

Bible Study for *The Millennium—What Does the Bible Teach?*

Chapter 1: The Millennium—Is It Christian?

1. The word *millennium* comes from two Latin words that mean “one thousand” and “year.” The quotation at the beginning of the chapter describes what millennialists expect the last thousand years of the world to be like. What are some of the characteristics of the millennial kingdom? What are people actually hoping for when they hope for a millennial kingdom here on earth?
2. As Pastor Wicke points out, the hope for a millennial kingdom was common among the Jews of Jesus’ day. How does that explain what the gospels relate, that many Jews became disappointed in Jesus?
3. Many millennialists have approached the Bible believing it contains the key for figuring out when Christ will return to earth to establish his millennial kingdom. Here are just a few of the more famous date settings of the last couple centuries for Christ’s return.

1836—date set by Johann Bengel, a German Lutheran millennialist

March 21, 1843—date set by William Miller, who influenced Ellen White, founder of the Seventh-day Adventist religion

1874—date set by Charles Russel, founding father of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, claimed Christ returned in secret that year and that in 1914, Christ would usher in the millennial utopia. Instead of a utopia, what world event happened in 1914?

According to Deuteronomy 18:22, what is one way we can know whether such “prophecies” of a millennium are true and from God or not?

4. Another way we can know whether date setting for Christ’s return is true is to see what Scripture in general says about trying to determine such specific dates. Jesus’ disciples asked him, “What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3). Jesus’ response to his disciples’ question is recorded in Matthew chapters 24 and 25. Read Matthew 24:36-51.

What does Jesus specifically say about trying to figure out the date for his return (verses 36,42,44)?

So if a Bible teacher or prophet claims that he or she has figured out the date or the year for Christ's return, what do we know about that person?

Read Matthew 7:15,16 and Romans 16:17. What should we do when we recognize that someone is a false prophet?

5. According to 2 Peter 3:9, why has the Lord delayed his return as long as he has?
6. Why can we see God's wisdom in not revealing to us the date for the end of the world? See Matthew 24:42, 1 Corinthians 15:13, Colossians 4:2, and 1 Peter 4:7.
7. Read John 3:16 and Mark 16:16. How can we always be ready for Christ's return (or our death), even though we don't know when it will be?

Chapter 2: Is Christ's Kingdom Millennial?

When millennialists read the Bible, they read it with certain presuppositions (assumptions). They assume that when the Bible says that Jesus is a king, he must be an earthly kind of king who rules in a visible, observable way and that his kingdom must be an actual political state. In this lesson we want to look at what the Bible says about the nature of Jesus' kingdom and the kind of King he is.

1. Read John 6:1-15,25-27.

When people saw Jesus' miracles, what did they conclude about him?

How did the people's expectations about the kind of king the Messiah would be color their opinions about Jesus?

How do the desires of the people in John 6 compare to what modern-day millennialists hope for from Jesus in a millennial kingdom?

What does Jesus say he came to give people?

Read verse 66. What did many people do when they realized Jesus was not going to be an earthly, political king who would usher in a "heaven here on earth" for the Jews?

2. Read John 18:33-37.

What kind of King does Jesus say he is?

How does he make it clear to Pilate that he is not an earthly kind of king?

How does Jesus say he exercises his rule?

Who are Jesus' loyal subjects?

3. Read Mark 1:14,15. How does Jesus establish his kingdom?

4. Read Luke 17:20,21. Where does Jesus reign with his Word of Truth?

5. Before Pentecost, Jesus' disciples also didn't understand the nature of his kingdom. Read Matthew 16:21-23. How did Peter respond when he heard Jesus talk about his death?

What does this show about Peter's assumptions at the time about the kind of king he thought Jesus should be?

6. Millennialists base their hopes for an earthly kingdom of worldwide peace on prophecies in the Old Testament.

Read Isaiah 11:1-9. In verses 6-9, how does Isaiah describe the remarkable peace the Messiah will bring?

Read Isaiah 9:2-7. What kind of peace does Isaiah say the promised Messiah will bring? How long will his peace last?

