

## The Millennium Now or Later?

Most Christians view the millennium, or thousand-year reign, as a future kingdom established by Christ at His return. But is it possible that the “Millennium” is a spiritual kingdom that exists now? While the question is certainly reasonable, only a few are willing to consider it. The reason for this is that most Churches today are restricted to teaching a literal reading of Revelation 20 as established doctrine. This alone has created a heavy bias against any alternative view involving the Millennium reign of Christ. Even so, a growing number of Christians are beginning to favor the view of a spiritual Millennium which they believe is symbolic for the current **Church age**. And while this view is clearly unpopular, it is no less valid and deserves our objective consideration. After all, consider the fact that only a literal interpretation of Revelation 20 **does not** require special decoding. Therefore it fits far less with the character of God in concealing these mysteries from the naked eye: *It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter* (Proverbs 25:2).

As one who adheres to an Amillennial interpretation, allow me to demonstrate some valid reasons for why I believe the Millennium Kingdom is a present spiritual reality, not to be anticipated in the future. In fact, I will also attempt to expose the many problems and inconsistencies that exist in the predominant view and how they impact the order of events spelled out in the teachings of Christ and the Apostles concerning the last days.

### **An Overview of Premillennialism and Amillennialism**

The two most common views on the millennium are Premillennialism and Amillennialism. Premillennialism is the view in which a future kingdom is established by Christ at His return and lasts for a full thousand years. Those who adhere to this position far outnumber any other group in eschatology and strictly maintain a literalist interpretation of the Millennium. Their belief in a future millennium remains a major tenant of Dispensational theology and is responsible for producing the majority of books and teachings on this issue.

Conversely, Amillennialism is far less popular and well known, and derives its name from Latin, meaning *no* millennium. It denotes the belief in a spiritualized or non-literal millennium. Proponents of this position view the Church as representative for Christ’s heavenly kingdom in which He **now** reigns from “David’s throne”. They believe

that a **physical** kingdom will be ushered in at the Second Coming when Christ sets up the “new heavens and new earth” (cf. Rev 21-22). While Amillennialists comprise a much smaller number of adherents, their advantage is that they can trace the origins of their belief much further back in history.

Also, in much the same way that the “woman clad with the host of heaven” (Rev. 12) and “Babylon the harlot” (Rev. 17) are accepted allegory, Amillennialists understand the millennium period of Revelation 20 to be no different.

### **End-Times Chronology**

Perhaps the greatest handicap in Premillennialism is that it relies solely on a literal scheme of interpretation. As a result, the end-times chronology located in both the Gospels and Epistles is at variance with Revelation 20. This handicap, however, does not exist when allowing for a spiritual reading of the same Millennium passages. Our goal, therefore, should be to harmonize these two prophetic time tables without compromising uniformity or causing inconsistencies. But first, we must compare these two chronologies to better understand where the issues exist. Only then can we proceed to resolve those issues by proposing a spiritual scheme of interpretation rather than a literal one. Pay close attention to the following chronologies to see what I mean. **What you will discover is that according to all the accounts offered in the Gospels and Epistles the Resurrection of the dead and Judgment Day occur simultaneously and immediately after Christ returns, not a thousand years apart. See for yourself:**

*The enemy that sowed them is the devil; **the harvest is the end of the world**; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore **the tares are gathered and burned in the fire**; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth (Mat. 13:39-42).*

*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. **So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire**: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth (Mat. 13:47-50).*

***When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Mat. 25:31-34).***

*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; **afterward they that are Christ's \*at his coming.\* Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; \*when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power (1 Cor. 15:22-24).***

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? **\*\*Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness** (2 Pet. 3:10-13).*

In the above chronologies, we see a common sequence of events playing out with great consistency:

- 1) Jesus returns
- 2) "Resurrection of the dead" (a.k.a rapture of the Church)
- 3) Destruction of the world by fire
- 4) Judgment Day
- 5) "New heavens and new earth"

Now when we turn our attention to Revelation 20, we find that the chronology therein, when **taken literally**, does not match up with the sequence of events just examined. Let me demonstrate:

