

Amillennialism & Revelation 20

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Revelation 20:1-6

1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

It is common for amillennialists to claim that Revelation 20 is the only passage in the Bible to speak of the “millennium.” It is the only passage that mentions a specific length of time – a thousand years. However, the essence of premillennialism is the coming Kingdom of God on the restored earth after the second coming of Christ. And this is found in a multitude of passages, from Genesis to Revelation.¹ How many years transpire between the first and second resurrection is only incidental to premillennialism. Yet, many amillennialists misrepresent premillennialism by implying that Revelation 20 is the only passage of Scripture that supports the concept of Christ’s Kingdom on earth after the second coming. It is their way of constructing a “straw man” argument.

Amillennial Hermeneutics

In addressing Revelation 20, amillennialists typically begin by justifying the allegorical understanding of the “thousand years.” However, showing that the Bible in general, or Revelation in particular, uses metaphors, figures of speech, or allegories, in no way justifies taking the “thousand years” in this passage in a non-literal way. Many things in

¹ Acts 3:19-21 “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.”

Revelation are clearly literal. For such an argument to carry any weight, it must be shown why the “thousand years” should not be understood literally.

The non-literal interpretation of the “thousand years” is not driven by sound exegesis of the text, or proven rules of hermeneutics, but by necessity. Obviously, if the “thousand years” is really a thousand years, then amillennialism cannot be true, because almost two thousand years have transpired since the crucifixion of Jesus – the point where amillennialists claim the “thousand years” began. It should also be noted that one could potentially get rid of any difficulty for any theological point by appealing to allegorical interpretation. And this is frequently done by some of the most liberal theologians in order to deny many truths of Scripture. Allegorical interpretation among Christians was pioneered by the early heretical Gnostics.² The employment of allegorical interpretation, when it is not obviously allegory, is not very convincing, and is an abuse of Scripture.

All interpreters recognize that Revelation abounds in allegories and metaphors. The distinction between premillennialists and amillennialists, regarding hermeneutics, is that premillennialists acknowledge metaphors that are obvious (as we do in everyday speech), but take literally what makes sense literally. In other words, *“If the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense.”* But, when the plain sense leads to absurdities, then one must look at metaphors or other non-literal language. This rule is not absurd, as amillennialists often portray it. Nor is it to be ignored in apocalyptic literature, as though the normal rules of grammar and syntax no longer apply to this genre. Apocalyptic literature is no different than any other kind of literature, except that it abounds in allegories and metaphors. There is no difference between Gabriel appearing to Mary (which we take literally) and an angel appearing to John or Daniel. There are not different rules of grammar or exegesis for this kind of literature. And it is wrong to abandon the plain sense of the text to escape some difficulty for one’s theology. That is subjective, and makes the interpreter the authority over the text. The above rule, that of taking the text at face value unless there is a good reason within the context to do otherwise, is objective and forces the interpreter to submit to the text.

We need to distinguish between an “allegory” and the use of “metaphors.” Both are non-literal ways of expressing things. However, in an “allegory,” the entire story is fabricated, not representative of reality, in order to illustrate some spiritual truth. Parables are excellent examples of “allegories.” In Jesus’ parables, the characters were fictitious and none of the events actually took place. However, the story was meant to

² The use of allegorical interpretation, even though a literal interpretation makes sense, was the primary tool of the early Gnostics to deny the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. They also used many of the same arguments used by amillennialists, including allegorizing the “resurrection.”

illustrate something real. Allegories are illustrations. Take for example the parable of the “Wheat and Tares” in Matthew 13. There is not a real farmer. There is not real wheat. There is no real field. However, Jesus later in the same chapter explained His allegory. The “field” represents the “world.” The “wheat” represents “the sons of the Kingdom.” The “tares” represent “the sons of the Wicked One.” And “the reapers” represent “the angels.” Consequently, “just as” reapers bind up the tares to burn them, and gather the wheat into the barn, “so also” will the angels separate the wicked from the just at the end of this age. As you can see, in an allegory, everything in the fictitious story has a counterpart in reality.

