

The Coming Earthly Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, Part 2

Revelation 20:1–5

As you know, we're studying the book of Revelation, and we have been doing so for quite a long time. We find ourselves in chapter 20, a coming earthly Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Revelation chapter 20, and you'll want to be looking there in your Bible, following along as we embark upon the beginning verses of this tremendous, tremendous chapter.

Let me just say that the promise of the earthly Kingdom of the Messiah fills the Old Testament. It would be impossible for us to cover even a portion of the Scriptures in the Old Testament that direct our attention to this event, to this period of time, 2 Samuel, Psalm 2, a number of places in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Zechariah.

And when you come into the New Testament, particularly the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew focuses on the time when the sign of the Son of man appears in heaven, the Son of man comes with the angels, they gather the elect from the four corners of the earth, and that is the beginning of the great and glorious Kingdom.

So, both Old and New Testament are just replete with promises with regard to the Kingdom. And just to put that in perspective, let me say something at the very outset which will help you understand the nature of God's promise to Israel and to all those who are in Christ and those who belong to God.

God always promised a Kingdom. He always promised a Kingdom that was eternal, but He promised also that it would be an earthly Kingdom, and as well, He promised the hope of eternal heaven. Now, how can God fulfill all of that? An eternal Kingdom, which is an earthly Kingdom, and also a heavenly Kingdom? Well, the answer is, the millennial Kingdom is the earthly part of that eternal Kingdom. The thousand-year millennial Kingdom is really phase one of God's eternal Kingdom.

In the Old Testament, the promises to Israel, the promises through the prophets speak of a Kingdom that is earthly, but they also speak of a Kingdom that is heavenly, a Kingdom that is here on this planet and a Kingdom that is in a completely different dimension, a Kingdom that is measured by time and a Kingdom that is beyond time. And so, when you look at the Kingdom prophecies, you will see that they are eternal and they stretch on through ever - through forever and ever, but at the same time, the beginning of that Kingdom fulfillment has an earthly phase, and that is the thousand-year millennium that is the theme of this marvelous chapter.

And it's necessary that God do it that way. He promised an earthly Kingdom, so He will bring it. Into that earthly Kingdom will come people who are physical just like we are, who haven't died. They will survive the time of the tribulation; they will be the redeemed. They will come from the nation Israel and from other nations of the world. They will go into the earthly Kingdom in the glorious renewed and revived earth.

They will have children, and so natural reproduction will be going on, natural processes in life will be going on.

And so there will still be a group of people on the earth who will have the right to believe or not believe. And so, the Kingdom, while it is in fact a Kingdom given to God's people by way of fulfillment of His promise, is also really the final time in which redemption can occur in the lives of human beings, and so there has to be in that Kingdom the final gathering together of the redeemed, and then can come the eternal state.

So, we're looking at Revelation chapter 20, and then in chapter 21, we'll see the eternal Kingdom, which is called the new heaven and the new earth. But here in chapter 20, we're actually looking at a restored earth, restored to its - to nearly its original glory, ruled by the Lord Jesus Christ and the saints of all the ages. And so, we said last time, up until Revelation 20, everything has been premillennial. Everything has been pre-Kingdom.

In this chapter, the Kingdom comes and is described in major features - if not specific details, major features. There's a framework of the Kingdom on which you can hang the myriad of details that come from the rest of Scripture. And I suggested to you last time that a literal interpretation and a simple acknowledgement of the normal chronology of Revelation puts the Kingdom on earth for a thousand years after the return of Christ and before the new heavens and the new earth, which is the eternal state.

You have the return of Christ in chapter 19, which follows the tribulation described in chapter 6 through the first part of chapter 19. And you have the eternal state in chapter 21 and slipped right in in chapter 20 is the Kingdom. So, a normal chronology and a simple literal interpretation yields premillennialism.

We told you last time that some people are postmillennial; that is to say, they believe Jesus comes after the Kingdom, post-Kingdom. They say that the Kingdom is going on now or soon will be going on, and at the end of the Kingdom, Jesus will come. It's not Christ who brings the Kingdom by His return, it's the church that brings the Kingdom and then offers it up to Christ. It is not a literal thousand years, but it is simply the power of Christ being expressed on the earth through the church, and at the end of that, Christ will come.

There are people who hold that today. The most well-known group would be called the reconstructionists, reconstructionist theology or theonomy, if you're familiar with those terms, dominion theology, kingdom theology, there are various forms of postmillennialism. It basically says things are going to get better and better and better and better and then Jesus will come. But that is not to interpret the Bible literally, that demands a figurative, symbolic interpretation, spiritualizing it, and also completely rejects the chronology of the book of Revelation.

And then there are others who are amillennial who say there is no Kingdom at all, it isn't going to come and then Christ will come at the end of it.

The only Kingdom that ever will come is what is here right now. It's just the church age and that's it and at the end Jesus will come. In some ways, it's not a lot different than postmillennialism; in other ways, it is. It makes the church Israel, all the promises to Israel of a future Kingdom are fulfilled in the church, we are the spiritual Israel. There's no future for Israel as a nation. The church age is the only Kingdom there is and when it's over Jesus comes.

