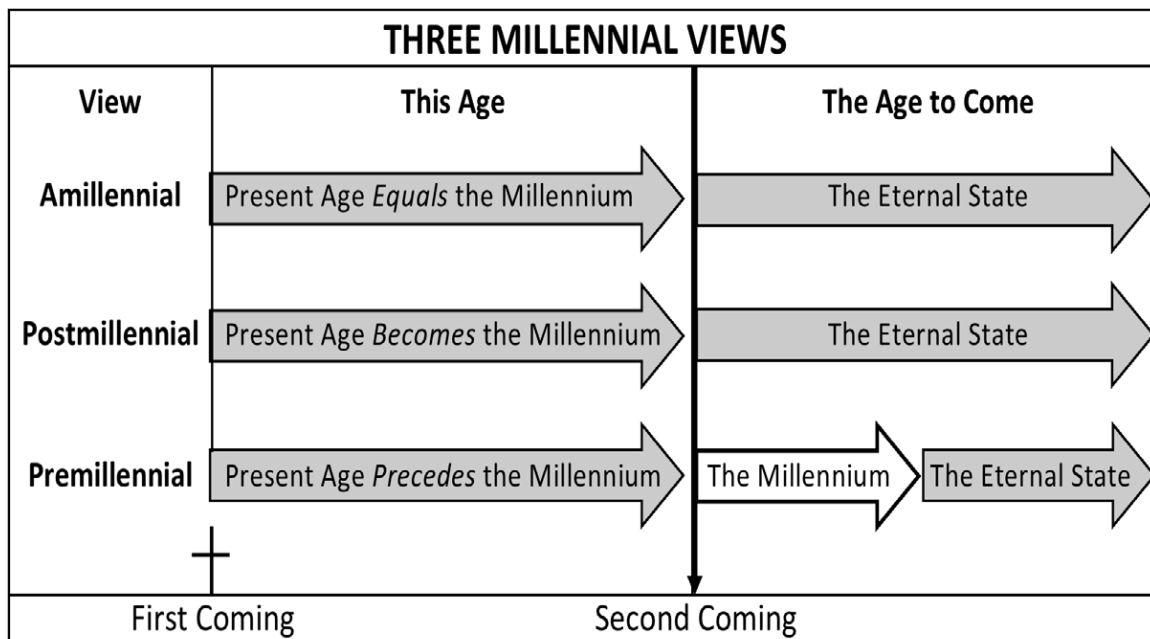


# THE MILLENNIUM OF REVELATION 20

## – PART 1

### INTRODUCTION

- Revelation 20 is typically regarded as the *crux interpretum* in the debate over the timing and nature of the Millennium
- But it is the source of a number of different interpretations
- “This chapter presents the fact that Christ will reign on earth for a thousand years. If this chapter is taken literally, it is relatively simple to understand what is meant. However, because many Bible interpreters have rejected the idea that there will be a reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years after His second coming, this chapter has been given an unusually large number of diverse interpretations, all designed to eliminate a literal millennial reign. In general there are three viewpoints, each with a number of variations.”<sup>1</sup>



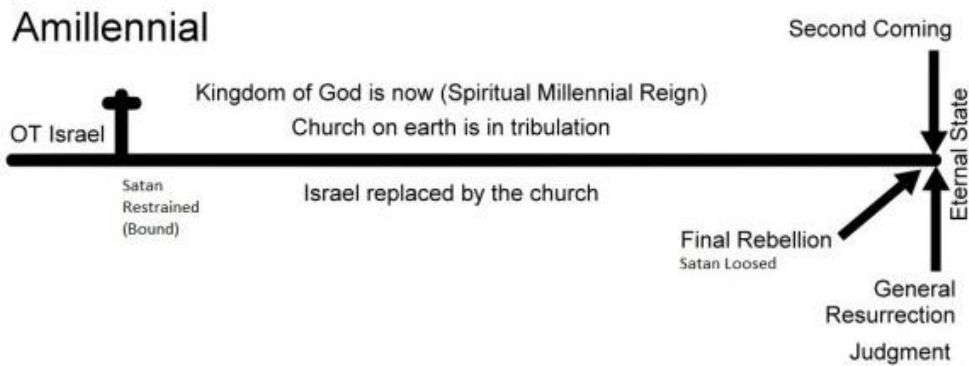
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### Amillennialism – There is No Future Millennium Yet to Come

