GOSPEL of Grace FELLOWSHIP

Revelation 20:1-6

The Future Millennial Kingdom of God

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Rev. 20:1-3a

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

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Rev. 20:3b-4a

after these things he must be released for a short time.

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,

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Rev. 20:4b-5

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

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Rev. 20:6

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.

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Millennium

The word "millennium" means "one thousand years," and – in biblical & theological contexts – it refers to the thousand-year period spoken of in Rev. 20.

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Timing of the Millennium

Although there are many issues in eschatology, the question of the millennium is one of the most significant & hotly debated.

Perhaps no other passage in Scripture speaks as directly to the issue of the relative timing of the millennium as Revelation 20.

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Two Questions

When will the Millennial Kingdom come?

What will the Millennial Kingdom be like?

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Kingdom of God

Universal Kingdom of God
Ps. 93:1-2; 103:19

Theocratic (Mediatorial) Kingdom of God
Dan. 2:35, 44-45

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Ruler of *This* World?

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Cor. 4:4)

We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. (1 John 5:19)

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Already, Not Yet

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved… (Eph. 2:4-5)

Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more we shall be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. (Rom. 5:9-10)

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Already, Not Yet

And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Rom. 8:30)

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Two Domains

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son. (Col. 1:13)

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Phil. 3:20)

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Timing of the Millennium?

Three primary theological positions have arisen to answer this question –

Premillennialism

Postmillennialism

Amillennialism

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Premillennialism

Premillennialism is the view that Christ will return *before* the millennium.

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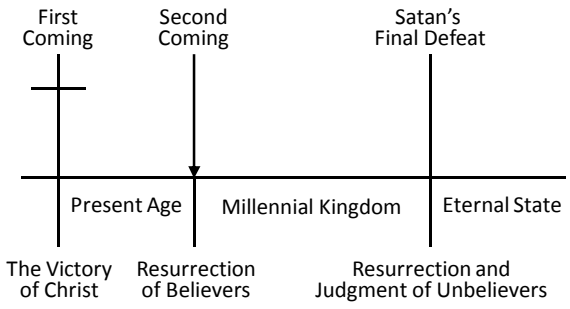
Premillennialism



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Premillennialism

According to premillennialism:

A. The present age will climax with a period of Great Tribulation and the Second Coming of Christ.

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Premillennialism

B. When Christ returns, he will establish an earthly kingdom and rule over it for a thousand-year period.

1. At the time of Christ's return, believers will be resurrected to reign with him, and Satan will be bound in the abyss where he will remain for the thousand years.

2. During the millennium, Christ will reign in righteousness & there will be peace & justice throughout the earth.

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Premillennialism

C. At the end of the thousand years, Satan will be released from the abyss & will gather the remaining unbelievers for battle against Christ, but they will be decisively defeated.

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Premillennialism

D. All unbelievers will then be raised from the dead, and God will judge them according to their deeds.

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Premillennialism

E. After this final judgment, both believers & unbelievers will enter the eternal state.

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Postmillennialism

Postmillennialism is the view that Christ will return *after* the millennium.

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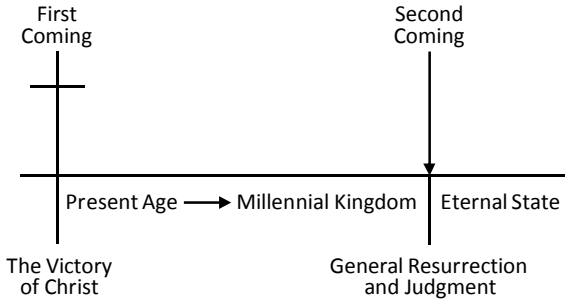
Postmillennialism



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Postmillennialism

According to postmillennialism:

A. Through the proclamation of the gospel in the present age, an unprecedented number of people in the world – in fact, a vast majority – will turn to Christ & be saved.

1. This time of mass spiritual expansion of God's kingdom is not seen as the entire period of time between the 1st & 2nd comings of Christ.

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Postmillennialism

2. Instead, it is believed that the present age gradually merges into the millennium in such a way that it is difficult, if not impossible, to discern the exact starting point of the millennium.

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Postmillennialism

B. The millennium will be characterized by spiritual prosperity, universal peace & righteousness, and economic well-being. Although Christ is not physically present on earth during this millennial period, he is believed to be the primary agent & cause of the church's expansion & influence.

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Postmillennialism

C. At the end of the millennium, there will be a brief period of apostasy & conflict between the church & the forces of evil. This will be followed by the return of Christ and the resurrection & judgment of all mankind, who will then enter the eternal state.

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Amillennialism

Amillennialism is the view that there will be *no* future millennium in the sense that the pre- or postmillennialists teach (the prefix "a" means "not"). In other words, the present age *is* the millennial kingdom.

