

## **Lesson Twenty Three**

### **The Millennium (20:1-6)**

The previous chapter described the second coming of Christ, the casting of the antichrist and the false prophet in the lake of fire, and the destruction of followers of the beast on earth. It is time for God to bring judgment to Satan and for Jesus to establish His messianic reign on earth.

#### **Satan Bound in the Abyss (20:1-3)**

20:1. An angel comes from heaven with keys. Keys are a common biblical symbol of authority. These keys enact authority over the abyss (9:1-11; 11:7). God, not Satan, has authority over the abyss. The angel is prepared to bind Satan in the abyss.

20:2. John leaves no room for error as to the identity of the one incarcerated in the abyss. The duration of time of the 1000 years of incarceration is debated. Is this a literal 1000 years or a symbolic period common with apocalyptic language? What is clear is the fact Satan will have no influence on earth during the messianic reign.

20:3. Satan will not deceive the nations during the millennium. No explanation is given for the identity of the nations. This is perhaps the most challenging component of premillennial interpretation. Some commentators suggest the nations are a remnant people

who followed the beast (19:18, 21). Some commentators suggest the nations are offspring of Christians who are born and live in the millennial reign in physical bodies.

### **The Millennium (20:4-6)**

These three verses are the only definitive verses that identify a 1000 year messianic reign on earth (cp. Acts 3:21; I Corinthians 15:24-25). The OT records numerous prophecies related to Christ ruling the nations from Jerusalem in a rather utopian existence (Isaiah 11; 40:9-11; 52:7-12; 65:17-25; Daniel 7:13-14, 27; Zechariah 9:9-10). There are three basic schools of thought related to the millennium.

**Postmillennialism.** As a result of the advancement of the gospel, Christ will come in the hearts of man which results in a glorious kingdom on earth. This school of thought assumes the world is getting better with the gradual entrance of the millennial reign. After the period of Christ's reign on earth, Jesus will return.

**Amillennialism.** The millennium is spiritualized to represent the reign of Christ in the hearts of His followers. It began when Jesus died on the cross. Satan is symbolically bound and Jesus literally returns to earth following this spiritual millennial reign.

**Premillennialism** – This school of thought is the most historic of the views. After an intense time of

tribulation Jesus returns to the earth in bodily form. This marks the beginning of the literal millennial reign of Christ on earth.

Dispensational Premillennialism. This is a variation of premillennialism. Christians will be secretly raptured before the tribulation. This interpretation was first believed by a teenage charismatic Scottish girl who reported her visions to her pastor John N. Darby of the Plymouth Brethren Church in 1830.

20:4. It appears John saw two groups. First are those who rule with Christ. The NT is consistent that Believers will rule with Christ (Daniel 7:9, 22; Matthew 19:28; I Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 2:26; 3:21; 5:10). Second is a group of martyrs. John saw souls who had been beheaded. The phrase, “they came to life” is one single word that is often used for a bodily resurrection (John 11:25; Romans 14:9; Revelation 1:18; 2:8).

20:5. “The rest of the dead” do not resurrect until after the millennium. This is the resurrection of the wicked that will face judgment (v.12). Thus, the first resurrection is for Believers who resurrect at Christ’s coming.

20:6. The first death is a bodily death that everyone experiences (Hebrews 9:27). The only exceptions are Believers who are alive when Christ returns. The second death is a spiritual and eternal death (v.14). It

refers to souls cast into the lake of fire. All Believers who participate in the first resurrection will not experience the second death. There is debate over the type of human existence during the millennium. When Believers resurrect they inherit a spiritual body. However, there will be evil nations on earth (vs. 3, 8) that appear to assume a physical type of body. Option one is that only martyrs resurrect and enjoy the millennium. This is unlikely. Option two is that two types of people exist in the millennium. Natural people who form the nations live with a physical body, and resurrected Believers live with spiritual bodies. This dual-type of existence actually occurred immediately following Jesus' death and resurrection (Matthew 27:52-53).