

Afterlife — The Millennium, What On Earth Is It?

August 20, 2017

Good morning. It is great to have you at CrossWinds. My name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. For the last few weeks, we have been living on the brink of war with North Korea as Kim Jung Un threatened to shoot nuclear missiles at Guam, or even the American mainland. President Trump promised a full-scale war if Kim Jung Un fired those missiles. While all of us would be surprised if North Korea actually launched a weapon, the tensions of the rhetoric in the news have left us uneasy.

All it takes is a little time in the history books to realize the atrocities of two world wars are not far behind us. The brutalities of Hitler, Stalin, and Mao Zedong remind us that humanity is capable of great evil. Shattering peace in our nuclear age would be devastating.

This morning, I have good news. While we don't have peace in this world, I am going to tell you where we can find it. There still is hope for the planet to experience unprecedented joy and vitality. It will not come from reducing aerosol cans that thin the ozone layer. It will not come from putting a stop to global warming and the melting of the polar ice caps. The way to peace and prosperity on earth involves more radical change. This morning, we will find out what it is.

Two weeks ago, we began a series called Afterlife: What does the Bible say about life after death? In the first week of the series, we learned what happens to people one minute after they die. We learned that after death everyone continues to exist either in a place of temporary torment called Sheol in the Old Testament and Hades in the New Testament, or because their sins are

forgiven through their trust in Christ's death on the cross, they are brought directly home to heaven to be with God. No one passes out of existence. Everyone continues to live either in God's presence or in a place of torment after they die.

Last week, we moved from talking about what happens to the person after they die to finding out what happens to the body after we die. While our bodies are buried in the ground to decompose, or are placed in a crematorium to be burned to ashes, the Bible tells us death is not the end of our bodies. Jesus' defeat of Satan and sin is so complete that death is not allowed to have victory over our bodies. When Christ returns, he promises to raise our very self-same bodies from the dead. Just as Christ's very same body rose from the dead, our very same bodies will rise from the dead when Christ returns. What about bodies that are decayed to dirt? The more ruined our bodies, the more glorious the resurrection of the bodies. The level of decay doesn't matter.

Our resurrected bodies will not just be brought back to life but they will be vastly improved. They will be upgraded to be like Jesus' resurrection body. Just as Jesus' resurrected flesh-and-blood body will last forever, so will our resurrected bodies last forever. The very same body we have today will be stripped of sin and replaced with immortality. We will never die of old age or show our age. In addition, while our current flesh and blood bodies are known for their weaknesses, our resurrection bodies will be known for their power.

This morning, as we continue our study, we will see how world history will unfold after Christ returns and gives us our resurrection bodies. We will see how Jesus is the key to peace on earth from that point forward.

Many Christians only have a vague understanding of what the Bible teaches about the history of the world after the return of Christ. Most of us grew up thinking the return of Christ was the one decisive event in history that is the hinge upon which everything turns. After the return of Christ, there would be a new heavens and a new earth. We grew up thinking all of God's judgments and rewards took place at that the return of Christ. There are a number of verses that appear to give that picture.

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Daniel 12:2 (ESV)

having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. Acts 24:15 (ESV)

Theologically this is called the Amillennial view of biblical history. If you were to put it on a timeline it looks like this.



The problem is a closer reading of the Bible shows us this picture is too simple. Things are stretched out a bit. The key passage that reveals more details is Revelation 20. Before we look at Revelation 20, let me set things up in Revelation 19. Satan will gain great power in this world and will rule it through his agent called the beast and the false prophet. They will possibly work for one world government. Their goal will be to oppress Christians and destroy

the church. During the tribulation period, God will judge the world led by the beast and false prophet with something Revelation calls the bowl judgments. They will bring great catastrophe on the earth. Even though God judges the world, most of the people won't turn to God in those judgments but they will become bitter against God because of his judgments. Everything comes to a head in Revelation 19 in something called the battle of Armageddon where the armies of earth and the fallen spiritual world go into battle against Jesus and the armies of heaven for all the marbles. This is a winner-take-all battle for the future of the universe. Spoiler alert. The good news is Jesus wins. Let's read the final verses of Revelation 19 to see how this unfolds.

Revelation 19 - The Defeat of Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great." And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh. Revelation 19:11–21 (ESV)

Jesus wins. The beast and the false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire, which is the final place of eternal punishment. The lake of fire is hell. Then we read these words in Revelation 20.

Revelation 20 - The Millennium

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while. Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years. Revelation 20:1–6 (ESV)

Before there is a new heavens and a new earth which is described in Revelation 21 — which we will study in two weeks — there is a thousand-year period of peace on earth with Jesus in charge. It is commonly called the Millennium. Where did that name come from? Millennium is from Latin. Mille means thousand and annum means years. This is a period of time where life on this planet is much better than it is now, but it is not life in the new heavens and new earth. For this world to run well, Jesus needs to be in charge of everything. Satan, the great deceiver, who began his deception with Eve in Genesis and who continues to deceive the world today, needs to be taken off the planet.