7. Read John 14:27. What kind of peace does Jesus promise to give his disciples? See also Philippians 4:7.
8. Read Romans 14:17. How does the apostle Paul describe the nature of Christ's kingdom? How does this compare with the earthly hopes of the millennialists?
9. For discussion: If Christ's kingdom is not earthly and political, is it proper for Christians to get involved in politics and civil affairs? Why or why not?
10. Agree or disagree: Because Christ's kingdom is not worldly, Christians shouldn't work to make this world a better place to live (help the poor, find cures for diseases, seek to improve people's material lives in general, etc.) because that only reflects false hopes for this world.
11. Based on what you have learned from God's Word about the nature of Christ' kingship, how would you respond to the millennialist who claims that if Jesus doesn't establish a millennial kingdom in which he puts down all evil; defeats all opponents of Christianity; wipes out war, disease, famine, natural disasters, etc., then he really isn't an almighty King and isn't actually ruling?

Chapter 3: The Millennium—Was It Prophesied?

1. What do millennialists believe is God’s special plan for the Jews as we approach the end of the world?
2. Read Romans 9:1-9. In light of what Paul says, evaluate the claim that all Jews today are God’s chosen people, even if they reject Christ as their Savior.
3. Read Romans 11:25,26. According to Paul, who is included in the term “all Israel”? Who is excluded?

Why is it so important to note in verse 26 that Paul says, “and *so* all Israel will be saved” and not “and *then* all Israel will be saved”?

4. Many Old Testament prophecies speak about Israel inheriting the land of Canaan and of a “restoration” of Israel. Millennialists claim that these prophecies could be fulfilled only by the formation of the modern Jewish state and that this literally happened in 1948.

According to Jeremiah 18:7-10, what kind of promises did God make to the Israelites regarding the future of their nation? On what were God’s promises conditioned?

Did Israel meet the conditions the Lord set?

5. We will now look at several Old Testament prophecies regarding Israel inheriting the land of Canaan and of a future restoration. We will compare each of these prophecies with how Scripture itself says these prophecies were fulfilled. (Note that in each case, millennialists hold that these prophecies refer to the formation of the modern state of Israel in 1948.)

Amos 9:11,12; Acts 15:12-18. According to the apostles, when and how was Amos’ prophecy fulfilled?

Isaiah 2:2,3; Hebrews 12:22,23. How is Isaiah’s prophecy fulfilled?

Jeremiah 31:31-34; John 6:44,45 and Hebrews 8:10-12. How is Jeremiah’s prophecy fulfilled?

Genesis 15:17-21; Joshua 21:43,45 and 1 Kings 4:20,21. When was God's promise to Abraham fulfilled?

2 Samuel 7:11b-16; Matthew 19:28, Luke 1:31-33, and Ephesians 1:20-23. When and how was God's promise to David fulfilled?

In light of how the Bible itself says such Old Testament prophecies have been fulfilled already in the Old Testament or by Christ and the establishment of his New Testament church, what can we say about the claims of the millennialists regarding modern-day Jews and the modern state of Israel?

6. For discussion: How would you respond to someone who says, "The United States should always be on the side of Israel because the Jews are God's chosen people and the modern state of Israel fulfills biblical prophecy. If our country went against Israel, we would be going against God."

Chapter 4: Will the True Millennium Please Stand Up?

1. In this lesson we will study Revelation 20. Before turning to chapter 20, turn to Revelation 1. Read verses 9-20.

What did John see?

What in these verses tips us off that Revelation contains visions that employ much figurative and symbolic language (see especially verses 12 and 20)?

2. The book of Revelation consists of a series of seven visions that the Lord Jesus gave to the apostle John. Each vision describes from a little different angle the travails and triumphs of the Christian church from the time of Christ's first coming to his second coming at the end of the world, culminating with the eternal victory celebration of God's people in heaven. Chapter 20 contains four parts, each introduced by the words "and I saw" (or "I saw").

A. Read Revelation 20:1-3.

Who came from heaven? Describe his power.

Who alone has power over Satan and hell (the Abyss)? See Revelation 1:18, 1 John 3:8, and John 16:11.

What can we therefore conclude regarding the identity of the "angel" in this vision?

Read Luke 10:18 and John 12:31,32; 16:7-11.

When and how did Jesus bind Satan?

What in these verses from Luke and John lead us to conclude that the "thousand years" is not meant to be understood literally but as a symbolic number for the whole New Testament period, from Christ's first coming to his second coming at the end of the world?

Point out other figurative and symbolic language in these verses.

In what way is Satan restricted from deceiving the nations during the New Testament age?

B. Read Revelation 20:4-6. This section provides some more details of the “thousand years,” that is, the New Testament age.

What does John say he saw?

Where are the souls of Christians who have died? (See Luke 23:42,43 and Philippians 1:23.)

What does Revelation 20:4-6 promise for all Christians, even those who were martyred for their faith?

