

Chapter 20: The Millennium

I. Introduction

A. Millennium

1. Only place in bible that speaks of this 1000 year reign of the saints with Christ.
2. Mille = 1000, Annus= year
3. The view of the Millennium affects much of how you see the bulk of OT prophesies as well.

B. Outline of Chapter

1. Vs 1-3 describes binding of Satan
2. Vs 4-6 1000 year period during Satan's binding which saints reign with Christ
3. Vs 7-9 describes the releasing of Satan for a little while to deceive nations
4. Vs 9-end, describes Satan and enemies of God being devoured by fire and then a general judgment of the dead.

II. Millennial views

A. This chapter doesn't correspond to the 4 different views of the book (futurism, preterism, etc)

B. Three classic views of the Millennium is a separate issue for the most part.

1. Pre-millennial view

- a. Christ returns before the literal 1000 years.
- b. Dispensational camp is most popular today.
- c. Historic Pre-millennial camp (non-dispensational) held by many church fathers.

2. Post-millennial

- a. Millennium comes first, then the second coming
- b. Binding of Satan takes place through efforts of the church
 - (1) Evangelism.
 - (2) Done **by Christ**, through church (His body)
- c. Jesus Christ will conquer world through preaching of gospel
 - (1) Majority (or all) the world will become Christianized.
 - (2) Real Christians, not just professing.
 - (3) No war because all are following Christ
- d. When Jesus returns, it's to a subdued world.
- e. Sub-group of Post-millers called Reconstructionists.
 - (1) Some call it "dominion theology".
 - (2) Believe society must be reconstructed according to the laws of Moses including penalties.
 - (3) 3. Most Post-millers do not believe this view.

3. A-millennial view

- a. Means "no Millennium" (literally speaking).
 - (1) They don't deny the millennium but take it symbolically as the church age.
 - (2) They do not negate Rev 20 or Christ's second coming as some charge.
- b. Christ returns at end of 1000 years (but 1000 years is figurative for church age)
 - (1) 1. 1000 years is symbolic for an extended period of time.
 - (2) Binding of Satan took place at the cross.
- c. Little season at the end is short period of time at the end where the church is persecuted globally. Some even see this time period as the great tribulation with anti-Christ and everything else.
- d. Fire from heaven is second coming of Christ followed by the judgment.

4. Each of the 3 views has very impressive scholars in their camp.

a. Pre-mil

- (1) George Eldon Ladd

b. Post-mil

- (1) Benjamin B. Warfield
- (2) Jonathan Edwards
- (3) Many others since the reformation.

c. A-mil

- (1) Almost All Reformed Theologians
- (2) Almost All Catholic Theologians
- (3) A large percentage of theology professors

