

Paradise Regained: The Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ

Selected Scriptures

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A couple of weeks ago, we left off our study of the millennium. We're continuing to look at the last things, those things that have yet to come, but will come because God has promised and planned them. And we find ourselves in that thousand year earthly reign of Christ after the tribulation, after the second coming, when our Lord establishes His kingdom here on this earth.

B.F. Skinner (many of you have heard about, read about, studied perhaps in college) was a Harvard professor and one whose ideas laid the foundation for much of modern psychology. In 1982, Skinner spoke to the American Psychological Association Convention and, in that address, he shocked the delegates who were there with his anger and his candor. He said,

Why are we not acting to save the world? Is there to be much more history at all?
[After his speech, an interviewer asked Skinner if he had lost his optimism, and this was his answer,]

I have. When I wrote *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, I was optimistic about the future. A decade ago, there was hope, but today [remember this is 1982, but today] the world is fatally ill. It is a depressing way to end one's life. The argument that we have always solved our problems in the past and shall therefore solve this one is like reassuring a dying man by pointing out that he's always recovered before.

He's right. From a human perspective, there is little reason for hope. We live in a world aptly described by the title of John Milton's famous poem, "Paradise Lost". What's the solution to the massive problems affecting the planet, those problems that discouraged and pushed Skinner into despair? The answer of the cultural elite and an answer that is spoken more and more openly today is there is really only one human solution and that is a one world government. This has been a common refrain for over the last fifty years.

Arnold Toynbee, the late Cambridge historian, said that, "Only a world government can save mankind from annihilation by nuclear weapons." More recently, Jonathan Schell, author of *The*

Fate of the Earth, wrote that, “Existing institutions must give way to some sort of transcendent sovereignty and security, presumably by a government that embraces all of mankind, a world government.”

Oddly enough, Toynbee, Schell, and even the liberal pundits are exactly right. They just have the timing and the person wrong. Only a one world government will solve our problems. That is God’s solution too. And it will happen when Jesus Christ returns to the earth and establishes His kingdom over this earth.

Now the last time we looked at the millennium, we examined the arguments for a literal, earthly kingdom. I’m not going to rehearse those again tonight. If you weren’t here, you can go online or listen to the CD. But tonight, what I’d like for us to do is to see what that time period from a biblical perspective will be like. It will, in a word, be the sequel to *Paradise Lost*. It will be *Paradise Regained*.

So, I just want us to trace through some of the features of this millennial reign of Jesus Christ starting with the most obvious question. The inhabitants – who will be there? All resurrected and glorified believers, only believers will enter the kingdom. There will be Jewish believers there. Isaiah 60:21 says, “Then (speaking of those days) all your people will be righteous; they will possess the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified.” Paul makes the same point in Romans 11 when he says at the end of the tribulation: “all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, ‘The deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.’” Only believing Jews will enter the millennium.

The same thing is true with Gentiles. In 1 Corinthians 6:10 writing to the Corinthians’ church, Paul lists a number of sins, and then he says none of them “... will inherit the kingdom of God. But such were some of you; but you were washed, you were sanctified, (you have been made pure through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ).”

In Revelation 5:9 and 10, we read,

... they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You to take the book, to break its seals; for You were slain, and You purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and nation and people. [And] You have made them *to be a*

kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.” [Only those who are blood-bought, changed by God, will reign with Christ, will be in the earth.]

Now when we consider the inhabitants of the millennium, there is one difficult issue. Why do a number of passages imply the continuing presence of sin? Controlled sin, sin controlled and squashed immediately by Jesus Christ in His reign with a rod of iron, but sin nonetheless. In fact, according to Revelation 20, at the end of the thousand years, there will be a massive rebellion led by Satan against God and against the Lamb. Revelation 20:8 says their number will be like the sand that’s on the seashore; a massive rebellion at the end of the thousand-year period.

So, who are these human rebels? If only believers go in, who are these human rebels and where did they come from? Well, there are really only three options, and only one of those is viable. Option number one is that these were true believers who went into the millennium saved, but at some point change their mind, reject Christ and His rule. Obviously, that runs contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture so that is an impossibility.