Again, the amillennial view takes a spiritualized rather than a literal interpretation and also rejects the chronology of Revelation. And so, we go back to where we began with this brief discussion and that is to say a literal interpretation of the Scriptures, Old and New Testament, and a simple understanding of the chronology of Revelation makes us a premillennial because we see the return of Christ, then the Kingdom, then the eternal state.

And then the Kingdom becomes the final stage on earth in which the last drama of human history is played out and everything is cleaned up to establish the new heaven and the new earth and the eternal state.

Now, with that as just a brief review of what we said last week, let's go to chapter 20, and we're going to be looking at the aspects of the Kingdom that unfold in the fifteen verses of this chapter. As I said, they are somewhat skeletal and general, and we'll do our best to hang some specifics on them that'll be meaningful for you. **Let's talk about the first point in chapter 20, the removal of Satan. The first matter of attention for John as he looks at this vision of the Kingdom is to see the removal of Satan.**

Verse 1. “And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years and threw him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were completed. After these things, he must be released for a short time.”

Now a simple understanding of that at face value, literally interpreting what was said, is very, very clear. An angel comes down, has a key, has a chain, takes hold of Satan, binds Satan, throws him into the abyss for a thousand years at the end of which, for a brief time, he is released. So, the first thing we see that occurs in the Kingdom is the removal of Satan. **Now that’s going to dramatically change the world, isn’t it? Because Satan is the prince of the power of the air, he’s the god of this age, he’s the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.**

Up until this point, by the way, God has already taken care of many of the rebels. Fallen men, sinful men have all been slain in the process of judgments through the time of the great tribulation, and those who survive that will perish in the holocaust around Armageddon described there in chapter 19. So, the unregenerate world has been destroyed, and then the antichrist and the false prophet we find at the end of chapter 19 have been seized and thrown into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.

So those ringleaders of this great worldwide rebellion have been taken care of.

Now, that leaves only Satan and the demons still loose. And if the Lord is going to establish His Kingdom, He's going to get rid of the ungodly leaders, He's going to get rid of the ungodly people, and now He's going to get rid of the ungodly powers of the heavens; namely, Satan and all the demons. **If the Kingdom is to be all that God designs, the enemy has to go.** There can be no one thousand years of peace and righteousness if he is at large. So, God removes the one who is the adversary, the enemy, the one creating the conflict.

In fact, his head was bruised at the cross, as promised in **Genesis 3:15**, and now comes his incarceration before a final exile at the end of the thousand years into the lake of fire where Satan and his demons will dwell forever.

So here is the incarceration of Satan and all the demons, which is crucial to the reign of Christ and the reign of the saints through the millennial Kingdom without any obstruction, without any hindrance. And what a world that is going to be.

Let's look, then, at what it says about the removal of Satan in **verse 1**. John says, "**And I saw**" - now I just stop there long enough to say that little phrase, "**and I saw,**" is repeated and it is an indication of some sequence of events. Back in chapter **19 verse 11**, "**And I saw heaven opened,**" and **verse 17**, "**And I saw an angel standing in the sun,**" and **verse 19**, "**And I saw the beast and the kings,**" and now **chapter 20**, "**And I saw an angel coming down from heaven.**"

It's not too hard to understand there's a real sequence here. **Verse 4, "And I saw thrones;"** **verse 11, "And I saw a great white throne;"** **verse 12, "And I saw the dead,"** and John is just marching us sequentially through this tremendous vision of the establishment of the Kingdom, one step at a time. The major steps are indicated by that little phrase, "and I saw," which indicates another facet of this immense vision that John is having of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom.

Now it says, "**I saw an angel.**" We can speculate that this angel is a particular angel, it could be, as noted back in **chapter 12 verse 7**, Michael since Michael there is indicated to be a uniquely gifted and uniquely used angel in some significant role on behalf of God. You find it in **Jude 9**, Michael is called the archangel. Perhaps some would suggest this could be Michael because of the very formidable event that is about to happen.

Michael, who has been the archenemy of Satan, would like to be the angel charged with this responsibility, but that is purely speculation since it doesn't say. But it would have to be a mighty angel, certainly endowed with supernatural strength, because he comes down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. **Now, he comes down from heaven with a very specific agenda.** He is going to do very, very specific things. One, lay hold of Satan. Two, bind him for a thousand years. Three, cast him to the abyss. Four, lock him with a key. Five, set a seal. Six, loose him at the end of the thousand years.

So, his agenda is prescribed by heaven itself, by God.

He comes down, he has what is called the key of the abyss, abussos. Abussos, the abyss. **And you might be saying, “Well, what is the abyss?” Well, Peter calls it in 2 Peter 2:4 the pits of darkness reserved for judgment. It is the place where demons are sent to be reserved for their final sentencing to the lake of fire. It is not the final hell.**

And believe me, fallen angels will go there because the final hell, the lake of fire, has been prepared for the devil and his angels. And so ultimately, they’re going to end up in the lake of fire which burns with fire and brimstone forever and ever.