However, metaphors are different. Metaphors are a single word or phrase intended in a non-literal way, introduced into an otherwise literal statement. For example, consider this passage.

Ephesians 2:1-3

*1 And you He **made alive**, who were **dead** in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,*

This is not an allegory. The players are real people, the Ephesians. Almost everything in this statement is meant literally. The “metaphors” are the non-literal words, “made alive” and “dead.” The Ephesians were not literally “dead,” nor were they literally “raised” from the dead. It is very clear in the context that Paul used “dead” as a metaphor for a fallen spiritual state. Physical “death” implies certain things that Paul wished to convey about their former spiritual condition in a colorful way. Same with “made alive.” The purpose of a metaphor is to add color to a statement, by bringing in illustrations from other tangible things familiar to the reader for comparison. Yet, as with all metaphors, taking them literally always leads to absurdity. Here, it would mean that the Ephesians were really “dead” and “resurrected” at the time of their salvation. It is apparent, then, that metaphors are governed by certain rules, and are easily recognized by their absurdity if taken literally.

When we look at Revelation 20:1-6, it is immediately apparent that this is not an allegory – a parable meant to illustrate some other reality. Rather, it is a prediction about the fate of a real being – Satan, and the future reign of real people – Christians. Yes, it contains some metaphors. The “keys” and “chain” are clearly metaphors. The key is meant to indicate authority over Satan. The chain is meant to indicate total restriction from his former activities. These things are obvious. However, the amillennialists’ appealing to metaphors (key, chain) to justify the non-literal understanding of the “thousand years,” is a fallacy. How can the use of an obvious

metaphor imply that other things that could easily be literal must also be metaphors? This is not a logical argument. One could make a case, using this logic, that when John the Baptist said, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” that neither “sin” nor “world” was meant literally, because “Lamb” is a metaphor. If amillennialists object to this interpretation, why use precisely the same faulty method to support their case in Revelation 20? There is no difference. If it is an invalid hermeneutic in John 1:29, it is an invalid hermeneutic in Revelation 20. Double standards are condemned in Scripture, and should not be employed by truth seeking Christians.

The Binding of Satan

One of the biggest problems for the Amillennial view of Revelation 20 is the binding of Satan so that he may no longer deceive the nations. The appeal is often made to the following Scripture, claiming that Satan was bound by Jesus at His first coming.

Matthew 12:28-30

*28 But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, **unless he first binds the strong man?** And then he will plunder his house.*

Amillennialists claim that the “strong man” in Jesus’ parable is Satan. And the plundering of his house is accomplished through the spread of the Gospel throughout the world in this age.

However, that interpretation is proven wrong by the context. Jesus was speaking about His casting out a demon from an individual. It was the demon tormenting this man that was “bound” by Jesus. And the “house” is the man who was possessed by the demon. This is made very clear from the parallel passage.

Luke 11:20-23

*20 But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. 21 When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. 22 But **when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him,** he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils.*

Jesus’ point had absolutely NOTHING to do with allegedly “binding” Satan for this present age, as amillennialists claim. His point was that He was more powerful than the demon He had just cast out. The passage continues as follows:

*24 **“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man,** he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ 25 And*

when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. 26 Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

If the previous verses referred to Satan being bound by Jesus at His first coming, and the "house" is the kingdom of the world that is "plundered" by the Gospel, what would these next verses mean? Obviously, they would mean that ultimately Jesus will fail because Satan will be back, stronger than ever, (with seven more "Satans"), and completely undo what Jesus has done in this age through the Gospel. That is obviously absurd. This passage in no way indicates that Satan has been "bound" in this age.

Satan is not only "bound" in Rev. 20, but he is **sealed up in the abyss**. The "abyss" is a real location. If one argues otherwise, we are left wondering if "hell" is a real place, or the "Lake of Fire." There is no reason to take the "abyss" in a non-literal sense. The amillennial view is not compatible with what the New Testament says about Satan's location and activities NOW.

1 Peter 5:8-9

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Revelation 20 has Satan sealed up in the abyss. How then can he roam about freely? Even IF the abyss is a metaphor, it would be a metaphor for some sort of **prison**. A prison leaves absolutely NO freedom of movement or travel.

