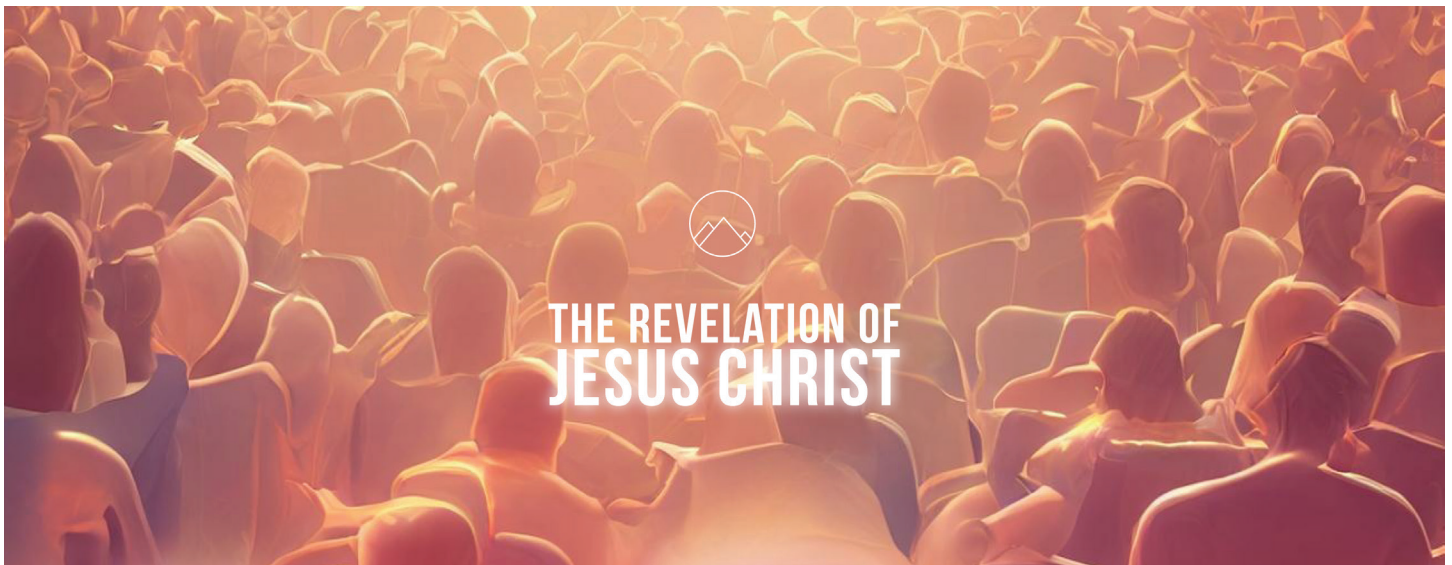




May 26, 2024
Revelation 20:1-10

'Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. 9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. 10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.'

Over the next few weeks, as we wrap up the series on the book of the revelation of Jesus Christ, these last few chapters are some of the most exciting and vivid chapters, because they declare with authority and power the victory of Jesus Christ. It is here that we see the final eradication of sin and the full glory of the promise of God fulfilled in redeeming humanity and the earth. And let me remind you, it's a victory that has always been. Jesus has never not been victorious and so these last

few chapters exemplify that incredibly!

Now it's been a few weeks since we've found our way into this series and if you remember the last time, we saw in Chapter 19 that the kings and kingdoms, and the beast from the sea and the beast from the land had all gathered together to wage war against Jesus. Jesus showed up riding on a white stallion with the sword coming out of His mouth and declares victory. He simply rounds up the Beast from the Earth and the Beast from the Sea, binds them and tosses them into the Lake of Fire. There is no war, nor is there any battle. In fact, there is no reason for war, because the war had already been fought and won - on the cross - thousands of years earlier! When Jesus died and resurrected, it was in that single act that Satan was defeated. So this is just the round-up of evil taking place. He speaks and both beasts are bound and thrown into the Lake of Fire.

And so it's interesting to read here in the next chapter that Satan who is represented by the Dragon (whom the two beasts got their power from) is now also bound but then we read at some point will be loosed but then captured and thrown into the Lake of Fire with the two beasts. John underscores all of this by referencing a period of time that will last a thousand years.

Up until this point, we haven't talked much about the timing of the last days, or when the final judgment of God will take place because ultimately the Book of Revelation is not necessarily meant to provide a precise timetable for future events. Instead, as we have seen, it is a deeply symbolic and theological work that focuses on the ultimate victory of Jesus Christ over sin and evil, reminding us that God's judgment towards sin and evil is not necessarily a futuristic event but is something that exists in the present and past as well.

