

10 Reasons Why the Millennium Is Not Now!

by Anthony Buzzard

Amillennialism (meaning literally “no millennium”) teaches that we are currently “reigning” with Christ “spiritually,” having had our personal, figurative “resurrection” at our conversion/baptism. Yet there are at least 10 reasons why the millennial reign of Christ and his saints in Revelation must lie in the future:

1) The reign of Christ and the saints in Revelation 20 follows the events of the return of Christ given in chapter 19. In Revelation 19:11 the words “and I saw” introduce a sequence of events, linked at verse 17 (“and I saw”) and verse 19 (“and I saw”) with the complete overthrow of the beast and the false prophet (v. 20) and the destruction of the remainder of those who oppose Jesus (v. 21). In Revelation 20:1 “and I saw” continues the sequence and deals with the complete removal from the world scene of the ultimate enemy, Satan himself. Following that event comes the next stage of the drama: “And I saw thrones and people sitting on them who had been given authority to rule” (Rev. 20:4).

2) The reign of the saints with Christ depends on a resurrection (Rev. 20:5). The noun “resurrection” (*anastasis*) occurs some 40 times in the New Testament. In every case (apart from a special use in Luke 2:34) it refers to a *real resurrection of dead people* to life, not a “resurrection” from the life of sin to life as a Christian (as amillennialism has to argue). It would be both unnatural and inconsistent to think of anything but the real resurrection of the dead in Revelation 20:4-5.

3) John described a real resurrection and not a figurative one by saying that the occupants of the thrones “came to life” after being *beheaded*. The core of the millennial passage reads: “I saw those persons who had been beheaded...and they came to life...This is the first resurrection” (20:4-5). People are not beheaded at conversion, but they may die as martyrs. The “coming to life” of those “who had been beheaded” cannot by any stretch of the imagination describe conversion! Yet amillennialism has to deal with these words in this extraordinary way in order to avoid a literal resurrection.

4) In Revelation 20:3 Satan is bound “so that he can no longer deceive the nations.” Earlier in the

same book John describes Satan as “the one [now] deceiving the whole world” (Rev. 12:9). Here in Revelation 20:3 Satan is bound and prevented from “deceiving the nations any longer.” It is beyond question that Satan cannot *at the same time* be “deceiving the whole world” and “not deceiving the nations any longer.” Yet the whole “amillennial” school is committed to that contradiction. Amillennialism teaches that the period of time in which Satan “no longer deceives the nations” (note: “the nations,” not the Church) is *the same* as the period in which he is now “deceiving the whole” world. It would be hard to think of a more unsatisfactory method of reading the Bible! Amillennialists, we fear, are driven to these extremes by their dislike of the idea of a Messianic Kingdom of God, ruled by the Messiah and the saints.

5) In Revelation 12:12-13 the Devil is thrown down from heaven to the earth. This, as all agree, is at a time prior to the Second Coming. However, in Revelation 20:1-2, Satan is banished entirely from the earth and sent to the abyss. This banishment into the abyss, which coincides with the beginning of the millennial reign, must lie in the future. Satan cannot be both confined to the earth and banished from the earth into the abyss at *the same time*.

6) Satan is represented as extremely active and powerful in the present evil age (Gal. 1:4). John describes Satan as now exercising power over the whole world: “The whole world lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). 2 Corinthians 4:4 sees Satan as “the god of this age.” To grasp the New Testament view of the present activity of Satan the following passages should be examined: Luke 22:3; Acts 5:3; 2 Cor. 4:4; 11:14; Eph. 2:2; 1 Thess. 2:18; 2 Tim. 2:26; 1 Pet. 5:8: “Your enemy, the Devil, is prowling around like a roaring lion, searching for someone to devour.”

Yet in our passage we have a description of the total cessation of the influence of Satan over the nations. He is removed from the scene, banished and sealed in the abyss. We urge our readers to abandon a view which makes Satan’s present deceptive activity over the whole world (Rev. 12:9) compatible with a time when he is bound and unable any longer to deceive the nations (Rev. 20:3).

