

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

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This month's topic for consideration is an issue that all Christians would do well to get straight in their minds, that being: **fallacies and facts concerning Christ's second coming**. As with all subjects concerning Christianity, we must go to the Holy Bible for the correct information, and we must always remember to consider the context and compare Scripture with Scripture as we use clear and plain Bible verses to help us properly understand and rightly apply the less-clear prophetic passages which are rich in symbolism. [All Scripture quotes taken from the Holy Bible King James Version (KJV) unless otherwise noted.]

Time and again, one can hear false prophets quoting from the book of Revelation as they take phrases out-of-context and put their own spin on the words in order to push their preconceived notions upon listeners. Invariably these false prophets are millennialists who dream Jesus Christ is visibly coming a second time to set-up-shop on earth for 1,000 years of good times, during which all Christians will live in ease and pleasure. Then, so they say, Christ will depart for a season and subsequently visibly return to earth a third time, at which time He will judge the world. Such teachings are pipe-dreams, FALLACIES which are opposed to Holy Writ, for Colossians 3:1-4 and 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 clearly declare to all Christians: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

The facts will be further reinforced as we consider more and more what the Holy Bible actually teaches.

I recently heard a Sunday-morning T.V. preacher quote only a portion of Revelation 1:7 from the New International Version (NIV), the phrase being, "all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him." The T.V. preacher then proceeded to teach that since the words refer to Christ's second coming it is evident that the people who mourn will again seek to crucify Jesus as happened when He came to earth the first time. Consequently, a battle called Armageddon will take place, at which time Jesus Christ and His followers will finally win the greatest physical battle ever on the earth, and will subsequently rule the earth for 1,000 years in absolute peace, prosperity, luxury and ease with the city of Jerusalem in the state of Israel being the capital.

Comment: That T.V. preacher is a typical example of the false prophets bent on pushing their fallacy of a millennium of good times on earth in which Jesus and His Christians will rule the world in wealth and health, for such false prophets always heavily rely on but a few verses from the book of Revelation, or portions thereof, taken out of context. Nevertheless, Revelation is a book of prophecy using much symbolism; so, it behooves Christians to wisely consult clearer parallel passages of Holy Scripture to arrive at correct conclusions, as we will presently do.

Consider the following:

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” (Revelation 1:1-8)

Comment: Looking at Revelation 1:7 in context, it is obvious that Jesus Christ who suffered and died for us, paid for our sins with His holy and precious blood, bodily rose again and ascended into heaven, whose glory and dominion is forever and ever, and who is the Almighty, is NOT coming a second time to earth to suffer and die, but is rather coming visibly in glory to judge ALL people, both those who are alive at His appearing and all others whom He will call forth from their graves— including those who nailed Him to the tree of the cross during His first visible sojourn on earth. The enemies of Jesus Christ will wail because they know He will have come the second time to judge them in their bodies! Oh, this is NOT merely my opinion, it is fact as the following Bible verses testify:

Jesus says, “there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (Matthew 24:24-31)

Note well that Christ is visibly coming the second time with power and great glory, NOT in lowliness to be crucified again!

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” (Hebrews 9:24-28)

Observe that Christ is NOT coming to earth to bear our sins and die again; Christ is visibly coming but one more time to earth “without sin unto salvation.” Yes, on Judgment Day Jesus is coming to usher in eternal salvation for His believers according to soul and body!

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” (John 5:28-29)

Note that ALL dead bodies will be raised at Christ’s second coming by the power of His almighty voice— His Word. Those who have done good (those with faith in Him) will be bodily raised to life eternal, while those who did evil (all unbelievers) will be bodily raised to suffer never-ending death in hell. Yes, only those with faith in Jesus Christ can do good and will inherit eternal life according to soul and body, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” (Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:16; Romans 10:10-11)

Also consider:

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10)

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” (Matthew 25:31-46)

Observe “that day” of Jesus Christ’s visible return, His second coming, is that day which is known as Judgment Day, the day when ALL people in their bodies — believers and unbelievers — will appear before the Lord Jesus Christ, be judged by Him, separated, and subsequently sentenced to immediately enter “life eternal” in heaven or “everlasting punishment” in never-ending hell-fire.

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.” (Revelation 16:13-21)

The only place in the Holy Bible where the term “Armageddon” is used is Revelation 16:16 and refers back to verse 14, “the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” Interestingly, “Armageddon” literally means “destruction of their army” or “mountain of destruction.” Consequently, all the symbolism is used to point to the fact that the devil and his followers will be judged and will finally experience God’s fierce wrath and destruction forever. Thus, the triumph of the Lord is sure and certain (we have God’s Word that “it is done”) and will be completed when Christ returns in glory on Judgment Day— “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:10-15) Hence, the devil, the beast, the false prophet, and all unbelievers according to soul and body will be consigned to the “lake of fire” to suffer never-ending death.

Now, about the millenialists who dream Jesus Christ is visibly coming a second time to set-up-shop on earth for 1,000 years of good times during which all Christians will live in ease and pleasure, consider the following:

“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. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.” (Revelation 20:1-5)

The apostle John relates here a vision he beheld. Think about just what particular “angel” has the power to bind Satan: the answer is none other than the uncreated Angel, the Lord Jesus Christ, “even the messenger of the covenant” (Malachi 3:1) [“messenger” being an English translation of the Hebrew word “mal’ak” meaning messenger, angel, king, ambassador]. Hence, the Lord Jesus Christ is the “angel” referred to in Revelation 20:1 since He alone has the power to bind Satan and has done so, for Jesus Himself – the strongest man, the God/man, the uncreated Angel – informs us: “if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.” (Mark 3:26-27)

Additionally, Holy Writ reports concerning Jesus Christ: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” (Hebrews 2:14-15)

Regarding the 1,000 year time-figure, we need to remember, “beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” (2 Peter 3:8) Thus, since Revelation is a prophetic book rich in symbolism, we can only say for sure that the Lord has set a specific period of time known to Himself in which Satan has been bound by Him and will be subsequently released by Him for a “little season” immediately preceding Christ’s visible second coming to judge the world. Indeed, the 1,000 year period is the New Testament era, for note well in Revelation 20:4 that it is the “souls” of them beheaded for the witness of Christ that live and reign with Him for the 1,000 years— the souls of those believers being in heaven and NOT on earth. Hence, the first resurrection is the spiritual resurrection that ALL believers have experienced by God’s grace and power, for “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:4-7) Accordingly, the millennialists are wrong in dreaming Jesus Christ is visibly coming a second time to set-up-shop on earth for 1,000 years of good times during which all Christians will live in ease and pleasure.

Fellow Christians, let us take comfort in knowing that “now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” (1 Corinthians 13:12; Philippians 3:20-21) Let us keep looking to Jesus Christ in heart-deep faith as our personal Savior and Lord, for then we remain assured that we will be with Him forever in glory, since “we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” (2 Peter 3:13)

m.e.l.