A second possibility is that they are unbelievers who survived the tribulation, are allowed into the millennium and live through the entire thousand year period. But as we just saw from just a sampling of Scriptures, the Scripture is clear that will not happen.

So, that leaves only one other possibility and that is they are born, these rebels are born, during the thousand years. And there is some reference to such happenings in the millennium. Isaiah 65:20 says, “No longer will there be in it an infant *who lives but a few days*, Or an old man who does not live out his days; For the youth will die at the age of one hundred And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be *thought* accursed.” So there are children, there are infants.

And by the way, let me just comment on this verse in case you’re confused who’s dying here. Notice that the implication is that those who die will be the wicked, those who die will be those who refuse to bow the knee to Jesus Christ and His rule. But there are going to be children born apparently. The question is to whom are these children born? Obviously, not to glorified believers, Jesus said there will not be a marriage relationship with them like there is on earth.

Luke 20:34 - Jesus said, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage." So, there must be non-glorified believers who enter the kingdom. The most common explanation is that there will be redeemed survivors of the tribulation – people who live during the tribulation time and come to genuine faith, survive the tribulation, are not killed, but because they are still living, they enter the kingdom in normal, physical bodies.

Now, we can't be absolutely sure of this, but this seems to be the only reasonable explanation. Some would object immediately and say that's odd to have. In fact, one writer calls it "a mixed multitude of glorified saints and unglorified saints." Well, certainly from our vantage point, that seems unusual, but it certainly happened after the resurrection of Christ. He in glorified form lived and interacted with the disciples for forty days who were non-glorified believers so it can happen. And apparently, these redeemed survivors of the tribulation will go in in their physical bodies in unglorified form, will in turn have children who have children, and so forth.

And because of the ideal conditions and no sicknesses, they will multiply. These unglorified saints will still be tainted by original sin which they will pass along to their offspring. So, every child born will be a sinner in need of salvation. Many will be saved. Isaiah 65 references the salvation that will come during that time. Many will not. Christ will deal swiftly with those who openly rebel. Psalm 2:9 says, "You will break them with a rod of iron, You will shatter them like earthenware."

But there will be many who neither come to faith nor who openly rebel against Christ. And so, they will live long lives, quietly submitting but not loving Jesus Christ. And at the end of the millennium, there will be many alive to participate in Satan's rebellion. That's our best guess as to where these rebels come from. But the inhabitants for the most part of the millennium (those going into the millennium) will be true believers, Jew and Gentile alike.

I want to move secondly to the character of this period of time. What are some of the defining features of this time period? The Scripture is clear in Revelation 20:1 - 3 that Satan will be bound. For that thousand year period, he will be bound. He and his minions will not have the external, overt influence that they have today. They will be bound. In addition to that, we learn that this present earth will be renewed.

Now, before I go on, let me just ask then answer the question how do we know that the millennium will occur on the earth? Well, there are a number of reasons. Let me just give you a couple. Revelation 5:10 says that the saints will reign upon the earth. Now those who reject our view, they only have one alternative and that is to say they're reigning right now. And yet, Paul the apostle, the inspired apostle, says we are not reigning now. The only alternative is the millennial period of time when we reign upon the earth.

Revelation 19, Christ returns, and when He returns (and everyone agrees with this), He returns to the earth. And the next flow in the story there, in the chronology of Revelation, is the millennium. At the end of the millennium in Revelation 20:9, after the thousand years, the last battle that's described there occurs on the earth according to the text.

And in addition to that, reason number four is that many Old Testament texts show that this was the expectation of the Old Testament saints. They expected an earthly reign.

This time, this period of time, this thousand years, will be a renewal for the creation. In fact, Jesus described it in Matthew 19:28 as "the regeneration". In Acts 3:19, Peter calls it "times of refreshing". In Acts 3:21 it is the "restoration of all things". It will be a paradise regained to a large extent. There are several verses that point up this renewal of the earth. The most familiar perhaps, Isaiah 11:7 – 9,

“... the cow and the bear will graze, Their young will lie down together, ... the lion will eat straw like the ox. The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.” [A renewed earth.]

Isaiah 35:1, “The wilderness and the desert will be glad, and the Arabah (the desert area) will rejoice and blossom; like the crocus It will blossom profusely.”

