

18. 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's 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. Later rejected as heretical, the Catholic church retained the allegorizing of prophecy. 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 were 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, and 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 (Ps 2:6-8, 72:7-8, 110:2, Dan 7:14, 18, 27, Isa 9:6-7, 11:4-9, 32:1-2, Jer 33:14-17, Ezek 34:23-31, 43:7, Zech 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 aorist: past tense in a point of time.

- The world is in a poor state, because not only is Satan not bound now (Rom 16:20, 2 Cor 4:4, Eph 2:1-2, 6:12, 1 Pet 5:8), the Bible declares that he is ruling the world (Lk 4:6, Jn 12:31, 16:11, Eph 2:2, 6:12, 1 Jn 5:19 (written later than the John’s Gospel), Rev 13:2). Galatians 1:4 speaks of this present evil age.
- Prophecies state that the world will only get worse (Dan 12:1, Mt 24:21, 29, 2 Thess 2:3-4, 2 Tim 3:1, Rev 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. (Mt 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: (Mt 24:31, Lk 14:14, 20:35-36, Jn 5:29, 11:25, 1 Cor 15:23, 1 Thess 4:15-17, Rev 20:4-5).
- There is an “age to come” which BAG interprets as the Messianic age (Mt 12:32, Mk 10:30, Lk 18:30, Eph 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’ll be God’s nation on Earth and will supervise God’s worship at the Jerusalem temple. (Jer 31:33-34, Ezek 36:24-27, 37:23-28, 39:28-29, Joel 2:28-32, Zech 12:10, 13:1, Rom 11:1-32).
- Heaven is not our hope and is never spoken about as our future home (Dan 7:27, Jn 14:3, 1 Thess 4:17, Rev 21:2).
- The Bible doesn’t teach a new heaven and Earth after the final judgment (Isa 65:17-25, 66:22-23, 2 Pet 3:13, Rev 21:1-2).
- Many millennial events are denied by amillennial teaching, for example the thousand-year reign of Christ on Earth before the final judgment. Their explanation of future events is oversimplistic; 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 heaven and 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 (Zech 14:4-5, Ezek 43:1-4, Mal 3:1)
- The descent of New Jerusalem from heaven to Earth (Rev 21:2 – 22:5)
- The regathering of all Israel to the promised land (Isa 11:11-12, 14:1-2, 43:5-7, 60:4, 66:20, Zech 8:8).
- The conversion of Israel (Isa 32:15, Ezek 39:29, Joel 2:28, Zech 12:10)
- The binding of Satan and confinement in the Abyss for 1000 years (Rev 20:1-3)
- The Messianic reign over all the Earth (Zech 14:9, Rev 11:15, 20:6)
- The rule of the saints over the world with Christ during the millennium (Dan 7:18, 26-27, Rev 5:10, 20:4, 6)
- The glorification of Jerusalem (Isa 60:1-3)
- The first resurrection (Lk 14:14, 20:35-36, 1 Cor 15:23, 1 Thess 4:16, Rev 20:4-5)
- The yearly pilgrimages to Jerusalem to worship the Messiah by the survivors of the nations (Zech 14:16-19).

- The nations beating their swords into plowshares during the millennial reign of peace, justice, and righteousness (Isa 2:3-4, 9:6).
- The Earth being filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Isa 11:9).
- The new sky and Earth (Isa 65:17-25, 2 Pet 3:13, Rev 21:1, 5). These verses predict the millennium, there is no new sky and Earth after judgment day.
- The renewal of creation and restoration of all things (Mt 19:28, Acts 3:21, Rom 8:19-21, Isa 11:6-9).
- The final rebellion of Satan after his 1000-year incarceration and his being cast into hell, where the Antichrist was thrown 1000 years earlier (Rev 20:7-10).
- The Messiah's handing over his kingdom to God after his millennial reign (Dan 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 return of the Lord Jesus Christ**

Revelation 20 follows logically and connectedly with the previous chapter, where the Messiah is depicted as returning to Earth on a white horse to strike down the nations. This great apocalyptic event that occurs at the end of this age cannot be spiritualized, as if it referred to the historical victory of Christianity. The Messiah will tread the grapes in the winepress of the fury of God's wrath. 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 (Rev 19:6). This is a great scene of judgment and divine retribution.

- **The Messiah begins to rule**

In Revelation 11:17, voices in heaven announce that the Messiah has 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 (Rev 17:14, 19:16).

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

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

Revelation 20 follows Chapter 19 chronologically

There are at least three issues that 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 (Rev 19:6) and then rules the nations with an iron scepter (Rev 19:15).
- At the Messiah's return, the Antichrist and the False Prophet are captured and thrown into hell (Rev 19:20), and then, when the thousand-year reign is ended, the devil is thrown into hell, where the Antichrist and the False Prophet are (Rev 20:10).
- The martyrs refuse to worship Antichrist or receive his mark on their foreheads or hands. They come to life (after the Antichrist's reign) and reign with the Messiah for 1000 years. This is the first resurrection (20:4, 6).
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Satan is bound for 1000 years (Rev 20:1-3)

The devil is captured and put out of action for 1000 years so that he's unable to 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 opposed to God) are herded together like prisoners and 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) occurs at Jesus' return, and punishment follows later. 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)

John only sees the martyrs who were beheaded by the Antichrist, but the resurrection is generally believed to be the resurrection of all the righteous, as all who belong to Christ are resurrected at his coming (1 Cor 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 Thess 4:13-17, 2 Thess 2:1-3, Lk 14:14, 20:34-36). Luke says those who are considered worthy to take part in the resurrection from the dead will also take part in the age to come, the Messianic age. The coming age is the hope to which God has called us (Eph 2:18). It's also called our inheritance, as we're heirs of the kingdom. It is the hope of glory, the glory of the children of God's children, which all creation waits and longs for (Rom 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 (Rev 20:7-10)

When the thousand-year reign is about to end, Satan is released for a short time and allowed to deceive the nations one 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 (Rev 20:11-15)

The judge is not named but we are told elsewhere that the Father judges no one; he has given all judgment to the Son (Jn 5:22), so we can be sure that it'll be Jesus on that throne. Earth and sky flee from his presence without leaving a trace; the end of the created universe. No other created universe is promised; the renewed sky and Earth that John sees in Revelation 21:1 is a flashback to the millennium. Jesus said: I'm making everything new (Rev 21:5), but it is the same old planet Earth. Judgment day sees the end of evil. Satan and his demons are now in hell and are joined by all humanity whose names were 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 (Rev 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 heaven. He hears them shouting: Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let's 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. The fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints. The saints are now to be united with their Lord in their glorified resurrection bodies, never to be separated from him again.

Their abode is in the Holy City that has moved down to earth as New Jerusalem, resting in the sky above the earthly Jerusalem (Isa 4:5-6, 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 (Zech 2:5, 10-13). Yes, the Lord will rouse himself from his holy dwelling, and the dwelling place of God will be

with man (Rev 21:3). They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

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. The city descends before the millennial reign begins but isn't described until after the Final Judgment because it alone continues on into eternity. 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).