That eternal fire, **Matthew 25:41** says, prepared for the devil and his angels. And down in **verse 10 of chapter 20**, the devil, who deceived them, was then thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are also, and they’ll be tormented day and night forever and ever. But the devil doesn’t get thrown into that place until the thousand years is over. Here, he is put into the abussos, which is some other kind of place of incarceration, not the specific final lake of fire, because once you go to the lake of fire, you can never come back because it burns with fire and brimstone forever and ever, and no one is ever released.

The abyss is mentioned also in **Luke 8:31**, you remember, when Jesus was casting demons out. The demons said, **“Don’t send us to the abyss.”**

Now, just to give you a little bit of a review of things that we’ve said in years past, keep this in mind. I’ll give you a little diagram, kind of follow it in your mind, if you will.

On one line, if you were diagraming, it you could write angels, and then you could split off a line and divide those angels into two. There would be holy angels and fallen angels. Take the line that says fallen angels and split it into two, loose and bound. The loose ones are demons. The bound ones are those incarcerated. Take the bound ones and split them into two, permanently bound and temporarily bound.

There are permanently bound angels, permanently bound fallen angels and demons. When were they permanently bound? Well, I believe they were the ones who sinned in **Genesis chapter 6** and are reserved in everlasting chains. So, they went into the abyss and they will be there permanently until they're transferred to the lake of fire. There are other fallen angels who have been sent into the abyss, but they're only there temporarily. **And we find in the book of Revelation on at least two occasions that they are released.**

In **chapter 9**, hell belches out three unclean frogs that represent unclean spirits, and then you have two hundred million of them who have been bound at the Euphrates, and they are released during the time of the tribulation. **So, there are some demons that are loose, there are some that are bound. Of those that are bound, some are permanently bound, some are temporarily bound. The temporarily bound ones are loosed for purposes of judgment during the time of the tribulation. They will then be reincarcerated in the abyss until finally they are all cast into the lake of fire prepared for all of them.**

Now here, this angel has a key, which simply identifies authority. If you have the key, you control the door. The angel has the key, and it signifies authority. He can open it and he can close it. In fact, back in *chapter 9, verse 1*, it says, ***"The fifth angel sounded and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. And he opened the bottomless pit."*** **There's the same kind of thing. That bottomless pit, that abussos, that place of torture and torment, not the final hell but the place of incarceration of demons.**

May well be the place where Jesus, when He was crucified - and you remember He went and made a public display before the demons while His physical body was in the grave. He was alive in His spirit, Peter says, and He descended and He proclaimed a triumph, *kērussō*, over the principalities and powers. He went there, and while hell was holding a carnival because Jesus was dead, He showed up at the party and brought His words of judgment and condemnation.

Back in chapter 1 and verse 18 we read that Jesus Christ is the one who has the keys of death and Hades. And He dispenses those keys, in this case, to an angel, in chapter 9, to open the bottomless pit, and here again in chapter 20 to open that pit as well and then to lock it again. **Notice the angel also had a great chain in his hand. The idea that it's great signifies the greatness of Satan, in a sense, so that it takes a great chain to bind him.**

It would be the same kind used, as noted in Jude, to bind the demons. It says in **Jude 6**, “**Angels who didn’t keep their own domain but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal chains under darkness for the judgment of that great day.**” So, Satan then goes and he’s bound in the same place that these other demons have been eternally bound in great chains. And again, **2 Peter 2:4** says the same thing.

Just a note. In **Mark chapter 5**, there’s an interesting reference that kind of ties in with this, I think, interestingly. “They came to the other side of the sea into the country of the Gerasenes and when He had come out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him” - that is, met Jesus - “**and he has his dwelling among the tombs, and no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain because he had often been bound with shackles and chains and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces.**

“**And no one was strong enough to subdue him, and constantly night and day among the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out and gashing himself with stones.**” **Here is a demon-empowered man who is so powerful, so strong, so indomitable that the best chains of men can’t bind him. The point being Satan’s demons can break the chains of men, but they cannot break this chain in chapter 20. Satan himself can’t break the chain of God that is used to bind him.**

Then verse 2, this angel comes down, and this has got to be a great moment for this angel, be it Michael or whoever. This has got to be a monumental moment.

“And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.”

That is the duration of the millennial Kingdom. He laid hold of the dragon. **And again, remember that the term “dragon” is used back in chapter 12, verses 3, 4, and 17, to refer to Satan. Why does the term dragon refer to Satan? Because it emphasizes his bestial nature, it emphasizes his fierceness, his ferociousness, his cruelty, his oppressiveness.**

Not only is he called the dragon but he’s called the serpent of old. And what does that remind you of? The serpent of old takes you all the way back to where? To the garden, the garden of Eden, the snake in the garden of Eden who tempted Eve and started all the trouble. The one, according to **2 Corinthians 11:3**, who deceived. And it is that dragon, that fierce bestial, cruel, vicious, deadly, old snake from the garden of Eden. Further, he defines him - **“who is the devil” - again giving you another insight into him. Devil is diabolos, it means slanderer.**

And you remember that the book of Revelation also tells us he is night and day before the throne of God accusing the brethren. He is a malignant liar, this has been his character since he fell. He is the father of all lies. He cannot speak the truth except for lying purposes. The devil, it says in **1 John 3:8**, has sinned from the beginning. He is a lying deceiver.

