

The Millennium

IN REVELATION 20 there is a passage that speaks of a thousand year reign of Christ. Those ten verses have been the subject of tremendous debate over the years. For the most part this passage has been interpreted in one of two ways. Those who are **premillennial** believe that the thousand year reign is literal and that one day Jesus will return to Earth, set up a kingdom, and reign as King over the nations for a thousand years. On the other hand, those who are **amillennial** believe that the passage should be interpreted symbolically. They teach that Christ's kingdom is purely spiritual. To them the very idea of Christ reigning as a political king over the Earth is bizarre and unbiblical.

What I'd like to do is take a careful look at the passage. Before I begin, however, I want you to read this passage for yourself in its entirety. The passage can be found in Revelation 20:

Revelation 20:1: "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the **thousand years** should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until **the thousand years** were finished. This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

7 And when **the thousand years** are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

And now let's begin!

The Binding of Satan

I would like to start by looking at the first three verses of the chapter:

Revelation 20:1: “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him **a thousand years**,

3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the **thousand years** should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

In these verses we are told that an angel comes down from Heaven. This angel (which is given no name and does not appear to be an archangel) binds Satan and locks him in the bottomless pit. While Satan is locked in that pit he is unable to deceive the nations anymore, and he is trapped there for a thousand years. After that thousand years he is set free, but we'll get into that later.

These verses are often interpreted symbolically. Those who are amillennial teach that this refers to the death of Christ on the cross, and that when Christ died Satan was bound. They believe that the millennium is currently going on as we speak (in other words, “millennium” is just another word for this age of history) and that the phrase “thousand years” is just symbolic for a long span of time.

I find this explanation to be very problematic. First of all, the passage says that an *unnamed angel* bound Satan, not the Lamb that was slain. If Jesus bound Satan then why doesn't Revelation 20:1 say that? Why does it attribute this act to someone else? More importantly, though, I find it *impossible* to believe that Satan is currently bound and unable to deceive or harm anyone. That is certainly not what the New Testament teaches! Look at what Peter wrote:

I Peter 5:8: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, **walketh about**, seeking whom he may devour:

9 Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”

Did Peter say that the devil had been bound by Christ's death and was unable to deceive anyone? Did he teach that we have no need to worry about Satan because his days of deceiving people were over? Far from it! Peter warned us to be sober and vigilant, for the devil was “seeking whom he may devour”. Peter was certainly not under the impression that the devil had been bound and rendered harmless. James echoed Peter's concern:

James 4:7: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

Once again, you don't see James saying “Don't worry about the devil – he's incapable of doing any harm”. Revelation 20:2 specifically says that Satan is *bound*, and yet I Peter 5:8 says that he “walketh about”. If Satan “walketh about” then he is not currently bound, which means Revelation 20:1-3 is still in the future.

There are also chronological reasons for believing that the binding of Satan is still in the future.

In Revelation 4 the apostle John is told this:

Revelation 4:1: “After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.”

John was told that he was about to see things “which must be hereafter” – in other words, *things that had not yet taken place in his day*. Part of this vision included the binding of Satan. Therefore, the binding of Satan could *not* have happened at the cross because Revelation was written decades *after* Christ died and rose again, and yet at the time John was given the vision it had *not yet occurred*.

It's worth noting that a great many things take place between Revelation 4 and Revelation 20. These events appear to happen in chronological order. If you read through those chapters (and I will not quote them all here!) you will see that things follow a progression. For example, in Revelation 6 the first seal is open, and then the second seal is open, and so forth. Revelation 7 then starts with the phrase “and after these things”. Event follows event. There is nothing in the text to indicate that we are viewing things out of sequence. In fact we can see a progression, as the two prophets preach and are then killed, only to rise again (Revelation 11); as the beast rises to power and prevails against the saints (Revelation 13); and as Babylon falls (Revelation 18). Revelation 20 takes place *after* all of these things. To say that the binding of Satan happened at the cross would mean that Revelation 4 through 19 happened before the crucifixion, which is silly. At that point John isn't seeing things “which must be hereafter”; he's seeing things that happened decades earlier. It just doesn't make sense.