Deceive the Nations No More

Satan's imprisonment keeps him from "deceiving the nations" during the thousand years. If the millennium is now, why is Satan now "deceiving the nations?" Revelation 20 said that he was bound, and sealed up in the abyss so that "*he may deceive the nations [εθνος - Gentiles] no more.*"

2 Cor 4:2-5

3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded [deceived], who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Eph 2:1-3

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,

Eph 6:11-13

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against **the wiles [deception] of the devil.** 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against **the rulers of the darkness of this age,** against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

1 John 5:19

19 We know that we are of God, and **the whole world lies under the sway [deception] of the wicked one.**

Rev 12:9

9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, **who deceives the whole world;** he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

The spread of the Gospel cannot be the “restraint” here, because it is slow, progressive, and limited. Satan has successfully hindered the power of the Gospel according to 2 Cor. 4:2-5. Satan’s binding and imprisonment is at a specific time – the beginning of the thousand years. Satan is not partially thwarted from deceiving the nations in Revelation 20, but completely, and instantly! It says he deceives the nations “NO MORE,” not “a little less than before.” The nations are deceived, and are being deceived, right now. This fact is proven by the last verse above. Note the present tense of the word “deceives.” John wrote this in AD96, more than six decades after the crucifixion of Christ. Yet, Satan was still deceiving the whole world. The Greek text has “πλανων,” a present participle. This is more accurately rendered, “the ancient serpent, who is called ‘the Devil’, and ‘Satan’, the one deceiving the whole world.” The time of the present tense participle here is independent – from the writer’s perspective in AD96 – during the time amillennialists claim that Satan had been “bound.” When John wrote Revelation 20, Satan was at that time deceiving the whole world. How then could he be bound with a chain, sealed up in the abyss, so that “he may deceive the nations no more?” Impossible! In fact, the binding of Satan in Revelation 20:1-3 is in response to his previous (present) activity of “deceiving the whole world” described in Revelation 12:9.

Jesus Came to “Destroy the Works of the Devil”

1 John 3:8

8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

This verse is used by amillennialists to show that Jesus has ALREADY destroyed the works of the devil through the spread of the Gospel. It is claimed that Revelation 20 describes this. However, notice that this verse only explains the PURPOSE for Christ's coming into the world, not the result. Whether this purpose is accomplished through a process over a long time, or completely accomplished when Jesus was here on earth, cannot be ascertained from this text. Jesus' work regarding Satan is NOT finished until Satan lands in the Lake of Fire. Note the almost identical language in the following verse.

Heb 2:14-15

*14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, **that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,** 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

This verse links the crucifixion to Jesus' destroying Satan himself. However, Satan has not been "destroyed" yet! That will not be accomplished until Revelation 20:10, when he is thrown into the Lake of Fire. Neither has "death" been destroyed yet.³ The defeat of Satan is something that occurs in stages. Sure, the cross provides the basis for redemption, which will lead ultimately to the total defeat of Satan's plan. And that defeat is partially realized as the Gospel spreads, and people are set free from his clutches. But, it is not "the nations" that are freed from deception by the Gospel, but only those individuals who have trusted Christ. "The nations" are thoroughly deceived right now, even after the Gospel has been going out for two thousand years. In fact, the deception is increasing as we approach the end of the age, not decreasing.⁴

Satan's Judgment and Condemnation

John 12:31-32

*31 Now is the judgment of this world; **now the ruler of this world will be cast out.**
32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself."*

John 16:11

*11 Of judgment, because **the prince of this world is judged.***

It is true that Satan has been "judged" and "condemned." But his sentence has not yet been carried out. There is much more that must happen before one can say that Satan

³ 1 Cor. 15:25-26

⁴ 2 Tim. 3:12-13

has been completely put down or “cast out.” Much is made of the word “now” in John 12:31. But, a quick look at the grammar reveals something far different than what amillennialists claim. Note the two things connected with the word, “now.” The first is: “*Now is the judgment of this world.*” The word “is” is a present tense verb, and connects the adverb “now” to the present “*judgment of this world.*” However, the second statement, “*now the ruler of this world will be cast out,*” has a future tense verb, “will be cast out” (εκβληθησεται εξω). The use of the future tense verb with the adverb “now” implies that the action to be carried out in the future has now been made certain or possible, not that it is happening now. To indicate that it is happening now, one would use the present tense verb, “now the ruler of this world IS cast out.” Here is another example of the adverb “now” modifying a future tense verb.

