

The Millennium – Rev 20:1-6

The Gospel Age of Hope - #14

Introduction – The final chapters of Revelation must be interpreted in light of what the Scriptures have already taught; they are not in contradiction with this. Keeping what we have learned in mind, we can come to the question of the Millennium, the thousand-year reign of Christ, with wisdom and understanding. In conclusion, it sets us on our course, the plan of God for the church in the Gospel Age of Hope.

The Millennium – Doug Wilson defined the Millennium as “a thousand years of peace that the Christians enjoy fighting over.” Hopefully, we can help in putting an end to that.

Some Initial Set-up – A few things should be said before looking at the passage.

Three Views of Eschatology – Views on apocalyptic passages of scripture can be generally summed up in three categories.

Postmillennialism is an optimistic view of the future of the gospel on the earth over the history of the age in which we live. The Great Commission will be successfully fulfilled and then Christ will physically return.

Premillennialism also teaches of a “golden age” on the earth, but Christ will return personally to usher that age in at its beginning. Until that time the world and the church will continue to grow in wickedness and apostasy.

Amillennialism holds that the millennium is not manifested on this earth; it is a spiritual/heavenly reality for those glorified saints in heaven, and there is no promised literal manifestation of this victory upon the earth.

Two Views: “Futurists” and “Preterists” – Another eschatological debate has to do with when these (or the majority of these) apocalyptic passages were or will be fulfilled. Futurists believe that Revelation will be fulfilled in the future. Preterists believe that the vast majority of Revelation was fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD.

The First Resurrection (vv4-6) – One of the keys to understanding this chapter is what John tells us about the First Resurrection. Some argue that this only refers to dying and our souls going to heaven. The context, however, includes the events on earth (v3 and v7). In addition, we know that Christ instructed that we now reign with Him, discipling the nations here upon the earth (Matt 28:18-20). Rather, we should first look back to the First Death (Gen 2:16-17). The day that Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit was the day of their spiritual death; a death we all now share in Adam (Eph 2:1). The First Death was a spiritual death and thus the First Resurrection is a spiritual resurrection (Eph 2:4-6, Col 2:11-13, 1 John 3:14). There is a physical Resurrection which takes place at the Last Day when “there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15, cf. 1 Cor 15).

Jesus had used the term “*resurrection*” in these two different senses in another passage recorded by John in his gospel (John 5:24-25, 28-29).

Resurrected in this Age – Those who believe in Christ are now partakers in the First Resurrection. This resurrection is spiritual and is connected to our re-creation in His image, and because of it, “*the second death has no power*” over us (v6). In this First Resurrection, we are priests (Rev 1:6) and we reign with Christ in His kingdom (Eph 1:20-22, 2:6, 2 Pet 2:9). “*...and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years*” (Rev 20:4). This points to the fact that the Millennium is taking place now as well.

The Binding of the Dragon (vv1-3) – Setting up this millennial reign of Christ and His church, we have a symbolic picture of what Christ already declared He had done (and we spoke of this in a previous message in this series – John 12:31-32, Luke 10:18, Heb 2:14-15, 1 John 3:8). It follows that this “*angel*” (v1) is the Son of God (Rev 1:18, 10:1, 18:1) who “*was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil*”. The specific sense in which Satan is bound is “*so that he should deceive the nations no more*”. It is not that he is no longer active, but that he cannot prevent the victory of Christ’s kingdom. The contextual application of this again points to the fall of Jerusalem, the center of the first satanic resistance to Christ’s kingdom in the Jewish persecution of Christ and the church. This again places these events as being initiated at the end of the generation living when Jesus gave his warnings in Matt 24 and in the fall of Jerusalem.

One Thousand Years – God owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10). What does this mean? Certainly, it doesn’t mean that He doesn’t own the cattle on hill number 1001. “*Where seven connotes a fullness of quality in Biblical imagery, the number ten contains the idea of a fullness of quantity; in other words, it stands for manyness – and this ten has been cubed*” (Chilton). The Millennium is thus a vast, undefined period of time. It has already lasted almost 2,000 years and may go on for many more. The end will come when “the earth will be full of the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

Returning to Where We Began – “*And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world*” (1 John 4:14). Jesus Christ conquered sin and death in His death, burial and resurrection and as such He has laid claim upon the world as Savior. He thwarted the plans of Satan manifested in the demonic work of both the Jewish and Gentile kings. He ascended to heaven and poured out His Holy Spirit upon the nations at Pentecost. He brought about His vindication and the end of the primary persecutors of His body, His bride, His New Jerusalem, in the destruction of Jerusalem and the work of the Judaizers. We are now in the middle of the story of the work of this victorious gospel-kingdom, and while we live in a place and time of a great ebb in the efficaciousness of that kingdom, we know where the future is going. We know this, not because of ourselves, but because of the faithful testimony of *the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty*. Jesus is the Savior of the world. Jesus is King of the world. Jesus is the re-Creator of the heavens and earth. Jesus is the Head of the new humanity. Jesus is the Conqueror of the principalities and powers. Amen.