

Study Guide #26: The Millennium

Introduction

The word “millennium” doesn’t appear in the Bible. However, the word is derived from 2 Latin words, meaning “thousand” and “years.” Revelation 20 is the only chapter in the Bible that speaks of a *specific* period of 1,000 years.

Question #1: What are the major views on the millennium among Christians?

Answer: All Christians believe that the millennium represents a long period of Jesus’ reign in some way. Most non-Protestants—chiefly Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox—believe in amillennialism, a view that the entire period of Christian history constitutes the millennial reign of Christ’s kingdom of grace on earth. The 1,000 years is considered to be symbolic of a long but indefinite period of time. Other elements are reckoned as symbols, including the teaching that the binding of Satan (Revelation 20:1-3) as his inability to prevent the gospel from being proclaimed. Most Protestants understand the millennium to represent a long period in which either (1) Jesus reigns through His Church, and Christian efforts gradually bring peace and prosperity to the world (postmillennialism—that Jesus returns *after* the millennium), or (2) Jesus reigns literally on earth in His kingdom of glory (premillennialism—that Jesus returns *before* the millennium).

Question #2: How do amillennialists defend their viewpoint?

Answer: The most common passage used to defend amillennialism is Daniel 2. In that prophecy, 4 world kingdoms are followed by a period of political division and then by the so-called Stone Kingdom (Daniel 2:36-45). The Stone Kingdom, which becomes a mountain and fills the whole earth, is identified as God’s everlasting kingdom in Daniel 2:44. The non-Protestant churches generally interpret this Stone Kingdom as God’s kingdom of grace in which He rules through the influence of the Church, which gradually takes over (“fills,” v. 35, NKJV).

Question #3: Does Daniel 2 really support amillennialism?

Answer: No. *First*, Daniel 2:34 says that the stone was “**cut out without hands**” (NKJV). According to II Corinthians 5:1 and Hebrews 9:24, the phrase “**without hands**” refers to something done by God without human involvement. Since the kingdom of grace reigns through the Church, the Stone Kingdom can’t be that kingdom (since the Church is obviously involved). *Second*, the Stone struck the image of the man in the dream in his *feet* (Daniel 2:34), which represents the period of political division (Daniel 2:41-43). Yet the kingdom of grace began in the 1st century, when



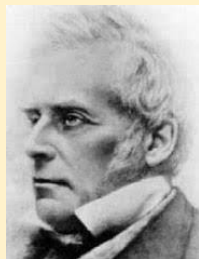
Jesus came and declared that the kingdom is here and in you (Matthew 4:17; Luke 17:21). Since this was during the 4th kingdom (Rome), represented by the legs, the Stone Kingdom can't be God's kingdom in Daniel 2. *Finally*, the Stone kingdom will destroy and replace all human kingdoms (Daniel 2:35, 44). But the kingdom of grace coexists with human kingdoms. Therefore, the Stone Kingdom must represent Jesus' kingdom of *glory* rather than of *grace*, which makes its coming the 2nd Coming of Jesus. We would also add that it's impossible to see how Satan could be bound today, for Revelation 20:2-3 says his being bound was to prevent him from deceiving the nations. Yet he is certainly deceiving people today. For all these reasons, we reject amillennialism.

Question #4: What is historic premillennialism?

Answer: Historic premillennialism dominated the 2nd and 3rd centuries and holds the view that Jesus' 2nd Coming will begin His 1,000-year reign on the earth in which Jewish and Gentile believers are co-rulers with Him. Before the 2nd Coming, Christians will experience the final tribulation brought by the Antichrist. This is also called *posttribulationism* because Jesus will return *after* the tribulation. From about the late 3rd century until the 16th century, amillennialism was the standard Christian perspective. However, the 16th-century Protestant Reformation revived historic premillennialism.

Question #5: What is dispensational premillennialism?

Answer: This view originated among more conservative Protestant Christians in the 19th century, having been originally championed by an Anglo-Irish clergyman named John Nelson Darby. The idea is that Christians will be raptured to heaven before the final tribulation (the most common view), which is the reason it's called *pretribulationism*. During the next period, usually understood as 7 years, the Antichrist makes his appearance, the Jews are converted to Christianity, and 144,000 of them evangelize the world, affording a 2nd opportunity for others to also be saved. At the end of that period, Jesus will return in glory, judge the wicked, and establish His millennial kingdom on earth. There are different variations of belief within Dispensational premillennialism, but that's the most popular version.



John Nelson Darby

Question #6: What does the Bible really teach concerning the millennium?

