

PREMILLENNIALISM: REVELATION 20,
THE THOUSAND YEAR REIGN OF JESUS CHRIST

Any study of premillennial theory requires at least a mention of the 20th chapter of The Revelation of Jesus Christ to his apostle, John. In the small space available to us here, a mention is about all we have room for. Yet, we can do so in a manner dispelling of the premillennial-ist's erroneous view while at the same time establishing what was actually intended by the Lord in the writing of this document.

Please note that The Revelation was not intended to predict world events waiting to be fulfilled in time yet future to modern generations. Rather, it was written to 1st century Christians who were about to face intense persecution. Its purpose was to prepare them for their ordeal and to assure them that the Christ they served was triumphant and that they would enjoy eternal victory if faithful to him (Revelation 1:4-8; 2:10-11, et al). Thus, The Revelation, written in the 1st century A.D., pertained to "...things which must shortly take place" (1:1).

Revelation 20 is part of the wrap-up of this powerful reassurance for Christians. According to preceding chapters, the oppressor of God's people had been destroyed by the Warrior King, God's own Son, the Christ, as depicted in chapter 19. Now, in chapter 20, the archenemy, the Devil, will be rendered powerless for those who serve God's Christ.

Revelation 20:1-4 describes Satan as being bound for a thousand years while in the same framework Christ reigns, and the faithful live and reign with him. Warning is given, however, that when the thousand years were finished, Satan "...must be released for a little while."

Premillennialism assumes this is a literal thousand year earthly reign of Christ followed by a shorter period when Satan will again rule. This is impossible. The reign of Christ was announced on the Day of Pentecost following his resurrection (Acts 2:2-36). This reign is to continue until the end when the last enemy, death itself, is vanquished in the resurrection (I Corinthians 15:24-26). Thus, there is simply no historical time slot available for Satan to again dominate all mankind.

Instead, "thousand years" is a multiple of the symbolic power number ten (10x10x10) and represents the magnitude of Christ's power. In contrast, Satan's "little while" implies his limited power, power exercised only by deceiving mankind to reject the Christ. In other words, Satan is powerless for those who submit to the thousand year reign (the gospel) of Christ and serve him faithfully in it.

—Jerry F. Bassett