

# 90. The Book of Revelation—20:1-3

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(8-17-22)

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## Revelation 19:19–21 (NKJV)

<sup>19</sup> And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. <sup>20</sup> Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. <sup>21</sup> And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

## Revelation 20:1-3

<sup>1</sup> Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup> He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the Devil and Satan*, and bound him for a thousand years; <sup>3</sup> 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.

Tonight, we come to Revelation Chapter 20 and to a subject that a lot of churches don't talk about anymore—the **Millennial Kingdom**.

The word "*millennium*" comes from two Latin words—*mille* and *annum*, meaning "*a thousand years*."

Among Christians there are 3 *major* views (there are offshoots of each but let's just stick to the major views for tonight) dealing with the thousand-year reign of Christ also known as the Millennial Kingdom.

Tonight's study is going to be introductory in that we need to lay some groundwork for the information presented in Revelation Chapter 20.

### 1. **Amillennialism** ("no millennium")

This view is held by a very large segment of the Christian church—such as: the Roman Catholic Church; the Episcopal Church; the Lutheran Church; the Presbyterian Church; and the Reformed Church.

Those who hold to this view don't believe the thousand-year reign of Christ or Millennial Kingdom is a literal period of time—they see it as a symbolic term.

They will point to Scriptures like:

## Psalms 90:4 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup> For a thousand years in Your sight *Are* like yesterday when it is past, And *like* a watch in the night.

**2 Peter 3:8 (NKJV)**<sup>8</sup>

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

And so those who hold to the amillennial position will point to these verses and say,

*“See how it says that a thousand years is like a watch in the night to the Lord; and one day is like a thousand-years and a thousand-years is like one day to the Lord—see, you can’t take the thousand-year reign of Christ literally.”*

The problem with that is—yes to the Lord a thousand years is like a watch in the night and like a single day—TO THE LORD but not to us!

Whenever God speaks to us in His Word about a specific period of time like a thousand-years—it’s always a literal thousand-years!

But those who hold to the Amillennial position see this as a symbolic period of time between the First and Second Comings of Jesus where the gospel is spreading and the Kingdom of God is growing and as such, they believe—we are in the Millennial Kingdom right now!

In fact, they go onto say that the binding of Satan described in verse 2 took place when Jesus defeated Satan on the cross. They will point to what Jesus said about His going to the cross, Satan being bound—and that that will allow the gospel to spread, and people set free from the devil’s bondage:

**Matthew 12:29 (NKJV)**

<sup>29</sup> Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

Satan (the ‘*strong man*’), they say, was bound when Jesus died on the cross and has been bound ever since and will continue to be bound throughout the entire history of the Church Age. This, they say, has allowed and will continue to allow the Church to plunder ‘*Satan’s house*’ by taking souls away from his kingdom and put them into God’s Kingdom as redeemed people for the glory of God.

However, a quick glance at the headlines is enough to make you say, “*If Satan is bound today his chain is way too long!*”

But there are profound differences between the manner in which Satan was bound at the cross and the way he is bound in this passage in Revelation 20.

First of all, notice that the binding of Satan in Revelation 20 makes no reference to the Cross—but instead *this* binding of Satan (Revelation 20:2) immediately follows on the heels of the Second Coming of Christ.

While it is true that Jesus won His decisive victory over Satan at the cross—the sentence against the devil has not yet been carried out.

Yes, he is a defeated foe—but he is still free to attack God’s people and oppose God’s work—

**1 Peter 5:8 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil [*is what—bound?! No...*] walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Now look, you need to understand that some of the greatest pastors, teachers, and theologians throughout the history of the Church have been Amillennialists.

So, I'm not dismissing this view as some kind of weird, goofy, *'whacked out'*, ridiculous view that only nut-jobs hold to—some of the most brilliant and godly people that have ever lived have held to this position. Yet just because they're godly and brilliant doesn't mean that they are or were automatically right on this issue.

Many other good, solid and godly pastors, teachers and theologians today and throughout the history of the Church have rejected the Amillennial position.

Let me just say this—you have to work pretty hard (like a potter molding clay) to mold and shape the Scriptures into the Amillennial position. In other words that the Bible *isn't* teaching a literal one-thousand-year period of time called the Millennium—that it is only allegorical.

Listen, the first thing I do when talking to someone who holds to the amillennial position is to show them Revelation 20 and point out to them that the Holy Spirit mentions the term "**a thousand years**" six times.

It is hard to imagine why God would continue to repeat the phrase "**a thousand years**" in this one Chapter of Scripture—if He did not mean a literal thousand years! In fact, because He repeats Himself six times—it defies logic to conclude that the Lord isn't speaking literally but only figuratively of the Millennial Kingdom.

I think it's pretty obvious that the reason the Lord repeated the phrase "**a thousand years**" six times in this one Chapter is because—He didn't want anyone spiritualizing it! He wanted to make it clear that He was speaking literally of a one-thousand-year period of time!

