

SERMON NOTES OF THE MILLENNIAL REIGN

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TITLE: THE MILLENNIAL REIGN

MAIN TEXT: REVELATION 20: v1-6

Before we read the main text, I would like to briefly comment on the significance of the one thousand years revealed in Rev. 20:1-7, which is often referred to as the millennial reign. Why is it so important? The short answer is that because it is in the Bible, and as Christians we ought to desire to understand all that is written in the Bible, to study it, to be approved a worker who rightly divides the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). So, the millennial reign is a very important teaching about the truth regarding the end times or what some theologians like to say, it is eschatology—which means the study of last things or the doctrine of last things. The significance of the millennial reign is also evident in the ongoing debate between Christian spiritual leaders regarding *the one thousand years*—whether this should be taken literally as an actual period in the future or whether it is symbolic. Who's right? Perhaps this is one of the reasons why some believers are discouraged about end time prophecies—because of the different interpretations. But let us study the three main views to gain a better understanding and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Cor. 2:13). This sermon focuses on the three main views regarding the Millennial Reign:

1. The Premillennial View
2. The Amillennial View
3. The Postmillennial View

Let us read the main text (Rev. 20: v1-6).

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ²He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³and 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. ⁴And 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 Christ 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. ⁵But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed 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.”

1. The Premillennial View of the Millennial Reign

Where we place the second coming of Christ is key to understanding the premillennial view and the postmillennial view. The *premillennial* view is that Christ's second coming is prior to the millennial reign, whereas postmillennial view is that Christ's return is after the millennial reign. The premillennial view in most cases requires strictly literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy (Is. 11:3-11; 24:23; 25:6-8; Mic. 4:1-7), and the Book of Revelation (20:1-7). Here are six main aspects to be taken literally:

1. The whole passage in Rev. 20:1-7 [which also mentions the one thousand years on six occasions] is to be taken literally as an actual period in the future.
2. The first resurrection is the resurrection of the righteous only (Rev. 20:4-5), which shall be followed by a second resurrection of the rest of the dead after the one thousand years period (Rev. 20:5).
3. The Church and Israel are two distinct identities with two individual redemptive plans. There shall be a seven year tribulation period during which there shall be a redemptive plan towards Israel, whereas the Church is raptured before a seven year tribulation (Dan. 9:24-27), and then the millennial reign commences [or in the view of some Bible believers, Christ the Son returns first secretly to rapture the Church before the great tribulation, then the Lord returns again [a third time] at the resurrection of the righteous after the great tribulation to commence the millennial reign].
4. The Antichrist shall reign during this tribulation period. The Antichrist and the false prophets shall receive eternal judgment [or punishment] before the millennial reign commences (Rev. 19:19-20; 2 Thess. 2:8). But Satan, instead of also receiving eternal judgment at this time, he shall mysteriously be bound throughout the one thousand years period, and also, he shall be prevented from deceiving the millennial population (Rev. 20:1-3).
5. The Son [Christ] on His 1st coming failed to establish the kingdom on the earth, although His disciples were expecting Him to do so (Luke 19:11; Act. 1:6). But upon His second coming He shall literally establish His kingdom on earth in Jerusalem (Is. 24:23), and His followers will form the government that shall reign over the millennial population (Rev. 2:26-27; 20:4; Zech. 14:16-21). The millennial reign shall be a time of unprecedented peace on earth (Mic. 4:1-7).
6. At the end of the millennial reign, Satan shall be released from his chains for a short time, and despite the peaceful reign of the Son [Christ] over the millennial population, Satan will deceive many and gather a great army for battle against the Lord, which results in defeat and leads onto eternal judgment for the ungodly (Rev. 20:7-15). The resurrection of the ungodly shall take place after the millennial reign (Rev. 20:5, 12), followed by the entrance into the new heaven and the new earth in the eternal kingdom for those who belong to the Lord [Christ] (Rev. 21:1-8).

The premillennial view can be divided into three main interpretations: [1] Dispensational; [2] Mid-tribulation; and [3] the Historic Premillennial or Post-Tribulation viewpoint.

1. **Dispensational View or Pre-tribulation Premillennial View:** The rapture of the church occurs just prior to the seven-year tribulation, where Christ returns for his saints to meet them in the air. This is followed by the tribulation, the rise of the Antichrist to world-rule, the return of Christ to the Mount of Olives, and Armageddon, resulting in a literal 1000-year millennial reign of the Messiah, centered in restored Jerusalem.
2. **Mid-tribulation and Pre-wrath View:** The rapture of the church occurs in the midst of the seven-year period, halfway through— but before God's wrath is poured out upon the nations.
3. **Historic Premillennial or Post-Tribulation View:** The rapture of the church [the body of true believers] happens after a period of great tribulation, with the church being caught up to meet Christ in the air and will accompany him to earth to share in his [literal or figurative] thousand years rule.

