

Revelation 20:1-6 research paper

[Environment](#), [Earth](#)



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Introduction

The Revelation chapter 20: 1-6 story is perhaps one of the most controversial biblical stories. Several bible scholars have argued the chapter marks the exposing of millennialism as a theological perspective among protestant theologies. It is for this reason that I have decided to examine this story so that I may have a clear understanding of the subject of controversy. This paper examines the relevance of this verse into the Christian denomination and its association with the Jews. The paper also brings different viewpoint that have been presented as alternative views of the story. Still, Revelation chapter 20: 1- 6 provides literary scholars of the bible with a succinct apocalypse on the future and the almost evident reign of Jesus Christ for 1000 years before the day of the final judgment. In the bible documentary series, “ Understanding Revelation in 60 Minutes”, Ed Hindson gives a detailed portrayal of the events of the last millennium in the book of Revelation. In Understanding Revelation, Hindson makes understanding the

book easy and realistic. The documentary will make it easy for to understand the assertions and have a rather objective analysis of the book.

What is Millennialism?

For effective understanding of the verse, the paper begins by explaining terms that may occur in repeatedly in the readings. Millennialism is a belief professed by some Christian denominations that argue that there will be a golden age on earth. During this time, Jesus Christ will reign as the supreme leader of the earth for one thousand years. After one a millennium of the golden age, there will be a final judgment and eventually an eternal state for the two sides. The good people will rejoice forever while the bad people will be in eternal abyss of suffering and anguish. Millennialism accrues from the information presented in Revelation chapter 20: 1-6. The next paragraphs dissect the meaning of this verse and its relevance to biblical study.

However, the world millennial does not appear in the bible since it is of Latin origin. However, the word “ Chilioi” appears in Rev: 20: 7 and has the meaning of one thousand. Accordingly, the concept of millennialism was originally known as chiliasm. Today, mainstream Christianity subscribe to the concept of millennialism.

Structure and Composition of Rev: 20: 1- 6

Gregory Beale writes that Rev: 20: 1-7 is like any other text in John’s Revelation in terms of structure and analysis. The verse is written in apocalyptic text and this indicates the influence of the Old Testament especially the work of Daniel. Daniel’s Midrashic model heavily applies with the use of words such as abyss, dragon, and the political powers struggle

described in Rev 20: 1-7. Moreover, the five chapters in Daniel cover the same eschatological future that is typical of Revelation. Still, the connection of Rev 20: 1-7 is not limited to Daniel's work, the works of Zechariah and Daniel are also hinted especially with the use of the word "Old serpent" in Revelation 20: 2. According to Beale, this evokes an "episode of primitive religious history that maintains the same meaning of theological history."

However, not everyone agrees with connecting Revelation with the Old Testament. Talbert Charles in his book, *The Apocalypse: A Reading of Revelation of John* argues that Rev: 20: 1-6 is instrumental in understanding the whole book. He cautions readers of dislodging the integrity of this book by misinterpreting the context. Talbert writes that "it is imperative that we allow the New Testament its integrity and not try and force it to conform into various eschatological perspectives" I think that Talbert is warning us about changing the contents of the book to suit our view. In this paper, we take an independent approach to examine the book.

Some scholars have views the structure of Rev 20: 1-6 through the lenses of non-historical or idealist interpretation. In this view, the preoccupation of millennialism is analyzed through the context of time and its relations to modern Christianity. The proponents of this view argue that while it is not far fetched to rule out the possibility of the literal meaning of millennialism as depicted in the text, it is important to view the text in relation to the purpose of the book. According to Harrington, the purpose of Revelation is to depict the struggle of evil and good and the ultimate triumph of good over evil. In addition, scholars of the bible must reckon that Revelation is structured as

a letter that means that the contents of the book must be timeless. The connection between the original recipient and modern readers might have been lost, but the symbols do not mean anything more than the prime goal of depicting the battle between good and evil. Still, Harrington does not rule out the possibility of Revelation being the forecast of human history. As such, millennialism as concept becomes a time bomb waiting to explode.

Mathew Mason in the article Revelation 20: 1-6 reasons the millennium period indicated in the Revelation is completed and gone. The transfer overlap is complete and the place of Jerusalem as the bona fide rule of all nations is gone and has been replaced by the presence of bridal church that now governs all Christians in union with Jesus Christ. Mathew argues that the church is resurrected and has a united people that possess the word under the command of Christ. He continues to argue that it is this time that Satan is bound so that he cannot deceive nations to allow Christ's final conquest.

