

The Millennium

Text: Revelation 20.1–15

Theme: We need to see the beauty of Christ's glory come to earth

Introduction — Rev. 20, our text for the morning, is without doubt, most controversial of all

- one of most debated chapters in all of Scripture
- as you can tell, from hearing it read, it deals with the millennium, meaning 1,000
- this period of time is the thousand-year reign of Christ
- before we actually look at the text, I believe we must consider this concept first
- I have provided an insert in your bulletins that present the four major views on this 1000 years

There will be a variety of reactions to this...

- you may know full well what your position is on this text and how you understand it
- you may be among the many who are just confused and don't really know what to think
- you may be among a few who have never really heard of this or at least heard it taught clearly
- you may know, or at least, think you know what my position is
- it doesn't truly matter to me, but I do need you to know what the four major views are
- so, at the risk of sounding like a lecture, I want to go over these matters briefly
- I will present these in a very broad, general manner
- to each group who would hold these positions, I'm sure I'll be unfair or too brief
- but my intent is that you know how it is that dear brothers & sisters in Christ understand this

So, before we look at the actual text, let's consider...

I. WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED "THE MILLENNIUM"?

- godly people, believers all, hold to one of these, and variations of them
- some of you will hold to one of them
- I am of the conviction that this is a secondary matter
- not a top drawer issue of importance
- that is: does not affect the gospel
- does not affect your salvation
- it may affect how you understand other parts of Scripture
- but for the most part, it is a secondary issue
- one of those areas we are to exercise charity, even in our seeming disunity

1. Amillennialism

- the prefix "a" means "no" or "none"
- no literal 1000, no earthly millennia; 1000 year is spiritual reign
- There is a sequence to this view
- Christ comes at incarnation
- age following is church age, also the millennium
- Satan's power to deceive the nations is curtailed
- the 1000 years is a figurative or symbolic 1000 years
- at the end of which, Satan is released; intensification of deception occurs
- there will be a tribulation time, right before the end, Christ comes back, His second coming
- believing and unbelieving are raised from graves to stand before Christ
- the judgment of unbelievers occurs and they are thrown into the eternal lake of fire
- believers are blessed to enter into eternal state

- certain tenets, key truths are held by this position
- prophecy usually interpreted symbolically
- great continuity between Israel and the church; not separate nor does one replace the other
- simultaneous development of good and evil in the world: so both optimistic & pessimistic
- some things get better; some things get worse

2. Postmillennialism

- post: because Christ returns after a millennium
 - Christ comes in incarnation
 - then church age begins, preaching of gospel goes forward, more & more of world is saved
 - nations becoming Christianized
 - not literal reign with Christ on a throne; He reigns from His throne in heaven
 - but great powerful influence from gospel
 - not utopia, not total conversion
 - but discernible Christianization of world, influence of evil becomes negligible
 - then Christ comes back, judgment occurs, etc
- some of the key tenets of this view are as follows:
 - sees NT prophecy already fulfilled by A.D. 70 in the fall of Jerusalem
 - optimistic view of the church: no more of all this terrible evil
 - kingdom grows gradually; gospel spreads, good in world increases greatly
 - # of saved will outnumber the # of the lost

3. Historic Premillennialism

- Christ returns before millennium but after the Tribulation
 - post-tribulational and premillennial
 - tribulation: no matter how long:centuries or seven years
 - greatest tribulation just before Christ returns
 - Christ comes, believers caught up in air, the dead saints resurrected
 - we all follow Him in His return and He sets up a literal reign on earth
 - 1000 years: some literal; others figurative
 - Christ reigns
 - second resurrection: after millennium, unbelievers resurrected
 - then all come before Christ at White Throne judgment
 - followed by eternal state
- their key principles are...
 - believe world is getting worse due to sin and evil
 - single return of Christ; no secret rapture

