

Joel Breidenbaugh (Revelation 20:1-6)

Intro. Today we begin our final series in the book of Revelation, chapters 20-22, on the theme “The Dragon, the Lamb & Eternity.” We start with Revelation 20:1-6 on the subject of “The Millennium.” It’s been said about the millennium & Revelation 20—the millennium is a thousand years of peace that Christians love to fight about. Let’s read the text together & see what it teaches us.

Theme: Christ’s reign

Background: I view Revelation as a series of visions describing the sovereignty of God, along with His judgment on the earth in light of the chaos during the final days as sin comes to a head in the person & work of the Antichrist.

➤ Before dealing with the text at hand, let me take a few moments to deal with a few matters related to the millennium (the 1,000 years of 20:2-7, mentioned 6x). Given the amount of material given to the first 10 verses of Revelation 20, one might wrongly conclude it is the most important passage in the Bible

2 big questions related to how one views the millennium:

1. When will Jesus reign?

- a. **Amillennialism**—“no” millennium & Jesus reigns in the lives of believers now
- b. **Postmillennialism**—Christ will reign “after” the present millennium is over (between His 1st & 2nd comings)
- c. **Premillennialism**—Christ will return “before” the millennial kingdom & then reign

2. How will Jesus reign?

- a. **Amillennialism**—Jesus is presently reigning spiritually
- b. **Postmillennialism**—the gospel will advance to the whole world & usher in an age of peace & then Jesus will return to set up the final judgment & eternity
- c. **Premillennialism**—Christ will return & establish the millennial kingdom suddenly & powerfully
- Some people try to say since this is the only time we see the reference to a millennium, we shouldn’t believe in it, but there are a number of key OT texts which speak of the coming kingdom on earth—Isaiah 2:1-5; 11:1-6; 32:1-20; 35:1-10; 60:1-22; Jeremiah 31:1-40; 33:1-26; Ezekiel 36-48; Amos 9:11-15; Zechariah 14:6-21 (to name a few)
- I’m a premillennialist because I think amillennialism spiritualizes the text (which is quite descriptive) & postmillennialism isn’t realistic (the world isn’t getting better but worse) & premillennialism is the most natural reading of the text & fulfills the promises of God to Abraham (about the land) & David (about the Son of David reigning on earth) & Revelation 5:9-10 teaches believers “will reign [with Christ] on the earth”

Why is the millennium necessary?

- 1. **To reward the faithful** (Daniel 7:18, 22, 27; 1 Corinthians 6:2-3; Revelation 2:26-28; 20:4, 6)
- 2. **To redeem creation from the Fall’s curse** (Genesis 1:30; 3:14-19; Isaiah 11:6-9)
- 3. **To fulfill the biblical covenants** (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:18; 2 Samuel 7:12-16)

What do we learn about the millennium from Revelation 20?

1. The millennium serves as a shadow of Satan’s future judgment (20:1-3)

Illus: Depending on the light source, you can often detect someone or something coming up behind you because of the shadow it casts—in the same way, this 1,000 year confinement of Satan serves as a shadow of his ultimate, future judgment

- The abyss (20:1) pictures the abode of demonic forces (cf. 11:7; 17:8)
- The reference to the “key” & the “great chain” carries images of bondage
- The description of Satan is very clear (20:2)—the dragon (of Revelation 12—an intimidating presence, much like Smaug of *The Hobbit*), ancient serpent (of Genesis 3—which introduced sin into the world through his deceptive ways), the devil (accuser) & Satan (adversary)—elsewhere in John’s Gospel, Satan is also called a “thief” (John 10) & a “liar” (John 8)

- In chapter 12, Satan was cast out of heaven to the earth (looking back in time), but here he will be cast of the earth into the abyss
- The verbs describing this “seized,” “threw,” “shut” & “sealed”—he will be “signed, sealed & delivered” to the pit for 1,000 years
- I’ll say more about Satan’s confinement next week—as well as the inhabitants of the millennium & issues related to Gog & Magog

2. The dead in Christ will come to life & reign with Christ during the millennium (20:4, 6)

- Jesus promised the apostles they would judge from the 12 thrones (Matthew 19:28) & 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 says the saints will judge the world
- Scholars differ on how many groups are described in v. 4—are those sitting on thrones described in the rest of the verse or are there those sitting on thrones as well as those who died for their faith & those who did not worship the beast or receive its mark—I’m here to tell you as your pastor who minored in NT Greek during PhD work that I don’t know how many groups John is referencing here

Illus: When the dead come to life, that’s shouting time for the believer—I recently learned of a charismatic church which started a few months ago & met in a funeral home, but they had people tell them they would join them if they moved locations, but it was too depressing to meet in a funeral home, so the church moved & more started coming. But they are the biggest believers in miracles, so I wonder why they didn’t just lay hands on the dead & see if God would raise them? Even though God doesn’t raise the dead on our time, He will do it one day & He proved it by raising Christ first!

3. The first resurrection is of believers & precedes the millennium (20:4-6)

- Scripture is clear who takes part in this resurrection—believers, for they are “blessed & holy” (20:6)

Illus: The Greek word for “resurrection” is anastasis & the Russian/Ukrainian name Anastasia means “she will rise again” (portrayed in the movie as well as in our former exchange student, who went by the name Sia)

- Notice how this resurrection precedes the millennium (20:5)—those outside premillennialism cannot explain this

4. Those who experience the first resurrection will not experience the second death, the lake of fire (20:6, 14)

- As a believer in Christ, you will be raised & you don’t have to worry about another death!

Illus: When you think about it, believers are those who are raised twice (spiritually at regeneration & physically at Christ’s return) & die once (physically), but unbelievers are raised once (physically at the end of the millennium) & die twice (physically & spiritually in the lake of fire)

5. Believers will serve God & Christ as priests during the millennium (20:6)

- That we will serve both God & Christ shows Christ is co-equal in deity with the Father
- Service as priests probably points to approaching Christ in the new temple, spoken of by Ezekiel 40-48, not for sacrificial purposes but for prayers & offerings of thanksgiving & such

So what must you do?

- In light of the future millennium, don’t put off what must be done today. Turn from the deceitfulness of sin to the Lord in repentance & faith so that you can take part in the first resurrection

Conc. People have always dreamed about a utopia, a great society, a paradise on earth, a return to the Garden of Eden. There have been several attempts through the years of producing this very thing. Take New Harmony, Indiana, for example, a community in Southwestern Indiana on the border of Illinois and just a few miles north of Kentucky. In the 19th century, they built this massive meeting house used for school, church & town hall meetings. Because there was nothing else to do in the town, the teens wanted to gather there on the weekends to hangout & dance, but most of the adults didn’t want that. They bickered about it & the teens decided to hold their ground, realizing they were the future of the town, so some of the adults burned the building down—so much for harmony & utopia! Such efforts at true peace on earth never work, because sin gets in the way. That’s the one thing keeping you from having peace with God & you must turn from it & trust in Christ to take part in the Millennium.