III. *Hermeneutics*

- A. Pre-mil tends to take things more literally.
 - 1. Israel in OT is always literal nation of Israel.
 - 2. 1000 years is 1000 years.
 - 3. Satan bound is literal binding.
- B. Post-mil and A-mil recognize symbolic language of prophets.
 - 1. Typically see many references to Israel as speaking of the church.
 - 2. NT writers quote many passages and apply them to church.
 - 3. Both agree that second coming is at end of Millennium.
 - 4. Binding of Satan is seen as figurative.
 - 5. Revelation must be interpreted rather than taken at face value.
- C. Question is not “what do we prefer”, but “what help do we get from the rest of scripture”?
- D. Pre-mil
 - 1. Seems to agree more with literal interpretation of Revelation.
 - a. For them, Ch20 chronologically follows Ch19
 - b. Easier to interpret.
 - c. This was the one thing that kept George Ladd from being Amillennial according to one of his books.
 - 2. This literal hermeneutic of the Millennium also gives them opportunity to believe in literal fulfillment to the promises to nation Israel in OT.
 - a. Kingdom passages in the prophets.
 - b. Literal temple, sacrificial system, Levitical priesthood, reign of Messiah on literal throne of David in literal Jerusalem.
 - c. World wide mandate to offer sacrifices in Jerusalem at feast of tabernacles.
 - d. This is known as the Golden Age of the Jews. None of those passages mention 1000 years, and some of them speak of it as being forever.
 - 3. Sabbath Millennium view.
 - a. If second coming is around 2000
 - (1) 4000 years in OT
 - (2) 2000 years in NT
 - (3) 1000 years in Millennium = the Sabbath Mil.
 - (4) 1000 years is like a day to the Lord (2Pet 3:8)
 - (5) Look also at the Creation week. 6 days work, 1 day rest.
 - b. This view held by some Church fathers and some Rabbi’s.
 - c. This is not a biblical argument, but a philosophical one.
 - 4. Jehovah’s Witnesses view
 - a. Millennium is necessary for God to be fair.
 - (1) Many have died without hearing gospel and therefore need a chance to hear it.
 - (2) These people will be resurrected and given a chance in the Millennium
 - (3) At end of Millennium, Satan deceives some and they never do turn to Christ.
 - b. However, bible doesn’t indicate that people get second chance (Heb 9:27-28)
 - 5. “Man’s innate corruption” view. (Held by some dispensationalists)
 - a. God has to show man that he’s culpable by his own innate depraved.
 - b. When Satan is bound, God can demonstrate that man himself is to blame for his own sin.
 - c. However, nowhere in bible does it say that God is either required or concerned to prove such a thing.
 - d. Also, the bible indicates that people don’t fall when Satan is absent.
 - e. It’s only when devil is loosed that we see them sinning again.
 - 6. Nobody takes all of Revelation totally literally...it’s impossible.
 - a. Example 1: 200,000,000 horsemen are taken by dispensationalists literally, but not actual horses.
 - b. Example 2: Dispensationalists see 7 letters to 7 churches as symbolically all the church age.
 - c. Everybody picks and chooses what is symbolic and what is literal.
 - (1) Each sees different compelling reasons for what they take literally.
 - (2) Each finds things that are convenient to their view to take literally and things that are not.
 - d. Premil’s generally insist that they are the one’s that take prophesy literally.
 - e. Rev 20 has things that can and cannot be taken literally.

- (1) Satan can't be literal bound by a chain in a literal pit...He's not a physical being.
- (2) He's also described as a dragon and a serpent, he can't be both.
- (3) We can say that Jesus limited Satan's freedom and this can be seen symbolically as chaining him up and putting him in a pit that opens with a key.
- (4) Angel cannot have literal key to bottomless pit for same reasons.
- (5) Bottomless pits cannot exist on earth because it's round.
- (6) Michael is most powerful angel mentioned in scripture. Yet even he would not dare to bring accusation against Satan (Jude).
- (7) This "angel" could represent Jesus Himself. He's the only One with the power to "bind" Satan. The word for "angel" means "messenger". Jesus was described as messenger in Malachi 3:1
- (8) 1000 years can be taken literal, but it's not necessary.
- (9) Many other things in passage (and book) are obviously symbolic.
- (10) Other time passages aren't taken literally, like 10 day persecution of Smyrna in Ch. 2.
- (11) 1000 years is never used literally in the rest of the bible (which isn't nearly as symbolic as Revelation). 1000 years is usually used to describe a very long time from our point of view, but not from God's. Examples: Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8
- (12) The number 1000 is commonly used in OT to simply describe a big number. It's never statistical (Deut 1:11; Deut 7:9-10; Psalm 50:10; Psalm 84:10)
- (13) If the book wanted to be specific about time frames, why is Satan's release described as "a little while"?

E. Things that compel us to take 1000 years symbolically:

1. Looking at chronology of chapter – binding of Satan (vs 1-3), 1000 years (4-6), little while (7-9), and the rest after that (9-15).
2. Vs. 9-15 are very likely to be things that take place at the 2nd coming of Christ (comparing with other scriptures).
 - a. If true, the things which happen before that must take place before the 2nd coming.
 - b. If true, it establishes either Amil or Post-mil to be true.
3. Look at cross-scriptural arguments for 9-15 being 2nd coming
 - a. Fire from heaven (vs 9) and end of heavens and earth (vs 11).
 - (1) 2 Thess 1:6-9
 - (2) 2 Then 2:8-9
 - (3) 2 Peter 3:10-13
 - b. Resurrection (12-13). General resurrection (2nd) and spiritual resurrection (1st...in this life)
 - (1) Acts 24:15-16
 - (2) John 5:24-29
 - (3) Eph 2:1
 - (4) 2 Cor 5:17
 - (5) 1st death can be seen as physical death.
 - (6) 2nd death can be seen as judgment after death.
 - (7) This kind will only be experienced by those who are not written in the book
 - (8) This is a different kind of death than the first.
 - (9) Likewise, the 1st resurrection is a different kind than the first.
 - (10) The rest of scripture indicates a general resurrection of the dead all at the same time.
 - c. Judgment (vs 14)
 - (1) Matt 25:31-35
 - (a) At second coming
 - (b) Everyone comes before Him
 - (c) Some to life, some to death.
 - d. So, we can't let the obscure symbolic passages (like Revelation) interpret the plainer passages, it needs to be the other way around.
 - e. In Rev 20:9-15, we have:
 - (1) End of the world
 - (2) General resurrection.
 - (3) General judgment.
 - f. The rest of scripture places these events at the same time.

