

The Bible versus the “Church of Christ”

The Resurrection and Judgment

Introduction:

1. This series of lessons is investigating the claims of a pamphlet titled: “The Bible versus the ‘Church of Christ’.”
2. The first lessons dealt with fundamental teaching about the church.
 - a. It is the spiritual body of Christ, but not a denomination.
 - b. Its name is important, and “church of Christ” is a scriptural one.
 - c. Its existence has continued since the Day of Pentecost.
3. The next accusations made against the church of Christ had to do with the worship of God.
 - a. Instrumental music in worship to God is not authorized under the New Testament.
 - b. God commands congregational singing – no other type of music is approved for worship.
 - c. The Lord’s Supper is to be observed every first day of the week.
4. The next criticisms had to do with the role of baptism in God’s plan of salvation.
5. Finally, the last accusations deal with the Bible’s teaching concerning the resurrection and the Day of Judgment.

I. Will There Be a Literal Millennium?

- A. **The Accusation:** *“The Church of Christ believes in a GENERAL resurrection and judgment for all people. Both saved and lost at the same time. This perversion of truth is known as A-Millennialism (No Millennium). The first seven verses of Revelation chapter twenty speak of a coming one thousand year reign of Christ and His saints on this earth. This reign immediately follows the Second Coming of Christ, which occurs in Revelation 19:11-21.”*
- B. **The Response:** *The Bible teaches that there will be one resurrection of both the saved and the lost – at the same time – when Jesus returns.*
 1. Jesus declared that the hour of the resurrection was coming (John 5:28-29).
 2. Other verses make it clear that there is only one resurrection (John 11:24; Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:23-26). {*More will be said about this under point III below.*}
 3. There is only one resurrection, because the Lord will return only once.
 - a. Revelation 1:7 – every eye shall see Him
 - b. 2 Peter 3:10 – the earth destroyed, no later return
 - c. Hebrews 9:27-28 – He appears the second time
 - d. 1 Timothy 6:13-14 – the appearing, not an appearing
 - e. 2 Timothy 4:1, 8 – one appearing (Titus 2:13)
 - f. 1 Corinthians 15:52 – the last trump
 4. As a result, there also will be only one judgment (Acts 17:30-31; Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10).
 - a. This judgment will take place when Jesus returns (Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10).
 - b. Notice that the righteous are rewarded and the wicked are punished at the same time.
 5. This is what the Bible teaches about the resurrection and the judgment.
- C. **The Response:** *Revelation 19 does not record the Second Coming of Christ, but His coming in judgment upon Babylon (symbolizing the Roman Empire).*
 1. The Book of Revelation was written concerning “things which must shortly come to pass” (1:1, 3; 22:6, 10).
 2. It does not detail things that would happen in the distant future.

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- D. **The Accusation:** *“A-Millennialism cannot be correct, because Revelation 20:1-7 clearly tells us that there WILL BE a one thousand year reign. To say that there will be no Millennium is to simply DENY the word of God.”*
- E. **The Response:** *The 1,000 years of Revelation 20 are symbolic, not literal.*
1. The Book of Revelation was written in symbols that were intended to signify things to the readers (1:1, 19-20).
 2. It is worth noting that **only** the 1,000 years are to be taken literally in Revelation 20.
 - a. The bottomless pit is not literal.
 - b. The chain is not literal.
 - c. The dragon is not literal.
 - d. Yet, the 1,000 years must be literal!
 3. Consider the following doctrines concerning the Millennium (1,000 years).
 - a. Postmillennialism – the belief that Jesus will return after the Millennium.
 - b. Premillennialism – the belief that Jesus will return before the Millennium.
 - c. Amillennialism – the belief that the Millennium is not a literal period of 1,000 years.
 4. The 1,000 years of Revelation 20 refers to a complete and full period of time during which the church was victorious over persecutions brought upon them by world powers.