So, he’s called the dragon, the serpent, the devil, and Satan. Satan means adversary, enemy. He opposed God, he opposed Christ, he opposed the saints, Job, Peter, Paul, believers. Back in **chapter 12 again, verses 4, 9, and 10**, we’ve gone through all of that.

So this is a triumphant moment, beloved, in God's redemptive plan. This is the moment when the victory of Christ is exercised over his archenemy and the roaring lion is overcome by the Lion of the tribe of Judah. And Satan is bound for a thousand years. This is the first of six references to this period with the number, one thousand.

And so, Satan is bound during this time of the Kingdom. That's going to dramatically alter the world - dramatically change it - because there will be no satanic enterprise, there will be no satanic ideologies, no satanic philosophies, no demonic theories of anything. There will be no satanic theories of morality. There will be no satanic theories of justice. There will be no satanic theories of social behavior, social life. There will be no satanic maxims, opinions, ideologies of any kind existent anywhere on the globe. The whole demonic world is incarcerated along with their leader, and Jesus Christ sets the agenda for all of the world.

Now, at this particular point, I might just throw in a footnote. Amillennialists tell us that we're now in the Kingdom, this is the only Kingdom there's going to be, this is it, this is all there is, there ain't no more Kingdom, the Kingdom is the church age, we are the Israel of God, all the promises to Israel are now fulfilled in the church - we are spiritual Israel and so this is all the Kingdom there will ever be. If that is true, then Satan must be what? Bound. I don't think so. I don't think so.

The devil goes about as a roaring lion, currently seeking whom he may devour. Luke 22, the devil comes to Jesus and asks for Peter and Jesus says the devil wants you, to sift you.

Acts chapter 5, Peter says to Ananias and Sapphira, ***“Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?”*** ***Second Corinthians 4:3 and 4***, ***“The god of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, lest the light of the glorious gospel shine unto them.”*** ***Ephesians 2:2***, ***“He is the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now is working in the children of disobedience.”***

You think of the words of the apostle Paul in ***1 Thessalonians*** as he was decrying his difficulty. He says, ***“We wanted to come to you more than once but Satan thwarted us.”*** **No, Satan is not bound now. This can't be the Kingdom. Satan is loose everywhere. But he's going to be bound and he'll be bound during the Kingdom which is to come.** No more will Satan establish a world system. **You say, “Well, that means there won't be any sin?”** **No, you don't need Satan to sin, that comes out of the flesh.**

I don't believe Satan gets in your mind and makes you sin. I simply believe Satan creates an environment that stimulates the flesh. And when you remove the environment, then the flesh is not going to be stimulated in the same way. Righteousness, peace, justice will rule the earth. And it'll be a world in exact opposite to everything we experience today. It will be the time of refreshing, time of restitution.

Now, it says in **verse 3**, after binding Satan for a thousand years, this angel - I like the terminology - ***“threw him into the abyss.”*** You have to do that because I guess the angel doesn't want to go down there. Literally, the word abussos, by the way, means bottomless. He threw him into the bottomless.

This is the description of this place of incarceration, it's called the bottomless pit. As I noted in verse 10, it's later at the end of the thousand years that he's thrown into the lake of fire.

Now, all seven times this abyss or bottomless pit appears in Revelation, it refers to the place where fallen angels and foul, evil spirits are held captive. The place where they await their final incarceration, from which they can never be relieved, called the lake of fire. It says in *Isaiah 24:21 and 22*, very interestingly. ***“So it will happen in that day that the Lord will punish the host of heaven.”*** **Who are the host of heaven? Angels. These are wicked angels. The Lord will punish in that day the wicked angels.** ***“And they will be gathered together like prisoners in the dungeon and will be confined in prison. And after many days, then they will be punished.”***

So first they are - I think Isaiah is seeing the same thing. They're confined for a period of a thousand years and Isaiah says, ***“After that, then comes the eternal punishment.”*** That comes later, after the great white throne judgment at the end of the millennium. All the unsaved of all the ages will be resurrected, brought to the great white throne, and they, along with all the fallen angels and Satan and the false prophet and the beast, will all be thrown into the lake of fire.

Verse 3 also says that after the angel throws him into the abyss, it says John saw in his vision, **“And shut it and sealed it over him.”** **He is chained with a great chain. He is locked into the abyss with a key. It is shut and sealed so that the world cannot at all be influenced by Satan. The whole world will be influenced only by those purposes of Christ.**

You say, “Well, won’t everybody then who is born of those redeemed people who go into the Kingdom become Christians?” No. Amazingly, there will be fallen creatures who will reject Christ even though they’re living in that marvelous Kingdom itself - shows you the depth of sin.

But the point made here is this: **All of this is done to Satan, middle of verse 3, “so that he should not deceive the nations any longer.” His deceptions are over. So if people reject Christ, it will not be because they are what? Deceived. It will be because they love their iniquity. And he’s kept there, it says in verse 3, “until the thousand years were completed.” Now, what would the world be like? What’s it going to be like?**

Well, from a moral standpoint, it’s going to be totally different. There will be no injustice. There will be peace everywhere, righteousness prevailing, and we’ll talk about that in a moment, but before we look at that, what will the world be like, just environmentally? All these environmentalists, you know, who worry and worry and worry about preserving the world - and I’ve told you before, if you think we’ve messed up the earth, wait until you see what Jesus does to it. Because in the tribulation, He’s going to destroy the thing. But what will the world of the millennial Kingdom be like?

