

# PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet  
and a light to my path"*  
Psalm 119:104

July 7, 2019

## The Apostles Judging on Thrones

by Frank Himmel

One of our readers asked about Jesus' promise to the apostles in Matthew 19:28: "And Jesus said to them, 'Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'" Understanding this promise hinges on the answer to several questions.

### What is the Regeneration?

The word itself means a rebirth or a renewal. The specific term occurs only here and in Titus 3:5 in the phrase *washing of regeneration*, a reference to baptism. When we are baptized into Christ we are raised to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4), hence we are "born again" (John 3:3). Being a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) and putting on the new self (Ephesians 4:24) are parallel ideas.

Jesus identifies it as the time when the Son of Man "will sit on His glorious throne." That same phrase in Matthew 25:31 is a reference to the final judgment, leading millennialists to see our text as a reference to an earthly kingdom yet to be established. But the Bible plainly affirms that Jesus is already on the throne (Revelation 3:21) and His kingdom is a present reality (Colossians 1:13-14).

Luke records a parallel promise about the apostles sitting on thrones and judging (22:28-30), connected with eating and drinking with Him in His kingdom. While it is true that the word *kingdom* is sometimes used in a future eternal sense, these references are certainly capable of a much more immediate application.

In our text, the rich young ruler had just departed, unwilling to give up his possessions to follow Jesus. Jesus pointed out to the apostles that it is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God (vv. 23-24). The apostles, who had left all to follow Jesus, asked, "What will there be for us?" Jesus' answer included not only them (v. 28) but all (v. 29). They would sit on thrones, and all would receive many times as much "in this present age" (Mark 10:30) as they had given up...and then eternal life in the age to come.

Thus, the regeneration is the gospel era. Those who are dead in sin come to life in Christ, who now reigns. "The eternal kingdom" (2 Peter 1:11) is the culmination of this era, when Jesus hands over the kingdom to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24). ▶



## How Do the Apostles Judge?

Judgement is based on Jesus' words (John 12:48), the message the Father gave Him to speak (v. 49). It was the apostles' work to preach that word to the whole world (Mark 16:15), completing, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the divine revelation that Jesus began (John 16:13-15). Thus, they are said to be the foundation of God's house, Jesus being the corner stone (Ephesians 2:20). Jesus previously told these "judges," "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18).



In view of these references to the apostles' authority, it is a serious mistake to take the popular approach that denigrates what they said and sees only what Jesus said personally as binding on us.

All saints in some sense judge the world (1 Corinthians 6:2). Just as Noah by his faithful obedience condemned the ungodly world of his day (Hebrews 11:6), faithful Christians stand, both now and in the judgment, as a testimony against those who choose to reject the gospel. The apostles certainly lead in that role as well.

## Who Are the Twelve Tribes of Israel?

The apostles first preached to literal Israel. On the day of Pentecost Peter began, "Men of Israel, listen to these words..." (Acts 2:22); and he concluded, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain

## A Christian

In faith, he is a believer • Gal. 3:9

In heart, he is Jesus' dwelling • Eph. 3:17

In conduct, he is obedient • John 14:15

In character, he is a saint • 1 Cor. 1:2

In relation, he is a son • 1 John 3:1

In darkness, he is a light • Phil. 2:15

In conflict, he is a soldier • Eph. 6:11

In the world, he is a pilgrim • 1 Peter 2:11

In his walk, he is a living letter • 2 Cor. 3:3

In hope, he is an heir • Rom. 8:17

that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified" (v. 36). Literal Israel is clearly judged by the apostles' word, however...

The gospel is for the whole world. The apostles' message convicts all of sin, condemns all who remain in it, and offers regeneration to any who will come to Christ. Nationality is no advantage or disadvantage. Thus, true "Israel" is those who follow Jesus (see 8:11-12; 21:43; cf. Romans 2:28-29). As the apostle Paul wrote, "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:15-16). ■

## Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	John Baucom	Adam Gibson
SONG LEADER	Clifton Lefort	John Baucom
OPENING PRAYER	Bruce Hollander	
LORD'S SUPPER		
BREAD	Bruce Williams	
CUP	Jason Chandler	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Stephen Lefort	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Sam Walters
CLOSING PRAYER	Kerry Gray	Chase Sibley