You move on to Amos and Amos has a very descriptive expression for the productivity of the earth. He said,

“Behold, [the] days are coming” [in Amos 9:13], declares the LORD, “When the plowman will overtake the reaper (there’ll be such productivity in the earth that they can’t stay out of each other’s way). ... the treader of grapes him who sows seed; When the mountains will drip sweet wine And all the hills will be dissolved. ... [I] also ... will restore the captivity of My people Israel, And they will rebuild the ruined cities and live *in them*; They will ... plant vineyards and drink their wine, And make gardens and eat their fruit.” [A renewed earth.]

Another characteristic of this time period is that Jesus will reign as king. This is what makes the millennium the millennium. This is the defining characteristic. Isaiah 9 promises that this child who would be born would someday have the government resting upon His shoulders and “There ... [would] be no end to the increase of His government or of His peace, On the throne of David and over His kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore.” You see the same thing in Isaiah 11:1 - 10.

In Daniel 7, Jesus is described as the One who comes up to the Ancient of Days. “And to Him was given (He’s the Son of Man, to Him was given) dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.” The thousand years introduces His reign and His reign continues forever.

At His birth, you remember it was announced that in Luke 1:32,

“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His Father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob [for His] forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

So, Jesus will reign as king, but He will mediate that reign through His saints. He will do it through Old Testament saints according to Daniel 7:27 where we’re told that the people of the saints of the Highest One will be given dominion and the kingdom.

In the New Testament, we find that He will also mediate His reign not only through Old Testament saints, but through the apostles. In Matthew 19:28 Jesus says to His apostles that “in

the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

But here’s the shocking part. Not only will Jesus mediate His reign through the Old Testament saints and through the apostles, but through us as well, through New Testament believers. First Corinthians 6:2, “... do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to *constitute* the smallest law courts?” Why are you going to court with other believers? Paul says. If you’re going to eventually judge the world, can’t you work it out in the church?

Second Timothy 2:12, “If we endure, we will reign with Him....” Revelation 2:26, “... [To him] who overcomes [which is all Christians]... TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS....” Revelation 3:21, “He who overcomes, I will grant him to sit down with Me on My throne....” Revelation 5:10, “... they will reign upon the earth.” And Revelation 20:6: “... they will reign with Him for a thousand years.” You and I, as believers in Jesus Christ, will mediate the rule of Jesus Christ on this earth.

Another characteristic of this time period is that Jerusalem will be the focal point of God’s presence. And I’ve chosen those words carefully. God is not confined to a space, never has been, never will be. But God has had, if you will, throughout human history at various times an address. Often in the Old Testament, that address was the tabernacle or the temple. In the New Testament, that address was of course His own beloved Son. But in the millennium, that address will be again in Jerusalem. It will be the focal point of God’s presence. Isaiah 24:23 says, “... the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, And *His* glory will be before His elders.” Jeremiah 3:17, “At that time they will call Jerusalem ‘The Throne of the LORD’, and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of the LORD.” Ezekiel 43:7, “He said to me, ‘Son of man, *this is* the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever....’” And again, in Micah 4:7, he makes the same point. “... the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion From now on and forever.” Zechariah 8:3, “... I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts *will be called* the Holy Mountain.”

What about the worship of this period of time? That's the characteristics of it, but what about its worship? Those have been hinted at in some of the verses we've looked at. In the middle of the writing of the prophet Ezekiel, we have one of the most lengthy and descriptive passages regarding the millennium. And it details the worship of the millennium. It's introduced in Ezekiel 37:27 where God says,

“My dwelling place ... will be with them; ... I will be their God, ... they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.”

Now that is a summary statement. Chapters 40 - 48 of Ezekiel are an expansion or explanation of that. And Ezekiel 40 - 48 predicts two really mind-boggling things. One of them is a millennial temple and the other (and this is a question) is animal sacrifices.

Let's look first at the millennial temple. There are other such prophecies that there will be a temple in Jerusalem during this thousand year period of time. In Isaiah 2:2,

... it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths. For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

You notice there's a prophecy about the house of God being a central focus of the worship of God's people and of the earth during that time. The same thing in Haggai 2:9, ““The latter glory of this house (speaking of the millennium) will be greater than the former,” says the Lord of hosts.”