Also, the last phrase in verse 3: "**But after these things he must be released for a little while.**"

The word "**while**" is *'chronos'* in the Greek—a word we get the English word "*chronology*" from, which deals with literal events in time. Because of it many commentators and biblical scholars believe that since that is a clear reference to a literal period of time (where Satan is released for a specific period of time)—that would mean that the thousand years must be a literal period of time as well.

➤ **Alright, where did this popular view come from—where did Amillennialism get its start?**

Well, it goes all the way back to Constantine who was a Roman general who went on to defeat another Roman general (Maxentius) to become the Emperor of the Roman Empire.

History records that by the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD the Roman Empire was in decline. After the reign of Diocletian (303-311 A.D.), there was a power struggle between Constantine and Maxentius for who would be the next Emperor of Rome.

Constantine's father had prospered when he prayed to the God of the Christian's—so Constantine thought he'd give it a try. The next day he supposedly saw a vision of a flaming cross in the sky with words in Latin—"*By this symbol you will conquer.*"

He went on to defeat Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge and immediately declared his conversion to Christianity—even though he continued to worship the sun god and gave no evidence of being born again. He assumed headship of the Church taking the title "*Pontifex Maximus*" (the *Supreme or Highest Priest*).

It was the Roman Emperors who were first called the “*Vicars of Christ*”—a title inherited by the popes when the Roman Empire disintegrated. Constantine’s title of *Pontifex Maximus* was also taken by the popes—thus the head of the Roman Catholic Church is called “*Pontifex Maximus*” or the “*Roman Pontiff*” to this day.

Following Constantine’s supposed conversion in A.D. 312—he made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Up until this point, the whole Christian Church believed that Jesus was coming back to establish a literal thousand-year Kingdom upon the earth. The Church believed and taught for the first three hundred years of its existence that the kingdoms of man were evil, corrupt and would eventually be replaced by Christ when He returned.

But now a Roman general had become a Christian and emperor of the known world—which meant that teaching that the kingdoms of man were all evil and needed to be replaced by Christ—was no longer a good idea!

Christian teachers, thinkers, and theologians said, “*Uh-oh. We’ve been teaching the kingdoms of this world are evil and going to fall—but now we’ve got a Christian in power in the person of Constantine—so now what!?*”

So, Origen an early Church Father and ‘heavyweight’ Bible teacher and philosopher of the day said, “*I think we’ve been reading the Scriptures wrong. All of the promises given to Israel are simply allegories and illustrations—I mean, didn’t Israel reject Jesus as their Messiah? God wouldn’t have promised a literal kingdom to a nation of unbelievers like the Jews. He must have been speaking allegorically to them when He gave them the promises of the Kingdom. In fact, those promises were really made to the Church and Israel was simply an allegory for the Church—the Church is Israel!*”

This thinking led the way for the spiritualizing of Scriptures to make them fit the new doctrinal narrative that references in the Old Testament speaking of Israel—were really speaking of the Church.

Origen left the scene and was followed by Augustine, who was such a gifted and passionate proponent for the allegorizing of the Old Testament, that even in some of today’s King James Bibles (going back to the Geneva Bible—1560), headings of the sections that speak of blessings upon Israel read “*Blessings to the Church,*” while sections that speak of curses upon Israel read “*Cursing Upon Israel*” (Micah 6–7).

## 2. Postmillennialism

A second view that used to be very popular before WWI but is recently making a comeback is ‘**Postmillennialism**’.

**Postmillennialism** has some points that are similar to *Amillennialism* in that it views the Millennium as the final triumph of the gospel in this present age.

But it differs in that those who hold to this view believe that the thousand-year Millennium—is a literal period of time.

Why they are called “*postmillennialists*” is because they believe Jesus will return to the earth at the end of the thousand-year Millennial Kingdom—or ‘post-millennium’.

This view believes that the last thousand years of the Church Age will be so dynamic and will see the gospel reach so many that the world will be Christianized and transformed into a peaceful paradise—and then Jesus will come back and take possession of it.

They will give you facts and figures to show you how that during the first thousand years of church history the gospel really didn't spread that rapidly but how from the time of the Reformation on to the present it really exploded—that's when we really saw the gospel spread like wildfire throughout the world.

This view was very popular in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries—and up until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

But you need to realize that it wasn't only Christians who had a very optimistic view of the world at that time—even secular people believed the world was on the verge of something grand—a utopia—a 'golden age' for mankind was about to dawn.

Why did they feel that way? Because the Industrial Revolution had really started to kick in with its advancements in technology where machines were doing much of the heavy work that people for centuries had to do by hand.

Also, modern science and medicine were making advancements that saw diseases being cured and along with other advancements and inventions caused many to believe that mankind was on the verge of a golden age where God was irrelevant (if He existed at all) and man was proving himself to be God with a brand-new religion for mankind—science!

Over a hundred years ago, the French novelist Victor Hugo wrote,  
*"In the twentieth century war will be dead. The scaffold will be dead (capital punishment will be gone). Hatred will be dead. Frontier boundaries will be dead. Dogmas will be dead. But man will live. He will possess something higher than all these: a great country, the whole earth, a great hope, the whole heaven."*

So, to say that man had an inflated view of himself during this period would be an understatement. But then came WWI, WWII, Korea, and Viet Nam—and instead of the world getting better and better—the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the bloodiest in human history.

