

**INTRODUCTION:**

One of the most important things that we can spend our time thinking about is ages to come, our future, eternity, and life after death.

- We often joke about it... I just received this cartoon on Thursday and it so adequately demonstrates how lighthearted we often are life after death.
- **“Honk if you love Jesus... Text while driving if you’d like to meet Him.”**
- If anyone can find that on a bumper sticker, please purchase it for me... I would love to have that put on the bumper of my car.

I sincerely believe that we need to do more serious thinking about our future.

- During the time that I have been preaching, I have discovered that there are a lot of people today who do not have a good understanding about what will happen when Jesus Returns.
- There is an incredible amount of information about the **“end times”** that is available on the internet because there are apparently a lot of people who are interested in this topic.
- Unfortunately, I have also found that the vast majority of the information that is out there is based on misguided opinions and is not in accordance with what the Bible says.
- So this morning, I want us to explore the answers from within the word of God so that we can have a better understanding about what we can expect when the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

There are many details that are not given to us about this event and we must be extremely careful to not try to **“fill in the blanks”** with information that is unsubstantiated—information that we cannot prove by the word of God.

- This morning we will be exploring a teaching that has become very popular and one that I believe has a number of very damaging affects.
- We will be exploring a total of four questions this morning, however, I would like us to begin by asking ourselves two questions... #1 What is Premillennialism? And #2 Why is it so important that we understand it?

We can find the most basic answer to this first question by going to The American Heritage Dictionary:

- **“The belief that Christ’s second coming will immediately precede the millennium.”**
- And that is a very basic definition that really contains more questions than it does answers...
- For example... What millennium is it talking about?
- What events are going to take place when Christ does return?
- And probably most important of all, what will happen to the obedient and the disobedient on the day that Jesus returns?

These are just a few of the questions that I will try to address this morning.

## **I. Let’s begin therefore, by addressing the question... WHAT IS PREMILLENNIALISM?**

First of all, the millennium is what many refer to as a 1,000 year reign of Jesus upon the earth.

- Many believe that Jesus will establish an earthly kingdom.
- They say that Jesus set up the church as a substitute due to the rejection of the Jews.
- The kingdom prophesies were postponed from the first coming and will be fulfilled at the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

- There were no Old Testament prophecies of the church and they were all referring to the 1,000 year earthly kingdom.

Perhaps this chart will help you to visualize their supposed timeline a little better...

- I found this online with a link to Tim LaHaye's website.
- As many of you may be aware, Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins are authors of the "**Left Behind**" series of novels from which three movies have been produced.

LaHaye, as well as many others, contend that Jesus will come "**for**" his saints in an event they call "**the rapture**" and will come "**with**" his saints at the end of this seven year celebration of the marriage of the Lamb.

- LaHaye believes that while the saints are in the rapture, those on earth will endure a seven year tribulation.
- Some regard the last half of this period (3 ½ years) as the "**great tribulation**" or the "**time of Jacob's distress**" which is briefly mentioned in **Jeremiah 30:7**.
- Premillennialists hold that when Jesus returns at the end of the seven year period of the rapture and tribulation, He will defeat his enemies at the Battle of Armageddon and set up His earthly kingdom of 1,000 years.
- And they say that He will sit on David's throne and will rule from the city of Jerusalem.

This is probably why there are some right now who are predicting 2012 as the date of the second coming.

- One of Israel's worst enemies is the country of Iran and there are people that are thinking that the development of nuclear weapons in Iran may have something to do with these "**end times prophecies.**"

There is one final aspect of Premillennialism that needs to be noted.

- They believe that there are at least three resurrections:
  - 1) The dead in Christ will be resurrected when Jesus comes in the Rapture.
  - 2) some will be converted during the Tribulation who will die during the seven years; these "tribulation saints" will be resurrected when Jesus comes at the end of the seven years to set up His kingdom; and
  - 3) the wicked dead will be raised at the end of the thousand years.

