Our Glorious Future – the Millennium
Matthew 19:27-30

Our beliefs greatly affect our attitude, outlook, actions and relationships. The early church had a robust view of heaven which helped them overcome incredible opposition, defy all odds and find victory in life. So we have taken 6 Sundays to refresh our vision of what God has in store for us in heaven.

- We started right after the wonderful testimonies the guys in Vermont Adult & Teen Challenge shared about the transformation Jesus was doing in their own lives.
- Our first Sunday, we were encouraged to picture heaven as the home Jesus has prepared for us. Home, in the best sense of the word, is that place we want to be, where we feel comfortable, where friends & family visit and where we can be ourselves. That also means there will always be some sense of missing something in this life because we are not home yet.
- Our second Sunday, we saw how God refers to a new earth in what we call eternity – heaven is not just ‘spiritual’. God wants us to picture a genuine place full of the abundance of the good things of this life and an absence of all wrong, sinful or unjust things.
- Our third Sunday, we saw how being able to see God face-to-face will be one of our greatest privileges and it is something very different from now. As John Donne summarized it many centuries ago, “No man ever saw God and lived. And yet, I shall not live till I see God; and when I have seen Him, I shall never die.”
- Our fourth Sunday, we looked at what we may do in heaven and found that boring won’t be in the vocabulary. There is much to do and learn in heaven as we will have work to do, be given responsibilities, be filled with joy and have times of recreation. We will create, discover, cooperate, build, improve, help others and so much more.
- Our fifth Sunday, we looked at what our human relationships will be like in heaven as we experience God’s full plan for relationships – deepening those we knew on earth and gaining many new ones!
- Our sixth Sunday, we saw how a proper view of heaven profoundly affects the way we live right now helping us live more pure & holy lives, helping us live more meaningful lives, and bringing a solid optimism & excitement into our lives that is not dependent on our current circumstances.

Then last Sunday, we were reminded that the Word, the eternal Son of God, who is both God and in relationship with God the Father and Holy Spirit left all the glories of heaven and temporarily emptied Himself to become the man Jesus to reach out in love to those He created knowing full well many would ignore Him. Christmas is the celebration of the incarnation – that is God becoming a man – and that is worthy of a great celebration!!

This week we want to finish our series on heaven by looking specifically at the millennium. The millennium is the 1,000 year period specifically spoken about in Revelation chapter 20.
where Jesus will literally rule over a renewed earth bringing in an unprecedented period of peace and abundance. It starts after Jesus’s second coming when He returns to defeat the antichrist and evil. Satan & the demonic will be bound for 1,000 years at that time. The millennium ends when Satan & the demonic are released 1,000 years later and lead a final great rebellion before they are banished in hell forever. That is also when the Great White Throne Judgement happens. After all this, then the final, eternal new heavens and new earth are made in Revelation 21. The Old Testament prophets spoke much about this time, especially of the rule and reign of the future Messiah and all the changes that will come from that.

Now, not all Bible-believing Christians through history have held to a future 1,000 year millennium period with Jesus literally ruling in Jerusalem over a renewed earth after His 2nd coming. This was the only teaching for the first 300 years of the church. It is also called “chiliasm” (kill-e-asim) in history or today it is referred to as “pre-millennial” since Jesus’s second coming is BEFORE an actual millennial period. Then as Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire a number of Christian leaders started to teach that there was no separate millennium. Augustine in the late 400’s is an example of this. They said Christ was already reigning over the earth through the expansion of the church. Although there are differences in the specifics Amillennialists believe that this gospel age (or a part of it) is the millennium. When the Protestant reformation exploded a third claim about the millennium was raised. This is called Postmillennialism because they believe Jesus returns after the church has defeated Satan, sin and worldliness in the whole world and installed Jesus’ righteous rule everywhere. This golden age of peace and Christian influence will come on earth BEFORE Jesus returns and remakes the new heavens and new earth in Revelation 21. While very few hold this view today, this was the most popular Christian view in America in the first half of the 1800’s.

