



REVELATION

FOLLOWING THE WAY OF THE LAMB

Study 17 “Millennial Madness” Revelation 20

Dwelling in the Word

Prayerfully read through Revelation 20 and ask: 1) What words, phrases, or images stood out to you? 2) What does this say about what God desires to accomplish in you? 3) How could you respond to God in this passage?

Digging Deeper

1. This passage has elicited much speculation and debate, particularly surrounding the meaning and nature of the “millennium.” Where do you find yourself in the mix of the different views (premillennialism, postmillennialism, amillennialism)? Why is it important to think through these options (what difference do the different views have on our attitudes and how we may live?), but also recognize that “it will all pan out in the end”?
2. The chapter opens with the dramatic scene of the “binding” of Satan. This has been understood in a variety of ways, but 20:3 indicates that his binding is specifically “to keep him from deceiving the nations.” Some equate this with the defeat of Satan at Jesus’ first coming (cf. Rev 12) and that Satan can’t stop the spread of the gospel (read Mark 3:27; John 12:32-33; Matt 16:18-19; 28:18-20; Col 2:14-15), while others see it as something yet future. What do you think?
3. No matter what view you hold on the millennium, 20:4-6 highlights the special significance of the martyrs in God’s eyes. Why do you think it is important that the martyrs are seen to be vindicated?
4. The final defeat of Satan and all evil is read about in 20:10 (also 19:20; 20:14-15). If God did not finally deal with evil, would God be seen as just? How do you feel about God judging evil, but also the perpetrators of evil (see 20:15)?
5. Who will be judged at the great-white-throne judgement (20:11-15)? On what basis will they be judged? (see 20:12-13; 2:23). How can we reconcile this judgement with the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith? (you may want to read Eph 2:8-9; James 2:24-26).

For Groups

1. One of the themes in this chapter is timing: the timing of the thousand years, and the timing of Satan’s captivity and release. In both these examples, there is room for ambiguity and questions because, as N.T. Wright describes, “Revelation is seldom tidy.” Are there areas in your life where the timing doesn’t feel “tidy”? What are some of the ways you process situations in your life where the timing of things doesn’t make sense? How have you practiced inviting God into those moments?
2. We also see the theme of faithfulness come up again when John sees those who have been beheaded for their witness. Are there any practices you continue to find helpful as you pursue a life with Jesus? Are there any areas that you are struggling with that you could share with your group?
3. In Canada we don’t tend to face harsh persecution for our Christian faith but it can still feel like there are barriers to sharing our faith with others. Do you feel comfortable sharing your faith? If not, what are the barriers you experience?
4. Is there anyone in your life that you would like to share your faith with? Take time as a group to pray for that person and for yourself as you look for opportunities to share.

Living it Out

While not every follower of Christ will face martyrdom (and it is very unlikely in Canada!), following Christ faithfully involves a willingness to accept martyrdom if necessary (see 2 Timothy 3:12). How do you honestly feel about your personal willingness to follow Jesus no matter what the consequences?



MILLENNIAL MADNESS

(OR THE VINDICATION OF MARTYRS,
THE DEFEAT OF SATAN, &
FINAL JUDGEMENT)

Revelation 20
March 17, 2024 | Tyler Williams

MILLENNIAL MADNESS

Eschatology (“last things”)

- Second Coming of Jesus
- Resurrection of the Dead
- Judgement
- New Heavens and New Earth

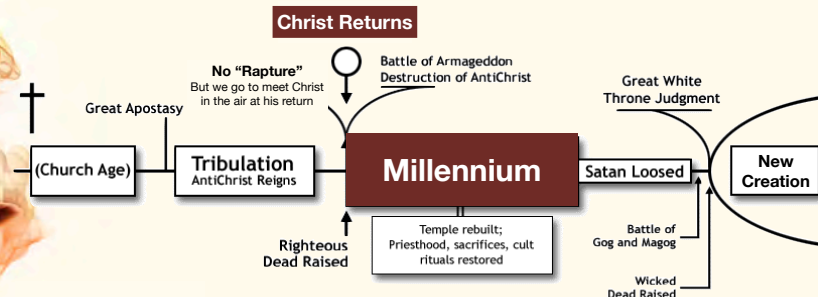
Millennium?

MILLENNIAL MADNESS

Views identified by the relation of the Millennium to Christ’s return.