The Dispensational view, which is also known as *the pre-tribulation premillennial view* has become the most popular view, but its interpretation and application of Rev. 20 is not the best. Let us turn again to our main text from Rev. 20, reading vs 1-3. “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ²He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³and 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.”

Notice from the text in Rev. 20:1-3, that the text is not to be understood in regards to a literal dragon or of a literal serpent. Nor do we understand that the angel has a literal key or a literal chain in his hand with which he binds the Devil—all of these are figurative. In like-manner, it can be argued that in regards to the “thousand years” that this is also figurative, and should not to be understood as an exact measure of time, but rather as a symbolical number indicating an indefinite period of time. The error of the Dispensational premillennial view is that this figurative expression of *one thousand years* is interpreted as literal, then applied to other passages in the Bible to try to justify this view. The *one thousand years* is an isolated text, apart from Rev. 20:1-7, the *one thousand years* is not taught in any other passage in the Bible. In contrast, the amillennial view compares this isolated passage of *one thousand years* revealed in Rev. 20, with other Scripture passages about the end times where spiritual truth is clearer [such as Matt. 24 & 25]. The supporters of the amillennial view claim to have the most solid case for their interpretation of Rev. 20. Let us now consider the second main view regarding the millennial reign.

2. The Amillennial View of the Millennial Reign

Two main points to consider in regards to the amillennial view of Rev. 20. Firstly, the supporters of the amillennial view do believe in a millennial reign that is real and literal, but in a different way, that is primarily in regards to the living souls reigning with Christ in heaven now, in the intermediate period of Christ's first and second coming, since His resurrection and ascension into heaven until His return, and rather than a literal one thousand years period of time, instead propose that the millennial reign refers to an appointed spiritual kingdom for an indefinite period [meaning part or even the whole of the Church age]. The amillennial interpretation of the millennial reign as symbolic is similar to the promised kingdom to Israel (Luke 1:31-33; Act. 1:6), in that it is to be understood primarily as a spiritual kingdom that has already come, but not in the literal sense of a visible observation (Luke 17:20-21; 18:16-17). It can be likened to a kingdom of power evident when Christ the King came to earth, and He demonstrated the power of His kingdom in mighty deeds [mainly in the casting out demons] *and words* (Act. 1:1-3; 2:22; Matt. 12:28). The spiritual kingdom shall one day be literally grasped by sight by all (Dan. 7:13-14; Rev. 21:1-8). This we can be sure of, as the Bible has recorded a historical event when the kingdom of God was actually grasped by sight. This extraordinary experience and privilege was granted to three apostles of Christ, who saw a vision of the kingdom of God in its present power and glory (Mark 9:1-9; Luke 9:27-36; 2 Pet. 1:16-18). Moreover, on the mountain [with Christ the Lord], the appearance of Moses and Elijah [both long deceased], discloses something very important about the glorious spiritual kingdom in heaven in regards to souls that continue to live even without [1] their earthly body or [2] their glorified resurrected body (1 Cor. 15:40-44; 2 Cor. 5:1-4; Rev. 6:9-11).

The resurrection is the second point to consider in regards to the amillennial view of the millennial reign. Look again at Rev. 20: v5, notice the text mentions *the first resurrection*. How we interpret the first resurrection is so vital to understanding the millennial reign. What is this resurrection? Is it the resurrection at which those in Christ shall assume their glorified bodies? It has been argued that the word must be understood literally as of a bodily resurrection. It is further said that the contrasting words ["lived" in Rev. 20: v4, and "the rest of the dead lived not" in Rev. 20: v5] necessitate this literal interpretation. But there is no reason for restricting the word *Resurrection* to a literal meaning of a bodily resurrection. ***In regards to the first resurrection, Charles John Ellicott's commentary of Rev. 20:4-5 is very helpful.*** The text of Rev. 20:4-5 is generally figurative, conveying a deeper underlying truth particularly in regards to great tribulation saints [primarily those martyred for their faith], with the emphasis on souls who lived after death. Resurrection means to restore to life [or to restore back to God], or revival, or renewal, or to rise again from the dead, both spiritually and also physically. Look again at Rev. 20: v6, notice the text mentions *the second death*, which is defined as the lake of fire in v14, for both the soul and the resurrected body of the ungodly. The text of Luke 9:30-31 defines death as *departure*. [It can refer to *departure* from (1) spiritual life in regards to fellowship or communication with God, or (2) the gradual *departure* of morality until complete *departure* altogether, or (3) untimely death or the gradual ageing body until the physical death of the body due to the *departure* of the soul]. The departure of the soul from the body, obviously is *physical death* (Jam. 2:26). The departure of the soul from God due to sin is *spiritual death* (Eph. 2:1; Luke 15:24-32). The first man at creation became a living soul (Gen. 2:7). The term living soul has great significance, as the Scriptures reveal the soul that sins will experience death (Ezek. 18:4; Jam. 5:19-20; Rom. 6:23). The Scriptures reveal *death* as primarily spiritual. This is clear from the Genesis account. When God informed Adam that