- “a” = no; therefore Amillennialism = no millennium
- This is not the best name because they do believe in a Millennium, albeit a spiritual one, not an earthly one
- This view denies a physical, literal reign of Christ on earth
- The roots of amillennialism were in Origen because he could not accept premillennialism; he was also the father of allegorical interpretation
- It was systematized by Augustine (350-400 AD)

<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 977). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

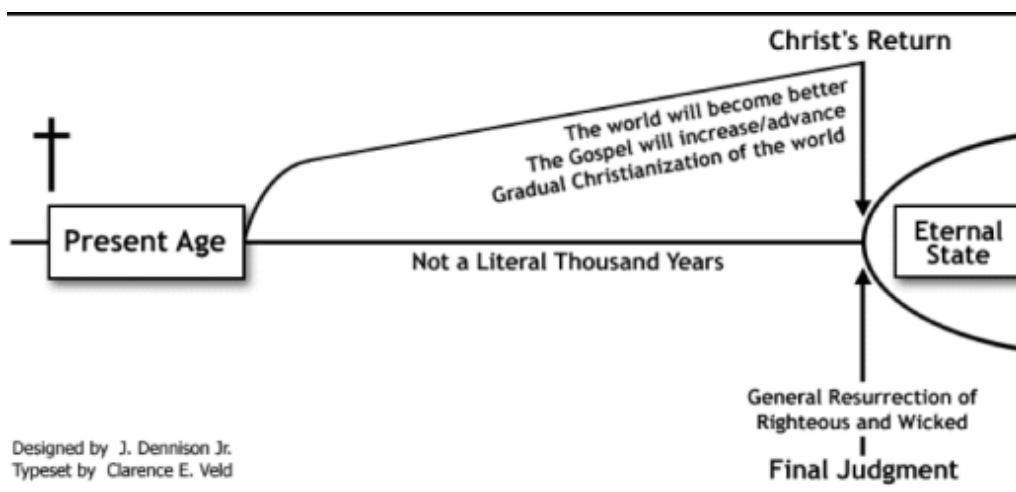
<sup>2</sup> Chart taken from Matt Waymeyer, *TES Premillennialism Seminar Session 1* notes



- Tenets of Amillennialism:
  1. The Millennium began at the 1<sup>st</sup> coming of Christ and will continue to His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming
  2. Satan was bound at Christ's first coming
  3. The first resurrection is a spiritual one (i.e. the new birth of the believer) and the second resurrection is a physical one (i.e. of all people at end of millennium)
  4. The Second Coming is a single event
  5. The Tribulation is present currently as believers always face tribulation
  6. At the Second Coming, there is one general resurrection and one general judgment
  7. The eternal state will be brought in after the Second Coming
  8. OT prophecies about Israel can and should be interpreted figuratively since apostasy canceled Israel's future blessing
  9. There is no separation between Israel and the church in God's redemptive program and there is no future for Israel as a nation because the church has replaced Israel in God's plan
  10. Christ is now sitting on the throne of David, ruling and reigning
  11. Revelation 20:4 refers to the present reign of the souls of deceased believers with Christ in heaven

### **Postmillennialism – Christ Will Return After the Millennium**

- “According to this view the thousand years represent the triumph of the gospel in the period *leading up to* the second coming of Christ. The return of Christ will follow the Millennium...Basically it is an optimistic view that Christ will reign spiritually on earth through the work of the church and the preaching of the gospel.”<sup>3</sup>