But there is one thing in particular that I want to draw your attention to. In Revelation 19 we are told that the marriage of the Lamb has finally come:

Revelation 19:7: “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”

As we discussed earlier in this book, all throughout the New Testament the Church is called the Bride of Christ and Jesus is called the Bridegroom. In Revelation 19 we learn that the long-awaited marriage finally takes place in Heaven. After the marriage the Lord Jesus Christ returns to Earth with the armies of Heaven:

Revelation 19:11: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

...

19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

This passage says that the Lord returns with the armies of Heaven to judge the Earth *after* the marriage of the Lamb takes place. Immediately after this is Revelation 20, in which Satan is bound in the aftermath of Christ's victory over His enemies on Earth. This means that Satan is bound *after* the Bride of Christ becomes the Wife of Christ. It is worth noting that the New Testament calls the Church the *bride*, not the *wife*. The Church can only be called the Bride if the marriage has not yet happened! These events, then, *must* still be in the future.

To look at it a different way: if Revelation 20:1-3 really is talking about the death of Christ on the cross, then that would mean the Marriage of the Lamb occurred *before* the Church even existed! How is that possible? How could the bride be dressed in the righteous acts of the saints *before the saints even existed and performed any righteous acts*? It doesn't make any sense. If that was the case then the New Testament should have referred to the Church as the Wife of Christ, but that never happened.

I believe this passage should be interpreted plainly. After the Marriage of the Lamb the Lord Jesus Christ will return to Earth with a great army and defeats the army of the Beast (which you can read about in Revelation 19:11-21). After this Satan will be bound for a thousand years, during which time he is unable to deceive the nations or do any harm. He is completely removed from the scene.

I have heard people say that this passage must be symbolic because it is impossible to bind Satan (a fallen angel) with a chain, but I do not find that argument convincing. After all, this is not the first time that the Bible refers to binding fallen angels with chains. There is this passage as well:

Jude 1:6: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

In this verse Jude tells us that certain fallen angels have been put in prison and are held captive *in chains* until Judgment Day. (Despite what you might think, not all fallen angel wander the world as demons; some have been imprisoned. Why some are imprisoned and others are not is beyond the scope of this discussion.) In Revelation 20 we see that Satan gets the same treatment: like the fallen angels of Jude 1:6, he also is bound in chains. It would appear that it *is* possible to bind angels with chains.

Is Satan currently bound, unable to cause any harm? Of course not! No one actually believes that – not even the apostles themselves. It does not fit the chronology of Revelation or the world that we see around us. The amillennial claim that Satan is bound and unable to cause trouble any more is simply wrong. This is a future event, not a past one.

The Thousand Years

It is common to hear people argue that the thousand-year reign is symbolic of the present Church Age (the time between Pentecost and the return of Christ). However, I do not think that the evidence supports this. If Revelation 20 is symbolic of the Church Age then that means that Satan is

bound, the marriage of the Lamb has already happened, and the Lord has (in some symbolic sense) already returned with the armies of Heaven to defeat Satan. I find that impossible to believe. I think it makes far more sense to read the text as it is: after the Lord returns, Satan is bound and Christ establishes a kingdom that lasts a thousand years.

Some have argued that the thousand years should be interpreted symbolically because of what Peter said:

2 Peter 3:8: “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

If you'll notice, however, this passage uses symbolic language. It clearly says that one day with the Lord is *as* a thousand years. Revelation 20 contains no such symbolic language! Look at how many times it says that this period will last *a thousand years* – not that it will seem like a thousand years, or will be “as” a thousand years, but will be *one thousand years long*:

Revelation 20:2: “And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,
3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

In both verses it clearly says “a thousand years”. There is no hint in the passage that this time period is symbolic. But we're just getting started:

Revelation 20:4: “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.
5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.
6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.
7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,”

In six verses the phrase “thousand years” occurs *six times*. I don't see how it could have been made any plainer that this is a literal period of time! To look at it another way: if this passage was meant to be taken symbolically then it would have been easy to say “as a thousand years” or “was like a thousand years”, but it doesn't say that. However, if the thousand-year period was meant to be taken literally then *how could the writer have possibly been any more clear?*

I believe the thousand year period should be interpreted as a thousand year period. In other words, it is called a thousand-year period *because it lasts for one thousand years*. I see no reason in the text itself to interpret it any differently.

