

#12 - Revealing the Kingdom of God
"An Overview of Revelation"
"Premillennialism" as Presented by Norman Geisler

PREMILLENNIALISM AS PRESENTED BY NORMAN GEISLER:

Remember, we are defining "premillennialism" from Geisler's words: "Christ will physically return to earth and set up a worldwide thousand-year reign" (pg. 1413).

Fundamental mistake #1 premillennialists make is to take all prophecy *literally*.

Fundamental mistake #2 is related to this; premillennialists *ignore* the NT's clear affirmations that OT prophecies *have been fulfilled!* For example, they want to say that Elijah still must come *before* the Messiah comes, in fulfillment of Malachi 4:5. Yet, Jesus *explicitly* says that John the baptist was "Elijah" (Matt. 11:14; 17:10-12; Mark 9:11-13) and the angel told Zacharias that his son (John) would come "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17). After the gospel accounts, where Elijah is mentioned 27 times; there are only *two* mentions of Elijah in the NT: Rom. 11:2; James 5:17. In other words, *there is no further indication in the NT that "Elijah" needs to come!!*

Fundamental mistake #2 they make is to argue that "Israel will have a unique role in the messianic kingdom, *functionally* superior to that of the Gentiles" (pg 1333; emph. Geisler's).

Fundamental mistake #3 is to believe the *land* of Palestine is *still* a part of God's permanent plans.

Fundamental mistake #4 which premillennialists make is to create more distinctions in the word "kingdom" than what the Bible allows.

Fundamental mistake #5 is the teaching that Jesus failed to establish His kingdom as He had promised.

LET'S DO AN IMPORTANT STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION BECAUSE IT IS COMPLETELY ABUSED BY PREMILLENNIALISTS:

First, let's emphasize one important aspect of biblical interpretation - *It matters to whom the book is written!*

A comical illustration of this very point is often used: the Bible says:

Judas "went away and hanged himself" - Matt. 27:5

Jesus said, "Go and do the same" - Luke 10:37

Does that mean we have to go hang ourselves? NO! Why? Because of the *context* of the statements! The same point is true with the book of Revelation...

Let's understand the *context* of the book of Revelation:

#1 - Revelation was written to Christians *in the first century!* However we wish to interpret *any* passage in Revelation, *it must first make sense to Christians in the first century!* Revelation 1:4, 11. This is an important point! "Babylon" is mentioned 6 times in Revelation: 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21. Babylon was a designation, first among the Jews then among Christians, *for the Roman Empire!*

"Great city" (16:19) is "Babylon the Great" ("great city" is used 8 times in Revelation)

"Great harlot" (17:1) - "harlot" is used 5 times: 17:1, 5, 15-16; 19:2

"Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth" (17:5) is identified as the "great city" which "reigns over the kings of the earth" (17:18)

“Seven mountains” (17:9)
“Babylon the great is fallen!” (18:2)
“Queen” (18:7)
“The great city, Babylon, the strong city!” (18:10)
“Great city” (18:16, 18-19)
“Babylon, the great city, will be thrown down” (18:21)
“The great harlot” (19:2)
Revelation was “for the churches” (22:16) to whom it was *written*!

#2 - The Roman Empire was *persecuting Christians*! The reason Jesus is identified as the “faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead” (1:5) is because *Christians were being killed for their faith or Christians were being tempted to compromise the gospel message so they would not be killed!*

References to the persecution the Christians were experiencing:

1:9 - “perseverance” is used 7 times: 2:2-3, 19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12
“tribulation” is used 5 times: 2:9-10, 22; 7:14
1:18 - Jesus was dead but now “alive forevermore”
Jesus has the keys of “death” (13 times) and “hades” (4 times: 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14)
2:3 - “endured,” “not grown weary”
2:7 - “overcome” - the Greek verb is used 17 times in Revelation
2:8 - “dead” and “come to life”
2:10 - “do not fear” and “suffer”
2:13 - “did not deny the faith” and “witness” and “faithful” and some were “killed”
3:10 - “hour of testing” and “to test”
3:14 - “faithful and true witness”
6:4 - “take peace,” “slay one another,” and “sword”
6:8 - “to kill with a sword,” “famine,” “pestilence,” “wild beasts”
6:9 - “underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain” - which is also a metaphor
6:10 - “judging and avenging”
6:11 - “killed”
7:3 - “We have sealed the bondservants” (which is also a metaphor!)
8:7 - “burned up” - used 3 times
8:8 - “blood”
8:9 - “died” and “destroyed” - “to die” is used 6 times: 3:2; 8:9, 11; 9:6; 14:13; 16:3
9:15 - “kill a third of mankind”
11:18 - “the nations were enraged” “those who destroy the earth”
12:10 - “accuser of our brethren”
12:11 - “faced with death”
12:17 - “make war with the rest of her children”
13:7 - “make war with the saints” - “war” is mentioned 9 times in Revelation
13:14 - the beast “deceives”
14:13 - “die in the Lord”
16:6 - “poured out the blood of the saints and prophets” - “blood” is mentioned 19 times
16:15 - “keeps his clothes”
17:6 - “blood of the saints, blood of the witnesses of Jesus” - “witness” is used 5 times.
17:14 - wage war
18:13 - “slaves and human lives”
18:21 - “blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain”
19:2 - “the blood of His bondservants”