C. Read Revelation 20:7-10. This section speaks of the “short time” (verse 3) at the end of the “thousand years,” the New Testament age, when Satan tries to mount a final assault on the gospel and the Christian church.

How does Paul describe this period in 2 Timothy 3:1-5?

What evidence do you see today that fits this description?

In Revelation 20:10, how does God’s Word assure us of Satan’s final defeat and Christians’ final victory?

D. Read Revelation 20:11-15.

What event is described in these verses?

Verses 7-10 assure us of the final defeat of Satan. What other enemies’ defeats are described in verse 14?

3. What is the overall message of Revelation 20?

How does this message comfort and encourage Christians throughout the ages as they strive to live Christian lives and proclaim the gospel for the salvation of lost souls?

Chapter 5: What About the Rapture?

1. What is the rapture, as taught by the millennialists?
2. According to millennialists and their teaching of the rapture, Christ will return not just once at the end of the world but twice: invisibly at the time of the rapture, 1,007 years before the Last Day, and then visibly seven years later, after the time of “great tribulation,” to usher in the millennium. According to millennialists, Jesus will not first return visibly on the Last Day but one thousand years before the end of the world.

Millennialists also hold that there will be not one resurrection on the Last Day but two resurrections, the believers will be raised in the rapture—1,007 years before the Last Day—and unbelievers will be raised on the Last Day.

By contrast, Scripture teaches that Christ will return once, visibly, on the Last Day. He will then raise all the dead, believers and unbelievers, and carry out the final judgment. In this lesson we will look at where Scripture clearly teaches this historic faith, as we confess it every Sunday in either the Apostles’ Creed or the Nicene Creed.

3. Read John 6:39,40.

When does Jesus say he will raise from the dead all who believe in him?

4. Read John 5:28,29.

In verse 29 what does Jesus say will happen immediately to everyone at his or her resurrection?

5. Read Daniel 12:2,3.

How many resurrections and judgments does Daniel speak of?

6. Read Acts 24:15.

How many resurrections does Paul speak of?

7. Read Matthew 25:31-46.

How many judgment days does Jesus say there will be?

Who all will be judged on that day?

8. Read Acts 17:31.

How many judgment days does Paul say there will be?

Who will be judged on that day?

9. Read Acts 10:42; Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:9,10; and 2 Timothy 4:1.

In all of these passages, how many judgments are spoken of and who will be judged?

10. Read John 12:48.

On what day does Jesus say he will carry out his final judgment?

11. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Some of the Thessalonian Christians feared that they would be forever separated from their Christian brothers and sisters who had died. When does Paul say all believers—those still living at Christ's return and those who have died—will be reunited?

In contrast to a secret, invisible return of Christ at the rapture, how does Paul say Jesus will return?

What is the sequence of events that Paul says will take place on the Last Day?

How are these truths a comfort to Christians?

Lesson 6: What About the “Great Tribulation”?

1. What do millennialists teach about the “Great Tribulation”?

How long do they say the “Great Tribulation” will last?

Who do they say will completely avoid the “Great Tribulation”?

2. The phrase “the great tribulation” comes from Revelation 7:14. Who is described as having experienced it?

How is their faith protected?

3. Turn to Matthew 24, where Jesus answers his disciples’ two-fold question, “Tell us . . . when will this happen [the destruction of Jerusalem], and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (verse 3).

Read verses 4-14.

What are the various signs Jesus tells us to watch for to remind us of his coming and the end of the world?

When were all these signs fulfilled in history?

How are these signs still being fulfilled?

In spite of all the tribulation believers must face in this world, what does Jesus nevertheless promise in verse 14?

4. Read Matthew 24:15-25.

What event does Jesus especially speak of here?

5. Read Matthew 24:30,31.

What event does Jesus now describe?

So all of the events preceding the Last Day, the entire time between Jesus' first coming and his second coming, is the time of "great distress" (verse 21), or great tribulation. Note that believers are not spared, as verse 22 points out.

6. Read John 15:18-20 and Acts 14:22.

In light of these verses and the other Scripture passages we have looked at, what are the prospects for a future "golden age" for the church?

7. Read Philippians 3:20,21 and Colossians 3:1-4.

Instead of hoping for or expecting a golden age for the church here on earth, in what does Jesus want us to put our hope?

8. Read Colossians 3:5-17.

With the knowledge and hope we have of Christ's return and our final redemption, what do we want to spend our time doing as we look forward to that great Last Day?