

Doctrine of the Millennium

Revelation 20:1-6

“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

1. The first reference to the Millennium is found in this passage. The Millennium refers to that period of time that extends for one thousand years.
2. The context is associated with the binding of Satan for a thousand years.
3. There are two basic issues the church faces with respect to the Millennium.
 - What is the actual nature of the Millennium?
 - What is its chronological relationship to the consummation of the kingdom of God and the coming of Christ?
4. Trying to answer these questions, various theological positions have been proposed.
 - Premillennialism. There will be a future, literal, earthly, millennial kingdom that will begin when Christ returns.
 - ❖ Historical (Classical) Premillennialism views the church as the spiritual heir of Israel with all the promises once given to Israel going to the church.
 - ✚ The Christian Church is in its initial phase as prophesied by the Old Testament prophets.
 - ✚ The New Testament Church gains some victories in history but ultimately loses her influence, becomes corrupt as evil spreads worldwide towards the end of the Church Age.

- ✚ The Church will pass through an unparalleled time of travail of great tribulation. This will punctuate the end of history and inaugurate the second coming of Christ who will establish His kingdom on earth for a thousand years.
- ✚ At the end of the thousand year reign, Satan will be loosed to attack Christ and His follower. Satan will be destroyed and there will follow a second resurrection, the judgment of the wicked, and then a new heaven and a new earth.
- ❖ Dispensational Premillennialism is characterized by several distinctives and is based the presupposition that God has two people, national Israel and the church, with a distinct plan for each.

✚ Christ offered to the Jews the kingdom of David which they rejected.

A Biblical Concern. John 6:15 When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

✚ Because of the rejection of the kingdom of David, it was postponed and the Church Age was introduced as an intercalary period. The Church is a temporary solution to a Jewish problem. God's greatest plan is for national Israel.

A Biblical Concern. Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

Special Note.

The System of theology known as Dispensationalism gets its name because Biblical history is divided into seven time periods or dispensations.

Dr. Scofield defines a dispensation as a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God. He teaches in the Scofield Bible that there are Seven Dispensations:

- (1) The Dispensation of Innocency: before the Fall.
- (2) The Dispensation of Conscience: before the Flood.
- (3) The Dispensation of Human Government.
- (4) The Dispensation of Promise: from the calling of Abraham until Mt. Sinai.
- (5) The Dispensation of the Law: from Mt. Sinai to the cross of Christ.
- (6) The Dispensation of Grace: from the cross of Christ to the Second Advent.

(7) The Dispensation of the Kingdom: the Millennium.

Special Note.

"These dispensations are regarded not as stages in one single organic development, but as distinct and mutually exclusive, or even as opposed to each other. This practice of dividing the Bible into parts, and setting one part against the others, means for instance, that in the Dispensation of the Law there was no grace, and during the Dispensation of Grace there is no law. The plan of salvation as set forth in the Bible is one organic whole, revealing a marvellous and profound unity. It cannot be split up into contradictory parts, much less into seven mutually exclusive dispensations." (Summarized quotation from *The Millennium* by Lorraine Boettner).

- ✚ The church will lose influence in the world and will become corrupt and apostate. The Dispensational view of the church is very grim and pessimistic.

A Biblical Concern. *2 Corinthians 2:14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. 15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: 16 To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? 17 For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.*

- ✚ Christ will come secretly to rapture His saints before the great tribulation. This concept introduces a third coming of Christ unknown to the church: 1st Advent + Rapture + 2nd Coming = 3 Comings of Christ.

A Biblical Concern.

Christ will not come in secret but as He went away. *Acts 1:11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

Christ will only come a second time. *Hebrews 9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

- ✚ After a seven year period of great tribulation, Jesus will return to earth to administer a Jewish political kingdom from Jerusalem. This reign of Christ will last one thousand years. During this time, the Temple will be rebuilt, the sacrifices will be reinstated, and Satan will be bound.

A Biblical Concern. *Hebrews 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. 5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: 6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. 7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. 8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;*

- ✚ At the end of the Millennial reign of Christ, the Lord of Glory and His followers will be attacked at Jerusalem by Satan who has been released from his bondage. = Christ will call down judgment from heaven and the final battle of Armageddon will be fought. A second resurrection will take place and the world will be judged, and the final eternal order will be initiated.

A Biblical Concern. The binding of Satan is a present reality.

Matthew 12:22 Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. 23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? 24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. 25 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: 26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? 27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. 28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

- Postmillennialism. The gospel will advance victorious throughout the world and then Christ will return. The term millennial is viewed as a term of completion, not a numerical number of a literal one thousand years. Postmillennialism believes in the inevitable influence of the church over the forces of this world. The Great Commission will succeed.
- Amillennialism. The millennium refers to the rule and reign of Christ over all the universe which is a present reality.

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Acts 2:33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

1 Corinthians 15:25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

5. The prefix for each theological position is an indication of the order in which Christ will establish His kingdom.
6. The practical problem in determining which position is the most correct one is that the concept of the Millennium takes place in a book of the Bible which is highly imaginative and is largely written in an apocalyptic style of writing.
 - Question. “What is the specific literary genera of writing is in view?”
 - Question. “What rules of interpretation should be applied to the narrative?”
7. One approach is to try to interpret the Revelation 20:1-6 literally. Dr. John Walvoord, the second president of Dallas Theological Seminary, taught that John saw a literal angel, with a literal key, going to a literal bottomless pit, with a literal chain in his hand, literally laying hold on the literal dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and binding him for a literal one thousand years.

Special Note.

The faithful interpreter of the Bible will always interpret the Bible literally, that is, in the sense in which the passage was written. If a passage is written in a poetic style, then it must be interpreted the way poetry is to be interpreted. If the text is historical, then the rules guiding a historical narrative must be applied. A verb is a verb, a noun remains a noun, a metaphor is a metaphor, and a simile is a simile. Care must be taken not to assign a wooden literalism to a poetic imagery. Two extreme examples of this would be to make God a cosmic chicken, and then go on to say that hills will one day clap their hands, based on the words of the psalmist and the prophet Isaiah.

- *Psalms 91:4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.*
 - *Isaiah 55:12 For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.*
8. In some passages, such as Revelation 20, there is a mixture of the literal and the poetical.
 9. Care must be taken in one’s exegesis.