

# IS CHRIST COMING AGAIN?

by

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## CHAPTER NINE

### THE ORDER OF MILLENNIAL EVENTS

About the millennium there is supposed to be a deal of mystery. For much of this, Bible students may hold themselves responsible. There is more revealed regarding the millennium than the average Christian has examined, studied, and systematized.

In order to the understanding of the twentieth chapter of Revelation—a portion of Scripture devoted entirely to the millennial program—one must be fairly familiar with the whole body of the inspired book. We agree with Mr. Justin Smith, in *“The Complete Commentary,”* that there is a close connection between this chapter and that which precedes it, and that to deal with it as if it stood wholly by itself is a mistake. In fact, the only way to interpret any Scripture is in the light of all other Scriptures relating to that subject.

Paul prescribed the way for the making of a good student and teacher of the Word, when to Timothy he writes: **“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”** The indifferent student of Scripture is likely to characterize the Apocalypse as “a book of fanciful figures,” “phantasmagorical images,” “unnatural combinations of types and symbols,” to speak further of its “fervid and extravagant language,” as one well-known writer has done.

But the man that gives “diligence” to study—handling aright the Word of truth—will discover in it the plan of the ages; and in its twentieth chapter, the program of the millennium. It is an orderly presentation of the successive events that shall open, characterize, and close that glorious period.

### THE REDEEMER TAKES THE THRONE

The immediate steps essential to that supremacy are therein presented.

### THE TRANSLATION OF THE SAINTS—

“The sign of the Son of man in the heavens”—has already appeared. Since penning the chapter upon the translation of the saints, we have received no small amount of literature from those who object to our claim that the Church will not pass through the tribulation. But the arguments of Tregelles and his confederates have not convinced us.

Without unjustifiable repetition, we believe that when our Lord comes a second time, to find many slumbering and sleeping, the prepared virgins will go forth to meet Him (Matthew 25:6) in answer to His gracious call: **“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain”** (Isaiah 26:20-21).

That this gathering then will involve the entire Church—existent at the moment—seems clear from the language of Paul: **“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”**

We are compelled to consent with Gordon as he writes: “As Noah was hidden in the ark when the judgment of the flood came upon the earth; as the disciples, being forewarned by Christ, were sheltered in the hilltop of Pella, beyond Jordan, during the bloody siege in which Jerusalem perished, so shall it be with those who are accounted worthy to escape the judgments poured out upon apostate Christendom. They shall be wrapped away in a sheltered pavilion of cloud, and hidden in some angel-guarded retreat on high, where the apostle’s word shall be fulfilled to them:

**“And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”** (II Thessalonians 1:7, 8).

### **HIS DESCENT FROM HEAVEN WILL BE THE DETHRONEMENT OF THE ADVERSARY**

**“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled”** (vs. 1-3).

The dethronement of the dragon is essential to the enthronement of Deity. The Antichrist must give place to the Christ. The rulers that have **“received their power from him”** must turn about and yield their allegiance to the Lord of glory, that the promise of the Father may be fulfilled to the Son and the supremacy from **“sea to sea, and from the rivers unto the ends of the earth”** become His.

The first step in the accomplishment of that conquest—the putting down of all opposing **“rule and authority and power”**—is the overthrow of the rebel of the centuries, the dragon of the pit.

**“The Prince of the power of the air”** must be uncrowned by **“the Prince of Peace”**; and **“the god of this world”** must be unseated by **“the Son of man,”** who is also **“the Son of the Most High”** God. This is the identical vision long ago vouchsafed to the prophet Daniel. He said, **“I saw in the night visions; and lo, one like the Son of man, and He came even 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 the people, nations, and languages should serve Him.”**

Students of Daniel cannot forget that before this glorious kingdom—represented by the stone cut out of the top of the mountain—fills the whole earth, it must be cast with mighty power against the image of the plain, demolishing the same — another figure of the great fact that Satan’s overthrow, the absolute end of his supremacy, is the first essential to the introduction of the Redeemer’s millennial reign.

### **THE RISEN SAINTS ARE TO REIGN WITH HIM**

The Second Coming will be the signal for the first resurrection— **“they that are Christ’s at His coming.”** Referring again to arguments already presented in favor of a first and second resurrection, separated by a thousand years, we look into this text, **“The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished”** and consent with Dean Alford, “If, in a passage where two resurrections are mentioned, where certain souls lived at the first, and the rest of the dead lived only at the end of a specified period, after the first—if in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean spiritual rising with Christ, while the second means literal rising from the grave— then there is an end to significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything.”

