

THE GOLDEN AGE

Revelation 20:1-10

Through our studies of the Bible prophecies concerning the future we have learned that, according to God's Word, no mere man, no group of men or no man-made scheme of redemption can ever bring peace and contentment to men and women whose hearts are ruled by Satan.

For thousands of years mankind has been yearning for, looking forward to, and confidently expecting a time of universal peace and unending prosperity. Authors have written about it, composers have sung its glories, and the inspired prophets of the living God have definitely foretold its coming.

God has not placed this intuitive longing and conviction in the heart of man to mock him, or to cause him to despair. For every basic desire and need of life, whether it be plant, animal or human, God has provided an answering supply. Eyes have been given to see and God has provided the beauties of the world; man experiences the pangs of thirst, but God's pure water is at hand for its quenching. Man likewise has an unquenchable, universal longing for an age of peace, happiness, and contentment, a "Golden Age." Do the Scriptures promise the fulfillment of this desire, or is a coming gold age an idle dream?

Many Old Testament passages and the closing chapters of God's inspired and infallible Word tell us of such an age. In Revelation 20, we find that this coming golden age will last one thousand years. Because this age will last one thousand years, students of prophecy speak of it as the Millenium. It is sometimes objected that we ought not to employ this term because it does not occur in the Bible. It is true that the world millenium is not a Bible word, but it does have a Bible meaning. Mille is the Latin word for one thousand, and annum is the Latin word for year. Millenium means one thousand years. Six times in Revelation 20 we are told that the Kingdom Age will last a thousand years. We believe that record to be the inspired, infallible, inerrant, eternal Word of God.

Some object to taking this statement literally because they say it is mentioned in but one chapter of the Bible. While one clear cut statement, whose meaning is easily understood, should be sufficient, it is interesting to note that this statement is repeated many times in the twentieth chapter of the Revelation.

1. Satan is to be bound for one thousand years.

"And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years" (verse 2).

Satan has been the instigator of every sin committed since our first parents fell in Eden. He will be removed from access to the race, and confined in the bottomless pit. For the first time, men will behold the earth without Satan in it. For these thousands of years, he has been going up and down through the earth accusing, tempting, and misleading people. During the Millenium, this world will be free from his deceptions and wiles.

2. Satan is to be loosed for a little season after the expiration of the 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" (verse 3).

3. The resurrected martyrs will reign with Christ the thousand years.

"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" (verse four).

4. The wicked dead will not be raised until the end of the thousand years.

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection" (verse 5).

5. Those in the first resurrection will reign with Christ for a thousand years. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (verse 6).
6. At the end of the thousand years, the final doom of Satan will be sealed. "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. 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" (verses 7-10).

Here we have six distinct references to the one thousand years of the millennial reign of Christ Himself upon the earth.

Concerning this coming Golden Age, certain things are obvious. Among them are the following:

- I. It Will Not Be Ushered In Through The Preaching Of The Gospel By The Churches.
 1. It is not the business of the churches to convert the world. It is their business to preach the gospel, to win the lost to Christ and to call out the saved. As long as a church calls out some from the world who are saved, it is not a failure.
 2. The churches are not converting the world. More people are being born than are being converted and saved.
 3. The world will be in a bad condition when Christ returns. This is true politically, morally and spiritually. "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first."
- II. It Will Be Ushered In By Christ Himself.

The Millennium will not come until Christ comes to reign on this earth. In this connection it is well for us to distinguish between The Rapture and The Revelation.

1. They differ as to characteristics. In the Rapture Christ will come into the region of the atmosphere, and the "dead in Christ" and all living believers shall be caught up to meet Him "in the air." Those outside of Christ will have no part in the Rapture. Probably He will come secretly to take His saints to be with Him. This event may be invisible so far as the world is concerned. I Thessalonians 4:15-17; I Corinthians 15:51-52.

In the Revelation, Christ shall openly reveal Himself. He will be unveiled before the world and manifested openly in all the majesty, power, and glory of deity.

"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" (Revelation 1:7).

The Rapture will probably be visible only to the saved, while the Revelation will certainly be visible to all people. In the Rapture Christ will come for His saints, while in the Revelation He will come with His saints. In the Rapture He will come to gather the saints, while in the Revelation He will come back with His saints to rule the earth in righteousness.

2. They differ as to the place of manifestation.

When Christ comes in the Rapture He will come in "the air." But, when the Revelation occurs, He will descend to the Mount of Olives, the place from which He ascended. Thus, the first stage of His coming will be only in the air, while in the second stage He will come to the earth. The Rapture will precede the Great Tribulation, whereas the Revelation and the glories of the millennial Kingdom will follow the Great Tribulation.

III. It Will Be A Time Of Glory For The Lord Jesus Christ.

It has been divinely ordained that our Lord Jesus Christ should fill three great offices--the Prophetic, the Priestly and the Kingly. As Prophet, He acted as God's Spokesman: revealing God's mind, unveiling God's heart and communicating God's will. As Priest, He acts as Mediator between God and men, and by means of His atoning sacrifice He reconciles believers to God, represents the interests of His own before God, interceding for them and pleading their cause. As King, He will reign over men, enforcing God's laws and upholding on earth the claims of His Throne. It is of Christ as King that we shall now speak and think.