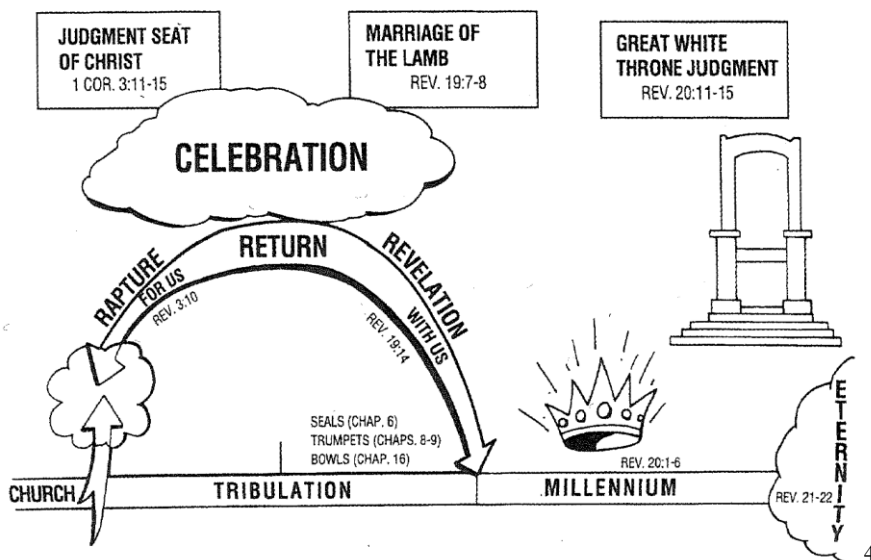
<sup>3</sup> Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 978). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

- Tenets of Postmillennialism:
  1. The thousand years in Revelation 20 are not literal
  2. The kingdom is spiritual not literal (i.e. the rule of Christ in the hearts of believers)
  3. The world gets better through the spread of the Gospel such that evil in all its many forms eventually will be reduced to negligible proportions and Christ will return to a truly Christianized world
  4. Christian principles of life and conduct will become the accepted standards in public and private life (theonomy)
  5. It views the two resurrections differently: first spiritual, second physical
  6. It employs a figurative interpretation of prophecy
  7. All resurrections and judgments are after the millennium

## Premillennialism – Christ Will Return Before the Millennium

- The millennial kingdom will be established on earth when Jesus returns in glory, constituting an intermediate kingdom between the present age and the eternal state

### EVENTS AFTER THE RAPTURE



- Tenets of Premillennialism:
  1. Christ raptures the church away from earth before the Tribulation
  2. Christ returns to earth after the Tribulation and before the Millennium to establish an earthly kingdom which he reigns over for 1000 years
  3. There is no present reign of Christ
  4. The Millennial kingdom is entirely future
  5. There are two physical resurrections: 1) of believers before the Millennium; 2) of unbelievers after the Millennium
  6. There is a distinction between Israel and the church

## The Key Question

<sup>4</sup> Chart taken from Charles Ryrie, *Revelation*, 150.

- The key question in this debate about the nature of the millennium is: Does the Bible teach the existence of an intermediate kingdom where Christ will reign on earth for 1000 years between the present age and the eternal state?
  - Amillennialism = No
  - Postmillennialism = No
  - Premillennialism = Yes

#### **A. There are Indications of an Intermediate Kingdom in the OT**

- These OT texts indicate the presence of an intermediate kingdom which both:
  - Transcends the Present Age      AND
  - Falls Short of the Eternal State

#### ***Psalm 72:1-20***

- In this Psalm, Solomon looks beyond his own reign as king to the reign of the coming Messiah
- He describes the reign of Christ as: extending over the entire world (vv. 2-4, 7, 12)...extending from sea to sea and the ends of the earth (v. 8)...a time when all kings will bow down to Him (vv. 11)...when all the peoples of the earth will be blessed (vv. 7, 16-17)...and when the whole earth is filled with His glory (v. 19)
- Yet, this description of the future reign of Messiah also includes conditions that fall far short of the eternal state: Messiah will vindicate the afflicted (vv. 2, 4)...will save the children of the needy (v. 4)...will crush the oppressor...(v. 4)...will subdue His enemies (v. 9)...will deliver the needy and afflicted who cry out for help (v. 12)...will have compassion on the poor (v. 13)...will deliver the victims of violence (vv. 13-14)
- Because this description cannot be harmonized with either our present world or the eternal state, it must refer to a future reign of Messiah in the intermediate kingdom