19:11 - "Faithful and true" - "faithful" is used 8 times; "true" 10 times
"Souls of those beheaded" (20:3) - which is also a metaphor

#3 - John is writing to *Christians* who were thoroughly acquainted with the OT and its images and messages. Thus, God spoke to him through "signs" or "symbols:" 1:1; the word "communicated" (NASV) in Greek has as its root word: "sign." Compare the KJV word: "signified." While signs convey truth, you *don't take them literally*. The word "sign" is used 7 times: 12:1, 3; 13:13-14; 15:1; 16:14; 19:20.

Perhaps the most clear "sign" in Revelation is the use of "Lamb" to refer to Jesus. The word "lamb" is found 32 times in Revelation, most (but not all; see 13:11) refer to Jesus. While it is true that Jesus is a *spiritual* Lamb, He is not a *literal* lamb! If we can recognize that point relative to Jesus, we ought to be careful how we understand the "1,000 years" in chapter 20 as literal!

The word "like" is found 65 times in Revelation! This is an indication of a simile, as is the use of "as:" 42 times.

In the same way, there are *metaphors* in the book of Revelation. The word "beast" is found 38 times! Are these literal? The word "dragon" is found 14 times. Satan is identified as a dragon in 12:3-4, 7, 9, 13, 16-17; 13:1-2, 4, 11; 16:13; 20:2.

"Alpha and Omega" (1:8)
"Seven golden lamp stands" (1:12)
"Seven stars" & "two-edged sword" coming out of Christ's mouth (1:16)
"Seven stars" and "seven lamp stands" are identified in 1:20
Jesus "walks among the seven golden lampstands" (2:1)
"Satan's throne" (2:13)
"Teaching of Balaam" (2:14)
"Woman Jezebel" (2:20)
"Seven stars" (3:1)
"Key of David" (3:7)
"Synagogue of Satan" (3:9)
"Pillar in the temple of My God" (3:12)
"I will write on him" (3:12)
"Seven spirits of God" (4:5)
"Four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, full of eyes around and within" (4:8)
"Lion from the tribe of Judah" (5:5)
"Golden bowls full of incense" (5:8)
"Sun became black as sackcloth; the whole moon became like blood," "stars of the sky fell to the earth" (6:13)
"Sky was split apart" and "every mountain and island were moved out of their places" (6:14)
"Sealed on the foreheads" (7:3)
"One hundred and forty-four thousand" (7:4; see 14:4)
Missing: Dan and Ephraim
"Spread His tabernacle over them" (7:15)
"Prayers on the golden altar" (8:3)
"Wormwood" - (8:11)
"Third of the sun, third of the moon, third of the stars," a "day would not shine for a third" (8:12)
"Star from heaven ...having the key to the bottomless pit" (9:1)