In Revelation 20: 1-6, God who has the key to the abyss sends down the angel from heaven. God has a chain that is going to be used to bind Satan. Binding Satan is symbolic of the fall of the Kingdom of Satan in Revelation 12: 9 where we get to know that the dragon and the Satan refer to one thing. The Satan will be in bound for one thousand years while saints reign with Jesus on earth. We understand that the reign will not be in heaven because Jesus will come for the third time after the thousand years are completed. When Jesus comes for the third time, he brings with him the saints, the host of heaven and the new Jerusalem (Rev: 21: 1-2). During this transition period, Jesus will burn up the earth and his works and will kill all the wicked that he had bonded at his second coming (2 Peter, 3: 10), Rev 19: 21). In

the process of the millennial rule, Jesus Christ will rule the earth free from Satan's interference as the earth remains desolate and empty.

Charles Powel, in the research article *Progression Versus Recapitulation in Revelation 20: 1-6: Some Overlooked Arguments* reasons several scholars have postulated arguments that interpret Rev: 2): 1-6 only in the pre-consummationist view. This view accepts the recapitulation as the *modus operandi* while analyzing this text. In this view, five common features accrue. The first is that the chaining of Satan is symbolic of Christ's victory over Satan and all other powers of evil, the millennium indicates the period that leads to the present church, and that Satan will be left free to cause havoc in the present age before Satan final vanquish. The view also argues that the fire coming from heaven symbolizes Christ's second coming and that there will be a general resurrection before the judgment day that will be followed with the making of new heavens and earth.

Powel also explains the premillennial view or what is called the post consummationist view that alleges that the binding of Satan is not yet done and will be done in the future. This event takes place when Jesus returns. Pre-millennial view posits that the millennium is an actual period when Jesus will reign on earth from Jerusalem together with the saints. In this view, the anguish of Satan will mark the climax of the millennium period that will be followed with the judgment of the wicked. After the judgment, the New Jerusalem and earth will be created one thousand years after Christ's second coming. The basis for premilinal argument is the literal aspect of the bible. This school of thought maintains the traditional hermeneutic paradigm that puts Israel and the church to full their promises. This paradigm advocates for

the literal reading of Rev 19: 20, uses the analogies depicted in Rev 20: 1-10 that document the plagues, and argues for a future full of happenings.

Premillennial proponents believe that the binding of Satan is absolute but unknown.

Proponents of the recapitulation view on Rev 20 1: 6 reason that a literal interpretation argued for by premillennialia viewpoint is wrong because it does not have concrete support. First, the mention of 1000-year period of Jesus Christ's reign is not found in any other scripture apart from Rev 20.

Moreover, the nature Revelation requires that it be interpreted in symbolic terms. Revelations is an apocalyptic book that cannot be analyzed in literal terms. Similarly, the bible and the records of the church do not mention the possibility of a messianic kingdom on earth between the end of the modern age and the eternal kingdom of God. Biblical scholars such as Robert Strimple have reasoned that the New Testament only argues for Christ's new kingdom and not an earthly political kingdom.

According to Strimple, the end times events documented in the book of Revelation are concurrent. The second coming of Jesus, the resurrection and of saints, the resurrection of the wicked, the big judgment day, the new heaven and the new earth as well as the dawn of the new kingdom all happen at the same time. In Strimple view, opponents of the recapitulation only miss the influence of language and philosophy in their interpretation of these events. The language used in the book by John, only records the events and do not hide or play with metaphors to hide the reality. While Strimple asserts that, the events in the New Testament occur concurrently or follow one another rapidly, there is evidence in text that demonstrate that

some events are separated over a long time. Still, the complexity of Jesus second coming makes it believable that a 1000-year interlude may be part of the bargain.

The connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament can also give hints that can confirm the close association of time that Strimple easily ignores. For example, Ezekiel 39: 9-11 writes about the burdening of weapons of a Gog and Magog for a period of seven years after a battle. The verse also accounts of burring people for seven months. This makes it possible to question the point of events if the coming of Jesus is simultaneous. Oh is part, Daniel 12: 11 record the number of days that are associated with second coming of Jesus. Daniel mentions 1260 days as well as 1335 days that are associated with the end. A keen look will notice that Daniel numbers correspond with 1260 days mentioned in Rev 12: 6 with a little extension. Although not conclusive, the discrepancy describing the end times and the differences makes it possible to refute Strimple's claim that the end time is concurrent.