#### ***Isaiah 11:1-9***

- Isaiah describes the righteous and peaceful reign of the Messiah as a time when the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord (v. 9)...and when the wolf will dwell with the lamb, etc. (vv. 6-8)
- But Isaiah also indicates in this passage that certain aspects of this stage of the kingdom will not align with the eternal state: Messiah will judge the poor with righteousness (v. 4a)...He will defend the afflicted (v. 4b)...He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth (v. 4c)...He will slay the wicked (v. 4d)
- “Because the coming kingdom of Isaiah 11 exceeds what is currently manifest in the current age – and because the presence of the poor, the afflicted, and the wicked are incompatible with the eternal state – premillennialists point to this passage as evidence of an intermediate kingdom between the two.”<sup>5</sup>

#### ***Isaiah 65:17-25***

- This passage looks ahead and describes the coming kingdom as a time of joy and prosperity when God will bless His people and make all things new...this is evident in that it promises longevity of life (vv. 20, 22). Thus, no one will experience an untimely or premature death as people will likely live hundreds of years
- However, death will continue to exist in this stage of the kingdom (v. 20)
- “The impossibility of locating the fulfillment of Isaiah 65:20 in either the present age or the eternal state points to the existence of an intermediate kingdom in which sin and death still persist, and yet the longevity of life far exceeds current conditions.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Matthew Waymeyer, *Amillennialism and the Age to Come*, 28.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

- (Amillennialists believe that v. 20 poetically describes the longevity of life to be enjoyed in the eternal state without actually implying that death will still exist at this time.)

### ***Zechariah 8:4-5***

- This text points to a time when the Lord returns to Jerusalem and the kingdom is characterized by sweet fellowship, a time of undisturbed peace and tranquility: the young will play...the old will rest peacefully. Thus, in the coming kingdom, God's people will live to an old age and will enjoy the blessing of seeing their descendants playing in the streets.
- However, age discrepancies still exist (old men and old women...boys and girls)...and the weakness of old age will make it necessary for the elderly to lean on a staff (v. 4b)
- "From Zechariah's time until now there has never been a time where the conditions of Zechariah 8 have happened. On the other hand, there will be no elderly who are weak in the final eternal stage for all the remnants of the curse have been removed (see Revelation 21 and 22). What Zechariah describes here, therefore, must take place in an initial phase of God's kingdom before the eternal state begins."<sup>7</sup>
- (Amillennialists view this passage as not describing a coming kingdom which includes procreation, birth, and aging; rather it symbolically portrays the child-like joy, eternal life, and spiritual fruitfulness characteristic of God's people in the last days.)

### ***Zechariah 14:16-19***

- Zechariah 14 pictures the day when Messiah will return to earth, arriving on the Mount of Olives (vv. 3-5) to defeat the invading enemies of Jerusalem (vv. 12-15) and to establish His messianic kingdom in which He reigns as king over all the earth (vv. 8-11)
- However, over time some will refuse to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Booths; consequently, God will punish them by withholding rain and bringing drought upon their land (vv. 17-19)
- "According to this passage, then, the Lord Himself will rule as king over all the earth, and yet this messianic reign of peace will not immediately involve the exclusion of all sin. Instead, the rebellion of nations refusing to worship the Messiah will be met with decisive judgment as the Lord smites the disobedient with the plague of drought. The Kingdom of Jesus in Zechariah 14, in other words, will take place in a radically transformed and yet imperfect world in which sin, rebellion, suffering, and death continue to exist."<sup>8</sup>

## **B. There is Evidence for a Temporal Time Gap in the OT**

**Isaiah 24:21-23** ~ So it will happen in that day, That the LORD will punish the host of heaven on high, And the kings of the earth on earth. 22 They will be gathered together Like prisoners in the dungeon, And will be confined in prison; And after many days they will be punished. 23 Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, For the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, And His glory will be before His elders.

