

The Millennium (A Crash Course in the Various Views)

It would be impossible to detail the distinctions between the four major schools of interpretation when it comes to the events of Revelation 20 but let me give you just a quick sketch of each. The four major schools of thought are: Historic Pre-millennialism, Dispensational Pre-millennialism, Post-millennialism, and A-millennialism.

Revelation 20 refers to a “1,000 year reign” of Christ. In English we have a word for a thousand year period of time (millennium). It comes from the Latin language – and combines two words: *mille* = 1,000 and *annus* = year.

I want to quote from Darrel Johnson’s book *Discipleship on the Edge* because he summarizes three key views quite succinctly:

“...**pre-millennialism** argues that Jesus comes again, or “breaks through,” before the millennium; **a-millennialism**, argues that Jesus is reigning right now – the thousand years being a symbol for the church age; and **post-millennialism**, arguing that Jesus comes again, or “breaks through,” after the millennium. The three options are more simply known as pre-mil, a-mil, and post-mil. In some circles, the titles serve as identity badges. In some circles, the titles are, sadly, used as measures of people’s spirituality.” (p 333)

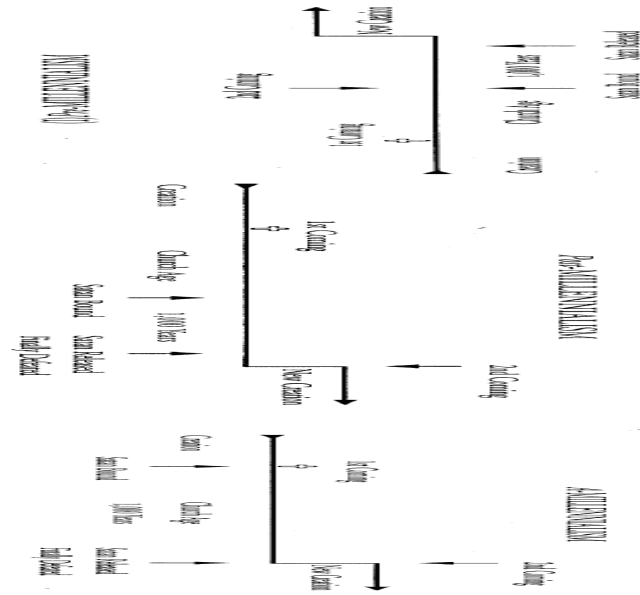
There are three key questions when it comes to interpreting the 1,000 years:

1. *Is the 1,000 years to be taken as literal or as symbolic?*
2. *Will Christ return before or after the 1,000 years?*
3. *Is there a distinction between the nation of Israel and the church when it comes to the event of the end times?*

The Pre-millennial and Post-millennial camps believe that there will be a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ here on earth. The difference in their views can be seen in the “pre and post” parts of their names. Pre-millennialists believe that Christ will return to earth before the 1,000 year reign, while post-millennialists believe that Christ will return after a “golden age of spiritual prosperity”. A-millennialists do not take the 1,000 years of Revelation 20 to be a literal 1,000 year period, but rather, to be symbolic of Christ’s reign that began in His first advent, and which will culminate in His return, judgment, and the eternal state.

The pre-millennial camp could be further divided into “historic” and “dispensational” groups. The historic-premillennialists do not see a distinction between Israel and the church, but see them as “one” people of God. They would see the church going through the tribulation. The dispensational-premillennialists see a clear distinction between the church and Israel. They believe the church will be “raptured” before or during the great tribulation, and that Israel will play a special role in the 1,000 year reign.

The following time-lines may help you to make sense out of the competing views. These are taken from Darrell Johnson’s book as well:



As you enter your personal study and/or your group discussions keep the following quote in mind:

“There are two facts that we need to keep in mind as we seek to rightly interpret Revelation 20.

First, each of the three options has been developed by godly students of the Bible, by people who sincerely want to understand God’s word and who want to submit their lives to it. Therefore, in choosing between the three options, we are not choosing between conservative and liberal; nor are we choosing between those who believe in the divine inspiration of the Bible and those who do not. Unfortunately, especially since 1948 and the founding of the modern state of Israel, views on how Revelation unfolds have been used to draw lines in the sand, and sadly, have become walls dividing the Body of Christ. The truth is that all three options are developed by equally-committed disciples of Jesus Christ.

*Second, each of the three options sees something in Revelation to which the others are blind or which the others choose not to take into account...**neither of the three systems is watertight.** “*

My heart has been so encouraged in this LONG study of Revelation with this one key truth! Jesus Christ IS ruling and reigning today. Regardless of where you land on the specifics of the 1,000 year reign, I believe we need to lift our eyes in a more hopeful stance to the truth that He IS the King of kings and that He IS and WILL bring His kingdom to earth! AND – we have a part to play!

Blessings to you as you press in to the Father’s heart!

- Pastor Mark

Home Group Discussion Questions

History (Making it Personal)

1. Share the various interpretations you have learned over the course of your life. Where do most of the people in your group fall as far as their opinion on the timing of the end times? How open are you to discussing the various interpretations?
2. If you've not taken time to scan the notes in the center of this insert, do that now, it will give you a quick overview of the major schools of interpretation when it comes to the 1,000 year reign.
3. In years past, how has your understanding of Revelation led to confusion, victory, joy, clarity...etc.... What has been your experience with this book? Share one key insight or learning that sticks out to you over these past six months!

Digging Deeper (Looking to the Bible)

4. Read through Revelation 20.
5. Talk about the binding of Satan. Read Luke 8:26-39 – focus on 8:31 and the concept of the Abyss. Read 2 Peter 2:4 which talks of the holding of demons for judgment. What has been your understanding of Revelation 20:3?
6. The text says specifically that he is kept from deceiving the nations. Some feel this is to allow for a period of world-wide evangelization. Jesus commanded us to reach all nations (Matthew 28:19-20) and promised that the gospel would be preached to all nations before the “end” (Mark 13:10). Talk about the implications this text should have on our efforts to preach the gospel.
7. Focus on Revelation 20:11-15. Add 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:9-12 into your discussion. For good measure, have someone read Matthew 25:31-46. What should all these texts teach us?

Taking It Home (Application)

8. Because this is the last week of our study – spend some time sharing what you have learned over the past six months. What new insights, what challenges, what encouragements?
9. Spend some time in prayer for our church family – that we would be strong representatives of the KING who IS reigning!
10. Talk about your summer ministry plans – what can you do together as a group to reach out to some people you love – who don't know Jesus?
11. Plan a BBQ or two to make sure you stay connected!
12. Finally, thanks for being such great learners – it's been a privilege to teach through this book!

June 6 & 7, 2009

“He Reigns!”

Revelation 20

Pastor Mark Burch

Revelation 20:2 “He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.”

1 Corinthians 15:24-25 “Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.”

SERMON NOTES:

**Thy Kingdom come...Thy will be done...
On earth...as it is in heaven!**