

## "The Millennial Reign of Christ"

Revelation 20:1-10

### **The Millennial Reign of Christ (Revelation 20:1-10)**<sup>514</sup>

It is now that we come to the Millennial Reign of Christ. It is called the Millennial reign because 6 times in 7 verses the phrase 1,000 years is mentioned. It seems evident that this phrase is emphatic in these verses since it is repeated so often. In regards to this 1,000 years, there are three major eschatological views. They are called Amillennialism, Postmillennialism, and Premillennialism.

*Amillennialism:* This view holds that there will not be a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ. It believes that the millennium is occurring now as believers experience the rule and reign of Christ in their hearts. It also holds that all prophecies to Israel are fulfilled spiritually in the church. It sees one general resurrection and judgment in the end.

*Postmillennialism:* This view holds that Christ will return to the earth after the Millennium is over. The Millennium will be brought about by the preaching of the Gospel, and the gradual Christianizing of the world. Thus by our energetic work, we are instruments of "bringing in the Kingdom." This view was popular until two World Wars brought the realization that things are not getting better.

*Premillennialism:* This correct view holds as does the Bible that Christ will return in glory at the end of the Tribulation period as a literal rendering of the book of Revelation explains. Christ will then establish a literal 1,000 year kingdom upon the earth at that time. The promises made to Israel will be fulfilled literally to Israel during the Millennium. This is the only view that applies the proper rules of Biblical interpretation all the way through the Scriptures. This is the only view that makes sense as one studies through the book of Revelation. This is the view of Valley Bible Church and this instructor.

### *The Restraining of Satan:* (20:1-3)

After destroying the enemy armies at Armageddon and tossing the Antichrist and his false prophet into the lake of fire. Christ has Satan bound for 1,000 years. This is the last step of preparations for the Millennial Reign of Christ.

John first sees an angel coming down from heaven. He does not directly identify this angel. There have been numerous attempts to identify this angel. Some have suggested it is Christ, however it seems unlikely that Christ would be referred to as an angel here. Some have suggested that it might be Michael the archangel, since he is a great adversary of Satan (cf. Rev. 12:7; Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9). This would seem to make a great deal of sense, however it must be noted that the angel is not directly identified in the text. What we can know is that this angel is given authority to come down from heaven, lay hold of Satan, and cast him in the abyss.

This abyss is just a temporary place of incarceration. It is the same abyss as mentioned earlier in the book as it held bound demons (cf. 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8).

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The key and the chain are simply metaphors rather than a literal key or chain. This is best supported by the fact that we are dealing with a spiritual being, not a physical earthly being. The key signifies God's delegated authority. The angel is operating under the authority of God and has been given the authority to bind Satan. The chain is a metaphor for binding. "It is not a literal chain such as would bind a physical being; it is rather such as would be necessary to bind a spiritual being like Satan (cf. 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6)." <sup>515</sup> Keep in mind this is indeed a literal binding. Satan will indeed be bound for 1,000 years.

"The angel laid hold of Satan, who is unmistakably identified by the same four titles given him in 12:9. First, he is called **the dragon**, a title given him twelve times in Revelation (cf. 12:3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17; 13:1, 2, 4; 16:13). It emphasizes his bestial nature, ferociousness, and oppressive cruelty. The title **serpent of old** hearkens back to the Garden of Eden and Satan's temptation of Eve (Gen. 3:1-6; 2 Cor. 11:3). Diabolos (**devil**) means "slanderer," or "malicious gossip" (1 Tim. 3:11; 2 Tim. 3:3; Titus 2:3)—an appropriate title for the "accuser of our brethren" (12:10). Satan is a malignant liar; in fact, he is "the father of lies" (John 8:44). *Satanas* (**Satan**) and its Hebrew root *satan* are used fifty-three times in Scripture. Both words mean "adversary," since Satan opposes god, Christ, and all believers." <sup>516</sup>

The angel will bind Satan in the abyss for 1,000 years. It seems clear that a literal 1,000 years are meant in this passage. Satan would not have free access to deceive the world any longer. He will be shut into the abyss. The abyss will be sealed and Satan will be bound for 1,000 years. The apostle John seems to clearly make the point that Satan will not be released until the 1,000 years are over. But when that 1,000 years are over, Satan will indeed be released for a short time.

### The Reign of the Saints: (20:4-6)

With Satan now out of the picture for 1,000 years, John now sees thrones. He notices that those who are sitting upon these thrones are able to judge. It is difficult to come to a clear conclusion exactly who John sees upon these thrones. They are likely best understood in light of who is promised the opportunity to reign with Christ in the Millennium. The Old Testament saints are promised this in Daniel 9:27: "*Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of [all] the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom [will be] an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.*" This reign was also promised to the apostles by Jesus in Matthew 19:28: "*you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*" New Testament believers are also promised the opportunity to reign with Christ. (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:2; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 2:26; 3:21) So what is the conclusion of this matter? It is likely that this is a general reference to all of the Saints, who have been given this promise. The promise is now being fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom. The saints will have the opportunity to reign with Christ.

As verse 4 goes on, John describes one other group of individuals. This group is easily identifiable. They are clearly the tribulation martyrs. They are first described as beheaded. "Pelekizo (beheaded) literally means, "to cut off with an axe," and is a figure of speech meaning "to put to death," or "to execute."