My purpose today is not to argue which is the right interpretation which is the only thing people seemed to do when I was younger. Instead I want to think about the millennium itself whether you hold it as spiritual (Amillennial), a golden age where most people in the world become Christians (Post-millennial) or the fulfillment of the many OT prophecies and promises which Jesus will literally do after His second coming (Pre-millennialism) which I strongly hold to and teach – today we just want to go back and see the encouragement Jesus wants us to see in this picture He gives us. I will share this from a pre-millennium perspective because that is what I believe.

PROPOSITION: The millennium is a 1,000 year period where God’s faithful will work, rule, and be richly rewarded by Jesus on a renewed earth where Jesus will physically reign and rule.

I. What happens when we sacrifice for Jesus?

In Matthew 19, Jesus had an encounter with a young man. In response to the young man’s questions, Jesus challenged him to give up all his wealth **now** for God’s purposes so he could have **greater wealth** in heaven – then come follow Jesus. The young man was unwilling to do this because he had much money. So Jesus then turned to his disciples and said that wealth actually makes it much tougher for a person to go to heaven. This shocked the disciples because they grew up in a culture which believed money and possessions were...
a major sign of God’s blessing. Jesus also made it clear that no one can save themselves, only God can do that – everyone’s salvation is a miracle!

Well, these words got Peter thinking, so once the shock wore off, Peter realized that he and the others had sacrificed a lot to follow Jesus – so Peter’s question now turns to “what happens when WE DO sacrifice for You, Jesus?” What is in it for us? Don’t we have that same question today? Is there any difference in what happens to a diligent, generous believer and someone else who just goes to church when they feel like it? Do our sacrifices really make any difference? Or we may become weary of doing good and think “Isn’t it time for someone else to step forward instead of just me?” What does happen when we sacrifice “for Jesus’ sake?” Now some writers though the centuries, have criticized Peter for asking about what he will get. But Jesus gives no hint of displeasure with this question – in fact, it seems to be something Jesus wants every faithful follower of His to know. So what happens when we sacrifice for Jesus?

A. We give up things others have

The first thing that will happen is that we will feel we have given things up that others haven’t. READ v 27. Peter had given up his career, his income, his friends and he had even given up being with his wife every night. Peter was married at this time, yet he was traveling around the countryside with Jesus. Had Peter given up EVERYTHING? We don’t know but we do know that each of the disciples had each given up far more than you & I have today. And they would continue to sacrifice until their martyrs’ deaths. Their commitment is inspiring! Dreams of God using us in great ways can come from this.

But sometimes when we dream of doing some great sacrifice for Jesus, we forget that after the initial surge of generosity, we feel that sacrifice in time! Peter and the others did – and it led to questioning sometimes. Many of you here have experienced a romantic relationship where you felt so strongly for the other person that you thought you would sacrifice anything for them for the rest of your life. Not right off, but years later, those romantic feelings lessen in intensity – all of a sudden, you start noticing your sacrifices and began to believe they were so much more than others around you.

A similar thing can happen in our spiritual lives. You’ve may have already hit one of these times, where the reality of our sacrifices become clear. We simply do not have as much free time, as many possessions, as much new gadgetry, or as much financial resources as others around us. Significantly joining Jesus in His work requires genuine sacrifice that you & I will feel at some point. If we are going to become more generous and more sacrificial for the long run, we need to honestly understand that the intensity of the initial joy of giving will lessen, but that discouragement will only be temporary, because Jesus has a much bigger plan than just what happen now.

B. God will “renew” or “rebirth” the earth

Matt 19:27

Matt 19:28a
Jesus starts His answer by telling them about a future event called “the renewal of all things”. READ v 28a. The word means to renew or to rebirth. Because this renewal is different from “eternal life” in v 29, I believe this is speaking about the millennium. This millennium time period is separate from eternity in heaven. At the time of the restoration of the earth, righteousness will flourish, peace will abound, Jerusalem will again be exalted, health and healing will prevail, the earth will produce food as never before, the leopard will lie down with the goat (and not eat it), the deserts will blossom, and life will be long. The millennium is the original paradise of the Garden renewed and greatly expanded! Just the idea of a world where mosquitoes don’t bite me, storms don’t destroy and the weak are not taken advantage of, personally gets me really excited! This paradise alone would make all our sacrifices in this life worth it.

