

The World Made Perfect

The last few articles in this series have looked at Bible teaching about the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. We saw that Jesus will return to earth to be king, sitting on the throne over that kingdom.

He will judge all those who he called to serve him during their lives, and if they have died, he will raise them to life again for this judgement. Those who deliberately rejected him will themselves be rejected and have no part in the kingdom.

To those who have pleased him, Jesus will give immortal life, untouched by disease or other human frailty: they will be "*like him*" (1 John 3:2). For them, and for Jesus himself, death will be a thing of the past. Jesus said "*Because I live, you will live also*" (John 14:19). Then they will help him to rule the earth and fill it with God's glory. These are the people that the Bible calls 'saints' (for example, 1 Corinthians 1:1-2) and to whom the kingdom is promised:

But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever (Daniel 7:18).

Teaching and Guiding

However, the people over whom Jesus and his saints rule will be mortal, like you and me now. Jesus will bring just, effective government, but there is more to it than that. The saints will be guiding and teaching these mortal people in the ways of God, wherever they live throughout the world.



Jesus hints at this in some of his parables, such as in Luke 19. Here a nobleman gives money to his servants and tells them to work for him, until he returns. Reckoning with them on his arrival, we read the master's approval to one of his faithful servants:

And he said to him, "Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities" (Luke 19:17).

The people of the world will be learning the truths about God and His purpose. They will also be discovering that most of the things their previous leaders had told them were wrong, both in religious matters and in daily life. Jeremiah wrote about their reaction to this:

The Gentiles shall come to you from the ends of the earth and say, "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, worthlessness and unprofitable things" (Jeremiah 16:19).

Malachi 4:5-6 reveals that the Jews will also need to be converted to a true understanding of God's purpose. In

particular, they will need to recognise Jesus as the Messiah, or Christ – God’s anointed king. The prophet Elijah will have a key role to play in this.

A Patient Process

The change will not be instantaneous. It is important to realize that crime, sickness, poverty and death will not disappear suddenly at the beginning of Christ’s rule. It took at least 6000 years for the world to reach its present plight, so it is not surprising that it will take 1000 years to put things right.

During this millennium, Christ’s immortal servants will have the power to keep crime and sin under control, and they will guide men and women in the right ways of God. Revelation chapter 20 tells us about the saints’ work in Christ’s kingdom:

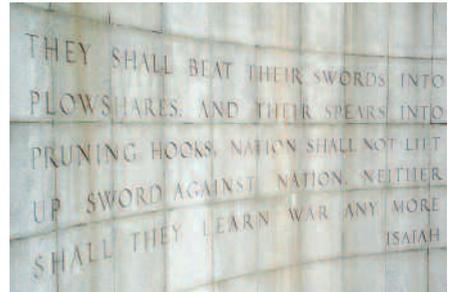
They lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years (Revelation 20:4–6).

During this time, the problems of the world such as illness, war and famine will be brought under control. People will live long lives in perfect conditions.

He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; 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 anymore. But everyone shall sit

under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken (Micah 4:3-4).

These words, which are also inscribed



on a wall near the United Nations, will finally come true, but only through God’s intervention.

Perfection

At the end of the thousand years, there will be one final revolt by people who reject the authority of Jesus and still want to do things their own way. This is shown in a symbolic way in Revelation 20:7–10.

Then those who chose to obey God during that millennium will be made immortal and will join Jesus Christ and his saints in sharing God’s divine, sinless nature. Death will have been abolished. Because all of this will have been achieved, God will finally be able to actually live with men and women. This wonderful situation is announced in the Revelation:

And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall

be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:3-4).

This is the time when God is described as being 'all in all'. The expression comes from the apostle Paul, who gives us some insight into how this will happen:

Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under him, that God may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

A Promise to Everyone

This perfect end-state for the world fulfils God's purpose as stated several times in the Bible:

Truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord (Numbers 14:21).

Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, Who only does wondrous things! And blessed be His glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen (Psalm 72:17-19).

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

Look to me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by myself; the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath (Isaiah 45:22-3).

Here too we see the ultimate fulfilment of those promises God made to Abraham and David. Abraham was promised that through him and his descendant (Jesus), all peoples or nationalities would be blessed:

All the families of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 12:3).



David was promised that his royal lineage would be unending, and that he would see it:

Your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever (2 Samuel 7:16).

These promises will be entirely fulfilled with men and women from all nations offered a place in the Kingdom of God. That includes you and me. We cannot earn a place in that kingdom, but are invited to be part of it through believing God's word, having faith in the work of Jesus, being baptised to show this and living as people who want to be in God's kingdom.

John Woodall