4. Dispensational Premillennialism

- Christ returns before millennium and before tribulation
 - first Christ comes FOR His saints
 - returns 7 years later WITH His saints
 - comes FOR His saints—secret rapture
 - no one knows until after it has happened
- then 7 years of great tribulation
 - end of 7 years, Christ returns again, WITH His saints

- establishes earthly utopia for literal 1000 (Jan 1, 2024–Dec 31, 2123)
- then resurrection of all people and White Throne
- dispensationalism believes that in each dispensation, each age, God has acted differently
- each dispensation depends largely upon how God's people, Israel, most pointedly, follow Him
- relatively recent (first third of 1800s)
- Left Behind is disp premill
- Scofield Reference Bible is disp premil
- some key beliefs of dispensational premillennialists
- literal interpretation of prophecy as hard as possible
- literal thrones, literal temple, literal return to sacrifices
- God deals in dispensations: different ways in different times
- last two are the church age, then the kingdom age (millennium)
- disp premil read NT differently
- Kingdom of Heaven and Kingdom of God are two different things
- Jews rejected Kingdom of Heaven, so now we are in Kingdom of God
- radical discontinuity between Israel and the church
- church is a parenthesis in God's plan of salvation, a Plan B, if you will
- Jews all along, but they rejected, so God "inserted" the church (Gentiles)
- church age until Plan A kicks back in
- OT prophecies and promises get fulfilled to Israel in millennium
- Israel will return to land and it returned to them
- mass revival with many believing in Jesus as Messiah

That's the main four views, ways of understanding Rev 20.1–6

- all who hold to these are believers, as far as I know
- all agree upon 80–90% of everything else
- I present this to help, not to produce division
- I know at least three of these positions are held among us here at Albion
- and I know that we all love each other in the Lord
- and I believe that we will keep on doing so after this Sunday as well
- so, now, let's look at the Word of God before us
- what we need more than figuring out these systems of thought is this:
- we need to have our hearts and imaginations ravished by the beauty of holiness
- we need to have our minds captured by Christ so much we'll not be bothered by this world
- we need our lives to be held to the power of righteousness found in Jesus Christ
- we need to see these things so we will live for His kingdom and not that of the imposters

First, we see what John saw...

II. THE BINDING OF SATAN, 20.1–3

- John saw an angel coming down out of heaven
- we see the implements used to bind Satan
- we see the actions taken to bind this old dragon
- and we hear of the duration of this binding
- I will say this before we see these things
- beginning in ch. 19, we cease seeing things in cycles we've been accustomed to
- from ch. 6–19, we have seen cycle of seals, trumpets, and bowls of wrath

- each is parallel to the the other, just with a heightened intensity to each
- but beginning in ch. 19, we finally see a timeline, a sequence of events
- no longer will we go back and then forward; it's only forward from here in a straight line

1. The implements of binding

- this angel has a key: we've seen that a key, in biblical imagery, holds power to open or shut
- here it will be used to shut, to lock up that ancient serpent, the devil
- the angel will have power to put Satan in a bottomless pit
- when Christ died & rose again, He achieved a great victory over Satan, weakening him
- now he will be bound up, unable to have his once great influence over the world
- the angel will also use a great chain with which to bind Satan in this pit

2. The actions of this angel

- while these actions seem self-explanatory, let me comment briefly
- we're not told who this angel is but he is one powerful supernatural being
- we see, in figurative language, him grabbing him, by neck or tail, matters not
- he binds him—and what is bound in heaven is bound on earth—or in a bottomless pit
- and then he seals this pit so the devil cannot influence those on earth

3. The duration of these actions

- it seems so simple to say
- but not one commentary I studied agreed fully to what this means exactly
- hence the views presented already
- but let's take the simplest meaning of the text
- let's see it as a timeline now carrying into eternity

And let's consider...