- 1) Return of Jesus, rapture of the Church, and destruction of the world by fire (Rev. chapters 1-19)
- 2) Satan bound and martyred souls reign with Christ for “1,000 years” (Rev. 20:1-4)
- 3) Resurrection of the dead after “1000 years” (Rev. 20:5-6)
- 4) Devil loosed to deceive the nations (Rev. 20:7)
- 5) Gog and Magog (Rev. 20:8)
- 6) Judgment Day (Rev. 20:11-14).
- 7) “New heavens and new earth” (Rev. 21:1)

As we can see, the prophetic timetable in Revelation 20 is drastically different than that contained in the Gospels and Epistles. For instance, points 2-5 are simply nonexistent in the first list of events. Notice that the Gospels and Epistles say nothing of satan being bound for a thousand years. Or a second Resurrection taking place a full thousand years after Christ has already raptured the Church. And they say nothing of the devil being loosed again after a thousand years to wage war on God's people for a **second time**. In fact, the entire 1,000 year gap between the Second Coming of Christ and Judgment Day is unaccounted for *anywhere* else in Scripture. Doesn't this create a major problem?

Also, 2 Peter 3 and 1 Corinthians 15, as quoted earlier, are a perfect case in point. Here we are told exactly what to expect at the end of human history. We are encouraged to anticipate with **great hope** the **complete** takeover of all opposing forces to God's kingdom and the creation of a *new heaven and new earth*. **There is no mention of a future millennium reign.** Evidently, Peter was unaware of the thousand year gap between the second coming of Christ and the “new heavens and new earth”. Apostle Paul was also ignorant of this gap. And even if he wasn't, we are left to wonder about the category of Christians who *are alive and remain at the coming of Christ* (1 Thes. 4:16). There seems to be no place for them in the millennium reign. Revelation 20:4-5 describes this kingdom as one populated **exclusively with martyrs**, those having perished in rejection of the antichrist system. **This hardly leaves room for the rest of us.**

But just in case you believe, as some Dispensationalists, in two Resurrections corresponding to just as many judgments (one each for the wicked and the righteous), allow me to direct your attention to an important fact. Each of the verses quoted earlier from both the Gospels and Epistles detail *only a single* judgment event. **One that takes place immediately subsequent to the Second Coming. Obviously, there would be no need for "the book of life" at the judgment of Revelation 20:12 if all the believing dead had been resurrected and clothed with new**

**bodies a thousand years earlier.** Notice what Acts 24:15 has to say about this event: *...there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.* Did you notice that? Acts 24:15 promises a single Resurrection of the dead involving both the just and unjust—**not two** Resurrections, but "a Resurrection" comprising both classes. Let me prove this further: *Marvel not at this: for **the hour is coming**, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice. And **shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*** (Jn. 5:28-29).

So as we can see, the Resurrection, also known as the rapture is a single event that happens at the return of Christ and involves both the righteous and wicked. And judgment day follows *immediately after*, **not 1,000 years later**.

### **The Binding and Disarming of Satan in Revelation 20**

*And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season* (Rev. 20:1-3).

Unlike the literal system of interpretation, the opposite hermeneutic fits far better with Scripture and allows for a logical progression of future events. For instance, Amillennialists will use specific parallelisms to easily explain the symbolic language of verses 1-3 (as quoted above), particularly as it relates to the "binding of satan" and his imprisonment in the "bottomless pit". We will soon discover that there are several scriptures that echo the same or similar language elsewhere in the New Testament to describe this exact event. For this reason, we refer to them as parallelisms. Notice the following verses:

*No man can enter into a strong man's house, and **spoil his goods**, except he will **first bind the strong man**; and then he will spoil his house* (Mark 3:27).