A great angel will bind Satan in a place called the abyss. Literally, this means the bottomless pit. The beast and the false prophet, who are Satan's

henchman, will be sent to the lake of fire but Satan is not sent there at that time. He will be put in a 1,000-year jail cell. Where is the abyss? I don't know. It may be a part of Hades or part of Tartus, which is talked about in 2 Peter. I don't know. Satan through the beast and false prophet will try to run the world and it will turn into a disaster. Once they are gone, Jesus and Christians will run the world. Things will work incredibly well for a thousand years.

Christians will rule the earth in the Millennium.

I want you to also notice that John the apostle says he also saw thrones and seated on them were those whom the authority to judge was committed. Who are these people on the thrones?

It is us! Christians will sit on thrones and help Jesus rule this world in the Millennium.

Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? 1 Corinthians 6:2 (ESV)

...until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom. Daniel 7:22 (ESV)

In addition to providing world leadership in our resurrection bodies on this planet during the millennium, Christians we will also be the worship leaders on this planet during the millennium. The Bible says we will be a kingdom of priests for God.

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." Revelation 5:9–10 (ESV)

How much authority will Christians have in their resurrection bodies during the thousand year reign of Christ on earth? Will we rule over a city or over a nation? It depends how we handle the responsibilities God entrusts into our care in this life. In Matthew 25 is the Parable of the Talents. While a talent in the ancient world is a unit of money. In this parable, Jesus is talking about more than money. Jesus tells us that he entrusts in our care different gifts based on our ability to handle them. If we are faithful with what God entrusts to us in this life now, he will entrust us with even greater responsibility in the millennium and in the new creation later. If we are unfaithful with the gifts God entrusts in our hands now, we will not be entrusted with great leadership responsibility in our resurrection bodies later. How we live now determines what positions of responsibility God entrusts into our hands later.

Jesus will revitalize the earth in the Millennium.

While it isn't explicitly stated in these verses, earlier in Revelation it talks about the great bowl judgments fell on the earth during the seven years of tribulation before Armageddon. They are catastrophic. For instance, in the second bowl judgment in Revelation 16:3, every living thing in the sea died. In the fourth bowl judgment, the sun scorched people and fried the earth. In the seventh bowl judgment, the earth suffered a massive earthquake that leveled the cities of the earth. The point is that prior to Armageddon, the planet will be devastated and face huge geologic traumas. Some Bible scholars believe the topography of the earth will be changed going into the millennium and the mountains will be flattened.

Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Isaiah 40:4–5 (ESV)

Since this earth is so ruined during the tribulation, some Bible scholars believe Jesus will revitalize this old planet for his' glorious reign on this planet for a thousand years. While this is speculative, some scholars believe this earth will return to a pre-Noah flood stage where the world was incredibly lush and there was a vapor canopy over the earth that kept the global temperatures even. Many things in the millennium sound like life that took place in the pre-flood times in Genesis. For instance, before Noah, people lived a long time, like 700 to 900 years. Isaiah talks about a time coming on this planet, that is not in the new creation, but people will return to living incredibly long lives once again. Most likely, this will take place during the millennial reign of Christ on earth.

No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. Isaiah 65:20 (ESV)

In addition, the book of Romans talks about this planet being revitalized when Christians receive their resurrection bodies. Notice this verse is talking about this creation, not the new creation we will talk about in two weeks.

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Romans 8:19–21 (ESV)

There is a lot of speculation on this this. What we have is when Christ inaugurates his millennial kingdom, we have Christians in their resurrection bodies reigning and ruling with Christ on this planet. It appears this planet will be

revitalized going into the millennium after it is nearly destroyed during the tribulation.

Who will we reign over during the millennium? This is very speculative but there are apparently still normal human beings on this earth that were not destroyed by Jesus in the battle of Armageddon because they didn't participate in the battle of Armageddon. Those are the people we will reign and rule over in our resurrection bodies during the millennium. At first, there probably are not many on the planet for us to rule over, but with incredible longevity, there will be big families. With sin under restraint and Satan with his demonic hordes off the scene, there will be incredible productivity and vitality on the planet. Sin, sickness and death will be greatly reduced. Scientists are already doing incredible things today with technology. Imagine what technology will do in the millennium where all of it is committed to doing good for others, not for war. The Bible says Israel will be the chief nation of the earth and Ezekiel 40-46 describes a great temple being erected in Jerusalem. For the entire millennium, it will almost be impossible not to believe in Christ when everything works like it should with incredible productivity on this earth.