We see this pictured in the judgments of the seven seals, the seven trumpets and then in the seven bowls - reminding us that the nature of God's judgment is always purposed first towards redemption. That He corrects and disciplines those He loves, but if they don't respond, then His judgment towards Satan and his hoards will ultimately affect those that follow them as well. And so in Chapter 19 we see part of God's final judgment being poured out on the two beasts by binding them and throwing them into the Lake of Fire. And again, we see the same action taking place with the Dragon/Satan in our reading today as well. And all of this is underscored by the mention of the thousand years/millennium a total of 6 times.

Now, the study of the last days or end times is referred to as eschatology. And in eschatology, there are a number of different viewpoints, as to where we are in history right now, and what will happen next based on what has already happened and various prophecies and clues scattered all throughout the Scriptures. There are historians and theologians who have dedicated their entire lives to working this through and ultimately, I need you to understand that there is no single correct position but that all share different perspectives, based on the interpretation of certain clues, symbols, and sections in scripture. All viewpoints share this in common, that Jesus Christ is victorious, and has defeated sin and death and those that put their faith, hope and trust in Him, will share in that victory as well.

So what I would like to do this morning is to take a look at this 1000 year period of time that is referred to as the millennium and walk through what that means through the lens of eschatology.

So here's what we know to be clear from the reading today:

The Dragon (Satan) either is, or has been, or will be bound for 1000 years

During that time he does not have the ability to deceive the nations.

When the thousand years are finished he will be released and able to deceive again but only for a short period of time.

During that thousand year time when the Dragon (Satan) either is, or has been, or will be locked up, the church will flourish.

When he is released the Dragon (Satan) will gather the nations together to wage war against Jesus Christ. At that time, Jesus will simply pick him up - just like what He did with the two beasts - and throw him into the Lake of Fire with the beasts.

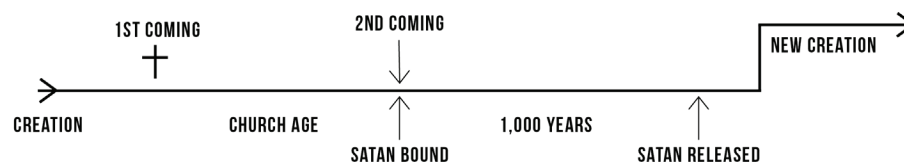
What isn't totally clear is when the binding of Satan will take place. Is it a futuristic event or has it already happened? And what about the return of Christ? Does that happen before Satan is bound or after? And what about the millennium? Is that a futuristic event or past and present? So many questions.... And I'm not the only one asking these questions either. These questions and many more have been asked by multitudes of people for centuries. And there are a number of varying view-points on this but three main ones tend to rise to the top very quickly:

Pre-Millennialism suggests that the return of Jesus Christ takes place before the 1000 year millennium.

Post-Millennialism suggest that the return of Jesus Christ takes place after the millennium.

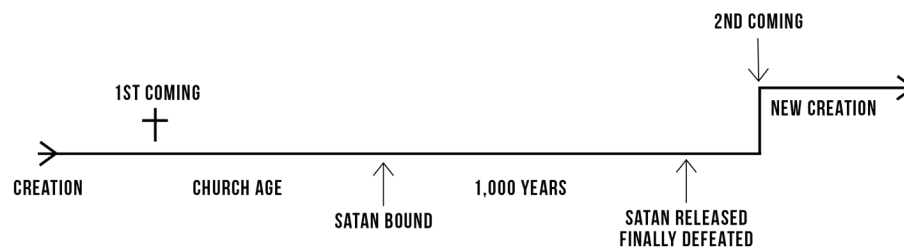
A-Millennialism holds to the idea that we are in the middle of the millennium right now and that the millennium is actually a symbol for the church age.

PRE-MILLENNIALISM



Pre-millennialists believe in a literal interpretation of the millennium, which is a future 1,000-year reign of Christ on Earth. In Revelation 20:1-10, they see this period as Christ's reign following His Second Coming. At this point, Satan is bound, and believers rule with Christ for exactly 1,000 years. The first resurrection is understood as the physical resurrection of believers who will reign with Christ during this millennial period on Earth. After the 1,000 years, Satan is released and attempts once more to destroy humanity and take over the world, but he is ultimately thrown into the lake of fire. Subsequently, the rest of humanity is resurrected and brought before the throne of judgment. The unrepentant are cast into the lake of fire along with the beasts and the dragon, while the saved enter into the glorious new creation.