***Now** is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself* (Jn. 12:31-32).

*And having **spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it** (Col. 2:15).*

*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death **he might destroy him** that had **the power of death**, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14).*

Throughout the above passages, we find some distinct correlations. The parable in Mark 3 encapsulates Christ's ministry work: **He came to bind the strong man (satan) and spoil his house**. Notice that this language is very similar to what we find in Revelation 20:1-3, depicting the **binding** of satan for a thousand years. So this seems to symbolize the despoiling of satan's temporal kingdom, the world. But Mark doesn't make this point secret at all. It is clearly spelled out for us later on in the same chapter (Mark 3). And when compared to John 12 the picture seems to become even clearer. Christ was set to deprive the devil from his totalitarian control of the world by **driving him out through the spread of the Gospel**. Notice: **now the prince of this world will be driven out** (Jn. 12:31). I believe this event occurred right after the crucifixion of Jesus which provided redemption for the entire world. And it likely set in motion the same spiritual battle depicted in Colossians 2 (see above).

### **Nations No Longer Deceived**

*...that he should deceive the nations no more... (Rev. 20:3).*

Prior to the Gospel Age, the heathen nations were under complete darkness and blind to their depraved condition. **They were deceived**. After Christ's redemptive work, the nations were awakened to their condition and offered the hope of salvation. Satan lost his ability to keep human kind under oppressive evil. Jesus eclipsed this darkness with the illuminating light of the Gospel:

**The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined** (Isaiah 9:2)

**For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth** (Acts 13:47).

*And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes*

*of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: **I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth*** (Isaiah 49:6).

***A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel*** (Luke 2:32).

### **The Dawning of a New Kingdom**

Jesus Christ not only drove out the prevailing darkness and deception present throughout the ages. He also established a permanent kingdom that would continue to spread throughout the entire world. Many fail to realize that Christ's greatest achievement was the establishment of the Church. The Church would become the channel through which the world would receive the light of the Gospel. Scholars believe Pentecost was the exact birthday of God's Spiritual Kingdom. On this day, the Holy Spirit was sent forth to convict mankind of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn. 16:8), leading many to join the ranks of God's eternal Kingdom. And according to Bible prophecy, this Kingdom would increase in greatness until it fully eclipsed all other kingdoms (Is. 9:6-7; Dan. 2:35).

Daniel's vision of the stone boulder growing into a great mountain (Dan. 2:35) and the parable of the leavened meal (Mat. 13:33) is certainly emblematic of the expanding influence and presence of God's Kingdom, the Church. To take the millennium reign literally means that God's kingdom succeeded in eclipsing all other powers of darkness (at the return of Christ), only to be challenged once again at the end of the thousand years mentioned in Revelation 20. This double challenge to God's Kingdom does not comport with the rest of Scripture.

### **The "Thousand Year" Symbolism**

*...and they lived and reigned with Christ **a thousand years*** (Rev 20:4b).

The Bible is full of symbolisms. Sometimes these symbols appear in numbers, imagery, or even story lines. The book of Revelation is no exception. By far, it is the most compelling example of symbolic language and imagery. It is also foremost in the Bible in its use of numerical symbology. **Just the number seven alone appears more than fifty times in a variety of contexts.** There are **seven** letters to **seven** churches in Asia and **seven** spirits before God's throne (Revelation 1:4), **seven** golden lamp stands (1:12), **seven** stars in Christ's right hand (1:16), **seven** seals of God's judgment (5:1), **seven** angels with **seven** trumpets (8:2), etc. In all likelihood, the number 7 represents completeness or totality. The seven churches represent the

completeness of the body of Christ. The seven seals on the scroll represent the fullness of God's punishment of a sinful earth, and so on. And, of course, the book of Revelation itself, with all of its 7's, is the very capstone of God's Word to man. With the book of Revelation, the Word was complete (Revelation 22:18).

But we also see other examples elsewhere in this book that speak of its metaphorical character. Revelation 3:10 promises that God will spare His true Church from "the **hour** of trial" that will visit the whole world. Yet we know this is a metaphorical reference to the 3.5 year tribulation period. In this case, 1 hour is used figuratively to symbolize a short period of judgment, namely 3.5 years. Some scholars even interpret the mention of the ten kings who gave power to the beast for **one hour** (Rev 17:13), and the Church suffering tribulation for **ten days** (Rev 2:10) as also being figurative uses. **Therefore it is accepted that time periods are used symbolically throughout the Scriptures.**

The **70 weeks** of Daniel 9 is yet another compelling example of a symbolic time period. Almost all scholars agree that the seventy weeks are **symbolic** for 490 years, and therefore are not to be taken literally.

