

Revelation 20:1 - 15 pt1

1 And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 3 and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

7 And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, 8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. 9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

11 And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 And death and Hades

*were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15
And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown
into the lake of fire.*

Isaiah 11

*1 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.*

*2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and strength,
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.*

*3 And He will delight in the fear of the LORD,
And He will not judge by what His eyes see,
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;*

*4 But with righteousness He will judge the poor,
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;
And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.*

*5 Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,
And faithfulness the belt about His waist.*

*6 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,
And the leopard will lie down with the young goat,
And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little boy will lead them.*

*7 Also the cow and the bear will graze,
Their young will lie down together,
And the lion will eat straw like the ox.*

*8The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra,
And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.*

*9They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
As the waters cover the sea.*

We're getting dangerously close to the end of this book!

I spent most of Friday listening to different positions on this chapter. If anyone would like to do some further study, ie. you're interested in this, I can't recommend highly enough to go to Desiringgod.org and type in a search for an *evening of eschatology*.

You'll find yourself listening to a 2 hour session where John Piper is moderator, and Sam Storms, Doug Wilson, and Jim Hamilton debate their three different positions on what we're going to be looking at tonight.

It turns out this passage is a battleground for different interpretations. So, it'll be fun to consider what all the kerfuffle is about, and hopefully you'll go home more solid in your belief system than when you came.

First, there is the literal position. **Pre-Millennialism**. Jesus will return to earth and reign on a reconstructed earth in a reconstructed Jerusalem for 1,000 years. Satan is bound until the end of that reign. Sort of like what we just read.

Arguments for: That's what it says.

Arguments against: None of the great church theologians believed this way from Augustin forward. It's only been about 200 years that anyone took this literal. No scholarship. No history. Uneducated folks land here. That's what we get for translating the bible out of Latin. People with teeth missing read this stuff and look at you, and say, "Well, that's what it says!"

We should note here that the church fathers DID believe this view for the first

300+ years of the church. The reason for that is simple. It's what the jews believed and the church came from judaism.

But over time, the church was, I believe, blindsided by Satan with anti-semitism. And little by little this view of a jewish kingdom that was promised slipped away until by the time you get to Augustin about 400 AD replacement theology was taking over. IOW the church was spiritual israel and God had transferred all of the promises to the church. Real israel was scattered and out.

Next is **Post-Millennialism**. This view says that the 1,000 years is a figurative number. The reign is spiritual. Millenium is just figural language for an undisclosed length "golden age". Satan is bound, now. He's not confusing world leaders any more. The church is going to infect the world like yeast, and the world is going to get better and better until at the end of the 1,000 years, whatever that is, because no one really knows when it started or how long the years are, it's very undefined and confusing, but at the end when the church has transformed the nations into righteousness, it then is presented to Christ who returns.

Arguments for: Jonathan Edwards believed this. So did Calvin. Augustin sort of did too. So it must be right.

Arguments against: To get here, you have to draw a line in the sand and say, all of the prophecies until this time were fulfilled literally and perfectly right down the line, but all the prophecies in the Revelation and New testament that haven't been fulfilled are non-literal. They can mean just about anything except what they say.

So all of the enormous conflagration we just looked at in Ch. 19 last week was actually a sort of description with a lot of poetic license and drama that occurred in 70 AD when God cancelled all of His promises to the Jews, squashed them, and gave them to the church instead.

Note that you have to roll all of the books of the bible backwards to before 70AD. So these folks will tell you John didn't write the Revelation in 96AD.

It was finished pre 70AD.

None of the references to any length of time mean anything. 42 months doesn't mean 42 months. 1260 days doesn't mean 1260 days. etc. etc. etc. Silence in heaven for about 1/2 an hour could mean anything you want it to mean. Like a "moment of silence" at an Obama prayer breakfast. Take what you want.

But if some reference of years adds something to your argument, like *Nero persecuted the church for 42 months!!* go with *that*. So if it works for you, go for it, but if it works against you, jettison it like an abortionist throwing babies in a trash dumpster.

Here's the kicker, at least for me. God doesn't really mean what he says. It's up to us to assign meaning to His revelation.

