

The Dragon is Overthrown, Part III- *The Saints Reign with Christ!*

Scripture: Revelation 20:1-10

Introduction:

We have looked at the three general views of the "Millennium," described here in Revelation 20. And I have sought to begin explaining why I believe that the Amillennial position seems to be most in keeping with the text.

Remember, the Amillennial position states that this "thousand year" (millennial) period is not to be taken any more literally than the rest of the numbers found throughout the Book of Revelation. The letter *A*, meaning "non" is meant to imply that the millennium is *not* a literal thousand years, but rather that which implies a lengthy period of time, beginning with the completion of Christ's earthly ministry and ending just prior to the final coming of Christ, when satan is released unto the deceiving of the world. At the end of this millennial period, in keeping with the sixth bowl judgment, satan will be released to deceive the nations into overcoming the church and surrounding the saints for the great battle of Armageddon, and it is then (in keeping with the seventh bowl judgment) that Christ will return, and bring judgment upon the wicked, the two beasts and satan himself. And this will lead into the creation of the New Heavens and the New Earth, described in chapters 21ff.

I gave you a list of texts, seeking to confirm that the binding of satan began to take place during the earthly ministry of Christ, ultimately culminating in the death and resurrection of Christ, when satan was cast out of heaven by Michael the Archangel, unable to deceive the nations any longer, permitting the Gospel to spread throughout the entire world. In that sense, satan was and still is bound. But in the end, he will be released unto the deception of the whole world, to overcome the church and to surround the saints (Rev. 20:7ff).

This morning, we move on to look closer at Revelation 20:4-6, where we will find one of the great and encouraging highlights of the millennium. Here we consider how the saints reign with Christ for this "thousand year" period, until satan is released. And I believe that this will further support the case for the Amillennial position.

I. The Saints Reign with Christ for 1000 Years

Here, we are told that John sees a group of thrones (not numbered), and he is told that judgment was committed to those who sat on them (vs. 4a). And then, following this, we are given a description of the ones who sat on these thrones:

"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" (vs. 4b).

So, the group described here, in some way, reigns with Christ for the duration of the millennium. And then, we are told in verses 5-7:

"But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 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."

Now, as we seek to open up the imagery here, consider a few of the facts given to us:

- 1) During this millennial period, Christ is said to "reign" in some sense.
- 2) The "souls" mentioned here, who sit on the thrones that John had seen, are said to reign with Christ during this millennial period.
- 3) These living souls have experienced a resurrection of some sort, which others will not receive, a "first resurrection."
- 4) All, who experience this first resurrection are said to be "blessed and holy." They are privileged in some significant way, for taking part in the first resurrection.
- 5) Those who experience this first resurrection are said to be "priests of God and of Christ." And over them, the "second death" has no power. They do not experience the "second death."

6) The rest of the dead will experience a resurrection as well, but only an implied "second resurrection," following this millennial period ("first" assumes at least a "second").

7) Those who experience the "first resurrection" are martyrs (they were beheaded for their witness) *and* those who "had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands." [Note: ESV: "...I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded...*and those* who had not worshiped the beast...etc--kai hoitines/*and whoever/and everyone who*]

The first group (the martyrs--see Rev. 6:9ff) is a representative sub-group of the whole (the second group--who refuse to worship the beast). Emphasizing the martyrs, emphasizes the "worst case scenario standpoint," from the world's perspective. This is a great encouragement, especially for those who are persecuted in any respect and/or martyred. They have been cut off from the world, but they reign with Christ!

Having then, these contextual factors in place, let us strive to answer two significant questions, before coming to a summary conclusion of the text. First, who are the ones who reign with Christ here (for the thousand years)? Second, what is the nature of the "first resurrection" here spoken about?

1- Who are the ones who reign with Christ here (for the thousand years)? All believers--all who have been "born again" in Christ (all who ultimately overcome, in accordance with the main theme of Revelation).

*Rev. 2:11; Rev. 13:11-18; Rev. 14:9-13; Rev. 15:1-4; Rev. 1:6

2- What is the nature of the "first resurrection" here spoken of? This is the spiritual resurrection, which takes place at conversion, and which continues to live in the intermediate state, following the first death. This is why all who experience the "first resurrection" are holy and blessed. They have spiritual life in Christ! The rest remain dead "spiritually" right up till the second resurrection; the resurrection of the body, which all will experience, after the millennium (after the return of Christ). Hence, the second death (hell), has no power over all who experience the first resurrection. Those who are converted, reign with Christ now!

*Jn. 5:24-30; Jn. 11:25-26; Eph. 2:5-6; Col. 2:13; Col. 3:1-4; Rom. 6:4-14

*Lke. 17:20-21; Col. 1:13; Jn. 18:36-37; Acts 2:30-36; Matt. 28:18ff...etc

*Rev. 1:6; 1 Thess. 2:12; 1 Pet. 2:5-10

*Note: Dan. 7:9, 22-27

II. Conclusive Thoughts

And so, a key emphasis of the "millennial period," is that Christ's converted saints reign with Him for the duration of the millennium. Again, this goes hand in hand with our original assessment of the "millennial period," stating that it consists of the whole time period, beginning at Christ's resurrection from the dead and ending just prior to His return, which is when His present invisible kingdom will become wholly visible. The first resurrection is the conversion of God's people, which unbelievers never experience, and the second resurrection is the bodily resurrection of the dead, which all experience. Unbelievers die bodily, having never attained to spiritual life. And so, the first and only resurrection they will ever experience is the bodily resurrection, following the return of Christ, when He raises all from the dead in this respect. This is not to say that unbelievers, in the intermediate state, are not conscious souls...they are, but rather, they experience no resurrection of the soul. They merely experience the soul's separation from the body.

1) All of this is meant to encourage us to persevere and overcome. We reign now, and that reign will continue on, into the intermediate state.

2) Our loved ones, who have died with Christ, reign now as well.

AMEN!!!