

Revelation 20:1-6 pt1

This morning we get to some concepts in Revelation that are familiar terms but highly disputed in their meaning. This is one of the most controversial passages in all of scripture. It may be the reason why more pastors don't preach this book i.e. so they can avoid this text.

We encounter words "binding Satan", "releasing Satan" or "1000 year reign".

A lot of ink and keystrokes have been spent over these terms.

Before we get to them, let's remember that Revelation is a prophetic, pastoral, apocalyptic letter written to THOSE harassed believers in the 1st century living in Asia Minor (Turkey of today). It was written to warn and give hope, i.e. unveil the Hope that is in the victorious Christ. It had application for them and for the church during the past 2000 years. It was not written for ivory tower analysts with their timelines, charts, and code breaking formulas.

This letter is an unveiling or revelation of Jesus Christ. The curtain is pulled back so that we get a fuller picture of the Lion of Judah, the Lamb who was slain. We get a glimpse of the spiritual reality that there has been an ongoing conflict between evil -the Dragon and Beasts and the kingdom of God. In this letter John is helping the church see that Christ is victorious. There are a lot of symbols and visions, but the bottom line is Hold Firm to Christ for He is the Victor.

Satan Bound

1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Dr. Kistemaker suggests that we see ch 20 as alternating pictures of the earthly and heavenly aspects of the same period:

v.1-3 present an earthly aspect of the millennium;

v. 4-6 the heavenly aspect of the same period;

v. 7-10 again the earthly aspect and

v. 11-15 picture a heavenly aspect of the Judgement Day p. 533 (New Testament Commentary Series – Revelation)

As Beale suggests, ch 20 should be seen primarily in light of the immediate context, then in light of the closest parallels in the book and finally in the light of other parallels in the NT & OT. (p.420)

TAKE THE KEYS AND LOCK HIM UP...v. 1-3

V. 1-3

An angel is given the key to the abyss – the lowest region of the underworld. It is the key to the bottomless pit. He gets the key from Christ- Revelation 1:18 already told us that Jesus holds the keys to death and Hades.

Jesus is the one who conquered sin, death, and hell so that “at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.” Phil 2:10

Eph 4:9 (Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

The angel is given a key and a chain to bind the Dragon, Satan for 1000 years. Satan, the accuser and deceiver, is thrown down and bound by the authority coming from the ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

The description of Satan is similar to that of ch 12:7-9 and suggests that the 1000 years is a ‘replay’ of an earlier expulsion from heaven described in the gospels.

The work of Christ on behalf of His Bride silences the accusations of Satan who is cast down by Jesus and the ministry of his disciples – Luke 10:17 “I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. John’s vision in ch 20 echoes Satan’s fall with the first coming and redemptive work of Christ. Satan is bound and his house plundered by Christ and his perfect obedience. In Matt 12 Jesus speaks of binding the strong man.

When do we read of the Devil being cast out? The author of the *Revelation*, John, records it for us in the gospel according to *John.12:31* “Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out. 32 “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” (Jn. 12:31-32 NAS).

As Jesus hangs on the cross, the ruler of this world is cast out;. Satan is thrown out by Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. This concept begins in the early ministry of Christ. Jeff Hamm Because of the gospel of Christ, the nations are no longer held in ignorance and darkness as the light of Christ spreads worldwide (Matt 4:13-17

Satan is bound but he is NOT inactive during the “1000 years”. The binding is so that he cannot deceive the nations. In v. 7 when he is later released (he does not escape), he seeks to go about deceiving the nations again. He can’t prevent the gospel from going forth.

“The binding of Satan...means that throughout the gospel age in which we now live the influence of Satan, though certainly not annihilated, is so curtailed that he cannot prevent the spread of the gospel to the nations of the world” (Hoekema, 229). Satan is bound so that he cannot thwart the mission of the Church, *Go and make disciples of all nations.*

Do we give our time, talent, and treasure to making disciples of all nations? God has not promised us the American dream, but he has said the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church. Are we part of an advancing force or are we shrinking away from the call?

EX: “You Campus Crusade folks would charge hell with a squirt gun”

If you are really into end times stuff you may have noticed that I’ve done 48 weeks in Revelation without referring to or explaining the major views of the millennium. That has been intentional. It’s not just because they are complicated and I’m not smart enough to fully understand them all, it’s also because *the Revealed message of Hope for the church is not dependent on a set system of understanding this book.*

On a personal note, I’ve been a believer for almost 49 years, and I’ve never given a great deal of attention to the issues surrounding the millennium. That’s not to say that it’s not important. This letter tells us that there is a blessing to those who hear and give heed to the words of this book. I have been blessed in doing this series.

That said, I've been able to function fairly well as a Christian, a pastor, husband, father, and friend without a thorough grasp of the millennial issues. I could take a week or two and go through the three major viewpoints, but I won't. There are plenty of resources that will do that for you. The notes inside the cover of Dr. Boettner's book THE MILLENNIUM says, "Each of these systems is consistently evangelical and each has been held by many able and sincere believers..."

The common joke regarding the millennial views – PreMill, PostMill, or AMill - is to say, "I'm panmill. Everything will pan out in the end." I can live with that.

But to do justice to this text, I do need to give some sort of explanation of the millennial views. It won't be exhaustive.

the 1000 years in 20:2 ff has 6 references

Literal or symbolic?

"I saw" leads into a vision or symbol.

