

“Why We Believe in an Optimistic Future, Part 1”  
(1 Corinthians 15:25)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Last week, we were looking at Millennium –
  - a. The thousand year period
  - b. Mentioned in Revelation 20.
  - c. We saw that all agreed there is a Millennium –
    - (i) You can hardly deny it exists
    - (ii) When it's clearly in Scripture –
    - (iii) Even though there are a few areas
    - (iv) In which we don't agree, such as
      - (a) Its character,
      - (b) Its duration,
      - (c) And when it begins.
2. Some believe the Millennium
  - a. Is a time of warfare to the end;
    - (i) While others see it as a time of blessing
    - (ii) As the church on earth enters
    - (iii) Into the blessings God's kingdom brings.
  - b. Some see it as a literal thousand years,  
While others see it as a period lasting much longer.
  - c. And some see it beginning when Jesus comes again,  
While others see it happening before He comes.
3. Our position is
  - a. That Jesus will come at the end of the millennium.
    - (i) Remember, it's the time between His first and second comings –
    - (ii) Between the binding of Satan,
    - (iii) Which He brought about at His first coming,
    - (iv) So that the world might be evangelized;
    - (v) And the loosing of Satan
    - (vi) To gather the nations together against the church
    - (vii) Just prior to His second coming.
  - b. We don't believe the thousand years is a literal number –
    - (i) Since it occurs in a highly symbolic visionary letter,
    - (ii) And since it's already been almost two thousand years
    - (iii) From the first coming to the present.

## B. Preview.

1. The one area we may yet differ on –
  - a. In this denomination in general,
  - b. And in this fellowship in particular –
  - c. Is the character of the millennium.
    - (i) We all agree that it's the time of Christ's reign,
    - (ii) But we disagree on the effect His reign will have:
      - (a) Will it be warfare to the end?
      - (b) Or will there come a time
      - (c) When the world will submit to Jesus Christ
      - (d) And experience His temporal blessings on earth?
2. What I'd like to do
  - a. Is work from the area of agreement – that Jesus is reigning –
  - b. To the area in which we disagree
    - (i) To see that either way
    - (ii) We should be encouraged.
  - c. Let's consider two things we agree on first:
    - (i) Jesus is reigning now.
    - (ii) And His reign will end at the Second Coming, after all His enemies are subdued.
  - d. Next week, we'll consider a final point:
    - (i) Whether that submission
    - (ii) Will make a substantial difference in this world
    - (iii) Before He comes again.

## II. Sermon.

- A. First, let's consider that Jesus is reigning now. Paul writes, "For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet."
  1. I want to emphasize this
    - a. Because there are so many Christians today
      - (i) Who don't believe Jesus is reigning absolutely now
      - (ii) And won't begin to do so until He returns.
    - b. Not only does the Bible teach
      - (i) That He is reigning now,
      - (ii) It also teaches that when He returns
      - (iii) His reign will end, not begin.
  2. First, the Bible teaches
    - a. That Jesus is reigning now with absolute authority.
      - (i) I'm using the word "absolute"
      - (ii) Because there are some who acknowledge
      - (iii) That He is reigning now in a limited sense,

- (iv) But His absolute rule waits until He returns
  - (v) At which time, He will usher in the millennium,
    - (a) Which, as we've already seen
    - (b) Can't be the case,
    - (c) Because the millennium is taking place now.
- b. It's clear that His reign began at His ascension.
- (i) The author to the Hebrews writes, "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET" (Heb. 10:11-13).
    - (a) After He died on the cross and was raised again to life,
      - (1) He ascended into heaven
      - (2) And sat down at the place of greatest honor.
    - (b) That was the day of His coronation –
      - (1) The day He took up His authority
      - (2) And began to rule.
  - (ii) It was the day predicted in Psalm 2:
    - (a) After the kings and rulers of the earth are unable
    - (b) To keep the Father from installing His King on Mount Zion,
    - (c) He enthrones Him with absolute authority over the world: "Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware" (vv. 8-9).
  - (iii) Paul tells us this was fulfilled following the resurrection: He writes, God "raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:20-22).
- c. Jesus' reign is not future from our perspective – it's now.
- (i) This also means we are now in the millennium,
  - (ii) Because the millennium is the time of Christ's reign.
  - (iii) John writes, "Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their 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 on their forehead and on 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” (Rev. 20:4-6).