They are raised not alone to the privileges of life —incorruptible and immortal, but to the exercise of power also, for they both **“lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”**

John saw not a single throne, but **“thrones,”** and **“they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.”**

Truly, as the great Nathaniel West once wrote: “Not only shall the twelve apostles sit on their thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, and the martyrs of Jesus bear eminent rule, but the vast multitude of those who have fallen asleep in Christ, in all ages, shall wake to share the joy with those who are **‘changed’** and enter the glorious kingdom of God, and live and reign with Christ a thousand years.”

This idea of reigning saints was not born of John while in the Isle of Patmos, as some that seek to set the testimony of the book of Revelation aside have been tempted to say.

If one turn back to Matthew 19:28, he will find that Jesus Himself, while yet in the flesh, gave this very promise. The report is that **“Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”**

And, that there shall be offices of even lesser authority, exercised by other saints, in the millennial period, is evident. When He shall come with His kingdom, one that was especially faithful in the time of His absence, shall be set to rule over ten cities, and another that loyally exercised his lesser talents shall rule over five cities.

### **THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS**

Six times over in this single twentieth chapter of Revelation, the phrase, “**the thousand years,**” occurs; and yet, interpreted in the light of other Scriptures, it suggests vastly more than is herein stated, for it is “**the Day of the Lord**” known to the Old Testament, the glorious era of God on the throne, known to the New. Of it Peter was thinking when he wrote, “**Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began**” (Acts 3:19-21).

“**The restoration of all things,**” whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, involves the millennial program. Nathaniel West, in a remarkably full discussion of “The Thousand Years in Both Testaments,” makes mention of twenty-six characteristics of the millennial era. They are biblical every one, but we must content ourselves with presenting a few of the more important ones.

### **IT WILL INVOLVE THE RESTORATION OF JERUSALEM**

The very land on which the city is located will be “**lifted high,**” and her crumbled walls shall come again in strength; and her scattered inhabitants shall again turn their feet into her gates: and the glory of the old Jerusalem shall be infinitely eclipsed by the splendor of Jerusalem renewed.

“**At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem**” (Jeremiah 3:17). Through Zechariah, God said, “**And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness**” (8:8; and “**All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses. And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited**” (14:10, 11).

### **IN IT WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED THE CONVERSION OF ISRAEL**

The eleventh chapter of Romans is devoted to the proposition— “**God hath not cast away His people whom He foreknew.**” “**There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.**”

The revelation of the Lord from glory shall produce the long-looked-for repentance of God's ancient people, and when their **"every eye shall see Him"** and **"them also that pierced Him,"** then **"all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over Him"** Then shall be fulfilled the prophecy, **"A nation shall be born in a day."** That is the day in which **"the LORD will sprinkle clean water upon them, and they shall be clean from all their filthiness, and from all their idols; the day in which He shall put a new heart and a new spirit within them, and give them a heart of flesh, and put His Spirit within them and cause them to walk in His statutes and keep His ordinances"** (Ezekiel 36:25-27). For did He not say by the pen of Jeremiah, **"For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear."**

### **FOR IT, GOD WILL REBUILD THE BODIES OF ALL SAINTS**

**"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory"** (I Corinthians 15:50-54).

God's buried believers will be brought forth to bodies **"incorruptible"**; and God's living children will be changed from bodies mortal to bodies **"immortal,"** so that they shall no longer dwell in **"natural bodies,"** but in **"spiritual"**; and **"as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."**

The natural body is a body dependent upon the heartbeat. **"Out of the heart are the issues of life"** **"The life is in the blood."** **"The natural body"** is the body in which Jesus dwelt before His crucifixion, and which was subject to humiliation and death; **"the spiritual body"** is the body quickened and raised by the indwelling Spirit of God. It will be visible, as was the risen Christ; tangible, as was His form— **"handle me and see"**; immortal, for death had **"no more dominion over Him"**; independent of earthly limitations. Closed doors were not an obstacle to His entrance, and gravitation exercised no opposition to His ascent.