But Ezekiel 40 - 48 is by far, far the most complete and comprehensive view of this millennial temple. It's clearly plans for a temple. No one debates that. If you read chapters 40 - 48, those are plans for a temple. Some argue that perhaps it's describing one of Israel's past temples. Well, let's think about that for a moment. It's not Solomon's temple because the details don't match if you compare it with 1 Kings 6 and 7. It can't be Zerubbabel's temple built after the Babylonian

captivity because the glory cloud was never there, but it is in this temple according to Ezekiel 43:5. Others argue, 'Well, it must be the heavenly Jerusalem that comes down from God out of heaven in Revelation 21.' It can't be that either because if that's true, why was Ezekiel taken to Israel to see it according to 40:2? And it can't be the eternal temple because there is no temple in eternity. The Lord and the Lamb are its temple according to Revelation 21:22.

So, when does this temple described in Ezekiel 40 - 48 exist? Well, if you back up and look at Ezekiel 38 and 39, there you have described a battle that occurs at the end of the tribulation with a confederation of nations so you're, at the end of the tribulation period in 38 and 39. At the very end of 39, you have Israel's restoration which comes at the end of that period and the temple and its details follow that event. So logically and chronologically, it must be a millennial temple. It's not a previous temple. It's not a temple that has yet existed. And in the flow of the chronology of Ezekiel, it fits after the restoration of Israel and after the final battle. And therefore, it makes sense that it is a millennial temple.

Now the question is, is it a real temple? Will it be a real temple or is it merely symbolical? Now, we can't be absolutely dogmatic here. We don't know for sure, but there are so many carefully laid out plans and measurements; eight, nine chapters given to this, even down to how many steps in some cases, that it is hard to imagine that these nine chapters are some kind of extended allegory. If you go back and read the plans for the tabernacle, there were fewer plans than this and they were followed to the tee. And so, there is reason I think to believe that there will, in fact, be a literal temple in the millennium. We know that in the time of the tribulation there will be a rebuilt temple. Paul tells us that in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, "(antichrist) takes his seat (we're told) in the temple of God." So, it's not wild to imagine that there will also be a temple in the millennium.

The question is why? What purpose would such a temple serve? Well, I think first of all it would serve as a focal point for the presence of God just as the tabernacle and temple did in the Old Testament. And secondly, the reason is given in Ezekiel 37:28, "The nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever." It is a focal point for the presence of God. It is God's address, if you will, during the millennial period.

Now what about animal sacrifices? An earthly temple is not an insurmountable problem to most people. They can see that there would be some reason and some value to that. But Ezekiel 40 - 48 also appears to teach that there will be animal sacrifices. If you were to look at Ezekiel 43:18 and following, you've got this prescription for animal sacrifices. Well, how does that compare with Hebrews and its statement that the sacrifices have been ended in Christ? Hebrews 10:12 says, "But Christ, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God." So how could there be animal sacrifices offered in the millennium?

Well, we can't be dogmatic, but there are two possible explanations. One is that they are, and some believe that they are memorials of Christ's sacrifice, that there will be actual animal sacrifices and that they will be memorials. They argue like this. The Old Testament sacrifices never dealt with sin. In other words, those sacrifices never really accomplished anything. They were merely a perpetual reminder according to Hebrews of guilt and of the need for a perfect sacrifice. So those who hold this view argue that Israel rejected her Messiah, but she will have the opportunity to commemorate His sacrifice in a memorial form for a thousand years. Of course, there is no temple as I said in the eternal state. That's very clear. That's one view.

Another view, and one that I personally am attracted to more than the first; although again, we can't be dogmatic, is that the descriptions Ezekiel gives here of animal sacrifices are merely representative of worship. In other words, Ezekiel wrote his prophecy in the sixth century B.C. so he used terms and concepts of worship with which his audience was familiar. For example, when the Bible describes future battles being fought with bows and arrows, it doesn't mean that mankind will again resort to ancient warfare techniques, simply putting battle in the language that the people who received that book originally understood. There'll be a battle, and there will be weapons of war. In the same way, in writing about animal sacrifices, Ezekiel was letting us know that there will be the genuine worship of God with whatever forms He prescribes. The authors were merely using descriptions of reality with which their audience would have been familiar. That may very well be an explanation for these animal sacrifices. Those are two possible explanations. There may be more. Those are the two more likely ones.

