

# THE HISTORICAL ERROR

The traditional churches have been found wanting and have stopped growing. God blessed them and used them in their day, but as we near the time for Christ to return, their eschatology is becoming increasingly irrelevant. Like the Pharisees of old, they nullify the word of God for the sake of their tradition (Mt 15:6).

Amillennial theology began at Alexandria in Egypt in the third century with the allegorizing of Scripture. It was later rejected as heretical, but the allegorizing of prophecy was retained by the Catholic church. Augustine taught that the Church was living in the millennial period and many in the Church expected the second coming to occur around 1000 AD. When that didn't happen, the thousand years mentioned in Revelation was taken as figurative. The Reformers retained this false teaching, and it is still taught and believed by most people in the traditional churches today: Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Methodist.

This false doctrine denies the following scriptural truths:

- The kingdom of God is future, all references to it in a present context relate to the Messiah and his monarchy, or the character of his kingdom; all references to it in a future context are to a future Messianic kingdom on earth. This is clearly stated in Revelation, where it says that the saints martyred by the Antichrist for not worshipping him or taking his mark on their foreheads or hands will reign with Christ for 1000 years.
- Evidence for an earthly millennium does not rely solely on Revelation 20. Many OT prophecies give details about it (Psalm 2:6-8, 72:7-8, 110:2, Daniel 7:14, 18, 27, Isaiah 9:6-7, 11:4-9, 32:1-2, Jer 33:14-17, Ezekiel 34:23-31, 43:7, Zechariah 14:9). Revelation 20 should be interpreted according to these prophecies.
- Neither Christ nor Christians are ruling the world now. Christ is presently seated at the right hand of God in heaven, but there is a world of difference between the sovereignty of God over the

universe and the political situation in our world. No Scripture teaches that Christ has begun to rule. This is only proclaimed in Revelation 11:17 and 19:6 where the Greek verbs for ‘reign’ are in the past tense.

- The world is in a poor state, because not only is Satan not bound now (Romans 16:20, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 2:1-2, 6:12, 1 Peter 5:8), the Bible declares that he is ruling the world (Luke 4:6, John 12:31, 16:11, Ephesians 2:2, 6:12, 1 John 5:19 (written later than the John’s Gospel), Revelation 13:2. Galatians 1:4 speaks of “this present evil age.”
- Prophecies state that the world will only get worse (Daniel 12:1, Matthew 24:21, 29, 2 Thessalonians 2:2:3-4, 2 Timothy 3:1, Revelation 7:14). The Jews were expecting a Messianic reign *on earth* and Jesus’ ministry to them was centered around their belief in the Messiah and his coming reign. (Matthew 3:2, 4:17, 23, 5:3, 5, 6:10, 9:35, 19:28, 20:21, 24:14, 25:34, 26:29).
- Two resurrections are taught in the NT: (Matthew 24:31, Luke 14:14, 20:35-36, John 5:29, 11:25, 1 Corinthians 15:23, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, Revelation 20:4-5).
- There is an “age to come” which BAG interprets as the Messianic age (Matthew 12:32, Mark 10:30, Luke 18:30, Ephesians 1:21, 2:7).
- Amillennialism has an anti-Semitic history and consequently they misinterpret the multitude of OT prophecies which predict a glorious future for Israel and denigrate the regathering of Israel that has been happening over the past hundred years. Israel has forfeited their right to the monarchy during the Messianic reign, but as subjects, they will be God’s nation on earth and will supervise the worship of the Messiah at the temple in Jerusalem. (Jeremiah 31:33-34, Ezekiel 36:24-27, 37:23-28, 39:28-29, Joel 2:28-32, Zechariah 12:10, 13:1, Romans 11:1-32).
- Heaven is not our hope and is never spoken about as our future home (Daniel 7:27, John 14:3, 1 Thessalonians 4:17, Revelation 21:2).
- The Bible does not teach new heavens and new earth after final judgment (Isaiah 65:17-25, 66:22-23, 2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1-2).