- (a) The first resurrection, according to John 5:25,
  - (1) Is a spiritual resurrection –
  - (2) That which takes place
  - (3) In conjunction with believing in Jesus Christ.
  - (4) Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself” (vv. 25-26).
- (b) John is saying, that those who trusted Him will reign with Him when they die:
  - (1) Not only those who died during the siege of Jerusalem –
  - (2) Which is more specifically what John is speaking of in Revelation 20 –
  - (3) But also those who trust Him
  - (4) And faithfully serve Him
  - (5) During the time of His reign – which is now.
- (c) If you have trusted Him
  - (1) When you die, you will reign with Him:
  - (2) Paul wrote to Timothy, “It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; *if we endure, we will also reign with Him*; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; if we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:11-13).
  - (3) This alone should show us
  - (4) That we have much to look forward to.
- (d) By the way, don’t worry
  - (1) That you don’t know that much about ruling now –
  - (2) The Lord will give you
  - (3) The necessary grace to do so
  - (4) When the time comes.
- (iv) But again, the fact that He’s reigning now
  - (a) Means His absolute reign doesn’t begin
  - (b) When He returns.
  - (c) It’s happening now.

B. This brings us to the second point: When will His reign end?

1. It will end when He returns at His Second Coming: Notice again our text, “For He must reign *until* He has put all His enemies under His feet.”

- a. Paul tells us, “The last enemy that will be abolished is death” (v. 26).
  - (i) This is the enemy He will overcome
  - (ii) When He comes to raise the dead.
  - (iii) Paul writes, “But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory’” (v. 54).
  
- b. He spells this out more clearly in the verses just before our text. Speaking of the resurrection, he says, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power” (vv. 22-24).
  - (i) Jesus is the first-fruits from the dead –
    - (a) Either the first person raised that will stay raised,
      - (1) Since there were those raised at His resurrection (Matt. 27:52),
      - (2) That likely died again;
    - (b) Or the fountainhead of the resurrection: the source of it.
  - (ii) When He returns, He will raise those who are His.
  - (iii) *Then* comes the end – the end of what?
    - (a) The end of human history, to be sure,
    - (b) Since He's coming to raise the dead,
    - (c) But also the *end of His reign*.
  - (iv) This is when He hands the kingdom over to His Father
    - (a) After He has abolished all rule, authority and power.
    - (b) His reign doesn't begin at His Second Coming,
    - (c) That's when it ends.
  - (v) There is a sense in which
    - (a) He will continue to rule as the God-man
    - (b) Under His Father's authority,
    - (c) But His absolute rule as King
    - (d) Over His Mediatorial Kingdom,
    - (e) Will be over.
  - (vi) This is just the reverse
    - (a) Of what many evangelicals believe today.
    - (b) They believe His reign begins when He comes.
    - (c) But this is when His reign will end.
  
2. Here is something else that we can look forward to: the end of His reign.
  - a. The very last thing He will do
    - (i) Is come again to reverse

- (ii) The effects of sin on our bodies.
  - (iii) Paul writes, “For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive” (vv. 21-22).
- b. Adam’s sin against God
  - (i) Resulted in the death of all his children –
  - (ii) The unnatural tearing apart of body and soul,
  - (iii) So as to leave us for a time without a body –
  - (iv) Not to mention the struggle we now have with sin
  - (v) And the resulting condemnation
  - (vi) We would have had to suffer in hell.
- c. But our Lord’s obedience –
  - (i) In becoming one with us,
    - (a) In obeying for us,
    - (b) Dying for us,
    - (c) And being raised again for us –
  - (ii) Has resulted not only
    - (a) In the redemption of our souls,
    - (b) But also of our bodies.
  - (iii) We will grow old and die
    - (a) Because of Adam’s sin,
    - (b) But we will be raised again to life
    - (c) Because of what Jesus has done
    - (d) On the day He returns
    - (e) To vanquish death.
    - (f) That’s why Paul writes, “O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY?  
O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?” (v. 55).
- d. Don’t forget that while we’re waiting for His return,
  - (i) We will be occupied in heaven
  - (ii) Ruling and reigning with Jesus Christ
  - (iii) For whatever is left of the millennium.
- e. Our future is full of hope
  - (i) Because of what Jesus has done.
  - (ii) The only thing you have to do
    - (a) To be a part of it
    - (b) Is to turn from your sins,
    - (c) Trust in Jesus,
    - (d) And then follow Him
    - (e) By the grace He supplies.

- (iii) Your future and mine would have been very grim,
  - (a) But Jesus has made it glorious.
  - (b) Trust Him and you will be part of it.
- f. Next time, we'll consider
  - (i) Whether the subjection of His enemies
  - (ii) During the millennium –
  - (iii) During the present time –
  - (iv) Will have any effect
  - (v) On the world in which we live.
  - (vi) If so, here is another level of optimism for the future. Amen.

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