So does the number one-thousand merely refer to a tangible time frame or could it denote something deeper? Since the number ten signifies greatness, and since a thousand is ten to the third power, we may think of the expression "a thousand years" as standing for a significant period, a very long period of indeterminate length. Don't forget that John sees this vision very close to the inception of the Church age. This vision is given with a scope of coverage spanning the beginning of the church age all the way to its completion. Why not assume the same principle applies to chapter 20? Perhaps we should conclude that this thousand-year period extends from Christ's first advent to just before his second coming. It is a symbolic example of a long time lapse. If at the beginning of the book one hour was used symbolically to describe the 3.5 years of tribulation, than one-thousand years may be viewed as the entire Church Age.

But if we feel this principle is stretching the rule a bit too far, then let us **consider the fact that wherever the numerical expression "thousand" appears in the Old Testament, it is always in connection to figurative or allegorical use.**

We must remember that the Jews often used numbers to convey meaning. Numbers were not always arbitrary and meaningless to the Hebraic



mindset of Biblical times, as they are today in Western culture. I will point you to just a few instances in Scripture where the numerical expression “thousand” is used to denote something innumerable or infinite, instead of a literal time span. Notice:

*Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to **a thousand generations** (Deu. 7:9).*

*For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon **a thousand** hills (Psa. 50:10).*

*For a day in thy courts is better than **a thousand**. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness (Psa. 84:10).*

***A thousand** shall fall at thy side, and **ten thousand** at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee (Psa. 91:7).*

*Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang **a thousand** bucklers, all shields of mighty men (Song. 4:4).*

*A little one shall become **a thousand**, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time (Is. 60:22).*

*Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than **ten thousand** words in an unknown tongue (1 Co. 14:19).*

*For though ye have **ten thousand** instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel (1 Co. 4:15).*

*But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as **a thousand years**, and a thousand years as one day (2 Pet. 3:8).*

### **The Reign of Faithful Souls**

*And I saw thrones, and **they sat upon them**, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the **souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his***

*image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But **the rest of the dead** lived not again until the thousand years were finished. **This is the first resurrection.** Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years (Rev. 20:4-6).*

Throughout the Church age there have been antichrist powers attempting to eradicate Christianity or force Christians into compromise and betrayal. One such power was the Roman Empire. Beginning with the Caesars and culminating with the popes, for hundreds of years Rome has tried to stamp out Christian influence and any who refused to capitulate to the beast power or the harlot church system (Roman Catholicism and her offspring). This harlot church is thus called because of its hierarchal and political structure. Revelation 20:4-6 is a summary of the Church's persecution by antichrist powers. And it culminates in the final attempt by satan to destroy the Church through the antichrist of Bible prophecy. Martyred Christians throughout this period, from the beginning of the Church Age and down to the end, enter into Paradise upon death to join their Savior. As John saw it, these martyred faithful were entering into Christ's celestial reign right upon their death. "And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years" simply indicates that they are reigning with Christ throughout the Church Age. In other words, martyrs for Christ don't need to wait for an appointed time to reign with Christ because they do so immediately after death.

We can appreciate the significance of this vision when we remember that in John's time the church was sorely oppressed and frequently persecuted. It was their solace to know that while their fellow brethren had died, they were now living and reigning with Christ in heaven. This living and reigning with Christ, John reveals, will continue throughout the thousand years (Church era) until Christ shall come again to raise the bodies of Believers from the grave.

There is no indication in these verses that John is describing an earthly millennial reign. The scene, as we saw, is set in heaven. Nothing is said in verses 4-6 about the earth or Israel as the center of this reign. And nothing is mentioned that would allude to the coming of a new **Jewish theocracy**. The thousand-year reign of Revelation 20:4 is a reign with Christ in heaven and concerns the souls of believers who have died. This reign is not something to be looked for in the future. It is going on now, and will continue until Christ returns.

