

Part four

And then there was one...or two.

A pleasant, but unexpected surprise came in the opposite direction of those who had just left. It was a group from Covenantal Crest. They explained that as everyone else was passing under the Millennial Arch, they turned off in the direction of the other trail because they couldn't really buy in.

The main reason had to do with the spiritualizing of the Old Testament promises to Israel. They were still convinced that God didn't need to fully reestablish the nation of Israel to fulfill the covenants literally, but they just couldn't agree with abandoning the physical and earthly dynamic altogether. They believe that Israel will literally come to faith in Christ in some way in the future, and many of the promises will be fulfilled, so the only logical conclusion was to embrace a view that the Millennium is still a future event.

Arriving at the group that had just said goodbye to the Postmillennial brothers, they explain the decision based in their interpretation of the sign.

Revelation 20:1–10 as interpreted by a [Historic Premillennialist](#)

1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven [symbolic language describing the limitation of Satanic powers], **holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain.** [this is where the demon locusts came from,

and the beast] ² And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan [literally], and bound him for a thousand years [real time, but maybe not really 1000 years], ³ and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended [the end of the Millennial Kingdom]. After that he must be released for a little while. ⁴ Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge [resurrected believers] was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God [the martyrs], and [or namely, described in more detail] those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years [physically resurrected; and reigning in earth]. ⁵ The rest of the dead [unbelievers] did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18]. ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years [on earth, in resurrected bodies, just like Jesus did in Acts 1:3]. ⁷ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth [proving that the root of sin is men's hearts, not his environment], Gog and Magog [hostile nations], to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹ And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city [Jerusalem; but there are no literal sacrifices as depicted in Ezekiel 40-48 because of Hebrews 8:13], but fire

came down from heaven and consumed them [emphasis on God not man],
10 and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and
sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented
day and night forever and ever [according to plan in Matthew 25:41].

The rest of the group on Stewardship Skyway welcomes them, knowing they will not agree on every interpretation in the Old Testament, but still feeling a strong sense of unity in what really matters, specifically, the gospel.

In fact, they agree for the most part with their interpretation. The two groups are remarkably similar, and unless you press for details about specifics, you'd have a hard time distinguishing them. To be clear, those specifics are important, and they definitely shape your view of the future, but they are not something to part ways over.

However, this last group does take issue with what they see as a lack of commitment to specifics, so they offer their own interpretations. It's based on an absolute trust that by taking words at face value, they have the meaning figured out, and to suggest that Israel is anything less than front and center in every way strikes at the heart of their method of interpreting the sign.

So, despite the broad agreement, they are more **literal about the mysteries in the text.**

Revelation 20:1–10 as interpreted by a Dispensational Premillennialist

¹ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven [a literal angel], holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. [this is where the demon locusts came from, and the beast] ² And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan [literally], and bound him for a thousand years [literally 1000 years of a Hebrew 360 day year], ³ and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended [the end of the Millennial Kingdom]. After that he must be released for a little while. ⁴ Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge [resurrected believers] was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God [the martyrs of a literal Tribulation], and [or namely, described in more detail] those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands [a literal mark of some kind]. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years [physically resurrected; and reigning in earth]. ⁵ The rest of the dead [unbelievers] did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18]. ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years [on earth, in resurrected bodies, just like Jesus did in Acts 1:3]. ⁷ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth [proving that the

root of sin is men's hearts, not his environment], Gog and Magog [hostile nations], to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. 9 And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city [Jerusalem as depicted in Ezekiel 40-48], but fire came down from heaven and consumed them [emphasis on God not man], 10 and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever [according to plan in Matthew 25:41].

As we leave our friends for another day lets recap what we've learned so far.

1. There are two main trails, one that comprises the teaching of Covenant Theology (Covenantal Crest) and the other Dispensational Theology (Stewardship Skyway).
 - a. The first sees the promises made to Israel as being fulfilled in Christ and the blessings given to the church. The Kingdom is a heavenly and spiritual reality with the events of Revelation largely completed, and all that needs to happen next is the return of Jesus Christ to bring final judgment and the eternal state.
 - b. The second also sees Christ as the fulfillment of the Law, and the church being incorporated into the people of God to receive all

the blessings that entails. However, they also see a future for a reconstituted Israel where the promises of the Old Testament will be literally and physically realized.

2. The main trail you choose will inform your view of the Millennium.
 - a. Covenant Crest logically leads to Amillennialism.
 - b. Stewardship Skyway leads to Premillennialism (with a few brothers choosing the Postmillennial view).
 - c. The Historic Premillennialist sees a spiritual fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies (therefore maintaining much of the Covenantal way of interpreting the Bible), but also believe that God must have some reason for being so emphatic about his promises to Israel. That said, it's just too much a stretch to see it work out as literally as the Dispensational Premillennialist suggests, especially the idea of reestablishing a sacrificial system after Christ has clearly come to fulfill everything it pointed to.