In that day the bodies of the unregenerate, breathing the atmosphere of the new earth, **"wherein dwelleth righteousness"** (II Peter 3:13) shall be relieved from the easy ravages of **"this present evil time,"** and **"the child shall die at a hundred years old."** In other words, an octogenarian will be an infant, and a centenarian a child. The entire removal of sorrow, tears and death is not promised for the millennial age, but is the peculiar glory of the kingdom when located in heaven.

Truly, **"the last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death"** In the very nature of the case, the devil must be doomed before death ceases; and yet, as Nathaniel West contends, we nowhere read that God's people are to be subject to sin, sickness and death in the glorious millennial era.

## THIS RESTORATION IS TO BLESS THE VERY EARTH

When sin entered the world a beast was made the instrument of the adversary; and a serpent—doubtless the most beautiful and intelligent of all lower creatures, winged and capable of conversation—fell to the lowest and most loathsome estate—being **“cursed above all cattle and above every beast of the field, and that upon its belly it was to go, and eat dust all the days of its life”**; and enmity between the beast and the woman and her seed originated, so that man sought to bruise the serpent’s head, and the serpent to strike the heel of the seed of the woman.

In the fall of man the earth found itself cursed with hatred and stained by the shedding of a brother’s blood; the very ground came under the consequential curse — **“Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee”**

God’s restoration will be as far-reaching as was the devil’s curse. The brute creation will be restored to its pristine beauty, and all forms of animal life shall cease from battle and carnage, the very serpent itself included. **“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 11:6-8). Even of the serpent it is written, **“and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.”**

As to the ground when the first Adam sinned, **“thorns and thistles”** it brought forth; when the Second Adam shall come to His throne, **“Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree; and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree, and it shall be to the Lord as a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off”** (Isaiah 55:11). **“In that day the desert and the solitary place shall rejoice and blossom like the rose,”** and the remnant of beauty in which the world has raggedly clothed itself shall give place to a land so glorious as to be fit to receive the city soon to come **“down out of heaven from God”**

In harmony with this recovery of brute life, and of the very face of the earth itself from the spirit and effects of sin, will be the new spirit imparted to man in the millennial age.

**“Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; and He will judge between many peoples, and will decide concerning strong nations afar off: 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”**

Not even that vestige of battle that marks contention between the few prospered and the many poor will remain to mar society, for **“they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it”** (Micah 4:3-4).

## THE MILLENNIUM ENDS

### SATAN'S BRIEF RELEASE SHALL MARK ITS END

After the thousand years have finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations, that are in the four corners of the earth, "**Gog and Magog!**" We here employ the language of a postmillennialist as both apt and adequate, namely, that "the millennium, glorious and happy as it is, the period of it is not the final consummation and triumph of the kingdom of God. The loosing of Satan and the effects that follow it are preliminary to the final judgment" (*The Complete Commentary*).

It is the plainest possible testimony to the fact that the sins of the world, involving all manner of deception and iniquity, are satanic in origin; and that when men are rid of his approaches and exempt from his power, they become faithful to God, and fraternal toward one another. But no sooner does this deceiver appear in their midst again than many, falling under his evil spell, are ready to rebel at once against both their Creator and their brethren, and out of the nations that are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, he will gather his dupes together to the war—the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

They will go up over the breadth of the land and compass about the camp of the saints of the beloved city. They will fight their last battle under demon leadership, to discover that his deception brought them to his doom, and the doom of his confederates—the beast, and the false prophets, by the lake of fire and brimstone, in which they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.

If one answer that this is a dark climax to God's millennial day, we answer, "All God's bright days end in night; but the night itself is the promise of another tomorrow." In this instance the tomorrow is to be a day brighter than even the millennium, as we shall see when we come to the study of "**kingdom of our God**" (Revelation 12:10).

Let it not be forgotten either that when the millennium is introduced, Christ comes to His supremacy through suffering on the part of His own; but when the millennium ends, the true subjects of the King shall triumph! Not a one of them shall perish; nor is there even the hint that one of them shall suffer at Satan's hands. The battle has gone with the sons of God and all saints; and the battle has gone against Satan and all his associates, so that the coming of night affects only the children of darkness! For the children of light, the end of the millennium is the breaking of an everlasting day.