So clearly, the passages in Revelation 20 bring to mind a panorama view of church history. It is not, however, the only place where such a sweeping scene is employed. In fact, Revelation 12 is very similar to chapter 20 in both style and content, and when the two are compared, it is easy to see the parallels. For instance, chapter 12 contains lots of symbolic imagery and also begins at the start of the Church Age. In chapter 12, the Church Age begins with the nation of Israel bringing forth the promised Messiah (12:1-2). While in chapter 20, the Church Age begins with Satan being defeated at the cross, which is portrayed by his symbolic binding and imprisonment (20:1-2).

But chapter 20 is also very similar to chapter 6. Chapter 6 involves the same thought concerning the reign of martyrs in Heaven while the powers of evil seem to prevail on earth. Notice: *And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the **souls of them** that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, **How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*** (Rev. 6:9-10).

The context here makes it plain that this is a pre-resurrection scene, same as chapter 20. The similarity in language, "the souls of", indicates the same time period. Didn't Jesus promise that *him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne* (Revelation 3:21). These "souls" are "with Christ" not because He came down to earth for the purpose of setting up a throne in Jerusalem, but because they, upon their release from the body, soared up to live and reign with Jesus.

So now that we've covered the background of Revelation 20:4, we should proceed to examine verses 5-6 of the same chapter. There is a specific way to interpret these passages so that they dovetail nicely with our explanation thus far. But first, let's begin with verse 5. This verse must be separated into two segments in order to properly decode its meaning:

**Part 1:** *But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.*

**Part 2:** *This is the first resurrection.*

Part 1 is a parenthetical statement (belonging in parenthesis) and should be read as such. While dropped in the middle of the narrative, it really belongs at the end. And part 2 refers to all of the information provided in v.4. Meaning that the first Resurrection

relates to the Believers who die in Christ throughout the Church Age. In contrast, the rest of the dead during this period (unbelievers) are not resurrected until they face God on Judgement Day—at the conclusion of the millennium reign, which we now understand represents the Church Age.

Now according to Paul, the dead in Christ will be first to resurrect, while we who are alive and remain at the Second Coming (1 Thes. 4:15-17) will join them as we all receive our new bodies. It is then that Christ will set up the “new heavens and the new earth”.

But just to be sure we all understand the explanation thus far presented, allow me to present an alternate reading for the verses so far examined. In fact, many newer Bible versions now contain such a reading as the following:

*...and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years (But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished) —this is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years (Rev. 20:4b-6).*

Now consider why those who participate in the first resurrection are called “blessed and holy” and why they are protected against the “second death”. Perhaps it is simply because they have already escaped eternal judgment by the mere fact that they are pictured with Christ ruling in heaven, as described of them in verse 4.

### **Satan Loosed for a “Little Season”, Nations Deceived, Gog and Magog**

*And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, (a little season, see v.3). And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Rev. 20:7-10).*

The “loosing” of satan at the end of Church history for a “little season” is symbolic for the time period known as the “great tribulation” or the “midnight” hour (Mat. 24:21;

25:6). At this time satan, through the antichrist, will be permitted to deceive the inhabitants of the world and to reign over them **completely**, but only temporarily. Just like prior to the First Advent when society was ruled almost exclusively by Godless paganism, the same kind of spiritual darkness will once more eclipse the whole earth, suspending the Gospel's progress and its effects. Daniel 7 describes this as a time when the Saints of God will be subdued physically by the antichrist: *I beheld, and the same horn **made war with the saints, and prevailed against them...And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time*** (Daniel 7:21;25).