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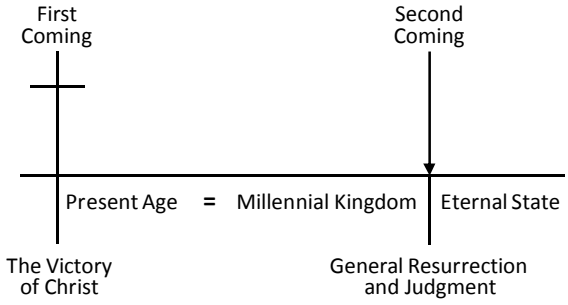
Amillennialism



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Amillennialism

According to amillennialism:

A. The millennial kingdom – which was inaugurated by Christ's victory at the cross – began at the first coming of Christ & will continue until the time of his Second Coming.

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Amillennialism

B. The millennial kingdom is – and will continue to be – characterized by a mixture of good & evil.

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Amillennialism

C. The conflict between good & evil will intensify toward the end of the present age, and the increasing persecution will culminate in the appearance of the antichrist [except for preterists] and the Second Coming of Christ.

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Amillennialism

D. When Christ returns, there will be a general resurrection & judgment of both believers & unbelievers, after which both will be ushered into the eternal state.

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Rev. 20:1-6

The various interpretations of Rev. 20:1-6 raise four crucial questions:

Is the binding of Satan present or future?

Is the "first resurrection" spiritual or physical?

Is the duration of the thousand years symbolic or literal?

Is the locale of the millennial reign heaven or earth?

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Timing of the Binding of Satan

According to amillennialists & many postmillennialists, the binding of Satan is a present reality because he was bound by Christ during his first-century ministry on earth. In other words, Satan is currently bound. Those who affirm this point out that the devil is said to have been bound in *one* respect & one respect *only*: *"so that he could not deceive the nations any longer"* (v. 3b).

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Timing of the Binding of Satan

This is said to mean that Satan is unable to prevent the spread of the gospel to the nations of the world. In other words, because Satan is bound, he is unable to destroy the church as a missionary institution & therefore unable to prevent the extension of the church throughout the world.

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Timing of the Binding of Satan

According to premillennialists, the binding of Satan – and the thousand-year period during which Satan is bound – is yet future & will follow the Second Coming of Christ. During this time, Satan's activities & influence on earth will be *completely* eliminated.

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Timing of the Binding of Satan

In examining the evidence for the two views, five compelling reasons emerge for rejecting the binding of Satan as a present reality & for affirming that this confinement of the devil has yet to occur:

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Timing of the Binding of Satan

1) <u>The present-day activity of Satan</u>
The binding of Satan in Rev. 20 indicates that the devil will be completely inactive on the earth during the thousand-year period, but the testimony of the NT indicates that Satan is quite active on the earth in the present age. When Satan is bound, his influence won't just be *limited*, but rather it will be *eliminated*.

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Timing of the Binding of Satan

2) <u>The present day deception by Satan</u>
The NT teaches that Satan is presently active (and will continue to be active) in the work of deception from which the binding of Satan in Rev. 20 will keep him. Satan's present-day work of deception proves that he is not currently bound & incarcerated as described in Rev. 20:1-3.

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Timing of the Binding of Satan

3) <u>The stated purpose of the binding</u>
Those who believe that Satan is presently bound generally teach that the purpose (and therefore the result) of Satan's binding is that he is now unable to prevent the spread of the gospel to the nations of the world.

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Timing of the Binding of Satan

The difficulty with this view is that the purpose clause in Rev. 20:3 does not say that the binding of Satan keeps him from preventing the missionary activity of the church to the nations. In fact, this clause concerns itself not at all with the freedom of believers to *proclaim* the truth, but rather with the ability of unbelievers to *perceive* the truth.

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Timing of the Binding of Satan

4) The non-progressive nature of the binding Amillennialists & postmillennialists usually assert that the binding of Satan has a progressive nature to it, but this is not supported by Rev. 20:1-3.

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Timing of the Binding of Satan

The problem is that the picture painted in Rev. 20 is not one of Satan being bound over a period of time (either through a process or as a series of individual bindings), but rather one of him being bound at a specific point in time at the beginning of the thousand years.

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Timing of the Binding of Satan

5) The supposed parallels of the binding Those who understand the binding of Satan as present reality almost always link Rev. 20:1-3 with various texts in the NT in order to connect the binding to the ministry of Christ in the first century. An examination of these texts, however, demonstrates that these supposed parallels do not support the position that Satan is currently bound.

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Timing of the Binding of Satan

Conclusion

Hundreds of years before the first coming of Christ, Satan was found to be "*roaming about on the earth and walking around on it*" (Job 1:7), and today – hundreds of years *after* the first coming – Satan still "*prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour*" (1 Peter 5:8).

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Timing of the Binding of Satan

Satan is not currently bound & imprisoned in the abyss, and the millennium of Rev. 20 has not yet begun.

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