The Kingdom

After Satan is bound we see a kingdom established:

Revelation 20:4: “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

We can clearly see that Christ is reigning for a thousand years (“they lived and *reigned with Christ* a thousand years”), but who is reigning with Him? Verse four says that the people reigning with Christ were people who were martyred for the cause of Christ. Verse 5 states that these people were *raised from the dead* so that they could reign with Christ. If the millennium is symbolic of the Church Age then this makes no sense at all. Have the martyrs been resurrected so that they can reign with Christ during the Church Age? Of course not! The resurrection is still in the future, so the fulfillment of this passage must still be in the future as well.

Once again, this is clearly talking about something that hasn't happened yet. Here we see martyrs, raised from the dead, reigning with Christ *on Earth*. Just in case we missed it, the idea of reigning with Christ is first mentioned in verse 4 and then repeated in verse 6. The author wants to make it very clear that these people are *reigning with Christ*. This, of course, means that *Christ is reigning over the Earth*.

As an aside, lest we think that only martyrs are reigning in the millennial kingdom, we find these verses much earlier in Revelation:

Revelation 5:8: “And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints.

9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

I believe that the 24 elders who are singing this song are symbolic of the Church. This is because they identified themselves in verse 9 – this group was *redeemed by the blood of the Lamb*. Their members come from *every nation*. What term does the Bible use to describe the leaders of the Church? “Elders”. It's also worth noting that I Chronicles 24 divides the priests into 24 different divisions that together represent the whole priesthood; 24, then, is a symbolic number that is used to represent an entire group. Given how the elders are described, 24 elders are almost certainly symbolic of the whole Church. (As an aside, some translations have “redeemed them” instead of “redeemed us”

in verse 9. I believe the manuscript evidence supports the use of “us” over “them”.)

Notice what these elders (who are symbolic of the entire Church) are claiming: they say that God has made them kings and priests and they will reign *on the Earth*. Not “reign on the New Earth that will be created after Judgment Day”, but reign on the Earth itself. God will one day turn His children into kings, and they will reign with Jesus over the nations. When the Lord returns He will put the Earth under new management – *His* management. Our job will be to reign with Him.

To many people the idea that Christ will reign as an earthly king is a shocking, unbiblical idea. The idea seems too strange to be true. Some would say that this passage *must* be symbolic because the very idea of Christ reigning on Earth is just too bizarre – and yet this very idea can be found in other places throughout the Bible. For example, the Lord's prayer hints at it:

Matthew 6:9: “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

Notice what verse 10 says – the Lord specifically commands His disciples to pray that His kingdom would come *to Earth* so that His will would be done *on Earth*. That sounds a lot like a plea for Jesus to return and reign as King! This could be interpreted spiritually, but it could also be talking about something else. After all, the Lord did make this promise:

Matthew 5:5: “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”

That verse echoes a passage from Psalms:

Psalms 37:10: “For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.
11 But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”

Ask yourself: just when is this going to happen? When will the meek inherit the Earth as Jesus promised? After all, this world is going to be destroyed:

2 Peter 3:12: “Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”

Revelation 21:1: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”

It's possible that the verses are talking about the New Earth that Jesus creates after the Great White Throne judgment, but it's worth noting that Psalms 37:11 does not say “the meek will inherit a different earth” or “God will one day make a new planet for the meek to live on”. Both Psalm 37 and Matthew 5 seem to be talking about *this* planet – and if so, at what point are the meek going to inherit it? They certainly haven't inherited it yet! Revelation 20 is a good fit. The meek will inherit the earth and delight themselves in the abundance of peace right after Satan is bound and Jesus reigns as King of Kings over the nations. That is when Christ's promise will be fulfilled.