- g. Revelation needs to be “decoded” by the use of the plainer teachings of scriptures.
- F. Satan bound for 1000 years.
 - 1. Scriptural references to something similar in Matt 12:28-29
 - a. Christ is plundering Satan’s house here (casting out demons), and He had to first bind Him.
 - b. This does not imply that Satan can’t do anything. He’s not inactive.
 - c. But Jesus has rendered him incapable of resistance.
 - d. The primary meaning behind the metaphorical “binding” of Satan is that he no longer has the power to universally deceive the nations into disobeying God.
 - e. Only 1 nation before Jesus had any light from God, the rest were blinded and deceived by Satan. (Idol worshippers, child sacrifices, etc.)
 - f. The great commission is to bring the light to the nations (Col 2:15).
 - g. Past tense. This image suggests that the powers of darkness are fighting without weapons. Satan is defeated, but there’s mop up to do.
 - h. This imagery is borrowed from the Roman practice of chaining their enemies and leading them back in a victory procession as they return from battle.
 - i. Heb. 2:14-15 - Greek word for **destroy means** to be entirely idle (useless), literally or figuratively
- G. 1000 years reign
 - 1. Earth or heaven? Pre-mil believes this is on earth.
 - 2. Nowhere in this chapter does it mention Jesus being on earth.
 - 3. This comes from the assumption that Ch 19 is the 2nd coming of Christ.
 - 4. However, there are multiple times in the book that we see the 2nd coming followed by something that precedes it, making this a false assumption. (ex. Ch. 11 followed by Ch. 12)
 - 5. Since we established the binding of Satan and 1st resurrection to be before the 2nd coming, it follows that this too is speaking of something before as well.
 - 6. John saw souls (vs. 4). Disembodied, beheaded Christian souls are in heaven, not on earth.
 - a. If this was after the 2nd coming, they wouldn’t just be souls.
 - b. Can’t be all resurrected saints because it says “those who didn’t take the mark of the beast.
 - c. Souls of martyrs are often mentioned in Revelation, and they’re always in heaven.
 - 7. So this **must** represent a time before the 2nd coming and general resurrection.
 - 8. These are people enthroned with Christ.
- H. Satan’s release and war.
 - 1. Some Amil’s think Satan has already been released.
 - a. Back in 1800’s many ideological deceptions and other things began to arise.
 - (1) Rise of almost all pseudo-Christian cults
 - (2) Darwinism
 - (3) Communist manifesto
 - (4) Humanist manifesto
 - (5) Post-Christian culture
 - (6) Increase in technology and communications allowing the whole world to be deceived very quickly.
 - b. However, this theory is very Anglo-centric.
 - (1) This describes what has happened in the west
 - (2) Christianity is spreading faster than it ever has in history anywhere (China, Africa, Asia).
 - (3) We don’t see the church globally pinned at this point.
 - (4) The gospel is spreading faster than it has ever in history.
 - (5) For America or the western world to collapse does not mean the end of the world or the gospel era.
 - 2. The beloved city is the church.
 - a. There hasn’t yet been a global persecution of the church.
 - b. There has throughout history been many localized persecutions.
 - c. This may happen after the world has been fully evangelized....who knows?
 - d. In what sense is there danger to the glorified resurrected Christ and His resurrected saints?
 - e. None. That’s why this can’t be speaking of Christ physically reigning on earth and being attacked by a bunch of mere mortals and a loser of a devil.