Luke 5:10

10 ... And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men."

The adverb, “now,” modifying a future tense verb, literally means, “after this.” It points to the beginning of a period of time during which the action of the verb will occur. It does not mean the action of the verb occurs “now.” The implication is that the change that is occurring “now” will result in some other action in the future. In John 12:31, Jesus meant that His present work “now” will make possible Satan’s being cast out in the future. In the same way Luke 5:10 means that Jesus’ calling Simon to be His disciple “now” will lead to Simon’s becoming a “fisher of men” in the future. One could not say that Simon became a “fisher of men” the very instant Jesus called him to be his disciple. His “fisher of men” activity began after he became an “apostle,” three and a half years later on the Day of Pentecost. Yet, Jesus’ calling him to be His disciple “now” made this future result possible. This is precisely what Jesus meant in John 12:31. Jesus’ present work on earth at His first coming “now” made a future result possible, Satan’s being “cast out.”

The First Resurrection

The usual interpretation of the “first resurrection” by amillennialists is that it refers to salvation made possible by Christ’s crucifixion. This is justified by an appeal to Scriptures that use physical death and resurrection as metaphors for salvation, (Eph. 2:1-3). But, such a view becomes impossible upon further examination. Amillennialists are forced to allegorize the “first resurrection” but take the resurrection of the “rest of the dead” literally. According to Revelation 20:4-5, the “first resurrection” is the means by which the beheaded ones “lived” (εζησαν). This is the aorist active indicative form of the word “live.” Precisely the same word is found in chapter 2, which clearly demonstrates its usage.

Rev 2:8-9

8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life (εζησαν):

Clearly, this does not mean Jesus was "dead in sin" and then was "saved." There is no question that "εζησαν" refers to the resurrection of the body. The NIV correctly renders Revelation 20:4 the same way. "They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years." This coming to life is what the next verse calls "the first resurrection."

Furthermore, note the language in verse 5 (highlighted in red).

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

The words "the rest of the dead" refers to the remainder of those from a larger group, the same group from which those raised in the "first resurrection" have come. The larger group is called "the dead." Those in the "first resurrection" are a sub-group of "the dead." And "the rest" is another sub-group (the remainder) of the same larger group, "the dead." Both sub-groups therefore are linked to the very same term "the dead" in verse 5. The meaning of "the dead" must be the same for both sub-groups. It cannot mean "spiritual death" for the first group and "physical death" for the second. Only one larger group (the dead), from which both sub-groups come, is mentioned. By making the "first resurrection" non-literal, amillennialists must also make their death (from which state they were resurrected) non-literal. That is, their "death" must be their lost condition prior to salvation. To "live again" means to become saved. Yet, how is their former condition described? Is it "dead in sins?" Hardly! Their death is the result of having been beheaded for their witness to Jesus, exactly the opposite of what would be required in the amillennial non-literal "resurrection." Amillennialists are forcing the term "the dead" to be both literal and a metaphor at the same time! This is simply impossible!

The language requires that the whole group (the dead) must be "dead" in the same way (either metaphorically or literally). If it is metaphor, then this passage would be saying that all those not saved during the thousand years will be saved afterwards. Yet, that is

theologically impossible, since many of “the dead” are cast into the lake of fire. One cannot make the first group “dead” spiritually and the second group “dead” physically, and both still be of the same class of “the dead.” Both groups absolutely are from the same class (the dead) because the latter group cannot be “the rest” (of the dead) unless they belong to the same class of “dead” to which the first group belongs. That they are from the same class of “the dead” is inescapable. Therefore, the “death” from which the “first resurrection” frees the first group must be physical death, not “spiritual death.”