But those passages are just hints; there are other verses that are far more explicit. Look at what Christ told His disciples in Luke:

Luke 22:28: “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.
29 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;
30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

The Lord promised His disciples that they would reign with Him – specifically, that they would sit on thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. This goes right along with Revelation 5:10 and Revelation 20:6. The disciples were clearly promised “a kingdom”, as it says in verse 29. If the kingdom was purely spiritual then this would have been a great place to tell that to the disciples, but there is no hint of that. It's true that the Lord once told Pontius Pilate “my kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36), but I believe there is a great deal of Scripture that teaches that one day His kingdom will reign *over* this world. All things will be put under the dominion of Christ.

How do we know this? Well, right before the Lord ascended into Heaven He was asked a question:

Acts 1:6: “When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”

Notice that when the Lord is asked this question He doesn't say “No, no, you misunderstand. My kingdom isn't physical – it's purely spiritual. You've got it all wrong.” Instead He says this:

Acts 1:7: “And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.”

Jesus actually confirms that He will “restore again the kingdom”, but He tells His disciples that it's not for them to know when that will happen. But there are other passages that are even more explicit. For example, take a look at Isaiah 60. Here the Lord addresses Israel:

Isaiah 60:9: “Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.
10 And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favor have I had mercy on thee.
11 Therefore thy gates shall be open continually: they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought.
12 For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.”

Has this happened yet? Do all the nations of the world serve Israel, as it says in verse 12? Has God destroyed the nations that would not serve her? Absolutely not! Israel is currently *oppressed* of all nations. She is universally despised. She is surrounded by nations that wish to see her completely and utterly destroyed. The fulfillment of this passage is clearly still in the future, and the millennial

kingdom is an excellent candidate for its fulfillment. But the passage gets even better:

Isaiah 60:14: “The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.
15 Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.”

None of this has happened yet. Israel is despised and hated, not loved and adored. What the Lord speaks of in Isaiah 60:15 has not yet been fulfilled. But there is still more to this passage! Not only does the Lord promise Israel great honor, but He also promises her great wealth and peace:

Isaiah 60:17: “For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.
18 Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.”

Is Israel today a place where violence is unheard-of? Absolutely not – but one day that will be the case. Lest we think this prophecy will happen before the Lord returns, He adds something that is astonishing:

Isaiah 60:19: “The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.
20 Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.
21 Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.
22 A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time.”

In the future the sun and the moon will not light the land of Israel because *the Lord* will be the source of light. This means that *the Lord Himself will be dwelling in the land of Israel*. This means that all of these verses will be fulfilled after the Second Coming – which makes perfect sense if the millennium is literal and not symbolic. After Christ returns and binds Satan He establishes His kingdom, and in doing that He grants Israel honor, wealth, and peace.

I realize that this passage has strong parallels to the New Heaven and Earth that are mentioned in Revelation 21, but I don't think that's what this is talking about. I say this because verse 12 speaks of the Lord crushing all nations that don't serve Israel, and verse 14 talks about forcing those who despised Israel to bow at her feet. In the New Heaven and Earth there is no more death, sorrow, or pain, and all evil has been done away with forever. This means that there would be no one left to despise Israel and there would be none that would refuse to serve the Lord and His Kingdom! So if there are still nations in rebellion then that means this must take place *before* the Great White Throne judgment, which occurs before the New Heaven and Earth are created. I think Isaiah 60 is a picture of what the millennial kingdom will be like.

But it is not the only picture. Isaiah 65 says this:

Isaiah 65:17: “For, behold, I create new heaven and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind.

18 But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold I create Jerusalem rejoicing, and her people a joy.

19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die a hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.

21 And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

22 They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

23 They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.

24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.”

At first glance this passage seems to be talking about the New Heaven and Earth that are mentioned in Revelation 21 (especially given what verse 17 says!), but I don't believe that's the case. I think this is actually a picture of the millennial kingdom, because verse 20 clearly says that *people still die*. The passage illustrates how long people will live by saying that someone who dies at the age of a hundred will be considered a child. This tells me that death has not yet been defeated. However, Revelation 21:4 says that in the New Heaven and Earth *there is no more death* (or sinners, for that matter). Therefore this passage must be talking about something else. If verse 20 had instead said that “There shall be no more death” then that would be one thing, but all it says is that people will live for a long time and then die. There is a tremendous difference between living a long life and *never dying*.