Let me give you some insights from some in the field of science. Just listen to this. “The violent earthquakes and upheavals through the tribulation time will have leveled all the polluted cities of a sinful world, the better to facilitate the erection of new, clean, peaceful communities at the beginning of the millennium.

These great land movements will also have eliminated the great mountain ranges and islands of the world, filling up the ocean depths and restoring gentle, globally habitable topography and geography all over the world, as it had been in the antediluvian age before the cataclysmic upheavals of the flood.

“As Isaiah the prophet has foretold, every valley shall be exalted, every mountain and hill shall be made low. The crooked shall be made straight, the rough places plain. The prophets also say the islands will flee away. This reversal of the topographic upheavals of the flood, however, will not send waters over the continents again - in other words, they won't flood the globe - since much of the waters of the ocean will already have been re-elevated above the atmosphere, restoring in some measure the antediluvian waters above the firmament, the canopy of water.

“The worldwide draught of the first half of the tribulation, the cataclysmic splashdowns of bodies from the heavens during the trumpet judgments, and the intensified solar radiations of the bowl judgments will all have contributed to the translation of vast quantities of water vapor far back into the skies. The earth, then, would be sheltered, as it was before the flood. Sheltered from the ultraviolet rays of the sun and that's why people will live to be very old, like they did before the flood.

“Quite probably the immense tectonic movements and the earthquakes and eruptions and landslides may also have trapped vast quantities of water beneath fresh sedimentary and volcanic deposits, reinstating in partial degree the primeval pressurized reservoirs of the great deep, as the Bible calls it, facilitating the

birth of copious artesian springs, including one which will feed the vast river emerging from the millennial temple in Jerusalem, described by both Ezekiel and Zechariah. And the seas of the millennial world will be relatively narrow and shallow once again, as in primeval days.

“Furthermore, the restoration of the vapor canopy should in large measure restore the globally pleasant warm climate of that part of the - that period of the earth again. No longer will great atmospheric movements generate violent rainstorms, blizzards, hurricanes, and tornadoes because the uniform temperatures of the global greenhouse will inhibit air mass movements of more than local extent.

“In the original world, the only rains were gentle mists from localized daily evaporation and precipitation, according to **Genesis 2:5**, keeping the world everywhere at comfortable temperatures and humidities and supporting an abundance of plant and animal life in all regions of the globe. There were no deserts or icecaps or uninhabitable mountain heights, it was all very good. The cataclysm of the great flood destroyed that beautiful world, but the global upheavals of the great tribulation will restore it, at least in measure.

“Joel wrote, ‘Fear not, O land, be glad and rejoice, for the Lord will do great things. Be not afraid, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree bears her fruit, the fig tree and the vine yield their strength. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, rejoice in the Lord your God, for He hath given you the former rain moderately and

He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.’”

Scientific expectation goes on. “The redistribution of earth’s topography and restoration of its vapor canopy will result in the elimination of many, if not all, of its wastelands and deserts. And the prophet said in Isaiah, ‘The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them and the desert will rejoice and blossom as the rose, for in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert, and the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water.

“Somehow there will also come a great healing of the lands and the waters of the earth, healing from the terrible judgment of the tribulation. Before the great flood, the soils were rich in all the needed nutrients and the drinking waters all came pure and fresh from artesian springs, fed from deep underground reservoirs. The destruction of these deep fountains and the devastating land erosion of the great flood largely destroyed God’s primeval terrestrial ecology, leaving the lands depleted and the waters polluted.

“Originally, all animals as well as man were to derive nourishment only from plant foods, but under the far more rigorous conditions of the postdiluvian environment, God authorized man to eat animal flesh as well. Evidently, for the same reason, many animals also had to become carnivorous. These conditions were further aggravated during the long centuries after the flood with the lands becoming further impoverished and the waters further contaminated, requiring increasingly great expenditures on fertilization and purification.

“The traumatic upheavals of the tribulation period will have brought these conditions to a climax with devastating famine conditions and with terrestrial waters so depleted and poisoned that all the animals of the sea had perished. Had such conditions been allowed to persist much longer, all life on earth would become impossible. In some marvelous way, God will use the physical convulsions of that awful period to purge and cleanse the land and the waters of the earth, as well as its moral and spiritual climate.

Possibly, the tectonic and volcanic upheavals and perhaps even the atmospheric bombardments will implant new supplies of needed nutrients and trace elements in the soils. Even the multitudes of dead animals and plants in the lands and the oceans, as well as the skeletons of the millions of dead men and horses at Armageddon and elsewhere, may well become fertilizing agents for the land as they remain scattered far and wide. Unprecedented global earthquakes and eruptions will trigger vast and violent landslides and showers of dirt and rocks, entrapping tremendous volumes of ocean waters beneath great overburdens of solid materials, which will rapidly become pressurized, lithified, and partially sealed.