Answer: Premillennialism is the Biblical perspective for several reasons. *First*, postmillennialism is too optimistic about human nature. The Biblical perspective is that mankind is inherently sinful and can never reach what most people call perfection. *Second*, Jesus establishes His kingdom at His 2nd Coming, as we showed under Question #3. *Third*, the context of Revelation 20 tells us that the 2nd Coming indeed is the beginning of the millennium. That context includes Revelation 19:11-21, which describes the 2nd Coming of Jesus. This is true because Jesus is shown there as riding on a white horse and leading the armies of heaven in war against the nations. [NOTE: It's Jesus on that horse since He is called the "**Word of God**" (v. 13) and the "**KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS**" (v. 16, NKJV)—both of which describe Jesus (cf. John 1:1, 14).] Also, He's shown in vision as treading a winepress of God's wrath, pointing back to Revelation 14:14-20's harvest at the 2nd Coming of Jesus (cf. Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43).

Revelation 19:20 describes the capture and punishment of the “**beast**” and the “**false prophet**” at the 2nd Coming (NKJV). But Revelation 16:13 tells us there will be an unholy *trinity* consisting of the beast, false prophet, and the dragon (Satan, Revelation 12:9). While Revelation 19 doesn’t tell us what happens to the dragon, Revelation 20 does so at the beginning of the millennium (Revelation 20:1-3). Therefore, the millennium immediately follows the 2nd Coming of Jesus and thus validates premillennialism.

Question #7: Where are the saved during the millennium?

Answer: In Explorer II, Study Guide #25, we learned that the saved are raptured to heaven at the 2nd Coming of Jesus. That fact is confirmed by them being pictured in Revelation 20 as sitting on thrones in judgment. The Greek word for “throne” or “thrones” occurs more than 40 times in the book of Revelation, with all but 3 of them (excluding Revelation 20:4) associated with God and are clearly located by the context in heaven. Therefore, we conclude that the saved are in heaven during the millennium.

Question #8: What judgment are the saved engaged in during the millennium?

Answer: It’s *not* the judgment pictured in heaven in Daniel 7 because that judgment is obviously *before* the 2nd Coming of Jesus (Daniel 7:26-27). The destruction of the wicked at the *end* of the millennium is based on their works recorded in books (Revelation 20:11-15). But the judgment *during* the millennium can’t be to determine who will be saved and who will be lost because that must have occurred before the 2nd Coming of Jesus. Therefore, we conclude by the context of the wicked being punished according to their works recorded in books, that the judgment during the millennium involves a determination of how long each wicked individual will be punished in the lake of fire. See Explorer II, Study Guide #24 for evidence concerning the variations in the length of burning in hellfire at the end-time. Moreover, the saved will also be able to examine the books to be fully satisfied as to the reason that certain people are not in heaven.



Question #9: What is the “bottomless pit” that Satan is cast into at the beginning of the millennium?

Answer: *First*, remember that the wicked were all slain at the 2nd Coming of Jesus (Revelation 19:21), and the saved are in heaven (see Explorer II, Study Guide #25). *Second*, note that the purpose for Satan being bound is so he can’t deceive the nations until the end of the millennium (Revelation 20:3). Therefore, we conclude that the “**chain**” (20:1, NKJV) that he is bound with is a figurative chain of circumstances because he can’t deceive the nations since no humans are alive, only Satan and his angelic allies. In turn, that means that the “**bottomless pit**” (Revelation 20:1, NKJV) is the entire earth. That term is appropriate because it’s the same Greek word used in the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) of Genesis 1:2 translated as “**deep**” to describe the desolate earth before God finished creating it. Certainly, the description of the earth as a result of the 2nd Coming qualifies as a “**bottomless pit**” (see Revelation 6:14-17; cf. 16:20).

Question #10: If the wicked humans are all dead, how can Satan deceive them at the end of the millennium?

Answer: Revelation 20:5 says that the wicked remained dead “**until the thousand years were finished**” (NKJV). Since the 1st resurrection is of the saved (Revelation 20:6), the wicked are raised in what could be called the 2nd resurrection at the end of the millennium. That’s the reason that verses 7-8 say that Satan was released from his prison and deceived the nations again. Interestingly, the fact that the nations are indeed deceived even *then* proves that they will never shift their loyalty to God—offering additional evidence that God’s decision regarding their eternal destiny was the correct one.

Question #11: Who are Gog and Magog that attack the “beloved city”?

Answer: In Ezekiel 38-39, Gog was the leader of a land called Magog, whose defeat was predicted in the prophecy there. However, scholars can’t identify them, which makes them good *symbolic* names for all of the wicked in the very last battle in Revelation 20. [NOTE: The context in Revelation 20 makes it clear that they represent *all* the wicked at the end of the millennium. Thus, all attempts to identify them with any modern nations or ethnic groups is fruitless and ignores the Biblical context.]