What happens next is one of the most amazing commentaries on humanity in the Bible. After one thousand years of a perfect human environment on the planet, human productivity working incredibly well, and wonderful spiritual instruction for everyone from Christians in their resurrection bodies, with no crime, no war, no external temptation to sin, with the personal presence of Christ and the resurrected saints on the earth and Satan bound in the pit, there are still

millions of people who are simply going through the Christian motions. They follow Christ externally but they do not love him in their hearts.

With every possible incentive to believe, as soon as Satan is released from the pit, people immediately begin following him. They reject Jesus and choose to follow Satan and a sinful lifestyle. This is like the Garden of Eden all over again but on a massive scale. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve both chose to reject God and follow Satan as their leader even though everything was perfect and there was no incentive to leave. In the same way, everything will be perfect on the planet for a thousand years but millions will make the same choice as Adam and Eve all over again. They will follow the lie of Satan, turn away from Jesus and go their own way.

Remember what will have happened up to this point. Satan and his demonic hordes will have already been decisively defeated by Jesus and the armies of heaven once. Satan will have had 1,000 years in the time-out chair to think about his ways and change them. Like the hardened criminal, Satan will not reform. Immediately upon his release he will begin building a massive army of humans that have only been following Christ externally.

Revelation 20 - The Final Defeat Of Satan

And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Revelation 20:7–10 (ESV)

This scene reminds me of the Pharisees in the days of Jesus. They saw Jesus performing miracles but they rejected the clear evidence that Jesus is God, which was right in front of their eyes. The same thing will happen here at the end of the millennium. People will clearly see Jesus is the rightful ruler of the earth. The only way things work well is when Jesus is in charge, but they will reject him anyway.

Satan and his armies will surround Jerusalem and the saints in the city. This time the battle will not be won by the sword. It will be won by fire. Fire will come from heaven, just like when Elijah prayed to God in his battle with the prophets of Baal, except this time it will be a massive fire which comes from heaven. It will start burning around the city and spread out to completely destroy Satan's army. Satan will be captured and thrown into the lake of fire, to join the false prophet and the beast. Remember the lake of fire is the final resting place for the devil and his angels. There they will be tormented day and night forever, which is the just response for their sin. The fires of hell will never subside.

What happens next is called the Great White Throne judgment.

Revelation 20 — The Second Resurrection And Final Judgment

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11–15 (ESV)

Earlier in our studies, we learned that Christ will raise us from the dead. He will give us our resurrection bodies at the beginning of the millennium. What about those who died apart from Christ and were not raised to reign and rule with him? In the first week of this study we learned they remained in Hades in torment after death. Then, Hades will be emptied of the dead and they will be judged. Everyone in Hades will be judged by what he or she did in life. As Christians, we will not be part of this judgment. We are the ones whose names are written in the book of life. Our judgment will have been earlier at the beginning of the millennium. We will learn about it next week. In this scene, everyone apart from Christ will be taken out of Hades and judged based on what he or she did with his or her life. This means a mass murderer will suffer a more hideous eternity in the lake of fire than a relatively nice person that died apart from Christ. Remember the lake of fire is a just response to sin. Greater sin requires greater severity of eternal punishment. All of it is eternal but some parts of the lake of fire are apparently more hideous than others. The more hideous the eternal punishment is reserved for the more hideous the sinner.

Hell is not one-size-fits-all.

For some of you, the idea of different degrees of punishment in hell is a new thought. Different degrees of eternal punishment based on the darkness of sin is found in other parts of the Bible. Look what Jesus said would happen on the day of judgment to the Jewish people in Jewish cities that saw Jesus' miracles yet rejected him as their savior compared to pagans in pagan cities that never saw Jesus or his miracles when it comes to the day of judgment.

“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. Matthew 11:21–22 (ESV)

The idea of different degrees of hell is new for many of you so in your Digging Deeper Sermon Study sheet I put more verses to substantiate this claim. Time some time this week to read through them.

The Bible frequently talks about the day of final judgment.

This day of final judgment is not just talked about in Revelation. The Bible frequently talks about it. It is often given as an incentive curb sin since all sin for those apart from Christ will be judged for their sin and none of it is forgotten.

...before the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness. Psalm 96:13 (ESV)

But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed. Romans 2:5 (ESV)

There are many other verses in the Bible I could use to show you how frequently the Bible talks about this great day of final judgment.

Years ago, I heard Erwin Lutzer talk about a funeral where he was asked to give the message. The family talked about the man in the casket telling Erwin he was a good man. He helped his children. He served in his community. The family said he was kind man, but he rejected Jesus. I remember what Erwin said to the family, “That is good. We know that when he stands before God, God will remember his good deeds. God will be fair.” That is true. Nobody will be with God except for salvation by Jesus alone but for those who die apart from Christ, when it comes to this day of final judgment, God will be fair. The less the sin, the less

the intensity of eternal suffering. The greater the sin, the greater the intensity of eternal suffering. We can trust God to be fair. He is the just judge.