POST-MILLENNIALISM

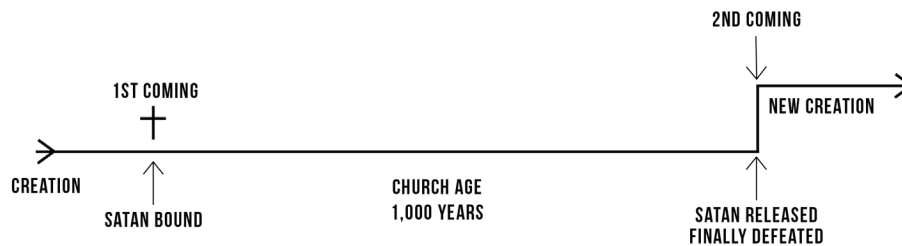


THE REVELATION OF
JESUS CHRIST

Postmillennialists believe that the return of Christ will happen after the millennium, a period during which the Gospel will make a significant impact on the earth as the church experiences great growth and prosperity. In contrast to premillennialists, who believe the world will deteriorate before Christ's return, postmillennialists hold that the spread of the Gospel will increasingly demonstrate its power throughout the world, and the hope for the Second Coming will strengthen as the power of the Gospel spreads. This contrasts with the premillennial view, which often anticipates and even sees the deterioration of the world as a sign of Christ's imminent return.

Postmillennialists believe that Satan was bound at the cross when Christ rose victoriously, and that the church age transitions into the millennium. The first resurrection is understood metaphorically as the spiritual regeneration of believers who spread Christ's reign on Earth. They often reference the parable of the mustard seed as symbolic of the kingdom of God: it starts small, grows slowly, but eventually expands and takes over. Postmillennialists see us currently in the church age, moving ever closer to the millennium. After this period, Satan is given one more opportunity to deceive, but ultimately, Jesus will cast him into the lake of fire. Following this, the final judgment occurs, and the saved enter into the glorious new creation.

A-MILLENNIALISM



THE REVELATION OF
JESUS CHRIST 

Amillennialists, like postmillennialists, view the millennium as a long period of time rather than a specific 1,000-year reign. They believe that Satan was bound at the cross, though they see this binding as a process that began with the birth of Jesus and was completed through His death and resurrection. According to amillennialists, the millennium is the period between Christ's first and second comings—an indefinite span of time certainly longer than 1,000 years. The first resurrection is understood spiritually as the regeneration of believers who come to faith in Christ and experience His reign in their hearts. This era is marked first by Jesus' preaching of the Gospel and now by the Holy Spirit empowering believers to spread the Gospel. When Christ returns, Satan will be released for a short season but will ultimately be defeated by Jesus and cast into the lake of fire. This will usher in the glorious new creation.

Now, as I see it, each one of these main three views has biblical merit based on the way that it is being interpreted. Each one of these viewpoints has scholars and theologians behind it. Each has multiple books and resources behind it so it can become increasingly hard to say who is right who is wrong because at the end of the day, Jesus simply hasn't returned yet and a lot of this is open to interpretation.

Here are my thoughts: After making it this far into our study, I would likely lean somewhere between the Amillennialist and Postmillennialist view, simply because it takes into consideration the overall symbolic and figurative nature of the book of the Revelation. I would also tend to view this thousand year reign as a metaphorical and spiritual one and as the amillennialists view, is not a resurrection of physical bodies to rule with Christ on earth, but more of a regeneration of souls being saved that are now here on earth, spreading light in dark places, being empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak the Gospel. I've always struggled with Christians who celebrate as the world is being destroyed, because they are hoping that this is an indicator of Christ's return. I like the view that the postmillennialists hold where they see revival as a sign of the return of Christ instead. They would say that the scripture that talks about wars and rumours of wars as being a sign of the return of Christ actually references the ongoing trials of human history and that Christians are to see them as an opportunity to spread the Gospel because people respond to the Gospel in times of need and

as they respond, the power of the Gospel is shown. To me, this speaks to the power of the gospel at work in the world. And just like a mustard seed that starts small, it gains momentum and you can't stop it. I like that!

I haven't even mentioned the rapture and tribulation yet - but we've already talked at length about the Great Tribulation mentioned in Revelation not being some futuristic event but that every generation experiences great tribulation and the call to stand for Christ is the same in those seasons which is something that both the postmillennialists and amillennialists would hold to as well. The idea that the church escapes tribulation during a rapture seems to me to circumvent the entire message of the New Testament that encourages Christians to hold fast during tribulation and trials. To take up their cross daily and follow Jesus. Thlipsis: uncomfortable pressure that is experienced when light starts invading darkness. Time and time again, the book of Revelation celebrates those that lost their lives, and were martyred for the sake of the gospel. It's interesting to me that the book of the Revelation makes no mention of an event called the rapture. It is the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians that speaks of saints being caught up in a cloud in the air to be met with Christ. And this can be interpreted figuratively, symbolically, or even literally. But one thing is clear, it's not meant to escape tribulation. After-all, the general context of Paul's letters all suggest that Christians are expected to endure trials and tribulations as part of their faith journey. The focus for Paul then in using this language is to remind us that we have salvation and our home is in Heaven with Christ for eternity and that should help give us strength and hope to walk through difficult seasons.

