

Premillennialism and Revelation 20

Don Walker

One of the most prominently believed false doctrines today is the false teaching of Premillennialism. This doctrine believes most of the prophecies made by those of old are yet to be fulfilled. It also states that the prophets of the Old Testament knew absolutely nothing about the church Christ established at His death on the cross. In explanation it is taught that Jesus came to establish the Kingdom in the first century and when the Jew rejected Him (John 1:11) He employed “plan b” and established the church. Now the world waits his return when He will accomplish what He first intended to accomplish while here on earth. Much of this fanciful theory is based on a misuse of apocalyptic sections of Scripture, including Revelation 20.

With our remaining space, we will consider first the doctrine itself, then we will consider the doctrine in light of Revelation 20, and finally we will see how it measures up to the teaching of the New Testament overall.

The events that are purported to be associated with Christ’s return are interesting to say the least. In this teaching the Rapture of the righteous will begin a period of seven years of tribulation. The first half of the seven-year period will be relatively soft while the latter half will be very intense. Just when it looks as if the “man of sin” is going to win the day in what is recognized as the “Battle of Armageddon,” Christ will return to this earth, gain the victory and begin a literal 1,000-year reign. He will sit on David’s throne, in Jerusalem for this reign. The Old Law, along with its sacrificial system will also be reestablished for this 1,000 year reign.

Now, as we turn our attention to Revelation 20, it is interesting to note how many of these dictums of Premillennialism are absent. They are simply not there. Let us first say, because we are dealing with apocalyptic literature, which is highly symbolic, it is an absurd error to literalize a solitary feature in this symbolic narrative. Also after reading this chapter we would note that it says absolutely nothing about the “second coming,” “Christ on earth,” “Jerusalem,” “David’s throne,” or even a “bodily Resurrection.” In this highly symbolic book, we need to look more for the principles and lessons that would apply to us to day. To understand chapter 20, we must go back to the beginning of the second section of the book. Up until chapter 12 God is giving warning. However, John is told in Revelation 10:4 to put his pen down and not reveal what the “seven thunders” meant. Why? Because the time for warning was gone. As we open chapter 12, we see the battle begins. We are introduced to the dragon which is Satan in chapter 12, the “beast of the sea” and the beast of the land” in chapter 13, the Harlot Babylon (14:8) and the men who had the “mark of the beast (14:9-11). Then we see each one of these emissaries of hell, enemies of Christ, are dealt with in a powerful way starting with the last one introduced going back to the earlier ones. The men with the mark are dealt with in chapters 15 and 16, the Harlot Babylon in chapters 17 and 18, the Beast of the Land and the Beast of the Sea in chapter 19. Then as we come to chapter 20 there is only one last enemy to deal with and that is the one who had empowered the other enemies; the dragon himself, Satan. Brother Johnny Ramsey wrote the following words concerning this passage.

So in this book written to encourage these 7 congregations of Asia, who are being deeply persecuted John in chapter 20 sees the devil being bound and cast into the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:3). This could not be literal. Who has ever heard of a literal bottomless pit? And how could you get a chain that would bind a spiritual

being? This is **symbolic language** meaning the devil is bound, his power is gone”(Emp. Mine, DWW).¹

It is a passage that would have been very encouraging to the first century brethren who were being persecuted so mercilessly, and should be an encouragement to us even today.

Now, let us consider the doctrine of Premillennialism in light of what passages outside of Revelation teach. There are a number of reasons why I cannot believe Premillennial doctrine.

1. The Premillennialist will have an inferior king who will not succeed. In Jeremiah 22:30 we learn that Coniah will have no seed prosper while sitting on the throne of David, ruling in Judah. In Matthew 1:11 we learn that Coniah is in the genealogy of Jesus. Jesus is the seed of Coniah and if Premillennialism is true, Jesus will not prosper during this 1,000-year reign. No, the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus was raised to reign at the right hand of God in heaven (Acts 2:30, 31) and is currently reigning over his kingdom today.
2. The Premillennialist will have an inferior High Priest. If the Old Law is re-established, then we go back to the Levitical system with the animal sacrifices which cannot take away our sins (Heb. 10:4) In fact the Hebrew writer’s arguments for Christ being superior as the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec are for naught. One must also consider the value of returning to the sacrifices of animals when we know that Christ was offered once for all for all sin, and it is the blood of Christ that can cleanse us from our iniquities.
3. The Premillennialist is missing out on Christ’s rule today. Jesus was raised to reign (Acts 2:30, 31). Our first century brethren were “translated into the Kingdom of God’s dear Son” (Col. 1:13). At the close of the first century, John and his brethren were fellow partakers of tribulation in the Kingdom (Rev. 1:9). Jesus began His reign in the first century nearly 2000 years ago and faithful brethren have bowed down to His rule in His Kingdom since.

We would close with this admonition to those who are wondering concerning this doctrine. If men go to a highly symbolic section of Scripture to prove their doctrine, while ignoring plain and clear teaching in the rest of the Bible, they should be avoided and recognized as false teachers. May we try the spirits (1 John 4:1) and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:11) to test all teaching as we study our Bibles more and more.

¹ Johnny Ramsey, *Bible Treasures*, (This book is **not** copyrighted – Use It To The Glory of God!), pg. 215