## **II. Now that we have briefly explored what Premillennialism is, we come to the second important question... WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT THAT WE UNDERSTAND IT?**

For the last 200 years or so, Premillennialist thoughts (including the rapture) have been popularized by a number of different people, however two of the most influential men on the "**end times**" are Edward Irving and Cyrus Scofield.

- Irving was the first to suggest that Christ's second coming would be in two stages... The rapture and then 7 years later the beginning of the 1000 year reign.
- Scofield has put together a Reference Bible that has been referred to by The Spiritual Sword editor, Alan Highers, as "...**a handbook on Dispensational Premillennialism.**"
- There are many who believe that Premillennialism has become influential among fundamentalist Christians in the United States in large part because of Scofield's notes.

I guess the point that I'm trying to make is that it seems that a vast majority of people in the US today believe in Premillennialism.

- ...As many of you are aware, I have been doing a survey with those who come in for benevolence from our food pantry.

- And in that survey I ask this question, “**Do you believe that Jesus will reign on earth for 1000 years?**”
- I have been amazed to find out that out of seventy nine people, 66 said “**yes**” (84%), 9 either put a question mark or left it blank (11%), and only a grand total of 4 people out of 79 said “**no**” (5%) that they do not believe Jesus will reign on earth for 1000 years!
- That is a vast majority of people right here in our own community that are convinced that the unrighteous will be left behind when Jesus returns and they will have seven years of tribulation (seven years to figure out that the Bible is accurate) and they’ll have opportunity for repentance!

### III. **Well... this brings us to a third very important question. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE DANGERS OF BELIEVING IN THESE VIEWS?**

First, and foremost, (as I just alluded to) people will have a false hope of a second chance.

- If the rapture is an accurate teaching, righteous people everywhere will suddenly disappear leaving little piles of clothes where they are standing as they are taken up to glory.
- Everyone else will have seven years to put the pieces together and make things right with God.
- This takes away the urgency of being prepared for the day Jesus returns.

Another danger is that Premillennialists have come to believe that the church wasn’t a part of God’s plan from the beginning and that it was just a sort of afterthought because the Jews rejected Jesus.

- So they believe that all of the passages about a coming kingdom in the Old Testament are talking about a 1000 year reign rather than about the church.
- Therefore, those who believe this way, do not hold the church as a sacred institution established for a purpose by God and they do not have any big problems with customizing the worship assemblies according to their own wants and desires.
- Personally, I am really surprised that anyone would dare to suggest that God didn’t know that Jesus would be rejected and He had to come up the church as a sort of “**backup plan**”?
- At it’s very core, it degrades the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- It degrades the Father because He apparently didn’t see all of this coming.
- It degrades the Son because He supposedly failed at His mission.
- It degrades the Holy Spirit because He apparently came at the wrong time.
- **Joel 2:28** says that He was supposed to come in the last days.
- Peter is also degraded because in **Acts 2:17**, he openly proclaimed that **Joel 2** was being fulfilled right there on that Day of Pentecost.

Another danger is that it leaves the Gentiles in this current age out of grace.

- In **Acts 15:16-17**, James, the half brother of Jesus, quoted from the prophet Amos when he declared that the “**tabernacle of David**” had been rebuilt.
- The “**tabernacle of David**” refers to God’s promise to rebuild the throne of David and to put one of his descendants upon that throne—That descendant being Jesus.
- Well James quoted this passage in **Amos** and indicated that the Gentiles were at that time being offered salvation.
- The reception of the Gentiles was to be effective only when the Messiah was on David’s throne.
- So if Jesus is not currently reigning over His kingdom, the Gentiles are still in a lost condition.

### IV. **These are just a few of the dangers associated with such teachings. This all brings us to the final and probably the most important question... HOW DO WE KNOW THIS TEACHING IS FALSE?**

What passages of the Bible contradict this teaching and what is the truth about the second coming of our Lord and Savior?

