

Introduction: Joke: “In A Minute”

1000 sounds like a huge number. 1000 seconds = 16 minutes 40 seconds. 1000 minutes 16.66 hours. 1000 hours is almost 42 days. 1000 days is almost 143 weeks. 1000 weeks is 230 months. 1000 months is roughly 83 years. 1000 years is one millennium. And it's been two 1000 years millennia since the 1st Advent of Jesus.

This Advent Season we are focusing more on the 2nd Advent of Jesus than his first. We are doing so to engender more hope as we look forward to the full manifestation of the Kingdom of God on this planet. My hope is that we all live in the vibrancy of expectation that Paul had, and talks about, in 2 Timothy 4:8

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

So, if you are currently longing for Jesus' second appearing, say with me right now, “Maranatha” (I Corinthians 16:22). Maranatha is an Aramaic word that means, “Come Lord Jesus!” We only have a few more weeks of our year-long, “Major Topics of the Bible, End-Time” edition. Last week, we looked at the Battle of Armageddon, during which Jesus and his Church easily defeat the forces of evil. Now that we have gotten through most of the chaos and conflict associated with the Great Tribulation, we shift gears to New Beginnings. Today, we dive into another massive event on the “End-Time Calendar,” the “Millennial Reign of Jesus.” Listen to Revelation 20:1-10

1 I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. 4 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. 7 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. 9 They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Millennial Stuff

Here, John sees a 1000-year period, where Christ personally and visibly governs the world. The period begins with Satan being chained and cast into the Abyss (released later but that's another message). Martyrs, i.e., those who were killed because they didn't worship the beast nor take his mark, are resurrected. Because of their faith and faithfulness, they will not be subjected to the “second death” (eternal damnation), will become priests of God, and will co-reign with Christ during this 1000-year period (I Corinthians 6:2).

After the 1000 years have concluded, Satan will receive his “get-out-of-jail-free-card” and get another “bite of the apple” (get it?). Like Armageddon, he, and his minions, will incite a global conflict in a last-ditch effort to defeat Jesus and his church. He won't succeed, however (some people never learn)!

People then head off to their eternal states. Those who loved, followed, and stayed faithful to Christ, onward and upward. Those who didn't, backward and downward.

Quick Qualifier

I need to quickly clarify that apocalyptic literature, like that of the Book of Revelation, is often written in code using symbols to protect its readers, i.e., the Church, especially from Roman and Jewish infiltrators and persecutors. Therefore, it is not written to be read literally, especially the numbers therein. Numbers, and large ones at that, are best understood as representing eras or epochs. John applied the number 1000 to the reign of Christ because it was the highest number in the Roman numerical system (represented by the letter M). If he was around today, he might say, a "billion" or even a "trillion" years in an effort to communicate the length of Christ's reign.

Millennium Characteristics

Before evil is put down forever, what will the long reign of Christ be like? The prophet Isaiah described it this way (2:3-4, 11:6-9):

3 Many peoples will say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD; to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

4 He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

11:6 The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. 7 The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. 8 The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. 9 They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

With Christ's in-person leadership and zero satanic influence, humanity will experience what it has always craved but never trusted God for, utopia on earth. There will be unmitigated and unparalleled peace and prosperity. The end of the predator system! Nations spending billions, not on destructive armaments and arsenals, but world enhancing constructive policies. Harmony between heaven and earth and all peoples, places, and races. The Kingdom of God and "all of his righteousness" on full display! People will flock to churches for worship and teaching. And, perhaps best of all, no more red ants, or gators (lol)! This will be a time God always intended for us when he placed us in an unsullied and pristine world before our "Fall from Grace." Can anyone again say, Maranatha?

Conclusion

Before we head into Holy Communion, let me say that some believe there isn't a millennium at all. "No millennium for you" because it's already transpiring through the work of the Church. And once this world reaches a certain level of goodness, Jesus comes back (amillennial). Others believe what we have been saying today: Christ does return, before the millennium, to set it up because it won't happen without him (premillennial). Lastly, there is a group that believes the millennium occurs only after the Gospel is spread everywhere. This effort creates a great harvest of souls and then Christ returns (postmillennial).

If you need to know, I am a happy pre-millennialist. However, I am also a functional post-millennialist! Why? Ever hear the saying, “Pray as if everything depends on God?” “Work as if everything depends on you?” Or regarding the Rapture, “Pray it’s pre, prepare it’s post?” When it comes to this planet, God wants to work in synergy with us. So, let’s passionately work his mission until He returns!

Now as we prepare to participate in Holy Communion, we want to experience one thing and do another. The thing we need to experience through the Sacrament is empowerment. Empowerment to be functional post-millennialists that are eager to spread his Gospel everywhere. The thing we need to do and are doing when we take Communion, is as Paul says in I Corinthians 11:26, “Proclaiming the Lord’s death until he returns.” Can anyone shout, “Maranatha?”