III. THE KINGDOM & THE FIRST RESURRECTION, 20.4–6

- we see thrones set up and upon those thrones ones who have been given authority by God
- we see martyrs and we see believers
- those who gave their lives for Christ, during the centuries of tribulation up to this point
- and we see all who lived lives of patient endurance, not bowing down to the beast
- all are resurrected here to reign with Christ during this time
- the ones who are not resurrected are unbelievers who have died up to this point
- the earth-dwellers, those who took the beast's mark, who worshiped him with their lives

1. The kingdom on earth

- I believe this kingdom is set up on earth and Christ rules over it
- I believe that all resurrected believers reign with Him
- this is not the final state, the world has not yet been remade perfect
- but for an extended period of time, perhaps a literal 1000 years, Christ reigns

2. The first resurrection

- I believe this text is telling us what happens when Christ returns to set up this kingdom
- He comes on His white horse, host of heaven following
- that trumpet blast has sounded, the dead in Christ rise first, we who remain follow quickly
- we follow Christ immediately to the earth, end of ch. 19
- then the angel binds Satan, Christ sets up this rule, and we all are with Him
- there is another resurrection awaiting all who have died outside of Christ

- but for those who have already died for the gospel are safely with Jesus
- no longer are they crying out, “How long, Sovereign Lord?”

After all this, John sees...

III. THE FINAL BATTLE, 20.7–10

- at the end of the 1000 years, this extended, long period of time, Satan is released for a time
- the nations he goes out to attempt to deceive are not Christ's, yet they live on this earth
- Satan is assembling them for a battle
- but just as we saw in Rev 19.19, there is no real battle!
- fire comes down from heaven and consumes them all: battle over, victory won
- Satan, the dragon, joins the other members of his unholy trinity in the eternal lake of fire
- it burns with sulphur and they will be tormented for ever and ever
- he will never return to harm God's people again
- this is why the new heavens and the new earth will not be like the Garden of Eden
- Eden had that possibility—temptation and sin
- but once Satan is dealt with forever, temptation and sin will be no more
- I really can't imagine it; it's all we have ever known
- praise the Lord God Almighty—He will win the ultimate victory
- His glory will shine forever and a day

Now comes the final scene here.

IV. THE GREAT WHITE THRONE, 20.11–15

- once again John says, “I saw”
- he sees what happens to those who followed Satan, his beast, and worshiped the image

1. The Great White Throne

- this is the final seat of judgment
- every single person will appear before this throne
- no exceptions, no absentees; this is the second resurrection of the dead
- there is a book for every person and every person will give account for what they have done
- this means this judgment is just and fair
- **If you say, “Behold, we did not know this,” does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?**

(Proverbs 24:12 ESV)

- **and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. For you will render to a man according to his work.**

(Psalm 62:12 ESV)

- **For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.**

(Matthew 16:27 ESV)

- **He will render to each one according to his works:**

(Romans 2:6 ESV)

2. The book of life

- however, there is another book: the book of life
- this contains all who are God's people, who are in Christ
- they are all, every one of them, spared God's judgment
- why? Because Christ has already borne it for them in His body upon the cross

- if our book of our life is opened and the deeds are shown it will read like this
- Christ did it for you: He suffered for you sin, He took away your guilt, He made you new

3. Those not in the book of life

- there is only one destiny for the unbeliever
- for those who rejected Christ's free offer of grace and salvation
- on the basis of what they have done—lived for self and not Jesus Christ—they are doomed
- found sinful and guilty, their judgment is terrifying and awful
- they will be thrown into the eternal lake of fire also
- this is eternal life so horrible it can only be called the second death
- absent from God's glorious presence for all eternity
- suffering in utter darkness in pain and torment without pause or relief
- you will be paid in like kind as to how you lived: for yourself

Conclusion – Do you long for His glorious appearing?

- God triumphs ultimately at last
- Christ wins with just a Word from His mouth
- all God's people are rewarded with blessing upon blessing, and 10,000 beside
- the whole earth will be filled with His glory

It could be stated this way, as far as you & I are concerned:

- if you have been born once, you will die twice—in this life and on that last day
- if you have been born twice, you will die once and live forever
- even so, Lord Jesus, come soon!