyone, and I mean everyone who enters into the Millennium will be saved. There will be no unbelievers at the beginning of this time.

During the Millennium there will be no wars or rumors of war. It will be a time of Holiness and perfect justice. But, even though all who enter the Millennium will be believers, they will be capable of sinning, but Christ will judge perfectly, and severely. There will be absence of sickness. People will live very long lives in perfect health.

So, why is the Millennium necessary? Why not just move straight into Eternity? First, it is so that God can reward faithful believers of all time. We will all rule and reign with Christ. 1 Corinthians 6 tells us: "Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? Do you not know that we are to judge angels?" Our life now determines what we will be responsible for in the future. So, what investments are we making now? There is a saying: "This is training time for reigning time." Let's make the most of our time now.

Secondly, the Millennium is needed to fulfill God's literal promises to Israel. Jesus will sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem as promised. Israel will live in the full boundaries of the land that had been promised. God does not forget His promises to His chosen people.

The Millennium is also needed to show the utter corruption of man. Now, why would I say that. Because, something will happen at the end of the 1000 years that seems to defy reason- a great rebellion. Although everyone who enters the Millennium will be saved, there will be babies born during this time who will grow up and will reject salvation through faith in Christ. And, they will rebel against the perfect rule and reign of Christ on Earth. At the end of the 1000 years, Satan will be released from the Abyss and will stir up rebellion in the hearts of unbelievers who will then gather around Jerusalem to attack it. It says that the number will be like the "sand of the seashore."

Rebellion Fire Picture

God will reign down fire from Heaven and destroy all those gathered against Jerusalem. And, Satan will finally be cast into the Lake of Fire to join the Antichrist and False Prophet forever and ever. That will be the end of Satan, and that will end the Millennium.

This will prove once and for all that regardless of a person's circumstances, or environment, people are utterly sinful apart from God's grace. Jeremiah was right, "The heart is more deceitful than all else, and is desperately sick." Man is totally depraved, and the Millennium proves that we need a righteousness outside of ourselves found only in Jesus Christ.

Great White Throne Judgment Picture

Next comes Judgment Day- the Great White Throne Judgment and it is the most fearful picture in all the Word of God. Let me read it from Revelation 20: "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Jesus himself is the judge and everyone who died without saving faith in Christ throughout all history stands before Him. It's a sobering thought and a sobering scene. That should stir us to seek out the lost while there is time and share the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Explosion Picture

Now, around this same time, something big takes place- and I mean big- the destruction of the present Heaven and Earth. This is mentioned multiple times in the Bible. In Matthew 24, Jesus says: "Heaven and Earth will disappear." 2 Peter says, "the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the Earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment." Now some commentators say that the present Heaven and Earth will not be destroyed but will be renewed and transformed. I like what Chuck Swindoll says: "This isn't a sequel. It isn't simply a re-edited version, enhanced with clearer sound, brighter colors, and a smattering of digitally enhanced special effects. This is no re-edit; it's a remake!" I tend to agree with that. When God remakes Heaven and the Earth, they will be a superior version- a perfect version for all eternity.

And, that's what's next- Eternity itself. Now we don't have a lot of information about what that will look like, but we do have a very good idea of what we won't have, and Steven Lawson has compiled an excellent list of "no mores."

No Mores Slide

So, what do we know that we do have? We certainly have a new Earth, and that Earth will be without a sea. We will also have a new city, the new Jerusalem, but it won't look like the old one.

New Jerusalem Picture

The new Jerusalem is very unique. It will be a perfect cube measuring around 1500 miles long, and wide, and high. It will be suspended above the Earth during the Millennium and come to the surface of the Earth during Eternity. This will be like a huge Holy of Holies, which was also a perfect cube shape, and will contain God Himself. God dwelling in the presence of redeemed men and women for all eternity.

Eternity Picture

Within the city will be the throne of God with the River of Life flowing from the throne. And it goes on to say in Revelation 22: "There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have

need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.”

And that my friends is our destiny. It is our eternal hope and our sure future as believers in Jesus Christ. It is a glorious future that should bring us daily encouragement as we live in this world now knowing that our future is certain- our future history is assured because Christ has promised it and secured it for us. Praise be to God!

Pray: Father, we praise you for who You are and for what you are doing throughout all history – from eternity past to eternity future You are God, and Your plans and purposes will be fulfilled exactly as You intend. Thank You that You have seen fit to show us our future as believers in Jesus Christ in our present time in order to encourage us with what You have for us in the future. And it is a glorious future! May this knowledge also spur us to share the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ with those who don't know You so that their future will be just as glorious. Move us with compassion toward them and fill us with courage. And, Father, may our future also keep us from losing heart, and produce in us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. I praise and thank You for our time together today and for this portion of the Bride of Christ known as Riverwood Bible Church. We are Yours forever. Thank You, Father. In Jesus' name. Amen