II. Does the Bible Teach Premillennialism?

- A. **The Accusation:** *“True Bible-believers take the Pre-Millennial view, which is the correct view, according to the word of God. Notice the order of events in Revelation.... The Bible is perfectly clear in stating that the 1000 year reign of Christ will come immediately AFTER the Second Coming. Anyone can see that.”*
- B. **The Response:** *The Book of Revelation is not a chronological account of events up unto the present and even until the end of time.*
1. Again, this book deals with things that were soon to come to pass.
 2. The Bible nowhere teaches the Premillennial doctrine of the Rapture.
 3. The Bible nowhere teaches the Premillennial doctrine of the Tribulation.
 - a. The “great tribulation” of Matthew 24 referred to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.
 - b. The Old Testament prophets were usually referring to the period of captivity for Israel and Judah.
 - c. The passages in Revelation deal with the persecution of the church in the first century, not a tribulation near the end of time.
 4. The Bible nowhere teaches the Premillennial doctrine of the Antichrist.
 - a. The Bible does not mention **one** Antichrist, but many antichrists (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7).
 - b. This is not one specific individual, but anyone who is “against” Christ.
 5. The Bible nowhere teaches the Premillennial doctrine of an Earthly Kingdom.
 - a. During His life on earth, Jesus taught that His kingdom was to be established very soon (Luke 1:32-33; Matthew 4:17, 23; 10:7; 12:28; 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 21:31-32; etc.).
 - b. However, His kingdom was spiritual, not earthly (John 6:15; 18:36; Luke 17:20-21; etc.).
 - c. After His ascension, the disciples of Jesus taught that the kingdom was in existence (Colossians 1:13; 4:11; Revelation 1:6, 9; 1 Cor. 15:23-26).
 - d. The truth is, the kingdom of Christ is the church of Christ – which began on the Day of Pentecost (Mark 9:1; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4).

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- e. Jesus is not returning to establish an earthly kingdom; for, His spiritual kingdom is already in existence.
6. It is a shame that so many misuse the symbols of the book of Revelation to contradict the plain and simple teachings of other passages of Scripture.
- C. **The Accusation:** *“II Peter 3:8-10... [T]he ‘day of the Lord’ can begin with the Second Coming and end a thousand years later with the White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20:11-15.”*
 1. The argument is that the “day of the Lord” is not actually a “day,” but a period of 1,000 years.
 2. Of course, this is an attempt to find the Millennium in a passage that does not teach it.
- D. **The Response:** *Peter’s statement has to do with the certainty of God’s promises, not with the false doctrine of a literal Millennium.*
 1. This passage does not teach that the Lord will return twice – each event separated by 1,000 years.
 2. This passage does not teach that there will be two resurrections and judgments – each separated by 1,000 years.
 3. Instead, it teaches that when the Lord returns the world will be destroyed.
 4. There is no time for a millennium because the world will no longer exist!

III. How Many Resurrections Does the Bible Teach?

- A. **The Accusation:** *“Revelation 20:5 (which is NEVER quoted by the Church of Christ) speaks of a ‘first resurrection’ for the Christians BEFORE the 1000 year reign. Lost people are not brought up to the White Throne Judgment until AFTER the 1000 year reign in Revelation 20:11-15, and this is called the ‘second death.’ So there is a ‘first resurrection’ for the saved BEFORE the Millennium, and there is a ‘second death’ for the lost AFTER the Millennium.”*
- B. **The Response:** *Like so many things in the Book of Revelation, the “first resurrection” and the “second death” are symbolic, not literal.*
 1. The Bible often uses the imagery of a resurrection in symbolic ways.
 - a. Ezekiel 37 – The return of Israel and Judah from captivity
 - b. Romans 6:3-5, 11 – New life in Christ
 - c. Romans 11:15 – Salvation of the Jews who obey the Gospel
 - d. Revelation 11:11 – Triumph of Christianity over persecution
 2. The “first resurrection” also refers to the victory of the church over its enemies.
 - a. When the worldly powers were defeated, persecution of Christians was greatly lessened or even ended.
 - b. Thus, the devil was defeated and the saints were victorious – they “lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”
 - c. This is the first resurrection – a revival of their cause, the cause of Christ – not a literal resurrection of bodies from the grave.
 - d. Those who have a part in the first resurrection are the Christians who remained faithful to the Lord in the face of terrible persecution and death.
 - e. Thus, they have nothing to fear on the Day of Judgment, for they will not be affected by the second death.
 3. The Bible tells us specifically what the “second death” is (Revelation 20:13-15).
 4. It is eternal death – separation from God – when souls are cast into the lake of fire!
 5. Thus, as noted previously, the Bible teaches that there will be only one resurrection and one judgment for all men at the end of time when Jesus returns (John 5:28-29; 11:24; Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:23-26; etc.).