- In preparing for this morning's sermon, I found an article that was written by brother David L. Lipe who was here for our meeting this past spring.
- In this article, brother Lipe brought forward four passages of the Bible that clearly demonstrate that there will not be more than one resurrection separated by a period of a thousand years.
- I would like to begin by taking a look at these same four passages.

In the time that we have to demonstrate the inaccuracies of Premillennial thinking, we can barely scratch the surface.

- There is an abundance of evidence in the Bible that refutes this teaching, however, let's begin by taking a look at **John 5:28-29**.
- This passage teaches that the resurrection of the dead will take place within the same hour.
- This is Jesus speaking, and He said, "***Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.***"

It is important to note first and foremost that Jesus does not refer to different hours of different resurrections.

- Jesus made very specific reference to "***an hour***" that is coming in which those who did good deeds will be resurrected to life and those who committed evil deeds will be resurrected to judgment.
- There is no separation in time between the resurrection of the good and the evil.
- The resurrection of the dead will be simultaneous.

Let's move forward very quickly look at several verses in **John 6**, which teach that the resurrection of the righteous will be on "***the last day***."

- Jesus very specifically refers to the last day four different times in this chapter.
- In **verses 39 & 40** he mentions it twice, back to back, when He said, "***This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.***"
- Again in **verse 44**... "***No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.***"
- And a fourth time in **verse 54**... "***He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.***"

The same truth is taught in **John 11:22-23** when Jesus told Martha that Lazarus would rise again.

- You may recall that on that occasion, Martha replied to Jesus by saying, "***I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.***"
- In yet another passage in **John 12:48**, Jesus said, "***He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.***"

We can note that the apostle John is the inspired writer in all of these passages.

- We can also note that in most of these, it is the very words of Jesus that are being quoted.
- And thirdly it is imperative that we note that both the righteous and the judged will be raised up on that same "***last day***" that is referred to in all of these passages.
- As brother Lipe concluded... "***Since the resurrection of the righteous is at the last day it cannot occur a thousand years before the last day.***"

A third passage of scripture in **1 Corinthians 15:51-52** teaches that the resurrection of the righteous will be at the last trumpet.

- *“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”*
- In **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17**, Paul again made reference to this occasion and he said, *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”*
- Paul specifically makes mention of a *“shout”* and *“the voice of the archangel”*.
- These are all references to an audible sound that all of the earth shall be witnesses to.
- Is this *“shout”*, this *“voice”*, this *“trumpet”* going to last for 1000 years?
- And why would some even try to imagine that there are some going to be **“raptured”** up silently leaving little piles of clothes left behind?

This sound must either be held out for 1000 years, or it must come twice.

- Those that hold to this teaching will have to admit that they believe it is going to happen twice.
- And yet when we come back to the first passage we looked at... **John 5:28-29**, we remember that Jesus said, *“all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.”*
- Since the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous is at the same *“hour”*, and on *“the last day”*, and at the sound of a *“trumpet”* it can not possibly have a one thousand year period in between.

Some will take a look at **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** and will contend that when Paul said *“the dead in Christ will rise first”* that he was saying that the dead out of Christ will be raised last.

- That is a blatant misrepresentation of the comparison that Paul was making.
- He very clearly was comparing the righteous living with the righteous dead.
- Paul was writing to the saints in Thessalonica and the unrighteous were not even a part of his consideration at this time.

This is the fourth passage that we must consider a little deeper.

- **1 Thessalonians 4:16** teaches that the dead will be raised at the Lord’s coming.
- The images that we see of the judgment scene in **Matthew 25** substantiate the simultaneous resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous.
- John wrote about the second coming in **Revelation 1:7**, *“BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him.”*
- Note that John mentioned *“even those who pierced Him”*.
- Every eye will see Jesus as He returns—Even those who beat Him, even those who chanted *“crucify Him, crucify Him”*, even those who insisted on letting Barabbas go, even those that pounded the nails into His hands and feet, and even the one who trust a spear into the side of the Savior will see His coming.
- And we have ample evidence throughout the New Testament that many of those who put Jesus on the cross were the very same ones who rejected Him as the Messiah.
- And if they rejected Him, according to the Premillennialist thinking, they would not *“see Him”* until after their supposed one thousand year time period.