Now the battle of Gog and Magog depicted in verse 8 is admittedly a little trickier to explain. However, Amillennialists understand this battle to be symbolic for the supernatural deliverance of God's people at Christ's return. A number of Bible scholars link Gog and Magog to the ancient adversary of the Jews, Haman. It is said that Haman was ethnically related to these two tribes, both of which were under the rule of King Ahasuerus of the Persian empire. Haman's people (Gog and Magog) were getting set to launch a fatal attack against the Jews under queen Esther but were foiled before they could do any harm. This same event is used to portray the deliverance of God's people in Revelation 20:8-10. It describes satan's plan to incite violence against the Church, the Israel of God, and to exterminate God's people. But once more, God intervenes to thwart this attack. Again, this parallel also exists in Revelation 12, as described earlier.

Something important to note concerning Gog and Magog is that they surround the "camp of the saints". The word "saint" in Greek is "hagios", which simply means holy one/s. **The camp of the saints does not refer to a political nation, but rather a redeemed people. Also, the "beloved city" is very clearly a reference to the bride of Christ, the Church, which we see descending out of heaven prepared for her bridegroom in Revelation 21:9-10.**

### **A Deeper Look at Gog & Magog**

There are only two biblical references to the battle of Gog and Magog, both of which appear in Ezekiel 38-39 and Revelation 20. According to Premillennialists, these two accounts represent completely separate events. In other words, there are two nearly duplicate Gog and Magog battles. The reason why Premillennialists believe in two Gog and Magogs is simply for the fact that the details and circumstances surrounding either account cannot possibly describe the same event. The Gog and Magog of Ezekiel

38-39 is pictured in the “fallen world” environment of our current day. While the one in Revelation 20 clearly happens at the end of the “thousand year reign”, after Christ sets up a perfect Kingdom. Details like the Israelites gathering their enemy’s wooden battle implements and burning them for warmth over a seven year period (Ez. 39:9) is tell-tale proof of this fact. It hardly depicts the perfect environment of the Millennium Kingdom, supposedly described elsewhere in the prophets (Is. 11:6,7; 35:5-10; 65:25).

Furthermore, if one should attempt to merge the two together, it would necessitate a millennium that lasts one-thousand and seven years. So these are the reasons why Premillennialists believe in two separate Gog and Magog battles. They place the one just prior to the Second Advent and the other immediately before the completion of the Millennium.

As an Amillennialist, I find the idea of two Gog and Magogs rather strange. To follow this conclusion would force me to believe that God is deliberately victimizing the people of Gog and Magog by compelling them to role play twice in this epic battle of the ages. **However, if we opt for the non-literal position, we are not forced to arrive at such a problematic conclusion.**

### **Great White Throne of Judgment and the Second Death**

*And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).*

There is no mistaking verses 11-15 as describing the Day of Judgment. This is important to understand as it corresponds clearly to the references quoted earlier from the gospels and epistles. We have seen that this important event will happen immediately subsequent to the return of Christ, not a millennium later. It is also sufficiently clear that the “second death” merely refers to the judgment of hell (v. 14).

## **The “New Jerusalem” and the “New Heaven and New Earth”**

As was previously stated, the apostles who wrote the epistles (Romans-Jude) seem to have been ignorant of the concept of a future millennium reign. They do not mention or allude to it anywhere in their writings. However, there is a future kingdom clearly described in the epistles which we are encouraged to greatly anticipate. This everlasting Kingdom is known as the new heaven and new earth. Its chief city is the New Jerusalem. Notice the following verses:

*But the **Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother*** (Gal. 4:26).

*For he was looking forward **to the city that has foundations**, whose designer and builder is God* (Heb. 11:10).

*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...* (Heb. 12:22a).

*For here we have no lasting city, but we **seek the city that is to come*** (Heb. 13:14).

*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband* (Rev. 21:1-2).

So clearly this is the future kingdom we are instructed to look for and *this* is the kingdom which will usher in Christ’s supreme reign, *not* the millennium.

## **Is Ezekiel 47:12 a Reference to the Millennium or the New Heaven and New Earth?**

Many Christians wrongly point to Ezekiel 47:12 as a reference to the Millennium or “thousand year reign”. However, we will soon discover by comparing Revelation 22:2 with Ezekiel 47:12 that the latter reference actually points to the new heaven and new earth era, not the thousand year reign. Notice:

*In the midst of the street of it, and **on either side of the river**, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and **yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations*** (Rev. 22:2).