The word “resurrection” is held in contrast to “the dead” for both groups. The cause of “death” is not stated for the second group. However, the cause of death is absolutely stated for the first group, and it is **physical death** – beheading. How then can the resurrection of these “dead” be spiritual when their death is physical? It makes no sense.

That the New Testament elsewhere uses rising from the dead as a metaphor for salvation in no way implies that this is a metaphor in Revelation 20. Actually, the New Testament **never** uses the noun “resurrection” as a metaphor for salvation. And this goes doubly strong when the definite article is used, (“**the** resurrection”), as in Revelation 20. “The resurrection” is a single event in which many are raised. It is not a million little “resurrections” as individuals come to Christ over a long period of time. The definite article absolutely demands this interpretation. “The resurrection, the first” (η αναστασις η πρωτη), is a single event that occurs at one specific time, before the thousand years.

The statement, “*the rest of the dead lived not again,*” requires also that “lived” in both groups means the same thing (either literal or a metaphor). It is the **timing** of their respective “resurrections” that is being contrasted, not the nature of their resurrections. When the words “lived” and “resurrection” are used of two groups within the same context, they cannot mean completely different things without doing violence to the text. The obvious meaning is that the former group “lived” again before the thousand years, and the latter group “lived” again after the thousand years.

How Did the Resurrected Rulers Die?

Revelation 20:4 states plainly the cause of death of those raised in the “first resurrection.” It is not that they were born in sin. They were beheaded for not worshipping the Beast and taking his mark, and for their testimony to Jesus and the Word of God. If their resurrection to reign with Christ means their salvation, why is it **after** their having been beheaded for their “witness to Jesus,” and resisting the Beast? Did they overcome the Beast, and witness to Jesus and the Word of God **before** they were saved (resurrected)? How did they “witness to Jesus” before they were believers (resurrected) if their

“resurrection” refers to their salvation? Amillennialists are in a real pickle here, by putting their faithful service to Christ before their salvation!

When Does the Beast Reign?

The amillennial view also demands that the “Beast,” his “image,” and his “mark,” were introduced when Jesus came the first time. This is required because those who “reign with Him a thousand years” are the ones who were **PREVIOUSLY beheaded** for resisting the Beast, his image, and his mark (666). If the thousand years began at the cross, the “first resurrection” beginning then, the mark of the beast must have been introduced before the cross, or at least contemporary with it. Amillennialists need to explain the “Beast,” his “mark,” and his “image.” The fact is, those reigning with Christ a thousand years are the martyrs formerly killed by the Antichrist, and resurrected afterward.

The “Beast” will reign on earth for three and a half years at the end of this age. The length of the Beast’s reign, and his mark, is 42 months (Rev. 13:5). And he will be destroyed at the second coming of Christ (2 Thess. 2:8, Rev. 19:19-21). Therefore, the Beast, his mark, and his image, will exist only during the last 42 months of this age. That means, those mentioned in Rev. 20, who reign for a thousand years, will have been “beheaded” within this 42 month period, which is still future. If their death is still future, so too is their resurrection.

Some may claim the 42 months is also non-literal, and refers to this entire age. That is, the “Beast” is not a person, and his reign is for the same period of time as the “thousand years.” Aside from the obvious absurdity of Satan being bound so as not to deceive the nations while the Beast reigns and deceives the nations at the same time, there is another problem. Why would God portray the very same period of time with widely differing symbols that are mutually exclusive, (42 months & 1000 yrs)? If a very large even number (a thousand years) means a very long indefinite period, as amillennialists claim, then an odd number of just a few months (42) would imply a very short definite period. These are mutually exclusive ideas. Therefore, the “forty-two months” cannot describe the same period as the “thousand years.” If one thing is clear from this passage, the “forty two months” during which the Beast reigns, and during which these rulers were previously “beheaded,” occurs BEFORE the “thousand years” begins. In an amillennial scheme, the Beast and his mark must be placed before the Christian era. How then were these people beheaded for their “witness to Jesus and the Word of God” before Jesus came the first time?