- The sequence of events in Isaiah 24:
  - Second Coming/Final Destruction of Earth (vv. 17–20)
  - Initial Judgment of God's Enemies (v. 21)
  - Lengthy Incarceration of "Many Days" (v. 22b) – the "many days" requires an intermediate kingdom because it represents a lengthy period of time separating the Second Coming of Christ from the final judgment and eternal state.
  - Final Judgment of God's Enemies (v. 22c)
  - Divine Reign of the Eternal State (v. 23)

<sup>7</sup> Michael Vlach, "The Kingdom of God in the Millennium," *MSJ* 23, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 238.

<sup>8</sup> Waymeyer, *Amillennialism and the Age to Come*, 56-57.

- **The Key Point:** what is strongly implied by the OT prophets is clarified and made explicit in Revelation 20
- In other words, a straightforward reading of Revelation 19-22 supports what the OT prophets describe



**THE BINDING OF SATAN**

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**Revelation 20:1-3** ~ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

- Initial observations:
  - An angel from heaven binds Satan in the abyss
  - The length of Satan’s incarceration is 1000 years
  - Satan is “thrown in, shut in, sealed in” the abyss
  - The purpose is so that he would not deceive the nations any longer
  - After the 1000 years, he is temporarily released
- **The Key Question:** Is the binding of Satan present or future?
- In other words, is the millennium present now (amill) or in the future (premill)?
- Summary of the main views:
 

	<u>Amill</u>	<u>Premill</u>
○ Timing of the Binding	Present	Future
○ Degree of the Restriction	Partial	Complete

**Summary of the Premillennial Understanding**

- Satan’s imprisonment cannot be a present reality and thus the millennium must be a future reality

***An Absolute Restriction***

- These verses describe a total and complete binding and restriction of Satan during the 1000 years
- The restriction described here is clearly incompatible with his activity and influence in the present age
- These verses indicate that Satan will be restricted from all earthly activity during the 1000 years
- John describes in vivid imagery the total removal of Satan’s influence: bound up...locked in...sealed over
- Satan will be: seized (v. 2)...bound (v. 2)...thrown in the abyss (v. 3)...and the abyss will be shut and sealed over him (v. 3)
- “[I]f a vision were intended to teach that Satan is rendered completely inactive during the thousand years, it is difficult to imagine how this could have been portrayed more clearly.”<sup>9</sup>

***The Present Activity of Satan***

- The NT makes it very clear that Satan is exceedingly active on earth during this present age

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<sup>9</sup> Matt Waymeyer, “The Binding of Satan in Revelation 20” in *The Master’s Seminary Journal*, 26/1 (Spring 2015), 21.

- The following characterize Satan’s activities in this present age:<sup>10</sup>
  - He is “the god of this age” (2 Cor 4:4)
  - He is “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31)
  - He “prowls about like a roaring lion” (1 Pet 5:8)
  - He tells lies (John 8:44)
  - He tempts believers to sin (1 Cor 7:5; Eph 4:27)
  - He disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor 11)
  - He seeks to deceive the children of God (2 Cor 11:3)
  - He snatches the gospel from unbelieving hearts (Matt 13:19; Mark 4:15; Luke 8:12; cf. 1 Thess 3:5; 1 Tim 1:20; 4:1–2)
  - He takes advantage of believers (2 Cor 2:11)
  - He influences people to lie (Acts 5:3)
  - He holds unbelievers under his power (1 John 5:19; Eph 2:2; Acts 26:18; 1 John 3:8–10)
  - He torments the servants of God (2 Cor 12:7)
  - He thwarts the progress of ministry (1 Thess 2:18)
  - He seeks to destroy the faith of believers (Lk 22:31)
  - He wages war against the church (Eph 6:11–17)
  - He traps and deceives unbelievers (2 Tim 2:26)
  - He holds them captive to do his will (2 Tim 2:26)
- **Conclusion:** Satan can either be locked in the abyss where he has no access to earth or he can be allowed to roam the earth engaging in his activities in the present age, but he cannot do both
- Thus, the binding of Satan in the abyss cannot be a present reality (nor can the millennium be a present reality)