What is most bizarre to me, is the folks who believe this are the most rock solid on the mechanics of salvation of any group. They are the ones that put the train back on the tracks when it comes to Soteriology!

But, thinking minds would like to know. IF God doesn't mean what he says about the future, why do I have any confidence that he wasn't tricking me with a bunch of stuff that means something else when it comes to my justification?

Because, honestly folks, to get to where they've gotten with future things requires just a whole bunch of abandonment of things that sound pretty literal to me. So how do you draw that line? God DID mean this, but He DIDN'T mean that. Really?

OK, A-millennialism. *A* meaning negative, or cancelled out, or none. Atheists. No God. A-moral = no morals. You get the picture.

These folks have taken the next leap and dismissed the whole millenium talk all together. It just means a very long time.

There's lots of overlap between the A-mil and Post-mil groups. Hard to pin them down exactly because they wobble back and forth a lot.

Revelation is just figural language, and millenium is just a term that means the heavenly state. These folk have much in common with what I just described above. The bad stuff in Revelation happened at 70 AD when God kicked the jews out. The church is in. I think the return of Jesus may not even be literal. He returns to finalize this world and wipe it out and make another one? Absent from the body present with the Lord, maybe that's what it's talking about.

Have I oversimplified my position to make my case? Probably. Undoubtedly Revelation is full of figurative language and other difficulties. Beasts and dragons and things with 7 heads and 10 horns and on and on.

Why didn't God make it a little more straight forward?

Well for one thing, folks in 1730 didn't really need to know how it ends. They needed to get Soteriology right and send missionaries out! and they did!

What I'm learning is this. The church as it marches ever closer to the things described for us in Revelation, understands progressively more and more. The folks who are there, when it unfolds, will read this stuff like front page news. No confusion at all! So God, by his purposes, has progressively revealed to the church, more and more concerning eschatology. Things to come.

If that is true, DO NOT scoff at something like pre-tribulation rapture and dispensationalism that really had not been thought of much before 1830. God could have waited until 1930 before He began to have that truth dawn on theologians. It was a grace that we've had it around to talk about for 200 years.

Likewise, DO NOT scoff at whom God chooses to reveal his revelation to. God does not discriminate between religious PHD's and anyone else who labors in His word. The false dichotomy of have's and have-not's in the

christian church when it comes to titles and degrees and long lists of letters after your name on a piece of paper on the wall, troubles me. Of course, I'm a have not. Obviously! Paul was a 'have'. Peter was a 'have not'. God used them both.

So I am obviously very comfortable with a literal interpretation that is less than 200 years old (and also 1000's of years old if you're a jew) for the reasons I just stated. I'm not about to get bogged down in 1730 quicksand because "that's what Jonathan Edwards believed." Not even for John Bunyan! Not even for John Owens! And that's just some of the John's.

Anyways, the literal interpretation is easy peasy, and I'm . . . lazy. OK, so let's dive in.

Vs. 1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.

Here's what it means. An angel came down from heaven, and the angel was holding the key to a place called the bottomless pit, that's what abyssos means, bottomless, and the angel had a chain. Not an ordinary chain, a really BIG chain.

There, see how easy that is. Oh, and the angel had hands. The chain is in his hand.

How did he get the key? Revelation 1:18 tells us *And I hold the keys of death and Hades*. Jesus has the keys. He gives them to whom He wants. In this case He assigns this angel this task.

Nothing new here about the bottomless pit. Remember the wild man at Geresá? What did the demons inside him request of Jesus? So where did He send them?

We can only imagine an abyssos, but to the angels and the demons, it's very real. And it was real to Peter. In 1 peter 2:4 he says; *For if God did not spare*

angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;

Heaven was opened in Ch. 19, so I'm thinking the whole world can see this angel coming down from heaven.

Also note that the language here is very sequential. There's no chapter breaks between ch 19 and ch 20. It's written as if each event follows the one before it.

Jesus comes out of heaven. And then He destroys His enemies. And then He casts the Beast and False Prophet into the lake of burning sulfur. And then an angel comes down to bind Satan and take him to the pit, and then, and then and then. It's sequential.