If this is not speaking of the New Heaven and Earth of Revelation 21 then when does it take place? It's certainly not happening right now! I think this is another picture of the millennial kingdom.

This passage may be talking about it as well:

Micah 4:1: “But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

2 And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

3 And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks:

nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

4 But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.

5 For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever.

6 In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted;

7 And I will make her that halteth a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation; and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even forever.”

This is another passage that has not yet been fulfilled. It's hard to imagine that this world will ever become a place where nations no longer wage war with each other, but that is the future God has planned for us. This passage speaks of a time when “the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion” – in other words, a time when the Lord reigns as King in Israel! He will “rebuke strong nations afar off”, put an end to war, and bring lasting peace.

I don't think this is talking about the New Heaven and Earth of Revelation 21 because in verse 3 the Lord rebukes nations. After the Great White Throne judgment all evil, sin, and death will be done away with forever. There will be no need to rebuke anyone because anything that was evil was cast into the lake of fire. I believe this passage is speaking of the millennial kingdom.

There are other chapters that also speak of the millennial kingdom, but I think I have made my point. The coming reign of Christ on Earth is a major topic that can be found all throughout the Old Testament – in fact, nearly all of the prophets had something to say about it. It is not a crazy idea that suddenly appeared out of nowhere at the end of Revelation.

The Last Battle

After the thousand years is over we are told that Satan “must be loosed a little season”:

Revelation 20:7: “And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, God and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

Here we see the final end of Satan. After the thousand years “are expired” Satan is set free. He

then goes all over the world and deceives the nations, creating a rebellion against King Jesus. He deceives many people, forms a massive army, and uses it to surround Jerusalem. However, the army never stands a chance. Fire comes down out of Heaven and consumes them all. Satan is then cast into the Lake of Fire, which puts a final end to his wickedness.

It is amazing to me that Satan was able to gather such a large army. At this point King Jesus had ruled over the world for a thousand years. There had been a millennium of peace, joy, and harmony. In this kingdom there are many immortals – the Church, the Old Testament saints, and the Tribulation saints have all been resurrected and inhabit the globe. There are also many mortals – those who survived the Tribulation and went on to have families. The Lord said in Luke 20:35 that the resurrected neither marry nor are given in marriage, so the repopulation of the world will be left to the Tribulation survivors. These people will live in a world populated by the saints from the Old and New Testament. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and many others will be wandering around. Jesus will be reigning as King from Zion! For all intents and purposes the mortals who are born during this period will be living by sight, not by faith. Today we live in a world that is full of fear and doubt, but the millennial kingdom will be nothing like that.

Despite all this, at the end of the thousand years a massive number of mortals will rebel against King Jesus and attempt to destroy Jerusalem – a city inhabited by *immortals* and reigned over by *God Himself*! That is madness. Why would they do this?

I think it is a testament to the evil heart of man. Even living in a perfect world is not enough to turn sinful men into righteous saints. The environment cannot remove evil from the heart of man – only Christ can do that. Apart from Him we can do nothing. Given the chance, a great many mortals will fall away from God and rebel, and will be destroyed in the last battle.

The Great White Throne Judgment

Technically this has nothing to do with the millennial kingdom, but it is a part of Revelation 20 and I wanted to finish out the story. It amazes me that many people interpret Revelation 20:11-15 literally but refuse to interpret Revelation 20:1-10 the same way. The text itself gives no reason to interpret the first 10 verses one way and the last 5 verses another way. It is a single narrative.

We are told that after the last battle, when Satan is defeated and thrown forever into the Lake of Fire, there is a final judgment. Now, the saints already know that they have nothing to fear. In fact, all of the saints that died during the Tribulation are raised from the dead at the beginning of the millennial kingdom so that they can reign with Christ. This is called the “first resurrection”:

Revelation 20:5: “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

(The Church is not included in this resurrection because they were raised from the dead at the Rapture.) The only people who aren't raised from the dead are the lost. They are left in Hell until the judgment begins:

Revelation 20:11: “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and hell we cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

It's worth noting that those who stand before God are “the dead” (verse 12). At this point the Old Testament saints, the New Testament saints, and the Tribulation saints will all have been resurrected, so none of them would be in the category of “the dead”. (For the record, the New Testament saints were resurrected in the Rapture and the Old Testament and Tribulation saints were resurrected in the “first resurrection” that is mentioned in Revelation 20:6.) There is no reason to think that the Church will face this judgment – the passage is clear that it only impacts *the dead*. Remember, at this point *all* the unrighteous people are dead because they just tried to invade Jerusalem and fire came down out of Heaven and consumed them. At this point in history there are no non-Christians who are still alive.