7) It is evident from Revelation 20:10 that Satan is finally thrown into the lake of fire after the thousand years (millennium), plus a “short time” (v. 3). Thus a thousand years separates his binding and sealing in the abyss (v. 3) from his casting into the lake of fire (v. 10). It is equally clear that the beast (Antichrist) and false prophet are already in the lake

of fire when Satan joins them a thousand years later (v. 10). In John's vision a thousand years separates the throwing of the beast (Antichrist) into the lake of fire and Satan's arrival there. If, as the amillennial school holds, the thousand years began at the crucifixion, or the conversion of the individual believer (opinions vary), what is the meaning of the throwing of the beast and false prophet into the lake of fire a thousand years *earlier* than that time? What John obviously describes is the ruin of the beast and false prophet at the Second Coming, Satan's banishment to the abyss at the same time, and his being thrown into the lake of fire to join the beast and false prophet a thousand years later. The thousand-year reign thus follows the Second Coming — which is premillennialism, a recognition of the future Messianic Kingdom.

8) Amillennialists sometimes argue that the present freedom of Satan (assuming the premillennial scheme that he has not yet been bound) contradicts the effects of the crucifixion. They admit, however, that Satan must be let free for a brief period of time (Rev. 20:3). This period of freedom would equally contradict the effects of the cross. The biblical facts are that Satan has already been defeated, but his sentence is put into effect when his authority as god of this age is finally removed by banishment, first into the abyss and subsequently by being cast into the lake of fire — a two-stage punishment.

9) Satan cannot possibly already be “deceiving the nations no longer” (as amillennialism has to say). In Revelation 19:15 Christ at his coming strikes the nations precisely because they have been so disastrously deceived by Satan into opposing the Messiah at his arrival.

10) Nearly all agree that the “rest of the dead” (those not included in the first resurrection) come to life *literally* at the close of the thousand years (Rev. 20:5, 12). Yet amillennialists deny that the “coming to life” of those in the first resurrection is a literal resurrection. The same Greek word describes the resurrection of both groups, and the same words “came to life”¹ occur in two consecutive sentences. Henry Alford's celebrated protest, known as “Alford's Law,” against the inconsistency of this reading of the passage deserves to be heard again:

“I cannot consent to distort the words [of Revelation 20] from their plain sense and chronological place in the prophecy...Those who lived next to the Apostles, and the whole Church for three hundred years, understood them in the plain literal sense...As regards the text itself, no legitimate treatment of it will extort what is known as the spiritual [amillennial] interpretation now in fashion. If, in a passage where *two resurrections* are mentioned, where certain ‘souls’ *came to life* at the first, and the rest of the *dead came to life* only at the end of a specified period after the first — if in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean *spiritual* rising with Christ, while the second means *literal* rising from the grave — then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything. If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second, which I suppose no one will be hardy enough to maintain. But if the second is literal, then so is the first, which in common with the primitive church and many of the best modern expositors, I do maintain and receive as an article of faith and hope.”²

The failure to see in Revelation 20:1-6 a future reign of the Messiah with his saints involves an extraordinary feat, by which the plain meaning of words and context are thrown aside in order to sustain a theory which did not appear in the Church until 300 years after the Apostles. As K.L. Schmidt observed, “The man who refuses to find clear teaching about a future millennium in Revelation 20 approaches the text with preconceived ideas, and gains from it neither the exact sense nor the value.”³ George Ladd points to a whole tradition of anti-Messianic reading of the Bible when he writes, “The first anti-millennarians disparaged the natural interpretation of Revelation 20, not for exegetical reasons, because they thought the book did not teach a millennium, but **because they did not like millennial doctrine.**”⁴

Opposition to the Jewishness of Jesus' Gospel about the Kingdom is explicit when commentators confront a straightforward (and in this case a climactic) statement about the resolution of the world's ills when the Messiah comes to reign. ✧

¹ Used also of literal resurrection in Rev. 1:18 and 2:8.

² *Greek New Testament*, Vol. IV, Part 2, p. 726.

³ K.L. Schmidt, *Le Problème du Christianisme Primitif*, Paris: Leroux, 1938, pp. 84, 85.

⁴ *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952, p. 149, emphasis added.