Thankfully, for Christians, God the Father poured out all of his just punishment for our sins on his own Son. That is why our faith in Christ's death for our sin means our names are written in the book of life and we will not face this judgment.

Not only will this judgment be fair, but this judgment will be physical.

The dead in Hades are given incorruptible bodies before being sent to the lake of fire.

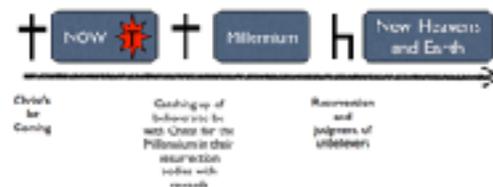
The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Revelation 20:5 (ESV)

Christians will have received their resurrection bodies at the beginning of the millennium. Everyone else will get an indestructible body at the end of the millennium. The problem with an indestructible body at that point is when you have it, you end up in the lake of fire for all of eternity in a body that is burned but never consumed. Yikes!

It is after the Great White Throne Judgment that eternity in the new heavens and the new earth begins. That is where we will pick up in two weeks.

Let me show you how the millennium fits in graphically.

It isn't just Revelation that talks of two resurrections and the millennial reign of Christ on earth.



As I mentioned earlier, the millennium that I described to you, is not something all Christians believe. Some

people think it is something only described in the book of Revelation. Since Revelation is hard to understand, maybe we shouldn't believe in the millennium and that Christ will one day rule on this earth.

Before you consider crossing out the millennium because it is only found in Revelation, remember there are lots of other things in the Bible that are only talked about in one place, but we don't cross them off. For instance, the details of the Tower of Babel are only found in a few paragraphs of the book of Genesis. That was earth-changing, yet people don't cross it out of their Bibles.

In addition, other parts of the Bible talk about two resurrections. For instance, Paul talked about two separate resurrections.

But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 1 Corinthians 15:23–25 (ESV)

Paul said Christ was the first to rise from the dead. When Christ returns, Christians will rise from the dead and receive their resurrected bodies at the beginning of the millennium. At the end of the millennium, after Jesus has put under his feet every rule, authority and power (which are Hebrew names for different angelic powers) that is when everyone else will get resurrection bodies and will face the Great White Throne Judgment.

In addition, there are Old Testament passages that talk about a time when this planet is vastly improved but it is not the new heavens and the new earth. We already looked at Isaiah 65:20, which talks about a return to human longevity on this earth when 100 years old would be considered young.

Isaiah also talked about a time when the animal kingdom will be at peace.

It is possible that instead of a meat-based animal kingdom like we have right now, during the millennium, we may have a plant-based animal kingdom.

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or 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 (ESV)

The time where the hunter and the hunted lie down in peace is a time when the knowledge of God will fill this planet like the waters cover the sea. That sounds like the millennial kingdom because Christ will be here. Knowledge of Christ will permeate everything during the millennium.

What should we do with those Bible passages I mentioned at the beginning of this message that seem to teach there is only one resurrection of the dead in the middle of time not two resurrections, one at the beginning and the other at the end of the millennium? Let's read these verses a little closer and see what they teach.

and many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Daniel 12:2 (ESV)

having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. Acts 24:15 (ESV)

These verses say everyone will be resurrected. They don't say everyone will be resurrected *at the same time*.

Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. John 5:28–29 (ESV)

If you read this verse closely you will see John said there will be two resurrections, not one. There will be a resurrection of life and a resurrection of judgment. The thousand year reign of Christ on this planet is between them.

Application

There is one big application I want to make.

The only one who can bring peace to this world and your life is Jesus.

There is a real spiritual battle taking place for who is in charge of this world. The Bible tells us in Revelation 20 that Satan is the great deceiver of the nations. His greatest deception of the nations will be through the false prophet and the beast when they assume world-wide leadership and try to eliminate the church. Satan is not just trying to deceive the nations and control the planet. He is trying to deceive you and control your life. Just like he deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden, he is trying to deceive you into thinking you know what is best for your life, not God and his Word. Just like Satan will run this planet into the ground when he rules it, he will run your life into the ground if he can get you to follow him today. Just as the only way this planet works is when Jesus is in charge, the only way your life will work is when we put Jesus in charge.

The only way to have peace on earth is to have Satan bound and Jesus in charge. The only way to have peace in your life is to turn away from the lie of Satan and ask Jesus to be in charge. Rejecting Satan's lie to put yourself in charge of your life instead of Jesus in charge of your life is the only way to find peace today.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics are preaching and ancient rhetoric. Feel free to contact him at www.Christ2RCulture.com (www.c2rc.com)