It is possible that the righteous who die during the millennial kingdom will face this judgment; I don't know. But I don't believe that anyone who accepts Christ during the Church Age will be involved. They will not be included in “the dead” because by then they won't be dead anymore! Besides, verse 6 clearly says that those who are included in the first resurrection are “blessed and holy” and that the “second death” has no power over them.

The criteria for surviving the Great White Throne judgment is simple: if your name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life then you will be freed and will enter into everlasting life. If your name is not found then you will be cast into the Lake of Fire, where you will be tormented day and night forever and ever. This is when death itself is done away with forever. After this judgment nothing else will ever die. The reign of death is put to an end.

It should be noted that Hell is *not* the final resting place of the unrighteous. Hell is emptied for this judgment and Hell itself is actually cast into the Lake of Fire (verse 14). Those who rejected Christ as their Savior will not be cast back into Hell; instead they will be cast into the Lake of Fire (verse 15). In other words, *no one will spend eternity in Hell*, but sadly, many will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire, where they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Why will this happen to them? Because they refused to accept God's offer of forgiveness. God was willing to pardon their sins, but they were not interested. They were unwilling to ask Jesus to save them. If you refuse God's offer of mercy then you will face His wrath.)

The story does not end here! Revelation 21 talks about a new Heaven and Earth that is created after death is done away with, and all suffering and pain has been put to a final end. But that is a topic for another time.

As a final wrap-up, this is how I believe events will play out:

- One day soon the Lord will return for His Church. All Christians who died between Pentecost (when the Church began) and the time of the Rapture will be resurrected. All living Christians will be translated so that they will never see death. The Lord will then take them with Him to Heaven.
- Some time after this the Tribulation will begin – a terrible seven-year period of judgment. The Lord will pour out His wrath upon a wicked world. He will also use these judgments to bring Israel back to Him. (One of the key purposes of the Tribulation is to turn Israel's heart back to God.)
- During the Tribulation the Marriage of the Lamb will take place in Heaven. The Bride of Christ will become the Wife of Christ.
- At the end of the Tribulation the Lord will return with the armies of Heaven and put an end to the Beast and the False Prophet. Satan will be bound for a thousand years and the Lord will establish a kingdom on Earth, where He will reign from Zion. At this point the Tribulation saints and Old Testament saints will be resurrected.
- During the Tribulation more than half of the world's population was killed. The world will be repopulated by Tribulation survivors. Jesus Christ will live on this planet, along with the Old Testament saints, the Church, and the resurrected Tribulation saints.
- After the thousand years are over Satan will be set free and will deceive the nations into launching a final attack against God. When he brings his armies to Jerusalem, fire will come out of Heaven and consume them. Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire, finishing his reign of terror.
- The Great White Throne judgment will then take place. Only the dead will be there. The only people who will be dead at this point in history are those who died during the millennial kingdom and those who were killed in the last battle against God. All those who rejected Jesus (whose names are not found in the Lamb's Book of Life) will be cast into the Lake of Fire. Death itself is done away with.
- After these things the Lord will destroy the current Heaven and Earth and create new ones. This will be a place that will never see death, pain, or suffering; it will be a perfect world that will last forever. The Lord will reign from the New Jerusalem, making His dwelling place with men. This is where the righteous will spend eternity – on Earth, as subjects of King Jesus.

We have a great deal to look forward to! The Second Coming is not the end of time but is actually the start of a breathtaking new chapter. The world will not always be a place that is filled with doubt and evil, for a King is coming who will put everything right. One day the meek will inherit the earth and delight themselves in an abundance of peace. I am very much looking forward to that day.