All other numbers are symbolic as well at some level.

It symbolizes a perfect huge number 1000

EX: we use the phrase "1 in a million" - so you're saying there's a chance

Millennial Systems...

As for the various systems, there is a common Christian view on certain things happening toward the end of time. The Apostle's Creed gives expression to this...

Jesus ascended into heaven, and from heaven he will return to judge the quick and the dead, or the living and the dead. So, we all believe that there's going to be a final judgment, and Jesus is going to return .

The issues of agreement outweigh the specific details of how it all unfolds. All of the current views may be wrong, but they can't all be right.

There are some differences in the details of how this happens but we all end up at the same place. In addition, we affirm that there will be a resurrection of the body. We will not exist as non-embodied spirits floating around on clouds. We will receive a glorified body. WE believe in a new heaven and new earth and life everlasting.

When is the 1000 years?

As Western readers we would read chap 19 then 20 and assume that there is a linear chronological flow. NOT SO FAST...

*BTW Dennis Johnson notes that while the vision of Rev 20 is presented after the vision of Revelation 19, the 1000 years can't follow the battle between Christ and the beasts in terms of historical chronology. The battle of ch 19 leaves no survivors so there is no need to bind the Dragon/Satan. There are no nations left to be protected from Satan's lies.**. P. 105 Core Christianity Study of Revelation

Throughout the book we've seen the method of RECAPITULATION. The various cycles of visions tell the same story from differing angles, like the "under review" at a football game.

So following Augustine and others we should see chap 19 and 20 telling the same story but from differing angles. Chap 19 focuses on the destruction of the Beast and False Prophet. Chap 20 zooms in on the destruction of the Dragon.

Premillennial – I can't say everything. There are numerous subcamps: Historic premill and Dispensational premill and divisions under them.

The gist of it is that after Christ returns he will reign on earth for 1000 years. There are differing views as to the state of the church during, before, or after this time.

This was a view held by some early church fathers, but mainly last 150 years

It tends to be Popular when times are hard

Postmillennial – Jesus returns after a 1000 year reign. The 1000 years may refer to the entire era between the first and second coming of Christ, or it may be the final 1000 years prior to his return. It is seen as a golden age of the church, then Jesus returns. Optimistic view
Popular when times are good

Amillennial – “no mill” not a great term

Better to call it **inaugurated millennialism**. Beale and Campbell put it this way...

The millennium is inaugurated during the church age by God’s curtailment of Satan’s ability to deceive the nations and to annihilate the church (20:1-3) Beale, G. K.; Campbell, David. Revelation: A Shorter Commentary (p. 427).

When Jesus rose from the dead His reign began in heaven and on earth.

Believers don’t just wait for his return, but we seek to live out the values of the kingdom now and bear witness to Christ.

While each view raises certain questions, this view has a long history in the church – Augustine, Luther, Calvin. It is the majority report in the PCA.

All of that said, I’m no expert on the overall topic of eschatology, but I can recommend some good resources if you want to dig deeper.

v. 4ff Vindication of saints

where are the thrones? In heaven

Note that the thrones of v. 4 are in heaven, as are the other thrones, until they descend to the New Earth. That is how thrones are seen in the book of Revelation. So, this reign of the souls of the saints killed for their testimony of faith do not reign on earth, but in heaven. It is a spiritual reign, not the reign of headless dead saints. With them are the other dead who did not worship the beast and had not received its mark on their forehead or hands.

What qualifies one to reign with Christ is not the manner of one’s death, but one’s fidelity to Christ until death. That is the focus, faithfulness. Renouncing the world. Overcoming tribulation. Holding fast to the gospel. Dr. Hamm

Who is on the thrones? Saints who follow the Lamb

v. 6 The first resurrection - While Eph 2 speaks of the spiritually dead being made alive and raised up. Our reign with Christ is inaugurated - this is a sort of resurrection. Death can’t harm you any longer.

It is also true that John sees the souls of believers. The first resurrection may simply be the translation of the soul from earth to heaven.

“There is an act of the risen Christ upon the soul at the instant of death purifying it from all sin and transforming it from a soul adapted to a human body into a soul adapted to heavenly life” (Engelsma, 58).

That is the first resurrection. The second is the resurrection of the body which will take place when Christ returns after the end of this millennial age. Dr. Hamm

v. 6 the Privilege of the Saints – to be priests of God and of Christ.

This is a great image of the intimacy and eternal inheritance of abiding in the presence of God forever.

We are so far removed from the original audience of persecuted believers that we might not be able to appreciate the unveiled Hope that they would find in this passage.

I’m not looking for persecution to hit us the way it has hit MANY Christians throughout church history, but if it happens, this chapter and this letter of Revelation will take on a deeper meaning.

Are we so intent on making our life a heaven on earth that the simple bliss of the presence of God seems dull and boring?

Are we so locked into our pursuit of pleasure and entertainment that we can't identify with the Psalmist who says, "The nearness of God is my good." Ps 73:28

How should we then live?

VoV God Enjoyed

P.19

While Jesus is representing me in heaven,

May I reflect Him on earth.

While He pleads my cause, may I show forth His praise.

I have been sorrowful, but Thou hast been my help,

Fearful, but Thou hast delivered me,

Despairing, but Thou has lifted me up.

Thy vows are ever upon me,

And I praise Thee, O God.

This is a great motivation to Come TO THE TABLE

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