“This will likely produce at least two effects. In the first place, the sea bottoms will be raised to higher elevation than at present, compensating for the great losses of water caused by the restoration of the atmospheric canopy and by the entrapment of vast volumes beneath the huge landslides, which produced the great reservoirs of fresh water.

The entire crust itself will to some extent have shifted and slipped over the earth's mantle, rearranging the various continental plates to a more nearly uniform distribution of land and sea surface areas.

“Second, this extensive rearrangement will facilitate the development of a new terrestrial system of springs and spring-fed rivers. ***Isaiah 41*** says, ***‘I will open rivers into high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I’ll make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water.’***”

Somehow God is even going to repopulate the oceans. We know that the second bowl judgment resulted in the death of every living soul in the sea so that those fishes who required a marine environment were destroyed, eliminated. But we know that in the great millennial river in Jerusalem described in ***Ezekiel 47***, ***“It shall come to pass everything that lives, which moves, whithersoever the rivers shall come shall live, and there shall be a very great multitude of fish.”*** Somehow the Lord is going to bring the fish back to the sea. He’s going to adjust them so they can live in whatever the climate of that new water is. And so, it goes.

Well, you say, “Is that all absolutely true or is that a little speculation?” It’s a little speculation. But it may not be too far off. This is the - this is the new creation, this is the glorious liberation of the children of God. This is when the creation is freed from its bondage. That’s the kind of world it’s going to be in terms of ecology or something similar to that, something like that. And when Satan isn’t here, beyond

that, it's going to be a world of blessedness, a world of absolutely blessed, blessed conditions.

The end of **verse 3, "After these things,"** - that is, after the thousand years of being chained - **"he must be released for a short time."** He must be released for a short time. Why? Why release him? Well, there's one final - final escapade. Satan is going to have the opportunity to collect all of those who would rather be in his Kingdom than God's because there will be people born during that time.

Remember now, when Jesus returns, He's not going to kill those that are believers. Many will be martyred, but many will still be alive. They're the sheep of Matthew 24 who go into the Kingdom, the nation Israel that's promised a literal earthly Kingdom. And there will be people in that Kingdom from every tongue and tribe and nation, and they'll all be a part of that Kingdom. **They'll all be believers initially, and they'll reproduce and they'll have children, and the earth will multiply rapidly. The exponential growth over that period of a thousand years will populate the church - populate the earth in the millions.**

And of all those people born during that thousand years, it says anyone who dies at a hundred years of age dies as a child. They'll live long and, therefore, they'll reproduce vastly greater numbers than anything we've ever known in our era of history. Some of them will put their allegiance in the Lord Jesus Christ, who's reigning over the earth, and some of them, because of the love of iniquity, will reject Christ. And so Satan comes back to collect the rebels.

And you see it down in verses 7 and 8. Satan is released from his prison to come out to deceive the nations and to gather them together for the war, and the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. Isn't that amazing? Not too amazing. They didn't reject - they didn't accept Christ when He was here the first time, though He walked and talked with them. And there will be those who will not accept Him then as well.

So, we see, then, the removal of Satan. In the meantime, he is not in chains. And we are not to be ignorant of his schemes, **2 Corinthians 2:11** says. **So, the first element, then, of the Kingdom is the removal of Satan. Let's look at the second element, the reign of the saints. From the removal of Satan to the reign of the saints, down to verse 4.**

And this is in **verses 4, 5, and 6**. **“And I saw thrones and they sat upon them and judgment was given to them, and I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the Word of God and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received a mark upon their forehead and upon their hand, and 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 completed.**

“This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these, the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.”
In verse 4 and then again in verse 6, it says we're going to reign with Him.

So, the second feature of the Kingdom that is delineated here for us is the reign of the saints. Now remember, obviously, the supreme One reigning is Christ.

Go back to chapter 19 and remind yourself in verse 16 that He has a name written on His thigh, King of kings and Lord of lords. We're not questioning His sovereignty here when we say that the saints will reign. The Scripture says we will reign with Christ.

Somehow, we will be involved in the expression of His will.

We will be His agents, carrying out His wishes, carrying out His will in the world. He will, of course, destroy His enemies, as we note at the end of chapter 19, set up His Kingdom. He will become King of kings and Lord of lords, but we will reign along with Him, carrying out His will. He will be in that day the King, no one can gainsay what He says.

In *Luke 1:32* we read, "***He will be great. He will be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and His Kingdom will have no end.***" **He came as a king, He was rejected as a King, He died as a King scorned. He will return as King of kings and Lord of lords to reign, and we will reign with Him.**

To understand that we would simply have to say all of the world leaders, all of the governors, all of the prime ministers, all of the potentates, all of the judges, all of the chiefs of police, all of those who are responsible for education, all of those who are responsible for the judicial process, all of those who are responsible for legislation, all of those who responsible for everything that is going on across the face of the earth will be the

saints who will have the delegated authority of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself to carry out His will everywhere.

Then there will be truth in education, then there will be justice in the courtroom. Then there will be moral standards upheld in every area of human life. Then there will be honesty in the newspaper. Then there will not be pollution on the bookstands. Books will be filled with truth. And television will be filled with only that which is true, and which carries out the agenda of the Lord Jesus Christ. The saints will be in charge of television, radio, education, social life, the judicial process, the legislative process, every aspect of operation. His saints will reign with Him.