Nearly two thousand years ago the first part of Isaiah 9:6 was fulfilled: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." When He returns to rule, the latter part of that prophecy will be fulfilled: "And the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever" (Isaiah 9:6-7). When He came to suffer and to die, He laid aside His eternal glory--not His deity; when He comes again, it will be with great power and great glory. In His resurrection body He will return, and His kingdom will be literal and real.

Jerusalem will be the city of the great King, the place where His capital will be located. It will be completely cleansed and made over by Him. It is unthinkable that the Messiah would use a Temple desecrated by the Antichrist or polluted by any evil whatever. Thus Zechariah said, "He shall build the Temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zechariah 6:13).

Zechariah tells us "The Lord shall be King over all the earth." There have been many who have had ambition to rule the world. It was this ambition that led Lucifer to his downfall. All others who aspire to such rulership will fail to realize their dream, for this is the right of our blessed Lord alone. Some earthly potentates and military leaders have conquered vast empires and ruled them for a time, but their kingdoms have been taken from them. The glory of the Messiah as King will be the kingdom over which He will reign and the fact that it will not be given to another. The Word of God declares that "All kings shall fall down before Him and all nations shall serve Him." The hymn writer has described the universality of His Kingdom and reign:

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth His successive journeys run;
His kingdom spread from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more."

IV. It Will Be Glorious For The Saved.

When Christ comes back to reign, it will be glorious for the children of God. What a glory it will be to be back on a renovated earth, restored to its Edenic state. We shall come back to the scene where our battles with Satan have been fought, where

we have struggled and been misunderstood. The Lord Jesus is preparing us now for that time when we shall know why we were led by sorrow's ways.

When Christ returns to set up His Kingdom, His saints will accompany Him. Not only shall they be with Him, but they shall reign with Him. "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:9-10). To comfort those who suffer, God gives us this promise, "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him" (Romans 8:17). Those who are in Christ can look forward to glorious days when Christ shall return to set up His Kingdom. It will truly be a Golden Age for those who love Him. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6). Christ's position, power and prerogatives will be shared by His people, for He and they are one.

V. It Will Be Glorious For Israel.

When Christ Jesus returns to rule, God's unconditional covenant with Abraham will then be fulfilled. The hopes and dreams of all the prophets will be realized, when the King comes back to reign! Regathered to her own land, trusting in the finished work of her Messiah on Calvary, this nation which, in spite of bitter persecution, has been miraculously preserved by Almighty God throughout the ages, will enjoy the chiefest place among the peoples of the earth. It will be glorious for Israel when Christ comes to reign.

VI. It Will Be Glorious For The Physical Creation.

One of the most beautiful pictures in all the Word of God is that of a renovated earth, restored to its Edenic state. The Garden of Eden was beautiful before the curse came, as a result of sin. There were no thorns before Adam and Eve disobeyed God, but the ground was cursed for man's sake; and ever since Adam lost dominion over the earth the ground has brought forth "thorns and thistles" (Genesis 3:17-18). When Christ comes to reign the curse on the vegetable kingdom will be removed. Isaiah 35:1-2 describes the renovated and renewed earth as follows: "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing." Thus, we are assured that the fallow ground and unproductive areas of today will become beautifully productive under the reign of our Lord.

The curse will be removed from the animal kingdom also. They will lose their ferocious nature and habits, so that none shall hurt nor destroy. Originally man had full dominion over all the animal kingdom, but this was forfeited when he rebelled against his Maker. In the Kingdom Age the fierce nature of the beasts will be subdued. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. (All their ferocity gone). And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:6-9).

The curse of sickness will be removed and antediluvian longevity will be restored. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert" (Isaiah 35:5-6).

VII. It Will Be An Era Of Peace.

This present age has no guarantee of peace. Christ said wars and rumors of wars would characterize this age. We hear much talk about peace, but the world has little of it. The records show that throughout the past ages there have been less than two hundred years which have been free from war. Looking down through the centuries to come, Christ told His disciples that "Nation shall rise against nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom" (Matthew 24:7). If men do not have Christ in their hearts, many of them can be led to do anything. We cannot have peace and reject the Prince of Peace. Isaiah looked forward to the millenium and wrote, "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4). "And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Micah 4:3).

VIII. It Will Be A Time Of Great Spiritual Prosperity.

At last the power of God will bring to an end for a thousand years the power of Satan, the enemy of God and of man; for during this time Satan will be bound and locked up in what God calls a prison. "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison" (Revelation 20:7). Satan's power to harm mankind will have ceased during Christ's reign.

How the soul exults in the thought that there is coming a time when the one who has brought such misery and woe to the race and wrought such havoc in God's creation will be chained in the pit! Our hearts cry out for the One Whose coming to establish His Kingdom will mean the binding of Satan. What a day that will be when Satan, the usurper, is restrained; and Christ, Whose right it is to reign, is on the throne! What a great day it will be for the whole world when Satan, the criminal outlaw against God's government, will be arrested and bound in chains! And how easy it will be for the Lord to chain him! When the scheduled time arrives, the Lord will send an angel with a chain, and it will be accomplished. Just one angel will be quite sufficient for the task. With Satan bound and Jesus on the throne, the whole earth will be one vast empire with Jesus the King of Kings reigning in absolute sovereignty. There will be righteousness and peace everywhere. The curse will be removed from the whole creation. Earth's bondage of corruption shall burst forth into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. The whole universe will be under His absolute sovereignty.