he would die in the day that he ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16-17), it was in reference to spiritual death. In the Genesis account, neither Adam nor Eve died physically upon disobeying God's command. But both died spiritually, as their souls departed from fellowship with God, evident by their actions, as both Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of God (Gen. 3:8). Furthermore, as a result of their soul's broken fellowship with God due to sin—Adam and Eve were ejected from the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:22-24). The Scriptures teach the concept of death in this way—that in the first Adam, the soul experiences a spiritual death [departure from God or broken fellowship with God] due to sin (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:6-19; Eph. 2:1-3) which leads onto the physical death of the body (Gen. 3:19). But the Scriptures teach the concept of death in the opposite way in the Last Adam [the Son Christ], for spiritually, the soul is revived, restored, and reconciled back to God in Christ (John 5:25-26; Eph. 2:1-6; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 5:18), which eventually leads onto the general resurrection of the body at the last day (John 6:39-40, 44, 54, 11:23-24; Dan. 12:2; Is. 26:19-21; 1 Cor. 15:42-55), which occurs at the second coming of Christ, who is the Judge (1 Pet. 4:5), who shall judge all His enemies, including death the final enemy shall be conquered at the second coming of Christ (1 Cor. 15:23-26; 50-57). Assuming the first resurrection refers to a bodily resurrection—the amillennial view can be interpreted possibly to the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:20; *Rev. 1:5, 18*), and His ascension into heaven where He reigns for a long indefinite period until His second coming at the last day when the general resurrection of the body shall occur (*John 6:39-40, 44, 54, 11:23-24; Dan. 12:2; Is. 26:19-21; 1 Cor. 15:42-55*), and also death, the final enemy shall be conquered (1 Cor. 15:23-26; 50-57). Moreover, physical death is conquered at the second coming of Christ (1 Cor. 15:23-26, 50-57), which rules out the premillennial view because it suggests that death [the last enemy] will continue after the second coming of Christ during a literal 1,000 years reign (*Rev. 20:4-6*). The premillennial view also fails regarding its teaching about the second coming of Christ during the millennial period, in that the gospel shall be preached with personal salvation still possible, which is contrary to Scripture which teaches that after the second coming of Christ the period of grace ends, and at this time the general or final judgment will occur (2 Tim. 4:1; *Rev. 22:12; Matt. 25:31-45*). Therefore, it does appear that the amillennial view is a better interpretation of *Rev. 20:1-6* than the premillennial view regarding the millennial reign. But let us now consider the third main interpretation of the millennial reign—the postmillennial view, which some who advocate the amillennial view are open to, but not totally convinced by it.

3. The Postmillennial View of the Millennial Reign

The postmillennial view is an interpretation of chapter 20 of the Book of Revelation which sees Christ's second coming as occurring after the millennial reign, a golden age particularly in which the preaching of the gospel prospers.

MATTHEW 28:18-20 states: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

And turning to ACTS 1:8: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

The Lord’s last recorded words in Matt. 28:18-20 and Act. 1:8 have come to be known as the Great Commission. The first generational [first century] Christians took this message seriously and began to spread the good news [gospel] to the most remote corners of the known world. There are 3 main points to consider in regards to the postmillennial view of Rev. 20. Firstly, the postmillennial view holds that all power and authority has been given to Christ [the Lord] now (Matt. 20:18), which some supporters of this view in accordance with Rev. 20 v2, interpret as Satan bound or restricted, he has no power at all—Christ has all power, and Christ establishes His spiritual kingdom on earth through His preaching and redemptive work in the first century and that He equips His church with the gospel, empowers her by the Holy Spirit, and charges her with the Great Commission to disciple all nations (Matt. 28:19). The second point is that the postmillennial view promotes the triumph of Christianity in the face of bitter persecution and sees the success of the early church (Act. 12:1-19, 24; 19:20) in carrying the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome and planting local churches across the Roman empire as a picture of future success. And thirdly, the postmillennial view is that this will not be the work of man, but the work of God—that work of God’s salvation which started with the early church (Act. 2:43-47; 5:35-42), gives hope to a successful end in regards to a last great awakening, as eventually the vast majority of people living will be saved. Increasing gospel success will gradually produce a time in history prior to Christ’s return in which faith, righteousness, peace, and prosperity will prevail in the affairs of humanity. After a period of a golden age whereby the preaching of the gospel is successful, such conditions shall result in the Lord’s [Christ] return visibly, bodily, and gloriously, to end history with the general resurrection and the final judgment after which the eternal order follows. This *golden age of the success of the gospel to the extent that the vast majority of people living will be saved, and also a time when peace and prosperity shall prevail prior to Christ’s return* are the main disagreements between the postmillennial and amillennial views—the amillennial view is that [1] Christ’s return will not be after a golden era, but in the midst of the same sort of persecution that the Thessalonian church was even then experiencing; and [2] throughout history it can be argued that it has always been a remnant of people living saved (Matt. 7:13-14; Rom. 11:1-5), therefore some in support of the amillennial view argue that the postmillennial view is too optimistic in regards to [1] an extensive golden age resulting in a time whereby peace and prosperity shall prevail in the affairs of humanity, and [2] the salvation of the vast majority of people living prior to Christ’s return.