So, it became clear that the gospel wasn't bringing peace on earth and Satan wasn't being bound which caused this view to kind of die out—as someone once said, *"The future isn't what it used to be."*

However, recently this view has been coming back strong although it's now going under a new label—'Kingdom Now' or 'Dominion Theology' which is the view that Christians need to take over positions of power in government because then we can change laws and Christianize the world.

They have revived the motto the old-time postmillennial preachers used to say at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—*"We're going to bring in the Kingdom."*

### **3. Premillennialism**

Premillennialism believes that the thousand years is a literal period of time and that it will begin almost immediately after the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to the earth.

This view believes that it is Jesus and not the Church that will bring the Millennial Kingdom to the earth. That when He comes (and that means *literally* comes to the earth) and establishes the *literal* Millennial Kingdom—He will reign *on the earth over the earth* for a thousand years during which time Satan will be *literally* bound for the whole thousand-year period of time.

If you haven't figured it out—I hold to a Pre-tribulational—Pre-millennial eschatology (the study of '*last-things*' or '*end-times*').

In other words, I believe that the Rapture of the Church will happen *before* the Tribulation Period (the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel) begins (pre-tribulational)—and that Jesus will come back at His Second Coming *before* the Millennial Kingdom begins (pre-millennial) because—He will bring the Kingdom when He comes which will begin almost immediately after His return.

➤ “What do you mean by saying that Jesus will set up the Kingdom ‘almost immediately’ after His return?”

Let me explain what I mean.

It is important to understand that there is no break between Chapters 19 and 20.

There is nothing inspired about the Chapter divisions in the Bible—those were devised by Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury in the early thirteenth century—and they do help so we thank him for that. But remember, the Chapter divisions (and later on the verse divisions) are not inspired and don’t appear in the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Bible.

In the original Greek text this account flows seamlessly from Chapter 19 into Chapter 20.

Chapter 19 ends with the return of Jesus to the earth where He instantly destroys the armies of the Antichrist who have gathered together in the Valley of Megiddo for the Battle of Armageddon—He does so with the **word of His power** symbolized as a sword coming out of His mouth.

Now that will result in Jesus sending His angels throughout the earth to gather those who are still alive—

**Matthew 13:47-50 (NKJV)**

<sup>47</sup> "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, <sup>48</sup> which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. <sup>49</sup> So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, <sup>50</sup> and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

The righteous left on the earth will be allowed to enter into the Millennial Kingdom and the unrighteous will be cast into Hades—but as we’ve said in previous studies—this judgment will take a little time before the Kingdom Age can officially begin.

**Daniel 12:11-12 (NKJV)**

<sup>11</sup> And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, *there shall be* one thousand two hundred and ninety days. <sup>12</sup> Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.

The angel said that 1,290 days will be measured off starting from the time “*that the daily sacrifice is taken away (stopped) and the abomination of desolation is set up*” which will happen at the midpoint of the 7-year Tribulation Period (Matthew 24:15).

- This last half of the 7-year Tribulation Period or 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel is referred to as “*a time, times, and half a time*” (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 12:14), which is three and one-half years.
- It is also designated in Revelation 11:2 as ‘*42 months*’ (of 30 days each); and in Revelation 11:3 as *1,260 days*.

➤ *How then can the additional 30 days (1,290 compared with 1,260) be explained?*

Furthermore, a blessing is pronounced on the one who makes it to the end of the 1,335 day—which is an additional 45 days beyond the 1,290 days (Daniel 12:11).

➤ *So how do we explain the extra 75 days from the time Jesus returns to the official start of the Kingdom?*

Although Daniel does not explain these two extra periods of time (30 days and 45 days), it is obvious that between the Second Coming of Christ and the official start of the Kingdom Age—a little interval of time will be necessary.

The Bible teaches that from the time the Antichrist sets up his image in the Holy of Holies, and demands to be worshipped as God until the Second Coming of Jesus—will be 1260 days.

This is followed by a couple of judgments—the judgment of the nations (Matthew 25:31-46), and the judgment of Israel (Ezekiel 20:34-38).

These two judgments could account for the extra 75 days.

These great judgments are designed to purge from the earth the remaining unbelievers—both Jews and Gentiles who worshipped the Antichrist and took his mark.

Although this will be handled quickly it will require some time.

By the 1,335 day, or seventy-five days after the Second Coming, these great judgments will have been accomplished and the Millennial Kingdom will officially begin. Those who make it to the 1335 day of this period are those who have been judged *worthy* to enter the Kingdom—which is why they are called “*blessed*.”

By ‘worthy’ I simply mean they have been judged by Jesus as true believers in Him and because of their relationship with Him they are pronounced worthy to be a part of His glorious Kingdom!

We will pick it up next week as I don’t want you to confuse the Millennial Kingdom with the Eternal State—as some do.

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Where will you stand in these last days? If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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