The consistent amillennialist is forced to eventually adopt full preterism, making Nero the Beast, and beginning the “thousand years” and “the first resurrection” with the

destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. And in doing so, he must abandon the connection of the “first resurrection” to salvation, and instead connect it to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. But, in what sense was there a “resurrection” of the first Christian martyrs in AD70? The only possible answer is to allegorize the entire second coming of Christ and “resurrection” of the dead, which is the hope of the Christian. The only logical place for the consistent amillennialist to go is the total abandonment of futurism, including the second coming of Christ. He must conclude with preterists that Jesus’ second coming occurred invisibly in AD70. We are now living in the “New Heaven and New Earth,” and all prophecies are already fulfilled. Full preterism is pure heresy.⁵ Amillennialists ought to seriously ponder where their allegorical interpretation is taking them. It had its source in heresy (Gnosticism), and it results in heresy (preterism) when applied consistently to Revelation 20.

The Future Hope for the Readers of Revelation

Verse 6 holds out the hope of reigning with Christ for a thousand years to the readers of Revelation. Below is my translation of this verse.

“Blessed and holy the one holding a share in the resurrection, the first. Over these, the second death has no power. But they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him a thousand years.”

Those who possess a “share” in the first resurrection are “blessed and holy” because of their future reward, not present reality. Note that being “priests of God and of Christ,” and “reigning with Him a thousand years,” are in the future tense. The use of the future tense here indicates that they were not yet reigning with Christ when John wrote Revelation in AD 96. **Reigning with Christ for a thousand years is the future hope of believers, not a present reality.** Had John been an amillennialist, and viewed the “first resurrection” as being salvation, and the “reign” of believers as being present, he would not have used the future tense, but the present tense. Placing the reign of the saints in the future, some six decades after the crucifixion, makes the amillennial view untenable.

Conclusion

The premillennial view of Revelation 20 is straightforward, taking the passage at face value. The amillennial view has enormous exegetical problems and inconsistencies. It relies on subjective interpretive principles. All of the arguments presented by amillennialists regarding Revelation 20 are easily overthrown upon closer examination.

⁵ Please refer to my debate with Samuel Frost on the www.answersinrevelation.org website, particularly the last submission.

Revelation 20 is not the primary basis for premillennialism, as is often claimed. Premillennialism is based on a multitude of Old Testament prophecies, taken literally, and the fact that the New Testament, including Revelation, harmonizes perfectly with these prophecies. The earth is to be restored at Jesus' return, not destroyed.⁶ The curse placed on this creation will be removed.⁷ And the saints will inherit the earth.⁸

⁶ Acts 3:19-21. Some will no doubt respond by quoting 2 Peter 3:10-11. However, in that passage Peter was citing Isaiah 65-66, where it is clear that the "burning" is a purging for restoration, not total destruction of planet earth. Known landmarks will remain after the burning (Ezek. 47:6-12, Zech. 14:16-21. see also Mal. 4:1-3). This earth will remain forever (Psalm 104:5). The "new heavens and new earth" do not refer to a different planet, but this earth after its restoration (Isa. 65:17-25, Isa. 66:10-16, 22-24). Irenaeus (AD 120-202) commented on this as follows: "*For neither is the substance nor the essence of the creation annihilated (for faithful and true is He who has established it), but "the fashion of the world passeth away;" that is, those things among which transgression has occurred, since man has grown old in them. And therefore this [present] fashion has been formed temporary, God foreknowing all things; as I have pointed out in the preceding book, and have also shown, as far as was possible, the cause of the creation of this world of temporal things. But when this [present] fashion [of things] passes away, and man has been renewed, and flourishes in an incorruptible state, so as to preclude the possibility of becoming old, [then] there shall be the new heaven and the new earth, in which the new man shall remain [continually], always holding fresh converse with God. And since (or, that) these things shall ever continue without end, Isaiah declares, "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I do make, continue in my sight, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain."* (Irenaeus, Bk. V, xxxvi)

⁷ Rom. 8:18-25

⁸ Dan. 7:13-14, 26-27