

I. INTRODUCTION [We move from “personal” to “cosmic” eschatology]

A. There are three main “eschatological schools” (theories about the “Last Things”)

1. The three schools are named after the “Millennium” which is only mentioned in Revelation 20.
2. In the providence of God, this passage (Rev. 20) has become a major subject in eschatology.
3. The question is simply this: will there be a period before the end when Christ will rule *on earth* for a period of more or less 1,000 years? The “Millennial” schools answer “Yes.” We teach “No.”

B. The three main schools are called Postmillennialism, Premillennial Dispensationalism and Amillennialism.

1. All of the schools agree that in the future there will be the Second Coming of Christ; that there will be a resurrection of the dead; and there will be a final judgment.
2. The eschatological schools, however, disagree on the *number* and *order* of these events.

C. The view we will defend (called Amillennialism) has this basic scheme

1. The next great event will be second, final, personal sudden, visible Coming of Jesus Christ.
2. Leading up to that will be various signs (events in the world and church which herald that coming and show us that Christ’s Coming is near. We call these “precursory signs” [running before]).
3. There will be one future Coming, one future general resurrection and one future general Judgment.
4. The “millennium” is the [symbolic] period of time btw Ascension of Christ and His Second Coming.

II. AMILLENNIALISM [We begin with the true view of the Millennium before we explain the others]

A. The word “Amillennialism” means “No millennium” (the prefix “a” means “not”)

1. We call our view “Amillennialism” because we reject a *literal, earthly* Millennium

- a. First, the 1,000 years in Rev. 20:2, 3-4, 5, 7 is a symbolic, not a literal number. We know this because it appears in the book of Revelation which is filled with symbolic numbers (7, 10, 144,000, 666, etc), and because it appears in a vision (“And I saw ...” [Rev. 20:1]).
- b. The number 1,000 refers to an unspecified long period (10x10x10). Ten is the number of completeness [a complete period according to God’s eternal decree].
- c. The events of Revelation 20 do *not* take place *chronologically after* the events of Revelation 19.

2. On earth the activities of Satan are restrained during this period (“bound for 1,000 years”)

- a. The binding of Satan in vv. 1-2 is figurative: an angel binds Satan (a spirit) with a chain and locks him in a bottomless pit. This is a vision!
- b. The binding of Satan is *not* a complete incapacitation so that Satan is utterly powerless, but it is with respect to two things: he cannot deceive the nations of Gog and Magog (vv. 3, 7-8) and he cannot prevent the preaching of the Gospel (by which the church is gathered).
- c. This binding of Satan takes place at the beginning of the Millennium and its effects last until Satan is “loosed” (v. 7). This binding took place when Christ died, rose again and ascended into heaven (Matt. 12:29; John 12:31-32; Rev. 12:9).

3. In heaven, at the same time, the saints who have died reign with Christ in glory.

- a. Verse 4 says that John saw thrones and souls sitting on those thrones. Both Pre-and Postmillennialism teach that these thrones are on the earth, *but they are in heaven*.
- b. We know this b/c v. 4 says that the ones who reign are *souls*. This is speaking of the intermediate state *in heaven*. The souls are of the martyrs (“beheaded”) but this includes all believers.
- c. We know this because v. 4 says that they “lived and reigned with Christ.” Christ is in heaven, and in the book of Revelation “thrones” are in heaven (Rev. 4:2, 5:1, 6:16, etc).
- d. The “first resurrection” in v. 5 is spiritual resurrection of the soul, living in the soul in heaven.

B. All of this shows us that the Millennium is the period from the Ascension to shortly before the end.

1. Therefore, we are right now in the Millennium. We should not expect a future Millennium.

- a. During that whole period Christ has been ruling from heaven and He has bound Satan.
- b. During that whole period the Gospel is preached, the church is gathered and persecuted, and the saints rule in heaven with Christ in the soul. *The text has nothing to do with ruling on earth.*

- c. During that whole period Satan has been severely restricted in his activities: he is still active, but he cannot do what he wants to do, which is gather Gog and Magog.
- 2. **At the end of the Millennium (a period determined by God in His counsel) Satan is released.**
 - a. Unrestrained, he does what he sought to do: he deceives Gog and Magog (the heathen nations on the periphery of history) and brings them against the church to seek to destroy it.
 - b. Christ returns suddenly, destroys Satan, and casts him with the beast and false prophet into hell.
 - c. The dead are raised and the final judgment occurs (vv. 11-15)
 - d. During that whole period God's saints have been ruling in heaven with Christ in the soul.

III. POSTMILLENNIALISM

A. Postmillennialism teaches that Christ will return *after* ("post") the Millennium

1. **The Millennium for Postmillennialism is not literal 1,000 years. It may be a longer period.**
 - a. The period will be characterized by peace, righteousness and prosperity *on earth*. Many Postmillennialists call this a "Golden Age."
 - b. This will be peace and prosperity *for the church* in a "Christianized" world: during that period the majority of people will be converted, governments and other institutions will be godly, and there will be a mass conversion of the Jewish people.
 - c. All of this will take place on earth before Christ returns and as a consequence of the rule of Christ: in this way Christ's kingdom will be realized on the earth.
2. **For this "Golden Age" to be realized prophecies concerning persecution, apostasy and Antichrist must be interpreted to have already happened *in the past*.**
 - a. Most Postmillennialists believe that such prophecies were fulfilled in AD 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. For example, the Antichrist was Nero or another Roman emperor.
 - b. Christians should not expect widespread persecution, the rise of an earthly worldwide antichristian kingdom, but should expect a worldwide, *Christian* kingdom [the *danger* is that Postmillennialists risk deception by the counterfeit kingdom of Antichrist when he comes].

B. Postmillennialism interpretation of Revelation 20 (and other passages)

1. **The Postmillennial interpretation expects a future fulfillment of Rev. 20 [Remember, Amillennialism says that the Millennium has already begun]**
 - a. The binding of Satan will happen in the future and will make future earthly prosperity possible. Therefore, the binding of Satan will be such that he will be able to do almost nothing (vv. 3, 7-8).
 - b. The reigning of saints will happen during a 1,000 year period *on earth*. This overlooks the fact that the reigning ones are "souls" of those who were "beheaded" and thrones in heaven (v. 4).
 - c. At the end of the 1,000 years the kingdom of darkness will rise up against the kingdom of God.
2. **Almost all "proof" for the "Golden Age" of Postmillennialism comes from the Old Testament.**
 - a. To interpret the NT in the light of the OT is exactly the opposite approach: the NT is clearer and a development of the OT, not vice versa.
 - b. Examples of OT prophecies: Psa. 2:8-12, 72:7-8; Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:17-25, etc.
 - c. These (and many other) prophecies describe the NT glory of the church, her spiritual blessings under earthly figures.
 - d. The problem with Postmillennialism is that it sees the "success" of Christ's kingdom in terms of numbers and earthly power. Fundamentally, Postmillennialism looks for an earthly kingdom (contra. John 18:36-37; Romans 14:17 and Romans 8:37). *Christ is ruling victoriously now.*
3. **The future events according to Postmillennialism are these:**
 - a. Christ's kingdom will become progressively greater, and Satan will gradually be bound until the earthly glories of the Millennium on earth shall appear.
 - b. Satan's final onslaught will end with Satan's destruction at the Coming of Christ.
 - c. There will be one future, bodily, visible Coming of Christ, with one general resurrection and one Day of Judgment for all men. *Next week, we look at the much more complex and wildly popular view of Premillennial Dispensationalism.*