Robert White arguing for recapitulation view proposes three arguments. First, he cites the discrepancy between the events documented in Rev 19 11-21 and in Rev 20 1: 3. Rev 19: 11- 21 accounts the recapitulation while the rest of revelation documents the motif of angelic descent and ascent. Still, it is s important for biblical literary critics to understand the importance of millennium in Rev 20: 1-6 especially in reference to the concept of time. According to Wallace, the 1000 years has genitive, dative, and accusative significance in relation to time. First, Satan is imprisoned for 1000 years upon which Christ reigns with all the saints. The saints that Satan had

unleashed havoc to reign at this time. In recapitulation view, this period begins after the end. While some pre-millennialists view the 1000 years of Satan's bondage as literal years, the use of the word "shmai, nw (' to signify') in 1: 1, ' encourages the reader to expect a predominance of symbolic over literal language, including references to numbers' throughout the book". In apocalyptic studies, ten is the number of completeness and this implies that the use of one thousand years do not necessarily implies 1000 years, instead, it means long time.

Rev 20: 1-3 focuses on Satan's bondage for about 1000 years and in a deep pit. Premillennialists view Satan's bondage as making Satan unable of any serious threat to order during the millennium. This bondage in the view of Premillennialists is absolute and renders Satan incapable of being a threat to Christ's reign. The fallacy of this argument is that it eliminates the view that Christ's second coming is in the future and so is Satan's imprisonment. The Satan will not be bound until Christ' second coming. The second coming thus marks the beginning of the millennium period. Still, Satan's bondage is described in the New Testament as beginning during Jesus' earthly ministry when it was established at Jesus' conquest over death upon the resurrection. According to this view, Satan is already conquered and made powerless although he still operates minimally for those that have not accepted Jesus as their personal savior. In verse three, the John writes that Satan is bounded to stop him from deceiving nations thereby falsely influencing them for war shortly before Christ's return. In my view verse three alludes to the argument that Satan is not completely powerless, his wings are clasped such that he cannot do what all he did before.

In verse 20: 4-6, John reports of saints and martyrs reigning when Satan is bounded. Satan is also judged for the crimes he has committed against the martyrs. The people of John's generation who did not worship the beast also get fair treatment for their faithfulness. Mathew Mason reasons that 20: 4 should be viewed as a "synecdoche for the whole church" During this time, the people who resurrect and reign with Christ during the millennium rule are not subjects of the second death.

Personal View

Biblical scholar's failure to agree on the common interpretation of Rev 20: 1-6, makes it realistic to make a personal view. Because of the length of the millennium and the ambiguity in knowing when it actually starts, speaking of Christ's return becomes problematic and a subject of biblical discussions prone to controversial debates. As a Christian, I acknowledge that Christ's return is nigh because of the present time and age. Still, I recognize that at the time when John was writing Revelations in A. D 75, it was hard to imagine how a long period would have been symbolic to 1000 years. At this time, the Roman colonizers of the Israel had destroyed Jerusalem and 1000 years had not elapsed, it was thus unlikely that Christ's return was eminent. Moreover, the unexpectedness of Christ's return was documented in Mathew 25: 5.

Like Beale, I am compelled to understand the millennium as thematic and not temporal. This view is realistic since it allows me to remove the tensions and ambiguity that characterizes the book of Revelations and remove the anxiety of the nearness of Christ's return. While agreeing with Beale, I recognize that the tensions of Christ's return and vigorous debate still

manifest itself in the New Testament. A practical and preterits understanding of Revelation reveals that nearness of Christ's coming is heightened by scholastic ineptness in understanding the connection between literal meaning so the bible and the symbolic meanings. Delay of Christ's return is thus a misconception and misunderstanding of the book of Revelation since no one understands the time and moment of Christ's return.

In my view, the Christian Church replaces the nation of Israel as the chosen nation of God. The United Church will rule the earth under the stewardship of the Lamb of God that is Christ. The Church thus becomes the queen of the world, as Christ is the prince of the Lord. Under God, Christ rules the earth in one with the United Church. Israel becomes irrelevant in this arrangement since the bible describes Jerusalem as a Harlot that rode the beast and ruled with the kings of the earth. In place of Israel, the Lord has placed the church that has been elevated to the place that Israel occupied in the Old Testament.

Conclusion

This paper has analyzed the concept of millennialism as depicted in Revelation 20: 1-6. In the paper, the concept has been employed using different biblical scholastic viewpoints perpetuated by different theologies. In the paper, we have come to the conclusion that the return of Jesus Christ and the thousand years that are described in this verse are difficult to tell. However, after a careful analysis of the bible, we have come to realization that Christ's second coming is not yet and the millennium period is not realized all though it is very nigh.

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