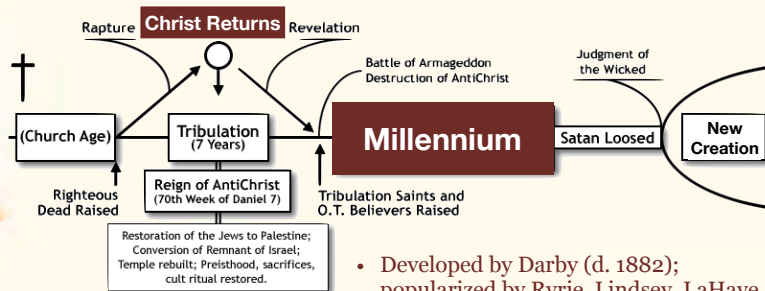
- Premillennialism (Historic & Dispensational)
- Postmillennialism
- Amillennialism (Inaugurated Millennialism)

HISTORICAL PREMILLENNIALISM



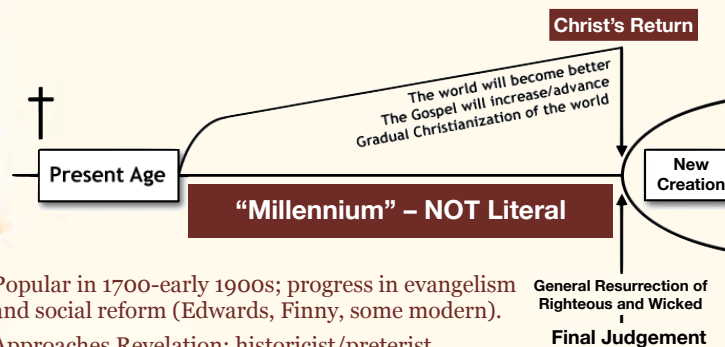
- Some early church and later; many evangelicals.
- Approaches Revelation: moderate futurist, literal/symbolic, chronological. Pessimistic.

DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM



- Developed by Darby (d. 1882); popularized by Ryrie, Lindsey, LaHaye.
- Approaches Revelation: futurist, literal, chronological. Pessimistic.

POSTMILLENNIALISM



- Popular in 1700-early 1900s; progress in evangelism and social reform (Edwards, Finny, some modern).
- Approaches Revelation: historicist/preterist, symbolic, theological. Optimistic.

AMILLENNIALISM (INAUGURATED)



- Some early church, dominant for most of church history (Augustine, Jerome, Luther, Calvin, most Reformed/Covenant theologians).
- Approaches Revelation: preterist/recapitulation, symbolic/apocalyptic, theological. Realistic.

MILLENNIAL MADNESS

- Our desire is to harmonize and systematize, but Revelation resists fitting into our simple (or even complex!) schemes and tidy boxes.
- Most scholars of Revelation (who haven't already committed to a theological system) do not find the various approaches convincing.

MILLENNIAL MADNESS

“Almost everything said today about the millennium by those speculating about the future does not come from this text. Yet it is the *one and only* passage about a millennium in the whole Bible.... The bigger issue is that Revelation should never be read through the framework of the millennium. Doing so is a colossal example of missing the whole point of the book” (Scot Knight, *Revelation for the Rest of Us*, 140).

PAN-MILLENNIALISM

It will all “pan out” in the end!

REVELATION 20

The Binding of Satan (20:1-3)

The Vindication of Martyrs (20:4-6)

The Defeat of Satan (20:7-10)

The Final Judgement (20:11-15)

THE BINDING OF SATAN (20:1-3)

“And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain” (20:1).

- Continuation or Recapitulation?
- Callback to the 5th Trumpet (9:1-11) where the “angel of the Abyss” or “Abaddon” (Satan?) is let out of the Abyss to torment God’s people (also see 11:7 and 17:8).
- Here Satan is sent back to the Abyss; a deliberate reversal of what Satan was allowed to do earlier.



THE BINDING OF SATAN (20:1-3)

“He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan...” (20:2).

- Earlier the dragon was “hurled down” to earth (12:9) “to wage war against the rest of her offspring” (12:17).
- The power behind the Beasts (13:2-4), who were already cast into the lake of fire (19:20).



THE BINDING OF SATAN (20:1-3)

“... and bound him for a thousand years.... to keep him from deceiving the nations” (20:2-3).

- Meaning of “bound” is given in 20:3, “to keep him from deceiving the nations” (cf. 2Thess 2:6-12).
- Amillennialists equate this with the defeat of Satan at Jesus’ first coming (Mark 3:27; John 12:32-33; Matt 16:18-19; 28:18-20; Col 2:14-15), while others will not.
- Satan is still active in the world (1Pet 5:8-9; Eph 6), but he will not be able to stop the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church.



THE BINDING OF SATAN (20:1-3)

“It is fashionable to say in some circles, ‘Satan is alive and well on planet earth.’ That is not true. He is alive, yes. But well? No. He is not well at all.... Because Satan is bound, the church can go forth to the nations with the gospel. Yes, his henchmen can cause trouble, and they do. But they cannot finally prevail. Their leader is in chains” (Darrell Johnson, *Discipleship on the Edge*, 367).