"The sun and the air were darkened" (9:2)
 "Locusts" (9:3)
 "Had a king over them" (9:11)
 "Power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails" (9:19)
 "Angel clothed with a cloud" (10:1)
 "Seven peals of thunder" (10:3)
 "Angel who stands on the sea and on the land" (10:8)
 "Eat the book, bitter & sweet" (10:9)
 "Two olive trees and two lamp stands" (11:4)
 "Fire flows out of their mouths" (11:5)
 "Ark of the covenant," "earthquake," and "great hailstorm" *in heaven* (11:19)
 "Woman clothed with the sun, moon under her feet, crown of twelve stars" (12:1)
 "Red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven diadems" (12:3)
 "War in heaven" with a dragon (12:7)
 "Dragon with ten horns and seven heads," on heads were written "blasphemous names" (13:1)
 "Name of the Father written on their foreheads" (14:1)
 "Ones who have not been defiled with women, have kept themselves chaste" (14:4)
 "Swing sickled over the earth and reap" (14:16)
 "Sharp sickle" (14:17-19)
 "Great wine press of the wrath of God" (14:19)
 "Blood flowing up to horses' bridle up to 200 miles" (14:20) - the Greek text illustrates better the figurative nature of the distance: 1600 stadia, a multiple of "four" and "10"
 "Temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven" (15:5)
 "Temple was filled with smoke" (15:8)
 "Seven bowls of the wrath of God" (16:1) - "bowls" are mentioned 12 times; "wrath" is mentioned 10 times; 7 of those times refer to God's wrath
 "Given blood to drink" (16:6)
 "Euphrates" (16:12)
 "Mouth of the dragon, beast, false prophet" (16:13)
 "War of the great day of God" (16:14)
 "Har-Magedon" (16:16)
 "Cup of the wine of His fierce wrath" (16:19)
 "Island fled away, mountains were not found" (16:20)
 "Drunk with the wine of immorality" (17:2)
 "Scarlet beast" with "seven heads and ten horns" (17:3)
 "Golden cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality" (17:4)
 "On forehead a name written..." (17:5) - "forehead" is used 8 times in Revelation
 "Beast with seven heads and ten horns" (17:7)
 "Seven heads are seven mountains" (17:9)
 "Ten horns are ten kings" (17:12)
 "Babylon was a dwelling place for demons, a prison for unclean spirits, unclean and hateful bird" (18:2)
 "Drunk with the wine of passion" (18:3)
 "Sins have piled up as high as heaven" (18:5)
 "stone, millstone" (18:21)
 "Marriage of the Lamb" (19:7, 9)
 "His bride" (19:7; 21:2)
 "War" (19:11)
 "Eyes are a flame of fire" (19:12)
 "Sharp sword out of His mouth" (19:15, 21)
 "Wine press of the fierce wrath of God" (19:15)
 "On His thigh written" (19:16)

“Great supper of God” (19:17)
 “Make war” (19:19)
 “Key of the abyss” and “great chain” (20:1)
 “Thousand years” (20:2, 3, 4-5, 6-7)
 “Abyss” (20:3)
 “First resurrection” (20:5)
 “Gog and Magog” (20:8)
 “War” (20:8)
 “Camp of the saints and the beloved city” (20:9)
 “Books” (20:12)
 “Book of life” (20:12, 15)
 “New heaven and new earth” (21:1)
 “Holy city, new Jerusalem” (21:2)
 “Tabernacle of God” (21:3)
 “Measuring rod” (21:15)
 “Fifteen hundred miles” (21:16) - in Greek, twelve thousand stadia, a multiple of “3,”
 “4,” and “10”
 “Seventy-two yards” (21:17) - in Greek, one hundred forty-four cubits, a multiple of “12”
 “Twelve pearls” (21:21) - one gate is one pearl!?
 “Street of pure gold” (21:21)
 “Lamb is the temple” (21:22)
 “Lamp is the Lamb” (21:23)
 “River of the water of life” (22:1)
 “Tree of life” (22:2)
 “His name on the foreheads” (22:4)
 “Dogs” (22:15)
 “One who is thirsty can take of the water of life” (22:17)

You can't take apocalyptic imagery literally! We'll study more about “apocalyptic language” when we study Matthew 24.

#4 - John writes to encourage his fellow Christians that the relief they will get from their persecutors will take place “soon:” 1:1, for the “time is near:” 1:3. Other references:

“I am coming quickly” - 3:11
 “In one hour your judgment has come” (18:10, 17, 19)
 “Must soon take place” - 22:6
 “I am coming quickly” - 22:7
 “The time is near” - 22:10
 “I am coming quickly” - 22:12
 “I am coming quickly” - 22:20

Also, as we have already emphasized, the Christians who received the book of Revelation were *in the kingdom* when they received the book (1:6, 9). So, however we want to interpret the 1,000 year reign of Christ in chapter 20, the people *were already in the kingdom!*

The message of Revelation is still relevant to us today: If we overcome the temptations of our own society and we stay faithful to Christ and His commandments, then we will be eternally blessed in heaven where we will never be tempted to sin ever again! Of course, serving God and continuing to *worship* are expected of Christians, regardless of what our society does:

4:8, 10-11

5:9-10, 13-14 - "sing" is used three times: 5:9; 14:3; 15:3; "worship" is used 24 times
7:10-11, 15
10:7 - "preached"
10:11 - "Prophecy"
14:6 - "eternal gospel to preach"
14:7 - "Fear God, give Him glory, worship"
15:3 - "sang"
15:4 - "worship"
18:4 - "Come out of her!"
19:1
19:4, 5 - "Worshipped God"
19:10 - "worship God"
22:3 - "serve"
22:9 - "Worship God"

Next week - We will do a study of Matthew 24