***And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine*** (Ez. 47:12).

It is clear that Revelation 22:2, which describes the new heaven and new earth, matches perfectly with Ezekiel 47:12. Both speak of a celestial river lined on either side with special trees containing healing benefits in their leaves. Yet in spite of this obvious correlation, Premillennialists still choose to view the latter as a reference to the thousand-year reign of Christ.

### **A Summary of the Glaring Flaws with Premillennial Eschatology**

1. A literal view of the millennium forces us to conclude that the end times chronology located in the Gospels and Epistles is missing a 1000 year gap between the second coming of Christ and the Day of Judgment. However, we cannot find any proof of this by simple examination of the texts.
2. The millennium reign is said to involve Israel, the Gentile nations, and a one thousand year era of peace and prosperity. But we do not find any of these details mentioned in Revelation 20. On the contrary, Revelation 20 distinctly describes **a reign of deceased Christian souls**. Neither do the verse quotations from Isaiah and Ezekiel mention anything about a millennium reign or satan being bound for the space of one thousand years. We simply link these prophecies together out of necessity, and not because they appear related.
3. Premillennialism causes a duplication of the Gog and Magog battle at different intervals in history.
4. Since everywhere else in the Scriptures we see the word “thousand” used figuratively, it seems inconsistent to interpret it differently in Revelation 20.
5. The Premillennial position creates two bodily resurrections and two final judgments, one for the righteous and another for the unrighteous. This is clearly contrary to scripture.
6. Premillennial theology promotes the return to a sacrificial system, keeping the feast



7. days, and an obligatory annual pilgrimage back to Jerusalem (Zec. 14; Ez.44:1-46; 46:24). To me, this theory negates the purpose of Christ's atonement and replaces the Church Age with a Mosaic one for another one thousand years. To me, such a scheme of belief seems irrational and contradicts the once and for all finished work of Christ.

## **OT Prophecies About the Millennium**

By Phillip Hess

The present reality and nature of Christ's kingdom will mostly fully be realized and expressed in Heaven, at which time it will be ruled by the Father. Currently, the Father has given the kingdom to Jesus to rule. Jesus gained the right to rule by what he endured on the cross and His resurrection. He was formally coronated (crowned) at the Ascension.

Here are the proofs:

Matthew 28:18, *All authority has been given to me in Heaven and on earth.* This speaks of his absolute rulership. It also explains why He is said to rule with a rod of iron, right now in this time. The "rod of iron" does not mean harsh rule. It means unbreakable authority. A rod of wood could be broken. But Jesus' authority, though He does not use it cruelly, is absolute. Since He bound the strong man at Calvary, he is the rightful ruler of the world, and His will will ultimately be carried out.

Jesus received this Kingdom when He ascended to the Father. Luke 19:12, *A certain nobleman went into a far country (Heaven) to receive for Himself a kingdom, and to return (back to earth).* The disciples saw Him ascend up into the cloud. Daniel, in the prophetic future tense, got to see Him come out the other side of the cloud into heaven, and there be crowned. Daniel 7:13, *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*

So Daniel saw the Son of Man receive this kingdom. Daniel 2:44 says, *And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.* So this kingdom was set up in the days of those kings (Roman Empire), and has been standing ever since, and will stand forever.

Isa 2:4, *And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.* This speaks of the character of the kingdom (the manifestation of which on earth is the church). All those who come into it beat their swords into plowshares, and learn war no more. This prophecy is of the present time. Around A.D. 160, Justin Martyr wrote: “We used to be filled with war, mutual slaughter, and every kind of wickedness. However, now all of us have, throughout the whole earth, changed our warlike weapons. We have changed our swords into plowshares, and our spears into farming implements.” The same verse was explained in the same way by Irenaeus, Tertullian, and probably others.