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- C. **The Accusation:** *“The saints are resurrected BEFORE THE Millennium so they can reign with Christ DURING the Millennium, but the Church of Christ OMITS the Millennium altogether, making the First Resurrection and the Second Death one and the same. By doing this they create a ‘general judgment’ for everyone, which is entirely unscriptural.”*
- D. **The Response:** *The Bible does not teach this doctrine of the Rapture.*
1. First, as noted before, the “first resurrection” and the “second death” are not “one and the same.”
 2. However, the Bible does teach a “general resurrection” and a “general judgment” for everyone – thus, it is entirely scriptural.
 3. The rapture is a false doctrine espoused by those who believe in Dispensational Premillennialism.
 4. It is usually based upon a misunderstanding of the book of Revelation and a misapplication of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.
 - a. It must be noted that the word “rapture” is not found in the Bible.
 - b. In fact, the word is defined as, “A state or experience of being carried away by overwhelming emotion: a mystical experience in which the spirit is exalted to a knowledge of divine things” (Miriam Webster).
 - c. The Premillennial idea of the Rapture did not come along until the mid-to-late 1800’s.
 5. The Premillennial doctrine of the Rapture teaches that Jesus will first return for His saints in a secret and silent coming (1 Thes. 4:13-18).
 - a. The righteous dead will be raised and ascend into the heavens to be with the Lord.
 - b. The righteous living will be caught up into the clouds with the ascending souls of the righteous dead.
 - c. While these are with the Lord, there will be seven years of tribulation upon the earth.
 6. After seven years, the Lord will return again with His saints (those who were raptured) and resurrect all those who were faithful to Him during the tribulation.
 7. Then, all the righteous will reign with Christ for 1,000 years upon the earth.
 8. Having already seen that the Lord will return only once and that there will be but one resurrection and judgment, let us consider this idea of the Rapture.
 9. Jesus will come for His saints (1 Thes. 4:13-18).
 - a. However, this is not a “secret” or “silent” coming of the Lord!
 - b. This is His final coming, for those who meet Him in the air shall ever be with Him.
 10. Jesus will come with His saints (1 Thes. 3:13).
 - a. This is not a separate occasion, but also the final coming of the Lord.
 - b. When we die, our spirits return to God while our bodies return to the earth (Ecclesiastes 12:7).
 - c. Thus, when Jesus returns, He will come with the spirits of the saints that will be reunited with their resurrected bodies.
 11. When Jesus returns, the dead will be raised (1 Cor. 15:23; John 5:28-29).
 12. When Jesus returns, the living will be changed (1 Cor. 15:51-52).
 13. Then, together, the righteous living and dead will ascend to meet the Lord and be with Him forever (1 Thes. 4:13-18).
 14. The earth will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10-12).
 14. The wicked will be condemned and cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).
- E. The Lord will return but once, and there will be no second chances.
- F. We must make sure we are ready for that day by studying and obeying the Gospel of Christ.

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Conclusion:

1. This study began with this challenge from Mr. Melton: *“If you attend a Church of Christ, or you know someone who does, I challenge you to read this study carefully, checking all of the scripture references in your Bible and praying for the Lord to show you the truth (Jn. 16:13). Remember, Jesus said SEEK and you shall FIND (Mt. 7:7).”*
2. In his conclusion, Mr. Melton states: *“Friend, you have seen how the Bible interprets itself. You have seen the TRUTH about the doctrines of the Church of Christ. According to Romans 16:17-18, these people should be MARKED and AVOIDED. We urge you to start looking for a true Bible believing church where the word of God is preached and taught correctly.”*
3. He then issues the following plea: *“If you’ve never been saved, we urge you to carefully and prayerfully read the Salvation verse that we’ve already presented. You can be saved this very moment, but you must repent of your sins (Lk. 13:3) and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour. ONLY JESUS CHRIST can save you. Your church membership, your baptism, and your good intentions cannot save you. We urge you to repent of your sins and call upon the Lord to save you today, for tomorrow may be too late.”*
4. We have studied the accusations made in this pamphlet carefully and in fairness – reading and considering each verse of Scripture mentioned.
5. In so doing, we have found that many of the things Mr. Melton claimed the Bible teaches are in fact doctrines and traditions of men.
6. In his tract, he has added to and taken from the Word of God.
7. He has misapplied and plainly denied certain teaching of the Bible in order to hold to his preconceived, denominational doctrines.
8. In fact, it is Mr. Melton and those who believe like he does that should be marked and avoided.
9. His teachings cannot be trusted for they do not come from the Bible.
10. Instead, if one desires to be saved from sin, he must obey the commands of the Lord.
 - a. Hear the Gospel Romans 10:17
 - b. Believe in Jesus John 8:24
 - c. Repent of sins Acts 17:30-31
 - d. Confess faith in Christ Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37
 - e. Be baptized Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Gal. 3:27; etc.
 - f. Live faithfully Revelation 2:10

If you would like to read the entire text of “The Bible versus the ‘Church of Christ’” by Mr. Melton, it can be on the following website: www.av1611.org/jmelton/chchurch.html