

## The Question before Us: When Shall Christ Come?

### Christ's Return in Relation to the "Millennium" (Revelation 20:1-10)

#### A. Two Broad Positions on the Timing of Christ's Return

1. Christ will return BEFORE the "millennium."
2. Christ will return AFTER the "millennium."

#### B. Two Specific Schools of Thought within Each of These Positions

- |   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| Before the "millennium"                 | After the "millennium" |
| 1. Historic (classic) pre-millennialism | 1. Post-millennialism  |
| 2. Dispensational pre-millennialism     | 2. A-millennialism     |

#### Our Initial Propositions Derived from NT data other than Rev. 20:1-10:

1. The Bible speaks of a singular return of Jesus Christ.
2. The Bible speaks of this singular return of Jesus Christ including the resurrection of both the just and the unjust.
3. The Bible speaks of this singular return of Jesus Christ ushering in the Day of Judgment in which all shall be judged.
4. The Bible speaks of this singular return of Christ ushering in the new heavens and the new earth.
5. The Bible Speaks of this singular return of Christ ushering in the eternal state.
6. Christ's return is the culminating event of history in which He and His cause shall be vindicated once and for all, and all opposition to His Kingdom shall be overthrown once and for all.

#### Significant Problems with the Pre-Millennial Scheme in light of the above:

*The above propositions lead us to seriously question any position that would posit an additional stage of "history" after Christ's glorious return, especially a stage of history in which:*

1. Sin still exists.
2. Death still exists.
3. The curse of Genesis 3 on the creation is still operative.
4. Rebellion against Christ is still present in the hearts of some.
5. The offer of salvation is still extended to sinners.
6. Satan is still in a position to lead a world-wide rebellion against Christ at the close of this stage of history.

*According to the pre-millennialist these 6 things characterize the millennium while at the same time:*

1. The glorified Christ reigns on the earth that is still subject to the curse of Genesis 3.
2. The saints who lived and died prior to the millennium have been resurrected, received their glorified bodies, and reign with Christ on earth.
3. Non-glorified sinful mortals live, propagate, and personally receive or reject the present and glorified Christ.

*This does not comport with all other biblical evidence.*

#### Understanding Revelation 20:1-10 in light of all other biblical data:

**Conclusion #1:** Revelation 20:1-10 does NOT chronologically follow Revelation 19. Why? Because Revelation 20:7-10 describes the SAME EVENT as 6:12-17; 11:15-19; 14:14-20; 16:14-21; 17:14; and particularly 19:17-21. Hence, "the end" is arrived at SEVEN distinct times in Revelation and all of these are parallel with one another. This is clearly seen as the close of this section (20:7-10) brings us:

- (1) to the preparation for the Last Battle - a "replay" of the (& Bowl (cf. 16:12-16; 17:14)
- (2) to the (implied) Return of Christ ("fire falls from God out of heaven" - see 2 Thess. 1:6-10)
- (3) to the Last Battle brought to a close-a "replay" of the 7\* Bowl (cf. 16:17-21; 19:17-21)
- (4) past the Threshold of the Last Day - Satan cast into Hell forever (20:10)

**Conclusion #2:** When then is Christ's return in relationship to the 1,000 years? The return of Christ to destroy all His enemies (and especially Satan) is as 20:7 states, AFTER "the thousand years have expired."

**Conclusion #3:** What of the binding of Satan in 20.1 -3? The binding of Satan is a SPECIFIC BINDING that prevents him from deceiving the nations in the same manner that he did in the Old Testament era. *He is still free to harass, to persecute, and to tempt (i.e. 1 Peter 5:8 & Eph. 6:11-16), but not to hold sway over the nations in such a way as to prevent the gospel of Christ from penetrating and prevailing. He is filled with great wrath but impotent to prevent the spread of the gospel.*

**Conclusion #4:** When did this binding take place? This binding took place when Christ finished His work on Calvary, rose from the dead, and ascended on high (see Matt. 12:22-29 & John 12:27-33 above).

**Conclusion #5:** What of the 1,000 years? The 1,000 years is to be understood symbolically. Ten is the number of fullness. 10 x 10 x 10 = The complete fullness of God's purpose and timetable. (See for example Deuteronomy 7:9, Psalm 50:10-11, Psalm 84:10, Psalm 90:4, 2 Peter 3:8.)