C. Disciples will join Jesus on thrones to judge Matt 19:28b
Let’s continue in v 28. READ. In the millennium, Jesus is going to literally rule over the whole earth from His victorious and glorious throne in Jerusalem. That is talked about a lot, especially in the Old Testament. The surprise is that the disciples will join Jesus in ruling over that renewed earth – in fact they will even have a part in judging the twelve tribes of Israel – God’s chosen people. That’s amazing. As Christian believers we also are going to co-rule with Jesus Christ. We are going to be the administrators of the millennium government around the world – leading cities, ministries, counties, states, and countries. We will be entrusted to maintain peace & fairness, provide opportunities and learning. According to Jesus’ parables, the level of our responsibility comes from the sacrifice we make on this earth for Jesus’ sake. Because God looks at the sacrifice, not just the amount, it is fair for everyone. I already know my bosses in the millennium will be Christians from places like India or China since they give up far more than I can here in America.

D. Sacrifices for Jesus’ sake will be rewarded 100-fold Matt 19:29
Those benefits are overwhelming if you think about it, but God has more for those who sacrifice their money, their possessions, their time and their lives for Jesus’ work. READ v 29. In the future, God will repay each of us 100 times what we sacrificed here on this earth. You certainly won’t get that return anywhere now, even if you cheat, steal or swindle!!! In fact, how much we have in the millennium is based on how much we give up here on this earth for God’s work.

You can quickly see why Jesus encourages all of us to be generous. It is for our own future good. Jesus knows how things work, He is the creator. We have a choice of focusing on ourselves for this 80 years and having little for the next 1,000 years in paradise. Or being generous now with God – making real sacrifices – and having 100 times as much for 1,000 years where everything goes right and our transportation doesn’t break down. Remember these sacrifices aren’t just financial – but time, friendships, new opportunities, houses, land, business opportunities, reputation, ease. God is a debtor to NO ONE.
E. True believers will receive eternal life

At the end of v 29 Jesus adds “and inherit eternal life.” So the blessings mentioned in v 28-29 are in addition to eternal life which only comes through Jesus.

F. The values of our day will be reversed

To help us see how radical all of this really is, Jesus summarizes what He is saying in v 30. READ. The values of our day are going to be reversed. The people who are last today (that is looked down on, have few possessions, always run into difficulties), they are going to be first in this restored time I am calling the millennium. The values of our day are going to be reversed. Those with lots of stuff, lots of popularity, lots of money, lots of talents, looks, strength – many of them won’t do so well in the millennium if it is all about them or they just give or help out of their extra. Now those who have more who are generous, don’t seek personal recognition, live more modestly than their income and help lots of people they will be richly rewarded as will those who seemed to have little of this world’s goods, but were still generous with God with their time, talents and treasures even though that seemed so small at the time.

II. What makes the millennium so special for us?

Again, I am not trying to argue for a particular view of the millennium today, but get us to think about what makes the millennium so special for us? So let’s dream a little bit now. Most of you have given your lives to Jesus as Savior and Lord – recognizing & repenting of your sins and wrong thoughts – you have recognized Jesus is God come down in human form who loved us so much He died on the cross to pay the eternal penalty of our wrongs and bodily rose from the dead to confirm it – and you have shown your faith and repentance by surrendering your lives to Jesus to live as He wants us to, holding the values He wants us to hold – rather than those which are easy or help us get more positive recognition, money, relationships or stuff. In doing so you have sacrificed –

• through your financial giving,
• through your sacrifices to help others or carry out spiritual disciplines or the inconveniences you willingly go through for others, like parking over at the Opera House to give others the chance to park close or moving up in the first service or moving over to the wall in the second service so others can be in “preferred seats”.
• through sharing Jesus to people who don’t always want to hear
• through time you’ve regularly given to help Jesus’ work
• through time you’ve given to worship with others, learn more about Jesus and pray to Him in personal devotions
• through public or family abuse or criticism you have taken for holding Jesus’ values and truths
• through letting your heart break for the spiritual lostness of family members and friends or coming alongside the grieving and hurting.