THE BINDING OF SATAN (20:1-3)

Thousand years (χιλια) – symbolic of fullness (6x in this passage: v. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7).

- Unique to Revelation; though there are ideas of a temporary Messianic period on earth in some Jewish writings (2Baruch 29-30; Psalms of Solomon 17), but they are not 1000 years.
- A symbol, not a statistic.



THE BINDING OF SATAN (20:1-3)

“Just as the door to the great Abyss cannot be located on a map, the duration of the thousand years cannot be located on a calendar. One does not draw nearer to heaven by means of a space shuttle or nearer to the abyss by digging a shaft into the ground, and one does not enter the thousand-year period by turning a calendar page. John refers to time in order to point readers to a reality that lies beyond time” (Craig Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, 181).



VINDICATION OF MARTYRS (20:4-6)

“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And [I saw] the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (20:4).

- Only talking about one group (the resurrected martyrs), as 20:5 makes clear by the reference to the “first resurrection” (see 3:21).
- They “reign with Christ” (20:4, 6); no indication whether on earth or in heaven.
- The martyrs are pictured as reigning with Christ as a vindication of their faithfulness (a promise made to all believers in Matt 10:28; 1Cor 6:2).



VINDICATION OF MARTYRS (20:4-6)

“The theological point of the millennium is solely to demonstrate the triumph of the martyrs: that those whom the beast put to death are those who will truly live.... The millennium depicts the *meaning*, rather than predicting the *manner* of their vindication” (Richard Bauckham, *Theology of Revelation*, 107, 108).



VINDICATION OF MARTYRS (20:4-6)

“John’s major concern here is not with the time as such, but with the special place God has reserved for those who have been killed by the state simply because they were followers of the once slain, now risen Lamb.... What all of this together seems to point to, therefore, is not a literal thousand-year reign on earth for a special group, but an intentional reminder to all of God’s people that... God has not forgotten his own” (Gordon Fee, *Revelation*, 282, 284).



VINDICATION OF MARTYRS (20:4-6)

“The millennium symbolically demonstrates the triumph of the allegiant witnesses: those who have suffered on account of Jesus Christ will in the end rule universally and receive the special rewards promised to those who have paid the highest price” (Scot McKnight, *Revelation for the Rest of Us*, 271-72).



THE DEFEAT OF SATAN (20:7-10)

“Satan will be released... and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth — Gog and Magog — and to gather them for battle” (20:8).

- The final battle again involves “the nations” (but 19:17-21) who are also identified as “Gog and Magog” (Ezek 38-39), and symbolize nations hostile to God and his people.
- Like Ezekiel 40-48, this vision is followed by the coming of the holy city (Rev 21-22).



THE DEFEAT OF SATAN (20:7-10)

“And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur...” (20:10).

- This battle turns out to be no battle at all (like 11:17-19; 19:17-21), but a decisive victory for God who throws the devil into the lake of fire (20:10).
- “Lake of Fire” is unique (19:20; 20:10, 14-15; also the “Second” death in 20:6, 14; also 2:11; 21:8), is the place where all evil is eradicated.



THE FINAL JUDGEMENT (20:11-15)

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it... And the books were opened, including the Book of Life” (20:11-12).

- General resurrection of all of the dead, “standing before the throne” (20:12) as “books” were opened.
1. The “book of deeds,” by which everyone is judged (see Dan 7:10; cf. Matt 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; 2Cor 5:10).
 2. The “book of Life” (20:12, 15; also; 21:17), in which the names of the followers of the Lamb are found.



THE FINAL JUDGEMENT (20:11-15)

“The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books... all were judged according to their deeds” (20:12, 13).

- God’s Grace: Salvation is by grace alone. Names in the book of life are written in it “from the creation of the world” (13:8; 17:8; cf. Rom 3:20, 28; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8-9).
- Human Responsibility: Our deeds are important (see 2:2, 19; 3:1, 8, 15; and 2:23; 14:13; cf. James 2:24-26, “faith without deeds is dead”).
- “We are justified by faith alone, but the faith that justifies is never alone” (cf. Phil 2:12-13).



THE FINAL JUDGEMENT (20:11-15)

“We are ultimately responsible for what we do, for it has eternal consequences—we are judged by works. God is ultimately responsibly for our salvation, it is his deed that saves, not ours—we are saved by grace” (Eugene Boring, *Revelation*, 212).



CONCLUSIONS

Millennial Views

The Defeat of Evil

The Reality of Judgement

The Hope of Faith