So, that will be the worship. God will be the focal point. The knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover (the, or will cover the) earth as well. And Jesus Christ will reign as king.

Now that brings us to where I wanted to bring us tonight and that is, what will that time really be like? What are the blessings of this time? Here is really the application if you will of our study of the millennium because as I detail these things, understand that you have all of these blessings to look forward to. If you're in Christ, these are the realities of what you will enjoy during the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. I've borrowed these from a helpful chapter in Alva McClain's book *The Greatness of the Kingdom*. I'm not going to write out all the verses by the way, but I'll give you some references. We'll print them for next week and you can check them out later.

I'm just going to go through the list of the blessings starting with the spiritual blessings that will be ours in the millennium. It's really amazing. There will be spiritual salvation there. In fact, I love Isaiah 12. In fact, we have to turn there. I won't do this the whole way. I promise you. But turn to Isaiah 12. Isaiah 12, in this chapter, Isaiah details the praise that will be expressed to God during this period of time. Notice the depth of the expression of praise that will be the people of God during that time.

Then you will say on that day, "I will give thanks to You, O LORD; For although You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, ... He has become my salvation [I love verse 3]." Therefore you will joyously draw water From the springs of salvation. [in other words, as you meditate on, as you think about, as you draw up all the truths of what God has done in salvation, you will drink from that water, and it'll give you spiritual joy]. ... in that day you will say, "Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name. Make known His deeds among the peoples; Make *them* remember that His name is exalted." Praise the LORD in song, for He has done excellent things; Let this be known throughout the earth. Cry aloud and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel."

There is a psalm or a song that we will sing in that day. It's a time of great spiritual salvation and rejoicing in the salvation that's ours.

It's a time of grace. According to Zechariah at the very beginning of that period, grace, the spirit of grace, will be poured out on the people of God. It's a time of repentance. The new covenant descriptions describe that time and it's a time of repentance. It's a time of regeneration according to Ezekiel 36. It's a time of sanctification in which there will be perfect holiness. It's a time of joy. Those are the spiritual blessings, some of the spiritual blessings that will be ours during that period of time. There are so many others. There's comfort. There's peace. There's joy. Those will all be ours in perfection; perfect, unending joy, perfect, unending peace, the experience of grace and perfect holiness. What a wonderful time spiritually that will be.

It'll also be a time of ethical blessings; pretty amazing when you look at some of the texts that the writers describe. They, the prophets are often rebuking God's people for what's going on or what was going on then. And he says but there's coming a day when things will be different. And he rehearses some of those ethical blessings that will be theirs during the millennium. There will be a complete readjustment of social values because Jesus Christ will be on the throne. There will be an objective standard. The law will be the standard. It will go out (Isaiah 2 says) from Jerusalem to all the earth. There will be an accurate appraisal of moral worth. No longer will those things that are wicked and sinful be judged of value, but only those things that reflect the character of Jesus Christ. Truth will be exalted.

There will be a personal retribution for sin on those who refuse to accept the king, those born during that period of time who refuse to accept the king. There will be an open demonstration of God's moral economy. No one will doubt that Jesus Christ is king and that He has laid down His law and those who cross the line will be dealt with and dealt with directly. There will be no question that He is in control.

In addition to those ethical blessings, there will be social blessings. Several passages remind us that all warfare will be abolished. They will beat their spears into implements of farming. And suddenly, there will be no more need for warfare. Imagine for a moment a world in which all of the money that all of the nations of the world now pour into their defense industry poured into

caring for people and the earth. That's what it will be in that day. There will be no warfare. There'll be no need for it. There'll be complete social justice.

