The Millennium Reign: Earthly or Heavenly?

The Present Reign of King Jesus: Why a Literal 1,000-Year Reign and Earthly Temple Are Misunderstood

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1. The Misconception of a Literal 1,000-Year Earthly Reign

Centering the Millennium on Old Covenant Israel

The idea of a thousand-year earthly reign of Christ stems from a misinterpretation of Revelation 20. Many believe this period is a restoration of Old Covenant Israel, but such a view misunderstands the purpose of Christ's kingdom.

If the focus on a restored Jewish kingdom is removed, the supposed need for a millennial kingdom disappears. Christian Zionists claim the millennium is about Christ, but in reality, their emphasis is on Israel's political and national restoration—something that contradicts the teachings of the New Covenant.

Revelation 10:6 and the End of Measured Time

Revelation 10:6 states, *"that there should be time no longer,"* marking the end of temporal measurements in God's redemptive plan. Under the New Covenant, Christ's kingdom is eternal, not bound by earthly timeframes or physical systems.

2. The Spiritual Nature of Christ's Kingdom

The Kingdom Is Heavenly, Not Earthly

Jesus explicitly stated:

- **John 18:36**: *"My kingdom is not of this world."*

This declaration highlights the spiritual nature of Christ's reign. His kingdom is not tied to geographical boundaries or physical locations. This is further clarified in **Luke 17:20-21**, where Jesus responded to the Pharisees' demand for a sign of the kingdom:

- *"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."*

Understanding "Observation" in Luke 17:20

The key term in Greek is **παρατηρήσεως (paratērēseōs)**, meaning "observation" or "careful scrutiny." This word carries the idea of watching intently for visible signs or phenomena.

Jesus' use of **οὐκ** (ouk, "not") emphatically negates the idea that the kingdom can be identified through outward, physical indicators. The Pharisees expected a political or geographic manifestation of God's reign, but Jesus redirects their understanding:

1. **Not External**: The kingdom's coming is not something that can be tracked or monitored by visible signs or events.
2. **Spiritual and Internal**: Jesus emphasizes that the

kingdom is already present, residing within the hearts of those who acknowledge His lordship.

This teaching is consistent with Jesus' earlier declaration:

- **John 4:23-24**: *"The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth…God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."*

The Everlasting Nature of the New Covenant

Paul reinforces the spiritual nature of the kingdom in **Colossians 1:13**:

- *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."*

This translation is a present reality for believers, highlighting the already-existent reign of Christ. Similarly, **2 Peter 1:11** describes this as an *"everlasting kingdom."*

If the kingdom is everlasting, a finite 1,000-year reign on earth is inconsistent with the New Covenant's eternal promises.

The Internal Temple of the Believer

In this spiritual kingdom, believers themselves become the temple where God dwells:

- **1 Corinthians 3:16**: *"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"*
- **Ephesians 2:21-22**: *"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."*

The kingdom is not defined by external structures, like the Old Covenant temple, but by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each believer.

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3. The Role of the Physical Temple and Sacrificial System

The Physical Temple's Destruction: Fulfillment of Prophecy

Jesus foretold the destruction of the earthly temple:

- **Matthew 24:1-2**: *"There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."*

This prophecy, fulfilled in 70 A.D., signified the end of the Old Covenant system. The destruction of the temple was not a temporary interruption but a decisive conclusion to the sacrificial system.

Christ as the Ultimate Sacrifice

The Old Covenant sacrifices pointed to Christ, who fulfilled and ended the need for them:

- **Hebrews 10:10-12**: *"We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."*

To suggest that Christ would reign in a physical temple where sacrifices are reinstated undermines the sufficiency of His once-for-all sacrifice.

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4. Understanding the Thousand Years in Revelation 20

Figurative Use of "Thousand" in Scripture

The term *thousand* often symbolizes completeness or vastness rather than a literal number. For example:

- **Psalm 50:10**: *"The cattle upon a thousand hills."*
  God owns all creation, not just a literal thousand hills.
- **2 Peter 3:8**: *"One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."*
  This illustrates God's eternality, not a literal timeframe.

Thus, the thousand years in Revelation 20 represents the fullness of the church age—the period from Christ's resurrection to His second coming.

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5. The Last Days: A New Covenant Reality

The First-Century Fulfillment

The New Testament consistently refers to the "last days" as the time of the New Covenant:

- **Hebrews 1:1-2**: *"Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."*
- **Acts 2:16-17**: *"This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel…in the last days."*
- **1 Corinthians 10:11**: *"Upon whom the ends of the world are come."*

These passages show that the last days began with Christ's ministry, death, and resurrection and encompass the entirety of the New Covenant age.

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6. The Binding of Satan and the Gospel's Expansion

Revelation 20:1-3 Explained

Satan being bound symbolizes his limited power to deceive the nations during the church age. After Christ's resurrection, the gospel spread freely to all nations:

- **Matthew 28:19**: *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations."*

Under the Old Covenant, the Gentile world was largely blinded to God's truth. Now, through the New Covenant, the gospel is accessible to all.

Conclusion: Christ's Everlasting Kingdom

Christ's reign is not future, temporary, or earthly. It is present, spiritual, and eternal:

- **Psalm 145:13**: *"Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom."*
- **Daniel 7:14**: *"His dominion is an everlasting dominion."*

The temple is no longer a physical building; it resides in the hearts of believers. The sacrificial system is obsolete because of Christ's perfect sacrifice. The thousand years in Revelation 20 symbolizes the church age, during which Christ reigns from heaven, and believers reign with Him spiritually.

King Jesus is reigning now in His heavenly kingdom, and His reign is eternal. It is not bound to a geographical location, a physical temple, or a finite period. All who are born again in Christ are part of this kingdom, which will continue forever.

Everlasting Covenant