- Many millennial events are denied by Amillennial teaching. They deny that there will be a thousand-year reign of Christ on earth before the final judgment and the eternal state. Their explanation of future events is over-simplistic, everything happens at once at Christ's return:
  - ❖ Resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked
  - ❖ Rapture of the living saints
  - ❖ Armageddon
  - ❖ The marriage supper of the Lamb
  - ❖ Final judgment
  - ❖ New heavens and a new earth

They nullify the following events, prophesied in detail by OT and NT prophets, by spiritualizing them or giving them non-literal interpretations:

- The Messiah's descent to the Mount of Olives and the temple (Zechariah 14:4-5, Ezekiel 43:1-4, Malachi 3:1)
- The descent of the New Jerusalem from heaven to earth (Revelation 21:2 – 22:5)
- The regathering of all Israel to the promised land (Isaiah 11:11-12, 14:1-2, 43:5-7, 60:4, 66:20, Zechariah 8:8).
- The conversion of Israel (Isaiah 32:15, Ezekiel 39:29, Joel 2:28, Zechariah 12:10)
- The binding of Satan and confinement in the Abyss for 1000 years (Revelation 20:1-3)
- The Messianic reign over all the earth (Zechariah 14:9, Revelation 11:15, 20:6)
- The rule of the saints over the world with Christ during the millennium (Daniel 7:18, 26-27, Revelation 5:10, 20:4, 6)
- The glorification of Jerusalem (Isaiah 60:1-3)
- The first resurrection (Luke 14:14, 20:35-36, 1 Corinthians 15:23, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Revelation 20:4-5)

- The yearly pilgrimages to Jerusalem to worship the King by the survivors of the nations (Zechariah 14:16-19).
- The nations beating their swords into plowshares during the millennial reign of peace, justice, and righteousness (Isaiah 2:3-4, 9:6).
- The earth being filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9).
- The new heavens and new earth (Isaiah 65:17-25, 2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1, 5). These verses predict the millennium, there is no new heaven and new earth after judgment day.
- The renewal of creation and restoration of all things (Matthew 19:28, Acts 3:21, Romans 8:19-21, Isaiah 11:6-9).
- The final rebellion of Satan after the 1000-years incarceration and his being cast into hell where Antichrist was thrown 1000 years earlier (Revelation 20:7-10)
- The Messiah handing back his kingdom to God after his millennial reign (Daniel 2:44, 7:14, 1 Cor 15:24-25).

These are the major problems with Amillennial theology, but not all. They have strayed far away from the premillennial return of Christ believed in by most Christians in the first 200 years of the church age (Chiliasm).

## **Interpreting Revelation 20**

- **The second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ**

Revelation 20 follows logically and connectedly with the previous chapter where the Messiah returns to earth to strike down the nations on a white horse. This is a great apocalyptic event that occurs at the end of this age and cannot be spiritualized, as if it referred to the historical victory of Christianity. The Messiah treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God. The sharp sword that proceeds from his

mouth symbolizes his powerful word with which he slays the beast (Antichrist), the kings of the earth, and their rebellious armies (19:6). This is a great scene of judgment and divine retribution.

- **The Messiah begins to rule**

As in 11:17, the Messiah is spoken of as having begun to reign (inceptive aorist). Up to this point he has not reigned over the earth and now for the first time, he is called King of kings and Lord of lords (17:14, 19:16).

- **The Messiah will rule the surviving nations with a rod of iron (12:5, 19:15)**

As prophesied in Psalm 2, the Father says to the Son: “Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the end of the earth your possession.” Chapter 20 is not the only passage that speaks about the Messianic reigning on earth as amillennialists often claim. It was the hope of godly Jews, as expressed by many of them in the Gospels and Acts 1:6. Jesus said to the overcomers at Thyatira: “To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations – that one will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery – just as I have received authority from my Father” (Revelation 2:26-27). This is another passage that teaches an earthly Messianic reign.

## **Revelation 20 follows Chapter 19 chronologically**

There are at least three issues which indicate this:

- The thousand years is mentioned six times in as many verses to show exactly what events follow the Messiah’s return. It is not figurative, spiritual, metaphorical, or symbolic; it is literal.
- The Messiah begins his earthly reign (19:6) and then rules the nations with an iron scepter (19:15).
- At the Messiah’s return, the Antichrist and the false prophet are captured and thrown into hell (19:20), and then, when the

thousand-year reign is ended, the devil is thrown into hell, where the beast and the false prophet were (20:10).