Question #12: What is the “beloved city” that the wicked attack at the end of the millennium?

Answer: The expression “**beloved city**” occurs only here in Revelation (20:9). However, Revelation speaks of the “**holy city**” in 11:2; 21:2; 21:10 (in the Greek text), and 22:19. The last 3 texts obviously refer to the New Jerusalem. Additionally, Revelation 3:12 calls the New Jerusalem “**the city of My God**” (NKJV). Clearly, then, the “**beloved city**” in the book of Revelation is the New Jerusalem, that comes down from heaven at the end of the millennium (Revelation 21:2).



New Jerusalem

Question #13: How can it be that the Great White Throne Judgment occurs after the wicked are destroyed in the lake of fire?

Answer: Literally, that can’t be true. Apparently, the apostle John was shown the fate of the wicked *before* the Great White Throne Judgment because the vision was in the middle of describing their attempt to attack the city. Literally, of course, the Great White Throne Judgment will interrupt the wicked’s attempt to attack the city. Then fire will come down from heaven and destroy the wicked. Therefore, his discussion of the Great White Throne Judgment constitutes a kind of *flashback* to fill in the details of the destruction of the wicked.

Question #14: What is the purpose of the Great White Throne Judgment?

Answer: Its purpose is certainly *not* to determine the fate of the wicked because we have already shown that their fate will have already been determined. But the New Testament teaches that everyone will have to appear before **“the judgment seat of Christ”** and will then acknowledge that God is just, according to Romans 14:10-11 (NKJV, cf. Philippians 2:10-11). Jude 15 also states that **“the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds”** (NKJV). Therefore, the purpose seems to be to convict them of God’s justice so that they will declare that they deserve their fate.

Question #15: Why are the wicked humans “devoured,” but Satan, along with the beast (Antichrist) and the false prophet, are tormented forever?

Answer: *First*, note that the beast (Antichrist) and the false prophet aren’t individuals but systems. This is true because a symbolic beast in prophecy represents a political kingdom or power, unless the immediate context requires it to be an individual king, according to Daniel 7:17, 23; 8:20-22 [NOTE: The **“beast”** in Revelation is 1st introduced in Revelation 13:1-2, where its description makes it a composite of all 4 beasts in Daniel 7, where the beasts are kingdoms.]. The **“false prophet”** in Revelation is the entity that will use miracles to deceive the world into following the beast, which makes him another **“beast”** (cf. Revelation 13:11-18; 16:13-14; and 19:20). These facts point to symbolic language.



The Lake of Fire

Second, this language of torment forever is borrowed from Isaiah 34. See Study Guide #24, Question #6 for evidence that this language is indeed figurative language pointing to complete destruction, not an eternally burning process. Therefore, the **“beast”** and the **“false prophet”** are systems that will also be totally destroyed.

Question #16: What does Revelation 20:14 mean by the “second death”?

Answer: Remember that the wicked will be resurrected at the end of the millennium. Since they had all died once, their death after the Great White Throne Judgment is called the **“second death.”** From the second death, there will be no resurrection. Note that Satan (the “dragon”) will also be executed at the same time, although since he never died before, it would not be called his “second death.”

Question #17: What happens after the final destruction of all sinful beings?

Answer: According to Revelation 21:1, God will create **“a new heaven and a new earth”** (NKJV). The **“heaven”** is singular, so it refers to the atmosphere around the earth. The Greek word for **“new”** here refers to new in *quality* rather than new in terms of *time*. This means that the new heaven and the new earth won’t completely replace the current ones, but they will be *recreated* in the sense of restoring them to their original perfection state at Creation. The reference in that same verse that **“there was no more sea”** (NKJV) in the context of a *literal* heaven and new earth, suggests that there won’t be any more large oceans on the New Earth.

Question #18: Would you please summarize the events associated with the millennium?

Answer: Note the following summary of the events associated with the millennium:

Beginning of the Millennium

- Second Coming of Jesus
- Righteous Dead are Resurrected
- All the Righteous are Glorified (i.e., given perfect bodies)
- All the Living Wicked are Destroyed
- All the Righteous go to Heaven

During the Millennium

- No one Alive on Earth except Satan and his angels
- Righteous are Reigning in Judgment with Jesus in Heaven

At the End of the Millennium

- Jesus Returns to Earth with His Angels, the Righteous, and the New Jerusalem
- Wicked are Resurrected
- Wicked Attempt to Attack the Saints and the New Jerusalem
- Great White Throne Judgment Interrupts the Attempted Attack
- Final Destruction of the Wicked in the Lake of Fire (literally hell on earth)
- Earth and Atmosphere Restored as New Earth and New Heaven



Life in the New Earth