All these can be sacrifices for Jesus’ work. So how is the millennium going to be special for you?
A. Jesus will rule leading to true peace and justice

Isa 9:6-7

For one, we get to look forward to a leader we can trust and who stands for the kind of things we stand for. **READ Isa 9:6-7.** Think of all the frustrations people have endured because of different governmental leaders throughout the world. Won’t it be nice to have one you can sincerely back without worrying how things will get messed up? Wow. Picture a time of real peace & justice – no need to lock your car, apartment or home. No rape, no bullies, & no crime that isn’t dealt with. People won’t be afraid to talk with strangers or walk down paths at night. I get a **peaceful, easy feeling** just describing it.

B. Earth/nature will work as it was originally intended

Isa 11 & 65

We get to look forward to a major change in how the earth and nature work. Currently nature is a cruel, dog-eat-dog, *survival of the fittest* type environment. But that is going to radically change as both Isaiah 11 and Isaiah 65 picture. Let’s just look at **Isa 11:6-9 READ.** This is what it was like before the corruption of sin radically impacted **nature itself.** Nature is going to be freed from this bondage at the **renewal of all things.** Let your mind savor this. No biting mosquitoes or annoying wasps at a picnic. We won’t itch. Our raspberries won’t be covered with Japanese beetles and the bean plants won’t be stripped by the ants. Hurricanes, tornados and earthquakes will be a thing of the past. Water will be clean wherever you go. Nature will be all that we dream it should be like when we see a beautiful sunset, majestic mountain view or bright sunny day at the beach.

And this transformation will extend to our bodies. No more will we face pain or sickness. Our backs won’t ache, our muscles won’t quit, and our breath won’t be bad. Imagine what it will feel like without the aches and pains, the unknown sicknesses and the weariness. And as we mentioned a few weeks ago, human relationships will not just be civil, they will be GREAT! Our best years are all ahead of us as Christians! That is the millennial part of God’s awesome plan!

C. We will be given responsibilities based on our sacrifices now

Luke 19:12-26

As we mentioned a couple weeks ago, the millennium (and the new heavens & new earth) is not just a place with an easy chair to watch a really giant screen TV nor is it one constant worship service. As humans, God made us to work – but God meant for our work to be successful and meaningful. That is not always the case here on earth. But at the renewal of all things, our work changes. We will be able to see its value, we won’t constantly be frustrated but will often feel the warm sense of success. The position we have will not be based on our abilities, contacts, or country **now** – our position in the millennium will be based on our **sacrifice for Jesus now.** And it is all proportional – I don’t get an advantage because you pay me to serve Jesus fulltime. Jesus gives each of us abilities and talents – the question is not how talented or gifted we are, but how we use what we do have to advance Jesus’ work in the world. That is what will determine how many cities we are in charge of according to Jesus’ parable in Luke 19.
D. Those who sacrifice the most will have abundance

And then there is Jesus’ promise to repay 100 times any sacrifice we rightly make for the advancement of God’s work in this world. Try imagining 100 times anything that you gave up this past year. Then remember those things will last 10 to 100 times longer than they would in our world today. Doesn’t that just blow your mind? It sure does make all the negative talk against you look very, very different!

E. Those who are “lower” privilege will have much

Lastly, those who have lower status or privilege now, those with less money or things now and those who have less opportunities in this life, will have much IF they continue to follow Jesus and sacrifice for His work. They may feel their sacrifice is nothing, but wait until they see the return in the millennium. Jesus regularly reminded us that the first will be last and the last first so we will never be discouraged no matter what our status in life.

I hope you have been encouraged by today’s look into Jesus’ teaching. I hope you can more vividly picture this future time so that the next time you feel self-pity because you are sacrificing & others around you aren’t, that the privilege of following Jesus will come back to you and you won’t be enslaved to self-focus. How foolish so many of our thoughts today are. I can’t help God or another person now because “If I don’t do this now, I’ll never be able to do it.” Or I can’t give to God because “If I don’t buy this now, I’ll never get another chance.” Really? God’s plan is way bigger—we’ll get to enjoy even greater things for a longer time without the problems of today.

I better stop here – thus ends our teaching on God’s marvelous plan for the future! Keep overcoming in the power of Jesus!