How often in our day is justice miscarried? There will be complete social justice in that day. Every legitimate interest of human life will receive its place. There will be respect and dignity for the old. There will be joyous and safe recreation for the children according to a couple of the texts I've put on the screen for you there. McClain writes,

This is no kingdom of asceticism where the normal impulses of humanity implanted by divine creation will be suppressed. The coming of God's kingdom will bring glad release to all to who submit to its king. The change will be so great that at first, men will be like them that dream (it'll be like we're in the middle of a dream). Then, as they realize that what is happening is no illusion, their mouths will be filled with laughter and their tongue with singing. [He pulls that from these texts that I've listed on the screen.]

It'll be a time of great political blessing as well. There will be an international authority. "Jesus shall reign (as the hymn writer says) where e'er the sun doth its successive journeys run." One international authority. There will be a world capital. It'll be Jerusalem. That's typical in any government. There has to be a capital city. There will be in the millennium as well. Israel's pariah status will be removed. There will be the adjudicating and righting of all political wrongs. We're told in Isaiah that the Lord will hear the disputes and discern the differences between the nations and will set them right. According to Zephaniah 3, there'll be one common language. Those will be the blessings, the political blessings that come with the millennium.

There'll also be many physical blessings that will come with the millennium. The climate, for example, will change according to Isaiah 30 – much more conducive to life and to growth and to productivity. It reminds me of Mark Twain. You know, Mark Twain said, "Everybody talks about the weather, but no one ever does anything about it." Well, our Lord will. In that day, He will change it. Waste areas will become fruitful. Those areas that are now unfarmable, unusable, that are simply a blight as it were on the surface of the earth, will become usable and fruitful. There will be increased productivity and fertile, fertile growth of all that man needs.

There'll be changes in the animal world, for the safety of man from the animals as well as peace between the animals. In fact, that reference I read a little earlier, "the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and the little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together." There'll also be no carnivores as verse 7 there says: "the lion will eat straw like an ox."

Couple of other physical changes that are amazing, there'll be the disappearance of physical disease and deformity. The hospitals and doctors and nurses will be out of business. They'll have to find another career because it won't exist. There'll be freedom from ordinary hazards. The ordinary hazards of life will not be there during the millennium.

It will be, in every sense, a wonderful paradise regained. In his book *Not the Way it's Supposed to Be*, Cornelius Plantinga recounts a scene from a 1991 movie "Grand Canyon". I am indebted to David MacLeod for sharing it. I read it in his book.

In the film 'Grand Canyon', an immigration attorney tries to avoid a traffic jam by taking another route and eventually, he finds himself in the typical nightmare scenario. His fancy sports car stalls in a dark inner city neighborhood. Before the tow truck arrives, five gang members surround his car and threaten him. About that time, the (tow) tow truck driver, an earnest young man by the name of Simon arrives and begins to hook up the car. Of course, the five gang members protest because they were about to enjoy the fruit of their robbery. So, Simon takes the leader of the gang aside and tries to give him a two-minute introduction to morality. And this is what he says, "Man, the world ain't supposed to work like this. Maybe you don't know that, but this ain't the way it's supposed to be. I'm supposed to be able to do my job without asking you if I can. And that dude is supposed to be able to wait with his car without you ripping him off. Everything's supposed to be different than what it is here."

Cornelius Plantinga, in his book, makes the point that that is exactly right because of the presence of sin. Everything is supposed to be different than it is here. Simon was right, and

someday, it will be different when Jesus Christ reigns over this earth as the king. May God bring that day, Your kingdom come.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank You for Your amazing plan, Your plan of the ages in which You will one day bring the authority of this world back under the control of Your Son, that He will break the seals of the title deed of the earth there in the book of Revelation, and He will regain control from the usurper Satan. And then, He will return and establish His kingdom for a thousand years here on this earth. And He will rule with a rod of iron. Father, we thank You that we can anticipate the day when we will stand with Him, ruling with Him, serving Him in paradise regained.

Father, I pray that You would bring that time swiftly to us. We pray as we have been taught to pray by our Lord, "Your kingdom come". Not only, Father, do we mean by that that the kingdom of our Lord would be advanced in every heart, but we mean that the literal earthly kingdom of Christ would come soon. We pray that tonight.

Until that time, Father, enable us to be patient. Enable us to be gracious with those who are enslaved to sin all around us. Help us to hate the sin without hating the sinner. And help us to long for the day when everything will be the way it's supposed to be.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.