- The martyrs refuse to worship Antichrist or receive his mark on their foreheads or hands. They come to life in the first resurrection and reign with the Messiah for 1000 years (20:4, 6).

## **Satan is bound for 1000 years**

The devil is captured and put out of action for 1000 years so that he will no longer deceive the nations until the 1000 years are over. He was last spoken about when the sixth bowl was poured out (Rev 16:13), when he was assembling the kings of the whole world for the battle of Armageddon. This incarceration was prophesied by Isaiah (24:21-23) when “on that day” the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below (all who are opposed to God) are herded together like prisoners bound in a pit to be punished after many days while the Lord reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem. Compare this with 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 where evil spiritual powers are incarcerated in Hades until judgment day. Judgment (separation) takes place at Jesus’ return; punishment follows judgment day. The association of Satan here with the kings of the earth shows that the passage is apocalyptic and does not refer to Christ’s defeat of Satan on the cross.

## **The first resurrection (Rev 20:5)**

Only the martyrs who were beheaded by the Antichrist are mentioned here, but it is generally believed to be the resurrection of all the righteous, as all who belong to Christ are resurrected at his coming (1 Corinthians 15:23). John states explicitly that the rest of the dead do not come to life until the 1000-year reign is over. Most NT references to resurrection refer to the resurrection of the righteous at Jesus’ return and do not mention the wicked (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, Luke 14:14, 20:34-36). Luke says that those who are considered worthy to arrive at the resurrection from the dead will also arrive at “that age,” the age to come, the Messianic age. The coming age is the *hope* to which God has called us (Ephesians 2:18),

also called our *inheritance*, as we are heirs of the kingdom. It is the hope of glory, the glory of the children of God for which all of creation waits and longs (Romans 8:18-23). Our resurrection, the redemption of our bodies, is especially relevant for our future life on earth during the millennium.

## **Satan's demise**

When the thousand-year reign is about to end, Satan is released for a short time to deceive the nations for a final time. The purpose is not revealed, but it seems that due to the callous human heart, and despite the ideal conditions of the millennium, mankind will return to unbelief. Details are not given, except that the rebels are destroyed by fire from heaven, and the devil is finally destroyed in hell.

## **The great white throne judgment**

The judge is not named but we are told elsewhere that the Father judges no one, he has given all judgment to the Son (John 5:22) so we can be sure that it will be Jesus on that throne. Earth and sky flee from his presence without leaving a trace. That is the end of the created universe. There is no other created universe promised, the new heaven and new earth that John sees in Revelation 21:1 is simply a flashback to the millennium. Jesus said, "I am making everything new" (21:5), but it is the same old planet Earth. Judgment day sees the end of evil, Satan and his followers are in hell and are now joined by all humanity whose name was not written in the book of life. Even death and Hades are annihilated. Only the inhabitants of New Jerusalem remain - God, angels, and redeemed humanity.

## **The marriage supper of the Lamb** (Revelation 19:1-9)

John hears a great multitude in heaven praising God for his judgment on the evil world system called "Babylon" and for avenging on her the blood of his servants who are now in heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22-24). He hears them shouting, "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For

the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given to her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.)" The saints are now fully united with their Lord in glorified resurrection bodies, never to be separated from him again.

Their abode is in the heavenly Jerusalem that has moved down to earth as the New Jerusalem, resting in the sky above the earthly Jerusalem (Isaiah 4:5, 60:1-3). The inhabitants of this city are supernatural beings: God, the Lamb, angels, and resurrected saints and this is their home during the millennium. God promised long ago through Zechariah that he would be the glory in her midst (Zechariah 2:5, 10-13). Yes, the Lord will rouse himself from his holy dwelling, and the dwelling place of God will be with man (Revelation 21:3). They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

### **The New Jerusalem** (Rev 21:2 – 22:5)

What John sees coming down out of heaven from God is a symbolic description of the bride of Christ who was resurrected at the second coming. The church, including OT saints, meets the Lord in the air. Before that moment, the home of the dead in Christ was in the New Jerusalem together with God and angels (Hebrews 12:22-24), but now they are there in their resurrection bodies, together with the raptured saints. This is paradise. The river of the water of life is there, together with the tree of life, and the throne of God and the Lamb (22:1-3).