It also seems to make sense with the overall narrative presented in revelation, that the binding of Satan happened at the cross not the second coming. For it was at the cross, where Jesus declared victory over sin and death. But to me it seems to make even more sense that even though the victory culminated at the cross, it actually started at the birth of Jesus. And this point for me is massive. Because all throughout Jesus' ministry, He operated in victory over the enemy. I think we can clearly see this in the beginning of the gospels when Jesus started his earthly ministry. Mark chapter 1 talks of Jesus coming out of the wilderness experience where He was tempted by Satan for 40 days and nights. It says that He came out of that experience victorious. And not only that, but Jesus Himself, then makes the bold statement that,

Mark 1:15

'...the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel.'

How can He make such a claim?? Because He is victorious and we see His victory over evil all throughout His ministry as He exorcises demons left and right. They submit to Him because even in that moment, He is victorious - and they know it! Jesus even references His victory over Satan,

Mark 3:27

'No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.'

It seems to me that Jesus is referencing Satan here - that he is bound. The word for binding here is the Greek word, 'Dēo.' And this is the exact same word that is used for Satan here in Revelation 20:2. The binding of Satan isn't a futuristic event - it's in the past - He was bound and He remains bound - as the Kingdom of God plunders the kingdom of darkness! This should bring great hope to us!! Because it is yet another reminder of the victory of Jesus, the power of the Gospel and the ultimate demise of the enemy. He cannot win. He cannot prevail, because he is bound and his next stop, is the lake of fire for eternity.

Which I recognize can actually raise an interesting question then. Because if Satan is bound, and Jesus has declared victory, how then, is he able to wreak havoc in the world as it exists right now?

He's not. It's not him.

The answer lies in the beasts—his two henchmen: the beast from the sea and the beast from the earth, gaining their power from the dragon.

Revelation 13:2b

'...the dragon gave (the beasts) his power, his throne, and great authority.'

Think about it. His power, his throne and his authority! It's one thing to say power, but it's a completely different thing to give up power, throne, and authority. The only reason he would delegate his power in this way is if he were bound and unable to act directly himself.

Example: drug lords in prison.

In verse 8 to 10 we are told that after this 1000 year period, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations and gather them for war against Christ. Generally speaking, all three camps seem to agree that the purpose of this is to reveal the true nature of those who have not genuinely embraced Christ. Despite living under Christ's righteous rule, some people will still choose to follow Satan when given the opportunity. This final rebellion allows God to conclusively demonstrate the necessity of divine judgment and the futility of human rebellion against Him. Verse 10 reminds us that no matter who he influences, Satan's power is no match for the word of God and as Jesus Christ shows up, He simply grabs him by the scruff of the neck and tosses Satan into the lake of fire with the two beasts. Although it sounds like there are two battles going on between chapter 19 and 20, it's important to understand that this is not so. This is the same battle as chapter 19. Chapter 20 is just looking at it from a different angle. We've seen John use this approach in previous sections so it's important to understand that this is what is happening here. There is only one battle. It doesn't take place. Jesus simply shows up and speaks His victory and the dragon and the beasts and all those that followed them are thrown into the Lake of Fire.

And honestly, I think that is the point right there. There might be significant areas where all three viewpoints differ in their approach and as the church, we need to learn to agree to disagree on some

of these things because ultimately, one thing that is entirely agreed-upon, is that when Jesus Christ shows up, the beasts, the dragon, Death and Hades will all be thrown into the eternal lake of fire. And those of us that have placed our faith, hope and trust in Jesus Christ will reign with Him in a glorious new creation for eternity. So in light of that the call then is very simple. It is a call to keep our eyes on the One who has bound the evil one. To keep our eyes on the One who causes us to come to life. To keep our eyes on the One who reigns over all authority and calls us to join with Him. To keep our eyes on the One who is even now bringing into being a whole new creation, which He calls His bride! To keep our eyes on the One whose love for you and me is the greatest love that can ever be known. You see, our great hope is in the Lord. The message of the Gospel is true and real and life-changing. To those that embrace and accept it, it is the power unto salvation. For eternity.

Therefore...

Hebrews 12:1-2

‘...we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.’

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