**Conclusion #6:** What then does the 1,000 years symbolize in regard to Satan's binding? Satan will be bound for a long time and be prevented from holding the nations under the sway of darkness and deception. This long time is equivalent to the time of the gospel going forth to the ends of the earth (Matthew 24:14). *Hence the 1,000 years is symbolic of the entire New Testament era which will be long and full.* At the end of the 1,000 years (the end of the NT era) Satan will be released for a "little season" to once again hold sway over the nations with his deception. This will be right before the end of time. This "little season" is intentionally put in contrast to the 1,000 years. In contrast to the long and full timeframe of the gospel age, the "little season" will be pathetically small and limited. This final assault will be brought to defeat as Christ returns in glory to cast Satan into hell forevermore.

**Conclusion #7:** What of the living and reigning of the saints for 1,000 years in 20.4-6? The living and reigning of the saints with Christ for 1,000 years speaks of their new resurrected life in Christ, whether here on earth as regenerate, or in heaven (after physical death) in the intermediate state, throughout the entire New Testament era. Those who are regenerate and/or enjoy the intermediate state in glory are those who have been partakers of the "first resurrection." Only these will be exempt from the "second death," and will have their bodies raised in glory at the "second resurrection." All others remain dead in their sins and trespasses and at physical death pass into a state of provisional "death." Their souls will suffer in this intermediate state in anticipation of their bodies being resurrected on the last day. At the general resurrection they in body and soul will be subject unto the "second death," eternal hell.

**Final Conclusion:** While the historic (non-dispensational) pre-millennial position on the return of Christ has certain strengths to it, a position that sees Christ return occurring after the "1,000 years" of Revelation 20 aligns much better with the whole of the Bible's teaching and with the inherent structure of the book of Revelation.

# Events Surrounding the Last Day

## **I. The great tribulation (Satan's little season, the man of sin)**

## **II. Christ's return/descent from heaven to the earth**

- > With all the holy angels
- > With the souls of the departed saints following
- > Accompanied by great cosmic disturbances and upheaval
- > The great shout & the last trumpet

## **III. The general resurrection of the dead - both the just and unjust**

- > The bodies of the righteous dead are raised/glorified and reunited with their souls as they descend with Christ.
  - > The bodies/souls of the righteous living are translated/glorified and "caught up" to be with the Lord in the air as He descends.
  - > The bodies of the unjust dead are raised unto dishonor and reunited with their souls to stand on earth and behold Christ descending.
  - > The bodies/souls of the unjust living are transformed unto dishonor as they stand on earth and behold Christ descending.

## **IV. The general judgment**

### > **The righteous judged**

Placed at Christ's right hand

Their lives publicly examined according to every thought, word, and deed

A declaration of their dependence upon Christ alone for their salvation

A diary of their life manifested

A disclosure of their sins (revealed as paid for and forgiven)

A delight in their good deeds done out of a heart purified by faith

Their good deeds done in Christ rewarded

Rewarded in terms of acceptance and commendation

Rewarded in terms of fitting them for their eternal capacity to glorify & enjoy God

Rewarded in terms of fixing their responsibilities for eternity

Responsibility #1 - Assist in the judging of the unrighteous

### > **The unrighteous judged**

Placed at Christ's left hand

Their lives publicly examined according to every thought, word, and deed

A declaration of their lack of dependence upon Christ

A diary of their life manifested

A disclosure of their sins

Their sinful deeds recompensed according to the "light" which they had

Pagans judged according to the light of nature/creation

OT unbelievers judged according to the light of nature and revelation of law

NT unbelievers judged according to the light of nature, the revelation of law, and the revelation of the gospel

Their persons sentenced to everlasting miseries in hell (different degrees of punishment)

The fallen angels judged and sentenced to everlasting miseries in hell

## **V. The destruction/purification of the heavens and earth**

## **VI. The inauguration of the new heavens and new earth**

- > The offering up of Christ's finished mediatorial work to the Father
- > The entrance of the righteous into everlasting glory to exercise given responsibilities