

The Lamp of Prophecy

or

Signs of the Times

by

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CHAPTER TEN

WILL THERE BE AN AGE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ERE THE CLOSE OF TIME?

IT HAS BEEN the generally accepted teaching of Christian leaders throughout all the centuries since apostolic days, that the Scriptures teach there will be an era when righteousness will prevail over all the earth and all nations be subject to the Lordship of CHRIST ere time has run its course. Some have taken literally the indicated number of years mentioned in Revelation 20, and therefore have designated the period in question as the millennium. Others, while questioning the literalness of the thousand years, have, nevertheless, believed and taught that GOD's kingdom would spread throughout the entire world, that wickedness would be abolished and righteousness become triumphant. For convenience sake, we shall use the term "Millennium" in this article for both of these views, meaning thereby the reign of righteousness over the earth.

Recently, a group of theologians, who make great claims as to their orthodoxy, declared that they have discovered that the views in question are utterly unscriptural and that there is no reason to expect any such glorious condition to prevail in this world before time comes to an end and the eternal state begins. In addition to the two classes, which have been known for many years as pre-millennial (if they believe that CHRIST Himself will come before the age of righteousness) and post-millennial (if they believe this age will be brought about by the preaching of the Gospel and CHRIST will come only to wind up earth's affairs), we now have the additional group who call themselves "a-millennialists," the word, of course, implying that there will be no millennium at all.

If it were simply a matter of difference of opinion in regard to the prophetic program, there would be abundant room for toleration here and no one need feel unduly disturbed because of differing eschatological conceptions. But there is far more involved than the mere question of prophetic interpretation. If the a-millennialists are right, much precious sanctifying truth must needs be relinquished or explained away, for if their position is correct, there will be no rapture of the church or judgment seat of CHRIST preceding the resurrection of the wicked dead and the judgment of the Great White Throne. Hence, no one can speak with assurance as to his final

salvation, because that matter awaits settlement at the judgment day, and the saints will not reign with CHRIST over this world, because His kingdom will not be established until eternity begins. The whole dispensational outline of Bible truth is destroyed if CHRIST is not to reign over the earth and be acclaimed by all peoples as "**King of kings and Lord of lords.**"

It behooves us then to turn once more to the Word of GOD and examine carefully the Scriptures which millennialists have taken as proof of a "good time coming,"

when JESUS shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

Isaac Watt's magnificent hymn is based upon and is almost a paraphrase of the Seventy-second Psalm, a portion of inspired Scripture which certainly depicts the Kingdom of GOD everywhere triumphant. While originally written for Solomon and possibly sung at the time of his coronation, we realize as we read it that a greater than Solomon was in view. The following verses were never fulfilled in the days of David's own son, but unless the truth of inspiration is to be denied, they must of necessity have their fulfillment in and through "great David's greater Son, our Lord JESUS CHRIST"

"He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him . . . His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed" (Psalm 72:4-11, 17).

No wonder, in view of such a glorious reign, the Psalm concludes with the words, "**The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.**" So far as earth's blessing is concerned, there will be nothing left to pray for when this Psalm has its complete fulfillment.

Now, it has never been true in the past that all kings have made obeisance to Him and all nations have served Him, or that all nations have called Him blessed. But as truly as GOD is GOD and as this Psalm is part of His inspired Word, such a time of blessing must yet come for this poor world.

It has been said that the whole doctrine of the Millennium rests upon a misapprehension inasmuch as the very word "Millennium" is unknown to the English Bible. Because of this, we are told, the doctrine of the Millennium is an unscriptural fallacy. But such reasoning would rob us of many other precious truths which even our a-millennial friends hold to be self-evident and important.

The word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, but the doctrine of one GOD existing eternally in three persons, revealed to us by our Lord JESUS CHRIST as the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, is clearly taught in the Bible.

The word "substitution" is not found in Scripture, but Isaiah 53:5 clearly teaches it, and when Paul exclaims, "**The Son of God loved me and gave himself for me,**" he is proclaiming the truth of a substitutionary atonement. And though the word "Millennium" is not found in the Bible, yet it is a fact not easy to explain away that the expression "**a thousand years,**" which is the English equivalent of the Latin form Millennium, is found six times in Revelation 20.

There we learn that a time will come when Satan, the great enemy of GOD and man, will be bound for a thousand years and unable to go out and deceive the nations until the thousand years are finished. The first resurrection we are told, will take place at the beginning of that thousand years and the resurrected saints will live and reign with CHRIST a thousand years. The rest of the dead will not be raised until the thousand years are finished, and after the thousand years we have the judgment of the Great White Throne.

Certainly, nothing answering to this thousand year period, whether we take the time literally or not, has ever been known on this earth.

It is folly to say that Satan was bound at the beginning of the Christian era, as some do, and that now we are living in the time of his loosing. He has had fearful and awful power throughout all the centuries since CHRIST' died on the Cross. But if Revelation 20 is to have a fulfillment at all, the day must come when Satan will be not only restrained in measure, but will have no power at all to deceive the nations, and during that time the saints of GOD are to reign over this world.