Micah 4:1, *But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. 2 And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

These verses are prophetic imagery of the church, which is called Mount Zion and Jerusalem prophetically. Being established in the top of the mountains speaks of its supremacy. Many peoples and nations flowing into it is the conversion of the Gentiles. His law going forth out of Zion is the preaching of the gospel by the church.

So Jesus is reigning now, and his enemies are being put under His feet, either by voluntarily submitting and becoming Christians, or by being destroyed. While the Lord does bring some judgment on wicked men all along, the greatest judgment will be at His coming. 1 Cor 15:23, *But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. (resurrection). Then come the end (at the resurrection) when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and authority and power. (So Christ is reigning, and will reign until the resurrection, at which time He will lay down His kingship and return the kingdom to the Father.) For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. (So death is destroyed at the resurrection—see verse 54—and Christ is only reigning until then. So He is only reigning until the resurrection, which obviously means He is reigning now. Why does He give up the kingdom to the Father? Verse 28: That God may be all in all.*

## **Day-for-Year Principle**

The “day-for-year” principle in Bible prophecy refers to a particular set of scriptures in which the word *day* is considered to be **symbolic** for a *year* of actual time. This principle demonstrates that the Bible sometimes uses **non-literal** time segments in prophecy. It also supports the notion of a symbolic millennium, rather than a literal one. The following are some biblical examples of the day-for-year principle:

1. **Numbers 14:34.** The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, one year for every day spent by the spies in Canaan.
2. **Ezekiel 4:5-6.** The prophet Ezekiel was commanded to lie on his left side for 390 days, followed by his right side for 40 days to symbolize the equivalent number of years of punishment on Israel and Judah respectively.
3. **Daniel 9:24-27.** This is known as the Prophecy of Seventy Weeks. The majority of scholars understand these passages to refer to 70 "sevens" or "septets" of years—that is, a total of 490 years.

So in light of this revelation, how do we know when biblical time references are literal or not? This is a good question, and one who's answer may not be so simple. But in most cases, a good hermeneutic to follow has to do with **context and use**. If the time reference is located within prophecy then there is a good chance that it's not literal. And sometimes we must cross reference the use of certain time periods with others in the Bible to get a better indication of what they mean. Bottom line, the reader should always employ critical analysis of the context and reference to make a determination, and this only with the guiding of the Holy Spirit.

### **3.5 Years of Tribulation: A Clearly Literal Time Reference**

The tribulation period is a perfect example of a literal time reference. It also serves to contrast the literal time segments in the Bible from those that are non-literal. For example, the Bible describes this era as one that lasts exactly 3.5 years. But this 3.5 years is referred to as “times, times, and half a time”. The way we can know that this time reference equals 3.5 years is because it is described later on in terms of months and even days. In fact, this is the only time the Bible breaks down a time period into years, months, and days. Notice:

### 3.5 YEARS

*And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand **until a time and times and the dividing of time** (Dan. 7:25).*

*And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for **a time, times, and an half**; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished (Dan. 12:7).*

*And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for **a time, and times, and half a time**, from the face of the serpent (Rev. 12:14).*

### 42 MONTHS

*But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot **forty and two months** (Rev. 11:2).*

### ONE THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTY DAYS

*And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy **a thousand two hundred and threescore days**, clothed in sackcloth (Rev. 11:3).*

*And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there **a thousand two hundred and threescore days** (Rev. 12:6).*

Clearly, no other scripture passages describe time as specifically as those above. It is nearly impossible to force a non-literal application on the previous verses when time is broken down so concisely into its logical sub-groups. I believe the Bible does this simply to prevent us from drawing the wrong conclusions when it is imperative to understand the data in a strictly literal manner.

### **Conclusion**

As we reach the conclusion of this writing, I hope it was demonstrated sufficiently why Amillennialism has always been the orthodox view of the early Church. And why it

best explains the millennium passages of Revelation 20 without falling out of harmony with the rest of Scripture. Most importantly, I trust that the explanation given thus far will help us decipher prophecy in a manner that doesn't bear negatively on God's eternal Kingdom and His plan of redemption for mankind.

In Christ,  
John Aziza