What a world that's going to be. Marvelous. And the saints won't have to try to figure out what to do because they'll all be glorified and perfect, and so they will perfectly carry out the will of Christ. What an incredible thought. We won't be having committee meetings, or any meetings about any - we won't have to figure anything out, we'll know everything because we will already have been made to know as we are known. We'll simply enforce the King's agenda, which will be abundantly and perfectly clear to all of us.

And as John then sees the vision of the reign of the saints, he first looks and sees a panorama of all of God's people resurrected, rewarded, and reigning with Christ. **Verse 4, "And I saw thrones."** That's the first thing he sees. Thrones. Well, there's only two kinds of thrones, really. One is a judicial throne, we call that the bench where the judge seats - sits, and there is a regal throne and we say that's where the king takes his place.

It is either a judicial or a regal place of authority. We will rule; that is to say, we will enforce the will of God and we will adjudicate, we will judge.

And by the way, there's no need for checks and balances because these leaders and judges are all perfect. And righteousness will be executed perfectly and swiftly. And the Lord will rule with a rod of iron, which means instantaneous, swift judgment.

He says, "I saw thrones." It's a time of reigning and ruling.

There's no way in my mind that you can make this equate with the current age. Is there in yours? Are the saints ruling? Reigning? Are we on thrones? Not on your life. Is Satan bound? Impossible. This is a completely different world. And it is perfectly suited to the destruction of the world which now exists. **That's why my ecological concerns are very limited. I want to do my little part to pick up the trash, but I know where this deal is going. And we don't have to save the earth and save the planet. What we would rather be concerned with is saving the people.**

"I saw thrones" - and this is interesting - **"and they sat upon them."** At first, that "they" becomes an interpreter's nightmare. And you say, "Lord, couldn't you at least have told us who they are?" "I saw thrones and they sat on them." You know why it doesn't say any more than that? Because it's patently obvious who they are. You say, "Who are they?" Well, to answer the question simply, this is the way I approached it. "I saw thrones and they sat on them." **All right, then who are they?**

Well, they're the people that the Lord put on the throne. Well, that's good.

Well, the next question is: Who did He promise that He would put on a throne? Because if we can find out who He told He was going to put on a throne, we can find out who these people are. Who did He promise would reign? Who did He promise would rule with Him? Who did He promise would be in His Kingdom, glorified and exalted, standing alongside their great King?

Well, go back to the Old Testament, ***Daniel chapter 7*** and verse ***18***, "***But the saints of the Highest One***" - or the Most High - "***will receive the Kingdom and possess the Kingdom forever, for all ages to come.***" Verse ***22***, "***The Ancient of Days came.***" That's God. "Judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the Kingdom." Verse ***27***, "***Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the Kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One, His dominion - His Kingdom will be an everlasting Kingdom and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.***"

Three times it says the Kingdom will be given to whom? The saints. To the saints. The sovereignty, the dominion, the greatness of all the Kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people, the saints of the Highest One. So first of all, **Old Testament saints - Old Testament saints have to be included in "they."**

Let's go over to Matthew - and we don't have to limit it just to that in Daniel. When Daniel says the saints of the Most High, he means all of them. But certainly, that includes the Old Testament saints who were reading and hearing what Daniel wrote. Matthew chapter 19, verse 28, Peter is talking to the Lord about the Kingdom, he says, ***"We've left everything and followed you. What will there be for us? What's going to be in our future?"*** Peter says, not only for himself but all of those who follow Jesus.

Jesus said to them, ***verse 28 of Matthew 19, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed me in the regeneration"*** - that's another name for the Kingdom, the restitution, the regeneration, when the Lord regenerates the whole earth - ***"when the Son of man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel and everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for my namesake shall receive many times as much and inherit eternal life."***

Hmm. Now, Daniel chapter 7 tells us that the Old Testament saints are going to reign. Matthew chapter 19 looks at that sort of period between the Old Testament and the New, the time when Jesus was on the earth, and He says all the apostles and all who have left to follow me are going to reign.

Now let's go to 1 Corinthians chapter 6 - ***1 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 2 and 3.*** By the way, if the Kingdom is now, how in the world are the saints from the Old Testament reigning? And if the Kingdom is now, how are the apostles and all who follow Jesus during His lifetime reigning?

And where are the twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel? You see, you have to just ignore any literal interpretation to come up with that view.

First Corinthians 6:2, “Do you not know” - like this is common knowledge, you’re not ignorant about this, are you? - **“that the saints will judge the world?”** Whoa - that’s pretty explicit. **Verse 3, “Do you not know we’ll even judge angels? How much more the matters of this life?”** And this is the New Testament saints. **Second Timothy 2:12, “If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.”** Reign with Him. **First Peter 2:9, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession.”** We are a royal priesthood, royal, regal, reigning priesthood.