That was Paul's thought when he wrote of Christ:

**"For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all"** (I Corinthians 15:25-28).

## THE FINAL JUDGMENT

**“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (vs. 11-15).**

### THE SUBJECTS OF THE FIRST RESURRECTION WILL SIT IN THE JUDGMENT

They will not be there as the subjects of the same, but as associates with Christ in passing the sentence. Their judgment was overpassed in Calvary. In John 5:24 we read: **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”** **“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth”** (Romans 10:4).

That is why it could be written into this chapter, **“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power.”** But, as John continues, **“They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years”** and as Jesus has aforetime told us, they shall sit with Him and judge.

### THE CHILDREN OF THE MILLENNIUM WILL COME INTO JUDGMENT

The twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew pictures their part in the same.

**“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:**



**“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (vs. 31-46).**

Many premillennialists have been led, as we believe, into a misinterpretation here, simply because God does not, on every page in Scripture, put forth the full program of the ages. They have thought that this assembling of the nations to receive the sentence of judgment, at the lips of Jesus, occurred immediately upon the coming of Christ to His throne because of what is written into Matthew 25:31. But why should we insist that there is no lapse of time between His appearance here and this separating of men to the right and to the left? As a great teacher has contended, there are many instances in Scripture in which the juxtaposition of sentences does not involve a kindred closeness of the events mentioned.

For instance, in reading Isaiah’s words concerning the Messiah, **“To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God,”** who would have imagined that in this single sentence two grand and distinct eras were brought together and spoken of—the era of grace and the era of judgment. But the Lord, by His penetrating exegesis, cleft the passage asunder, and breaking off in the middle of the sentence— **“to preach the acceptable year of the Lord”**— He closed the book and sat down, saying, **“This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.”** Two thousand years have already gone by and the latter part of the passage still awaits its application.

A comparison of Scripture with Scripture will show that the judgment of Matthew 25:31-46 does not precede the millennium. It has the same essential features that enter into Revelation 20:11-15; and there is a harmony between the Gospel and the Apocalypse. When the Son of man in all His glory, with all His holy angels, sits upon the throne for His last judgment, then, and not till then, shall men be brought to account, then shall the sheep be divided from the goats, the one taken to the kingdom and the other turned away into eternal punishment. But the order of the judgment is against the children of the millennium—or the living rebels first; and later, against the unbelieving dead, raised to receive their sentence. It is perfectly evident that there are living rebels or else Satan could not find a following at the end of the millennial period; and we are told that his following there is to have exactly the same fate as that meted out to those that are raised to hear judgment pronounced.

The children of the millennium are the only people that can be justly judged on the basis of their works, whether they are good or bad! All others stand or fall according to faith or unbelief; but these, having lived all their lives in the presence of the living Christ, faith will have given place to sight, and works alone will remain to test the true and to prove the false. The true, having been regenerated and having been **“changed from mortal to immortal,”** enjoy the same glorious reward accorded to the raised ones; who were **“changed from the corruptible to the incorruptible.”**

The false having been unregenerate, will meet the same sentence as that meted out to their rebel brethren that have slept in their graves, **“And I saw the dead, small and great”** are to stand before the throne, and **“the books will be opened, and another book will be opened, which is the book of life, and the dead will be judged out of the things which are written in the books, according to their works. The sea shall give up its dead, and death and hell will give up the dead that are in them, and they will be judged every man according to his works.”**

The man that is without faith can only work the works of the flesh, and the works of the flesh are these: **“Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God”** (Galatians 5:19-21).

These are the very works found characterizing the company excluded from heaven in Revelation 21. I well know that this runs counter to that much heralded judgment of nations on the basis of their attitude to the apostate Jews; but whole nations turned into hell because some politicians opposed peace—disturbing apostate Jews has little defense in Reason and less in Revelation.

If it is complained that this is a dark presentation of the millennium, let it be understood that this is no presentation of the millennium at all. It is the biblical event that closes it. That glorious era is not herein described, but as we have remarked, it is parenthesized. A man’s birth is the hour of awful travail; and a man’s death the moment of breaking hearts and agonizing spirits; but these do not mean that the man’s spirit may not have been as great as that of the apostle Paul, his conquests more multitudinous than those of an Alexander, and his life as sweet and happy as that of John the apostle.

The millennial age is the partial glory. The perfect glory comes with **“the new heaven and the new earth,”** and our God in the midst!

~ end of chapter 9 ~

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