There are supporters of the postmillennial view who are in agreement with the amillennial view of the millennium as a spiritual kingdom. However, the postmillennial view is the spiritual kingdom can be likened to Christ’s reign on earth in the hearts and minds of His followers (John 3:13-16, 31; 15:7-8; Luke 17:20-21). Look again at Rev. 20 v6. The text reveals that the participants of the millennial reign *shall be priests*. The postmillennial view of Rev. 20 v6, particularly concerning *the priests* who partake in the millennial reign can be compared with biblical teaching in regards to the inauguration of all Christ’s followers as a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9-10; Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10; 20:4-6). Therefore, all of Christ’s followers are priests who partake in this real and literal spiritual kingdom through evangelizing and sharing the gospel (Matt. 24:14; Act. 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:18-20), both in practice and also prayerfully (Matt. 9:38).

The postmillennial view is divided into two sub-schools of interpretation:

1. **Revivalist Postmillennial View:** The millennium represents an unknown period of time marked by a gradual Christian revival, followed by widespread successful evangelism. After these efforts is the return of Christ foreseen.
2. **Reconstructionist Postmillennial View:** The Church increases its influence through successful evangelism and expansion, finally establishing a theocratic kingdom of 1,000 years in duration (that is literal or figurative) followed by the return of Christ.

The postmillennial view stands in contrast to the premillennial view, and to a lesser extent the amillennial view, which particularly, it can be hard to draw a fine line between the amillennial view and revivalist postmillennial view, as they agree on much. To the extent that those who advocate the postmillennial view jokingly say that amillennialism is really pessimistic postmillennialism, and the amillennial supporters call the postmillennial view optimistic amillennialism. But on a more serious note, there is no reason why certain features of both views cannot be harmonized such as [1] the successful preaching of the gospel in the midst of persecution (Matt. 24:13-14). And also [2] Rev. 20:4 interpretation of the millennial reign as the living souls reigning with Christ in heaven now in the intermediate period of Christ's first and second coming, which coincides with the present spiritual reign of the living souls in Christ on earth for a long indefinite period of time, whereby the gospel is preached, and after a gradual, progressive and successful conversion of a vast number until its culmination (Matt. 24:14)—Christ shall return (Matt. 24:14-31). The preaching of the gospel can be successful even in the midst of hostility and persecution in the world, as the book of Revelation reveals a picture of a great multitude from all nations during the great tribulation that shall be saved, which seems to imply that a great harvest of souls shall occur during the great tribulation (Rev. 7:9-14; 14:14-16), which accords with the Lord's teaching of the events that must take place first prior to His return, such as *the preaching of the gospel to all nations* (Matt. 24:14-31; Mark 13:10-27), and if God is in it—then God is more than capable of using the preaching of the gospel effectively in regards to a last great awakening worldwide.

In conclusion, physical death is conquered at the second coming of Christ (1 Cor. 15:23-26, 50-57), which rules out the premillennial view because it suggests that death [the last enemy] will continue after the second coming of Christ during a literal 1,000 years period (Rev. 20:4-6). The premillennial view also fails regarding its teaching on after the second coming of Christ during the literal millennial period—that the gospel shall be preached with personal salvation still possible, which is contrary to Scripture which teaches that after the second coming of Christ the period of grace ends, and at this time the general or final judgment will occur (2 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 22:12; Matt. 25:31-45). Therefore, the Bible does clearly teach against the premillennial view—particularly the dispensational premillennial view, but it is much more open to the amillennial and postmillennial views—both these views have reasonable arguments for their convictions. But the most important teaching about the main three interpretations of the millennial reign which all are in agreement is that “Christ is coming” again.

I hope this message has been helpful to you and may God bless you richly.