

When Is The 1,000 Year Reign Of Christ?

Introduction. One of the most highly publicized teachings today in the religious world is the 1,000 year reign of Christ. Phrases like, "It's a sign of the times," "The rapture is coming," and "The kingdom of God on earth is about to be established," are flung at people from multiple sources. Because of the excitement stimulated by Premillennial prophets, many have been led to believe the Bible must teach it. But the foundation of Premillennialism is based on many misused passages, and its basic conclusions contradict many of the clear truths of the Bible.

Revelation 19 and 20 have been the paradise of the advocates of this doctrine. Indeed it bristles with questions. When is the battle of Armageddon? What is signified by the 1,000 year reign? Why must Satan be loosed after he has once been sealed? Whatever answers we give, we have to be certain they are consistent with the theme and purpose of Revelation; i.e., a relevant message for first century Christians (Revelation 1:1-2; 22:6-10). We also have to make certain that we are not in conflict with the clear teaching of the rest of the Bible.

I. ***Remember The Curse For Adding To This Book***

A. Facts that are not mentioned in Revelation 20:1-10.

1. This is the only chapter in the Bible that mentions the 1,000 year reign of Christ. Because of the emphasis modern preachers give to this subject, one might think it is found more often in the Bible with clearer descriptions.
2. We cannot add more than is there (Revelation 22:18-19). Premillennialists make many claims to justify their doctrine that are not even mentioned in the passage.
 - a) It does not mention the second coming of Christ.
 - b) It does not mention a bodily resurrection.
 - c) It does not mention a reign of Christ on earth.
 - d) It does not mention the literal throne of David.
 - e) It does not mention Jerusalem of Palestine.
 - f) It does not mention us.
 - g) It does not mention Christ on earth.
3. On what grounds can we teach a doctrine from this passage that is not mentioned?

B. Is this to be understood figuratively or literally?

1. Revelation is unlike any other New Testament book because it is written in signs and symbols (1:1; cf. John 12:33; 18:32; 21:19). However, the Premillennialist must interpret this chapter differently if there is to be a literal 1,000 year reign with Christ.

2. The problem is in being consistent. Even the Premillennialist knows that Revelation uses symbolic language, but advocates some of the terms to be understood literally. But there are a lot of problems if the terms in Revelation 20:1-10 are literal.
 - a) Key.
 - b) Chain.
 - c) Bottomless pit.
 - d) Dragon, that old serpent.
 - e) Seal upon the devil.
 - f) Souls of the beheaded.
3. Throughout the book, wherein numbers are used symbolically, no rule of interpretation would justify making this number literal in Revelation 20. The number is a multiple of 10, which is the number meaning fulness or completeness. This reign with Christ indicates an unbroken and full period of rule. It was set in opposition to the short time of persecution (Revelation 2:10; 11:9, 11; 12:6).

II. ***Armageddon, The Battle Of That Great Day Of God Almighty***

- A. The "King of kings and Lord of lords" comes forth to battle (Revelation 19:11-16).
 1. At this point in Revelation we are prepared to witness a great struggle.
 - a) The book describes in detail the power of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (Revelation 12-13).
 - b) We are now given a striking description of the strength of the King of kings.
 2. Christ is pictured, with His name Faithful and True, riding on a white horse, and in righteousness coming to judge and make war.
 3. The devil has also gathered his army to fight at a "place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (Revelation 16:12-16).
- B. The battle of that great day (Revelation 19:17-21).
 1. Like the 1,000 year reign, "Armageddon" is mentioned in only one chapter of the Bible (Revelation 16:16). And like the 1,000 year reign, its context indicates it is to be understood figuratively.
 - a) If the battleground is a literal place, then the generals who fight for the devil are going to look like frogs (Revelation 16:13).
 - b) There must be space for one of the armies to have 200 million horsemen (Revelation 9:16).
 - c) There will also be a great river of blood up to the height of the horse's bridle, and it will be 200 miles long (Revelation 14:20).
 2. Armageddon means "hill of Megiddo" which was literally in the Valley of Jezreel where a number of famous battles were fought. It

- stood historically as a famous battleground between the forces of good and the forces of evil.
- a) At Megiddo, Barak and Deborah overthrew the kings of Canaan (Judges 5:19); Gideon defeated the Midianites (Judges 6:33); Saul was defeated by the Philistines (1 Samuel 31:8); Ahaziah died from Jehu's arrows (2 Kings 9:27); and Pharaoh-Necho killed Josiah (2 Kings 23:29-30).
 - b) In Revelation it stands symbolically for the battle ground where the army of God finally clashes with Satan's army and overcomes them.
3. Actually this place described in Revelation has no location on the maps of the earth. The battle is between righteousness and evil, and righteousness is the victor! The whole thrust of Revelation is to assure the saints of this victory and to keep them from giving in to the pressure of emperor worship (Revelation 16:15).
 4. When the persecuting Roman Empire fell and the false emperor worship ceased, the Battle of Armageddon was over. The beast and the false prophet were "taken" (Revelation 19:20-21).

III. *The 1,000 Year Reign With Christ Is Now Being Fulfilled*

- A. The binding of Satan (Revelation 20:1-10).
 1. At Armageddon the beast and the false prophet have been defeated, and now the scene turns to the victory over Satan.
 2. When Christ died and arose from the grave, He bound Satan so far as limiting his power over sin and death (Matthew 12:28-29; Ephesians 4:8; Hebrews 2:14-15).
 - a) This did not render him absolutely helpless or unable to operate. Satan continues to be very active (1 Peter 5:8-9).
 - b) Through Christ we can now resist and be delivered from the power of Satan (James 4:7).
 - c) This does not mean sin came to an end, but the bondage of sin was broken, and men now make the choice which lord they will serve (Romans 6:16-18, 23).
 3. However, this binding means that he was divinely restrained from establishing control over the nations.
 - a) The binding of Satan in Revelation 20 describes the limiting of Satan's power in yet another way. He will never abolish the church!
 - b) Revelation 20 was written at a time when the cause of Christ was about to be crushed, or so it seemed. Those who refused to worship the emperor as Lord were being persecuted, some to the point of death. Never before nor since has the church been

put under the severe test it suffered under this world rule which tried to enforce emperor worship.

- c) Instead of the cause for which they died suffering apparent defeat, the persecutors will be brought to an end.
 - (1) The "first resurrection" symbolizes the vindication of the cause of Christ in overcoming Roman persecution, and demonstrates that the kingdom will never be destroyed.
 - (2) This was similar to the "resurrection" of Israel into the church in Ezekiel's day (cf. Ezekiel 37:11-14).
- B. They lived and reigned with Christ 1,000 years.
 - 1. The thrones John saw were occupied by those who had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, which takes us back all the way to the opening of the fifth seal (Revelation 6:9-11).
 - 2. They had not worshiped the beast, his image, or received the mark of the beast. Those who take part in this period of struggle will be joyously and victoriously rewarded, and will look forward to the final judgment (Revelation 2:7-11; 20:11-15).

Conclusion. The 1,000 year reign of Christ taught in Revelation 20 is representative of a full and complete period of time now in progress. It is not speaking of some future time. Neither Satan nor any other force can alter the purposes of God (Hebrews 12:28). Premillennialists take a very encouraging, but highly figurative passage, and turn it into something full of false teaching.

I am deeply indebted to Robert Harkrider for the use of his material.