- Clearly this contradicts all of these God-inspired passages that we have been looking at.

**V. Before we conclude our message this morning, I believe that it is very important to establish that THE KINGDOM THAT WAS PROPHESED SO MANY TIMES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT IS IN FACT THE CHURCH THAT WAS SET UP ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST IN ACTS 2.**

The very first recorded words of John the Baptist were, *“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* (Matthew 2:2) In other words, it was near 2000 years ago.

- In Matthew 4:17, right after Jesus was tempted, we find that that was also the very first thing that Jesus began to preach!
- In Matthew 16:19, Jesus told Peter that he would give him *“the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”*
- Peter would use those figurative keys to establish that kingdom to the Jews in Acts 2 and Peter would also open the figurative doors of the kingdom to the Gentiles with Cornelius and his household in Acts 10.
- Peter would later refer to Christians as a part of a *“royal priesthood”*. (1 Peter 2:9) They were already a part of the kingdom.
- James, the half brother of Jesus, referred to Christians of the 1<sup>st</sup> century as *“heirs of the kingdom”* that had been *“promised to those who love Him.”*
- Jesus has been reigning on His throne for nearly 2000 years now and as children of God we are a part of that royal kingdom.
- To top it all off... Jesus specifically said *“My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.”* (John 18:36)

**SUMMARY:**

Earlier, I mentioned dangers of believing in this false teaching about the 1,000 year reign.

- One of my concerns was that this teaching indicates that those who are **“left behind”** will have a second chance during that seven year tribulation to repent.
- This is clearly refuted in Matthew 25, when Jesus told the parable of the ten bridesmaids.
- When the bridegroom comes, the door will be permanently closed and those on the outside will not be allowed in—even in they cry out *“Lord, Lord”*.
- In verse 13, Jesus concluded by saying, *“Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.”*

Another danger that I mentioned is that some feel as though the church was just an afterthought.

- As we have demonstrated, the church has been a part of God’s plan from the very beginning and it is very important therefore that we conduct our worship by the authority of Christ and in accordance with the many examples that we find in the New Testament.
- We hold this time as a sacred assembly, partaking of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of every week as we find in Acts 20:7.
- We do not use an organ or piano along with our singing because the New Testament examples and history demonstrates that the worship was to be a cappella singing.
- The Greek word used for singing in both Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 are a word that refers to singing without a musical instrument.
- And since the church is the kingdom that God planned, we must worship in the manner that HE wants us to worship not in a manner in which WE want to worship.
- We must worship in Spirit and in truth!

## CONCLUSION:

If you still have any questions about anything that I have talked about here this morning, I encourage you to do some further investigating.

- We have 4 copies of a DVD out here in the lobby called “**God’s Kingdom**” that may help you gain a better understanding
- Paul specifically commended the members of the church in Berea for confirming by the scriptures the things that he had been teaching and I encourage you to do likewise.

The good news is the kingdom is here!

- And anyone who chooses to be a part of that kingdom can do so immediately.
- In **John 18:37**, Pilate asked Jesus, “*So You are a king?*”
- And Jesus answered, “*You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.*”

## INVITATION:

There may be someone here this morning who is not a Christian and may be ready to make that commitment.

- It is a serious life-changing decision.
- We must realize that Jesus died in our place as a sacrifice for our sins.
- When we come to that understanding, we turn away from sin.
- At that point, we confess the name of Jesus and allow ourselves to be immersed in the name of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins.
- When we are baptized, our sins are covered by His Son’s blood, and we are added by the Lord to his kingdom.
- We would love to see you make that decision this morning.
- If you are ready, you can come to the front as we sing the next song. Let’s stand and sing...