The Hebrew word kai, which we translate into the article 'and' is used over and over here. Interestingly, the NIV translation, (who has an NIV here?) omits that and about 6 times or more. I forgot the exact number, but it's almost like the translation team is trying to help out the Amillennial crowd by making it sound less sequential than the original language.

Vs. 2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

4 different names for Satan. No confusion here. The Holy Spirit wants us to be crystal clear about who is getting bound. Dragon. Serpent. Devil. Satan.

Now why would the Spirit be so precise in delineation about who, and then use a length of time that is meaningless? The angel binds Satan for a thousand years.

That is the first of 6 references to 1,000 years. So if you're going to make 1000 years mean anything you want, what do you do with the rest of this. Is it a figural satan? Maybe Satan just means negative thinking? Who knows what it means?? And we've just gotten started. Because verse 3 just gets even

more confusing! . . . or it just means what it says.

Vs. 3 and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

Now the Post Trib folks have gotten themselves into a mire I think. They say this has already come to pass.

Satan is bound. Now! He's not confusing Barack Obama, he's bound. Already. Satan hasn't entered into Vladimir Putin's mind and convinced him that the best time to seize his only warm water port in the Ukraine is probably right now, since we've got a weak president who will spout off a bit, but do nothing.

Satan hasn't confused the people of this country, and this whole boy marry boy, girl marry girl thing, that's in the news *DAILY*, it didn't come from Satan, because he's bound up in the pit.

Just saying! It seems like the cost of sticking with your 1730's home boys is really high to me. The interpretive gymnastics to get satan already bound???. Yikes.

And to me at least, it just seems like we're not getting better and better and closing in on any golden ages at all.

OK, I can only beat this drum so much I suppose before your eyes glaze over.

Here's what I think it means.

At the time of the glorious return and victory of Jesus, on earth, at Armageddon, an angel, a really strong angel, comes down out of heaven, and he has a chain, a really big chain, and he has the keys to the bottomless pit, and he captures Satan, the serpent of old, the Devil, and he takes him and throws him into the abyssos, the bottomless pit, and he binds him there for

1,000 years.

He seals up the abyss so Satan can't get out. And from that time at the end of the 7 year tribulation period, and forward for 1000 years, the earth will no longer be troubled, deceived, influenced, ruled, or in any other way disturbed by Satan.

so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed

Here we go again. The thousand years, whatever they are, have a literal beginning and a literal end. Why would you make it figural when all the terms around it are very literal in their meaning? It starts. It ends. Period.

Deceive the nations. Who are the nations?

One of the arguments against a literal interpretation is this. At the end of Revelation 19, Jesus kills everybody. So who is this? Where do these *nations* come from?

Let me give you some possible answers. Jesus judges everyone who takes the mark of the beast. What about their kids. Innocent? Other family members who didn't buy in and somehow survived? Jews all over the world who are elect and go into the kingdom alive. Whoever else God sovereignly chooses to go into the Kingdom whole.

He's the judge, not me. His problem, not mine. But think about this. Even after the flood, which limited the restart to eight people, by 2 generations, the nations were on their merry way again. And in the kingdom, if you die at 100 years, you're a baby. Reproduction from living folk who make it through the tribulation will be amazing. No predators. No sickness. No natural causes of death. Live 900+ years like Methusaleh. Make babies the whole time. And they make babies, and they make babies.

Replacement rates in the western world, with abortion and modern birth

control is down to something like 1.54 for every 2. In the mellenium, with Jesus ruling with a rod of iron, and men marrying women, and no divorce possible, and no birth control, and everything I mentioned above, families will be enormous. Functional! Happy.

parts of vs3 and 4 of Isaiah 11 that we read at the beginning give me hope;
*And He will not judge by what His eyes see,
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;*

*4But with righteousness He will judge the poor,
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;*

Certainly the ones who embraced Beast worship and 666 will be gone, but I think many will be spared. It's up to sovereign God.

In any case, you get the picture. So I don't think 'the Nations' is an interpretive problem. I think that argument from the post mil and a-mil guys is baloney.

after these things he must be released for a short time

Bummer! Why? Just when we're enjoying sitting under our fig tree in bliss! Why are you going to let him out??