This is in accord with the former prophecies found in the Old Testament.

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the Kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever" (Daniel 2:44).

This is the fifth great dominion that will bear rule over all the earth. It would be absurd to say that Christianity has been the fulfillment of this prophecy.

The same is true concerning the similar predictions in chapter 7: **"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed . . . Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him"** (Daniel 7:13-14,

22,27).

The kingdom spoken of in those verses and designated as everlasting is certainly not a kingdom set up in eternity, but in the very world where the beast powers have exercised their dominion. It is called everlasting because it will never come to an end, that is, it will never be superseded by any other dominion.

The characteristics of this time of blessing come before us in many other passages. For convenience sake, we may notice them under seven distinct heads:

1. The regeneration of Israel, who will become a blessing to all the earth.

This is clearly predicted in Isaiah 60:1-22: "**And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising . . . For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. . . . Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time.**"

Chapter 61 takes up the same wondrous story, as do many other parts of this great prophecy.

Jeremiah 31 declares the inviolability of GOD's covenant with Israel and shows that when their day of blessing comes, the entire world will be blessed through them.

Zechariah 14:16-21 depicts a time when Jerusalem will be a great spiritual center and the representatives of all nations will go up there to worship the King, the Lord of hosts. To these many other Scriptures might be added.

2. A warless world.

Our Lord JESUS CHRIST, in answer to the disciples' question, "**What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?**" tells us that wars and rumors of wars should characterize the entire present period (Matthew 24:6).

"Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong" (Joel 3:10).

Here we have the nations called upon to beat their agricultural implements into weapons of war, but note the wondrous contrast in the twin passages of Isaiah 2:2-5 and Micah 4:1-5. Notice particularly:

"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: 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 pruning hooks: nation shall not lift

up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Micah 4:3).

Who would presume to say that anything like this has ever yet come to pass? Yet it is clearly predicted for this world before time will come to an end.

3. Poverty abolished.

The same Scriptures to which we have just called attention also tell us of a time when all men will enjoy temporal comfort, when **"they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid"** (Micah 4:4).

Zechariah gives the same testimony, and Isaiah 65:21-23 confirms it: **"And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them."**

4. Changed conditions of the lower creation.

When this time of blessing comes, even the lower creation will share in it.

"The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock; and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 65:25).

The eleventh chapter of the same prophecy is entirely Millennial and there, too, we learn of the change that will take place in the very nature of the beasts of the field and of the forest.

"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. 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).

5. Sickness will practically disappear from the earth.

"And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" (Isaiah 33:24).

In Zechariah 14, a passage we have already noticed, we find that even in that wonderful age there will be the possibility of sickness, but only for any who wilfully disobey the Word of the Lord.

6. Death will no longer be prevalent, but inflicted only judicially.

Let me notice carefully Isaiah 65:18-20. It is very evident from this Scripture that in the coming day of the Lord's power those who enter into Millennial blessings on the earth will, under ordinary circumstances, be granted the gift of long life, such as the patriarchs enjoyed before the flood. In fact, it would seem as though they will live right on through the entire period, unless there be some wilful sin that will be dealt with immediately in judgment, and under such circumstances we read that a sinner dying at the age of one hundred years will be accursed and his death will be as the death of a child. This shows us that the Kingdom age will not be like the eternal state in which sin can never again lift up its head and death will be absolutely unknown. It will still be possible for man to sin against divine light even though there be no adversary to tempt him, but such behavior will not be tolerated when righteousness reigns, without immediate judicial dealing.

7. Righteousness will be everywhere triumphant.

During the present time we are called upon to suffer for righteousness' sake. In the day of which we speak **"a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment"** (Isaiah 32:1). This will be the time when GOD's **"judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness"** (Isaiah 26:9).

"Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Isaiah 32:16-18).

For we read, **"In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land"** (Jeremiah 33:15).

"For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14).

These are but a very few of the passages that declare the same general truth, that ere GOD closes up the history of this world He will give to man a demonstration of life on earth at its very best - no tempting devil, no poverty and distress, no wasting sickness and disease, no wickedness and corruption prevailing, death itself practically banished, and the divine authority everywhere established. This it is that GOD is going to bring to pass in His own time, in accordance with the prophetic Word.

In the face of the Scriptures we have noticed, to which scores of others might be added, how can any Bible believer declare that the Millennium is but an idle dream, hopeless of fulfillment?

As to whether this glorious state will be brought about through the preaching of the Gospel and thus the world prepared for CHRIST's post-millennial coming or whether it can be ushered in only by the personal pre-millennial return of the Lord, is not the question I am attempting to take up in this chapter.

Most of my readers, I am sure, hold with me that the latter view is correct. All I have been trying to do now is to demonstrate that Scripture does indeed teach that there will be an age of righteousness on this earth before time ends and eternity begins.

~ end of chapter 10 ~

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