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The empire of the Antichrist exterminated Tribulation saints because of their testimony of Jesus (cf. 6:9; 12:17; 19:10), because they faithfully proclaimed the word of God (cf. 6:9), and because they had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand (cf. 13:16-17; 14:9-11; 16:2; 19:20)." <sup>517</sup>

Verse 4 concludes with the phrase, *and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years*. This is describing the resurrection of the Tribulation martyrs. The church saints are resurrected at the rapture just prior to the Tribulation (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:50-57). The Old Testament saints are resurrected after the events of the Tribulation and Second Coming of Christ (cf. Daniel 12:1-3). Here we have the statement that the Tribulation martyrs will be resurrected also after the Tribulation and Second Coming just prior to the Millennial Reign of Christ. John informs us that these tribulation martyrs will be raised to life and also will reign with Christ for 1,000 years.

John goes on to mention others. He calls them the rest. This is a reference to unbelievers. John mentions that the unbelievers will not come to life again until after the 1,000 years are completed. In fact he will go on to give the detail of this resurrection and its result in verses 11-15. The Millennial Kingdom will be made up of Christ the King, Old Testament saints, Church age saints, tribulation martyrs, and obviously those believers who had not been martyred during the tribulation but will be allowed into the Kingdom in their physical bodies.

John calls this resurrection the first resurrection. He goes on to offer the fifth of seven beatitudes in Revelation (cf. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 22:7, 14). He says *blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection*. They are blessed because the second death has no power over them. The second death is clearly identified in verse 14 as referring to the lake of fire. They will never be tossed into the lake of fire to suffer eternal damnation. No! They are truly blessed! Instead, they will be priests of God and Christ and will reign with Him for 1,000 years. Believers are indeed referred to as a royal priesthood. "They are to proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light." (cf. 1 Peter 2:9)

The rule of Christ will be a true blessing! "Politically and socially, the rule of Christ and His saints will be universal (Psalm 2:6-8; Daniel 2:35), absolute (Psalm 2:9; Isaiah 11:4), and righteous (Isaiah 11:3-5). Spiritually, their rule will be a time when the believing remnant of Israel is converted (Jer. 30:5-8; Rom. 11:26) and the nation is restored to the land God promised to Abraham (Gen. 13:14-15; 15:18). It will be a time when the Gentile nations also will worship the King (Isa. 11:9; Mic. 4:2; Zech. 14:16). The millennial rule of Christ and the saints will also be marked by the presence of righteousness and peace (Isa. 32:17) and joy (Isa. 12:3-4; 61:3, 7). Physically, it will be a time when the curse is lifted (Isa. 11:7-9; 30:23-24; 35:1-2, 7), when food will be plentiful (Joel 2:21-27), and when there will be physical health and well-being (Isa. 33:24; 35:5-6), leading to long life (Isa. 65:20)." <sup>518</sup>

### *The Release of Satan & the Revolt of Sinners: (20:7-10)*

*The Release:* The first event to take place after the 1,000 years are completed is the release of Satan. He will be released from the abyss. He will be freed from imprisonment and will use this opportunity for one last act of rebellion upon the earth. He will come out to deceive the nations. In fact some will join forces with Satan, despite the perfect conditions of Christ's reign.

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Those who join forces with Satan in this rebellion against Christ are not believers. They are likely the offspring of those tribulation believers who were allowed into the Kingdom in their physical bodies. "The perfect environmental and social conditions of the Millennium, coupled with the lengthened life spans of those physically alive (Isa. 65:20), will cause their children to proliferate."<sup>519</sup> Despite the personal rule of Christ many of these offspring will reject Christ and join forces with Satan when he is released.

*The Revolt:* Satan's rebellion will begin by going out and deceiving the nations which are in the four corners of the earth. The four corners is a reference to the four points of a compass. It refers to North, South, East and West. Satan's deception will take place across the globe. Those whom he is said to deceive and gather together are called Gog and Magog. These two names occur in Ezekiel 38-39 in reference to an invasion of Israel during the Tribulation Period. This is not a reference to the same battle as in Ezekiel 38-39 for there are significant differences. So what is meant by the terms Gog and Magog? It is likely that these are symbolic titles referring to the unsaved. It seems to stand as a general title for an enemy of God's people. These unsaved people referred to as Gog and Magog will be gathered together for war against God. John goes on to mention the number of those gathered. He says they were like the sand of the seashore. This figure is used to emphasize a vast and uncountable multitude. It's amazing that so many would reject the Lord Jesus Christ out of His Millennial Reign. It demonstrates the extent of man's depravity.

*The Result:* It is at this point that John moves on to describe the result of this wicked revolt against the Lord. After the enemy army *came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city*, the war was over as quickly as it started. The result was similar to that of Sodom and Gomorrah as *fire came down from heaven and devoured them*. This seems to be a common way that God judges sinners (cf. Gen. 19:24; Lev. 10:2; 2 Kings 1:10, 12; Luke 9:54). The enemy forces will be physically obliterated by this instantaneous judgment. Their bodies destroyed and their souls waiting to be judged. Not only will the enemy army be destroyed, but the leader, Satan, will be judged. He will be permanently cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. It is in this same lake of fire where the beast and his false prophet have been for 1,000 years. The fact that they are still there at the conclusion of the Millennium emphasizes the permanence of this judgment and the fact that it is eternal. The soul will not be destroyed as those who hold to some sort of annihilationism suggest, but it will be in everlasting torment day and night, forever and ever. At this point only the Antichrist, his false prophet and Satan are in the lake of fire.