Here's why. Even though Satan is bound and even though Jesus rules with a Rod of Iron, something about mankind is still broke. Little babies are still born with something theologians call Total Depravity. After a thousand years, the world is going to be full of them. Just chomping at the bit to be evil. They're restrained by the rule of Jesus, but they're totally there, depraved, defiant, and God's going to use Satan to gather them up.

We'll pick that up again in Vs. 7. But first some more about this 1000 year reign of Jesus.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, like it is in heaven. 1000 years of God's will carried out on earth. Think about if 7 is the number of

perfection, 6,000 years of man's day under Satan's rule and authority, contrasted to 1,000 years of perfection under God's rule and authority with Jesus on the throne.

Many of the old testament prophets picture this kingdom as a place similar to anti-deluvian times, like the garden of Eden. The lion will lie down with the lambs, and a little child will play with asps. I always get tickled thinking about Patricia MacArthur, John's wife saying 'not my child'. Might be the kingdom but here kids weren't going to be playing with asps.

We get these pictures of paradise. Paradise re-gained.

4Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them.

Here is where the literalist folks wish God was a little more literal!

Thrones equals authority. That's easy enough. But who is "they" and who is "them" please? Who's this talking about?

The answer is all over the Bible, we just have to look a bit. First is Old Testament saints. Daniel 7:18 *But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.* then in 21,22 *"I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them 22until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.* So there we have tribulation saints, right, they're fighting anti-christ, and then in 27' *Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'*

Saints of every age will rule and reign together with Christ on thrones.

When the disciples asked Jesus what about us, we've left everything to follow you, in Matt. 19:28 He says: *"Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things,*

when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And likewise, Paul in his argument with the Corinthians about suing each other says; *Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?*

So we've got old testament saints, apostolic era saints, non-jewish well into the christian era saints, and tribulation saints, all ruling together with Christ in the kingdom.

4Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Very clear that this is talking about tribulation saints as well as other saints in previous dispensations.

The group that got their heads severed in the tribulation has extra honor. They are heroes. Although every one of them will say, it wasn't me, it was Him that got me through it. He gets all the honor.

The saints will rule the nations. Nations that still have depraved flesh. We will rule the nations with the Authority of Jesus behind us, and the rod of iron as swift punishment for anyone who wants to do evil.

5The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.

This verse is now the 4th mention of what has to be a literal thousand years. It has a beginning and an end.

Who's the rest of the dead. Non saints. Lost. Where it says this is the first resurrection, it hasn't left the subject of verse 4. The first resurrection is the saints.

Now about here, we could confuse ourselves and try to cubbyhole how all this is going to play out. I remember being taught that the old testament saints wouldn't be resurrected until after the 1000 years.

That's completely illogical, because the kingdom was promised to the Jews. Over and over and over in the old testament, the Jewish people are promised this time of blessing. Even though they had sinned and rejected their God, He still promises them this blessing. Irreversible.

So I can just see your heads spinning and trying to figure out how this is going to work. When is this resurrection? Is it the rapture? It doesn't seem possible to get everyone there in one resurrection.

All I can tell you is this. If you try to get all this to happen as neatly as a Clarence Larkin chart, you can get wrapped around the axle. I don't really know. Perhaps the "first resurrection" is in phases. He comes for the church, His bride, then after the second coming the OT saints, I really don't know. I just know that whatever and however the first resurrection works, all of the saints of all the ages that were promised the Kingdom will somehow be there. OT, NT, and Trib.

Maybe Paul helps us in 1Cor. 15 down around vs 23 *But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,*

Christ is the first fruits of this 1st resurrection. Then us. Then tribulation saints. Maybe the OT saints at the end of the 7 year trib?? Matt. 24:30 "*And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. 31 "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER*

TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

At least Paul helps us to visualize different possible phases of one resurrection.

I can't figure it out, but I know someone who can!

6Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

I think that's what I just said.

We began this session about the kingdom with words from the prophet Isaiah. We need to remember; the kingdom is promised to Israel. We are only wild branches that have been grafted in. Not to mix my metaphor's but we are heirs, by adoption.

I'll end similarly, with Hosea, chapter 3;

1Then the LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes." 2So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley. 3Then I said to her, "You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you." 4For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols. 5Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.