So, what have we got? Daniel talking about Old Testament saints. Jesus talking about the apostles and all who followed Him. And the apostle Paul saying the saints, the New Testament saints, are going to rule and reign. You come to the book of Revelation and repeatedly we hear about that. Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3 talk much about what is coming. **Revelation 2:26, “To him I’ll give authority over the nations”** - that is to Christ - **“and he shall rule them with a rod of iron as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces as I have also received authority from my Father.”**

Not just for Christ, but he who overcomes in Christ, that’s believers. Revelation chapter 3 repeats the same thing. **Revelation 3, verse 21, “He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with me on my throne.”**

Revelation 5:10, "Thou hast made them" - that is, the redeemed - **"to be a Kingdom and priests and they will reign upon the earth."** **Revelation 5:10**, it couldn't be more clear, they will reign and they will reign upon the earth. They will reign upon the earth.

So Old Testament saints, New Testament saints, those saints in the middle who follow Jesus, they're all going to reign, all of them - all the saints of all the ages. By this time, by the time the Kingdom starts, will all have been resurrected, they will all have their glorified bodies. You have the rapture of the church and they are glorified. At the end of the time of tribulation, **Daniel 12:2**, you have the resurrection of the Old Testament saints to get them into the Kingdom in their glorified form. **All the saints of all the ages will reign.**

You say, "Wait a minute, you left one group out." That's true, one group is left out but not for long. Go back to **verse 4. And after I saw they - Old Testament saints, those who followed Christ, New Testament saints - and judgment was given to them, and then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the Word of God and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand, and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."** **Who are they? Saints from what? From the tribulation.**

And you've got the last group included. He says, **"I saw their souls," first of all, because they initially hadn't been raised.**

He said, **“I saw their souls, those who had been beheaded, those who were martyrs because of the testimony of Jesus and the Word of God, those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, had not received the mark upon their forehead”** - and we went through all of those features in chapter 13 - **“and upon their hand. And they came to life. There was resurrection and they reigned with Christ.**

So, you've got resurrected Old Testament saints, you've got resurrected saints who followed Jesus during His lifetime, you've got resurrected New Testament saints, and now you've got resurrected tribulation saints, and it's all the resurrected saints who reign. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The martyrs who had been beheaded. That word “beheaded,” pelekizō, it actually means to cut off with an axe. Technically, it can be used to behead someone. Generally, it means to put to death. Those who have been killed by the antichrist and his enterprise by Satan during the time of the tribulation.

By the way, when it says **“came to life”** there? Can't mean anything but resurrection. Same word is used in ***John 11:25, “I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”*** It's a resurrection word. That's exactly what the word means, and it doesn't mean anything but that. It is used that way in ***Romans 14:9, Revelation 1:8, Revelation 2:8; 13, 14.*** And it's even used that way in ***Revelation 20, right here in verse 5.***

Now, they'll have the Old Testament saints in glorified bodies, those who followed Christ in glorified bodies, New Testament Christians in glorified bodies, tribulation saints in glorified bodies, that whole mass of resurrected, rewarded believers reigning in the Kingdom, and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years. So during the time of the Kingdom, then, we carry out the rule of Christ in the world. We reign for Him.

Says in **1 Corinthians 15:24**, ***"Then comes the end, and He delivers up the Kingdom to the God and Father when He abolished all rule and all authority and power for He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet."*** Ultimately, Christ will reign supremely, but we will, under Christ, reign with Him until finally the Kingdom is over on earth and He establishes that eternal Kingdom where God is all in all. This is going to be on earth in the very place where Satan the usurper has ruled and from which he has had to be expelled. The reign of the saints.

By the way, as a footnote, **verse 5, "The rest of the dead didn't come to life until the thousand years were completed." Who would be the rest of the dead? Who are the rest of the dead?** If all the saints of the Old Testament are resurrected and all the saints of the period of Christ's time are resurrected and all the New Testament believers are resurrected and all the tribulation saints are resurrected, who's not? **The unbelievers, the ungodly. They're going to have a resurrection, too, but it isn't described until the end of the chapter, and we'll see it when we get down to verse 11 and following.**

But he says then at the end of **verse 5**, “**This is the first resurrection, and blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection.**” So, you know what the first resurrection includes? Really, everybody. Christ is the supreme One but all the saints of all the ages are in the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection.

Why are they so blessed? Well, I’ll tell you next time because I’m going to tell you what the Kingdom is going to be like, not ecologically, not environmentally, but morally and spiritually. But we’ll have to save that. Let’s bow together in prayer.

Father, thank you for this wonderful, wonderful time in your Word, transcendent time, lifting us out of this world to that glorious world to come where Jesus Christ will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Oh, Father, how privileged we are, how blessed, how rich to be able to live in the light of that great Kingdom, to be able to anticipate it, to know that we’ll be there with all the saints of all the ages. We thank you for your marvelous plan and program. We give you praise for your grace that reached to us and made us citizens of the Kingdom.

Our citizenship isn’t here, it’s with you, it’s in heaven. We belong in this Kingdom to come to reign and rule with you, both then and forever. To that we wait, for that we hope, and say with John, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

We long for the glorious manifestation of the children of God. We long for that redemption of our body, which is resurrection. We long for the time when the creation no longer groans, waiting for the adoption. We long for Eden revisited, we long for paradise regained. We long to see Jesus exalted and ruling His world without hindrance.

Oh, Father, until that hour, may He rule without hindrance in our lives and in His church that He might be exalted who is worthy. And we pray in His great name, Amen.