## **Summary of the Amillennial Understanding**

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### ***The Present Timing of Satan’s Binding***

- Satan’s binding took place at Christ’s first coming
- His imprisonment in the abyss extends throughout the present age (i.e. during the current millennial reign of Christ)
- Rather than a future reality, Satan’s binding was accomplished through Christ’s death and resurrection
- Thus, the 1000-year binding of Satan extends from the first coming of Christ to His second coming (i.e. it is a present reality)

### ***The Partial Restriction of Satan’s Binding***

- Rather than seeing his incarceration as that which renders him completely inactive on earth, his activities are simply curbed and limited
- Rather than being strictly eliminated, his activities are curtailed, restrained, and restricted
- Thus, Satan is bound in this present age, but his binding is a partial one, not an absolute one
- Satan is both active on earth and imprisoned in the abyss
- Three arguments are offered by amillennialists to support their view:

#### **1. The Significance of the Abyss**

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<sup>10</sup> This list taken from Matt Waymeyer, *TES Premillennialism Seminar Session 3* notes

- Amillennialists argue that the abyss cannot be an actual location due to the symbolism in this passage
- To take it as an actual location is to be overly literal
- They take the abyss to be the sphere in which the devil operates
- Therefore, Satan can be active on earth while at the same time imprisoned in the abyss
- A premillennial response:
  - “[T]he abyss is neither a physical hole in the ground (the woodenly literal view) nor the spiritual sphere of demonic activity in general (the amillennial view), but rather an actual location in the spiritual realm where evil spirits are confined and prevented from roaming free on earth.”<sup>11</sup>
  - That the abyss is an actual location where evil spirits are imprisoned is supported by two key NT passages

**Luke 8:26-33** ~ Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. 27 And when He came out onto the land, He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with demons; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs. 28 Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me.” 29 For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert. 30 And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion”; for many demons had entered him. 31 They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the **abyss**. 32 Now there was a herd of many swine feeding there on the mountain; and the demons implored Him to permit them to enter the swine. And He gave them permission. 33 And the demons came out of the man and entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

- The abyss is not a metaphor for the sphere in which demons operate, but an actual location (they could either enter into the abyss or enter into the swine)
- It was a well-known spirit prison, known by both Jesus and the demons
- The demons requested not to be cast into the abyss because they knew that it would involve the complete removal of their influence upon the earth
- **Conclusion:** These demons could either be imprisoned in the abyss or they could be allowed to continue their influence on earth, but they could not do both

**Revelation 9:1-6** ~ Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of **the bottomless pit** was given to him. 2 He opened **the bottomless pit**, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. 3 Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4 They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man. 6 And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them.

- The “bottomless pit” (Gr. *abyssos*) is the same as the “abyss” of Revelation 20
- The implication of this text is that the demons who are released have no influence as long as they are locked up in the pit
- In other words, the confinement of the demons in the abyss involves a complete removal of activity on the earth

## 2. The Purpose of the Binding

- Amillennialists argue that the purpose of Satan’s binding is expressed in v. 3 ~ so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed
- They argue that the devil is bound in this respect only

<sup>11</sup> Matt Waymeyer, “The Binding of Satan in Revelation 20” in *The Master’s Seminary Journal*, 26/1 (Spring 2015), 25.



- Thus, although he cannot deceive the nations any longer, he is free to partake in every other activity described in the NT (i.e. 1 Pet 5:8)
- This is what amillennialists mean when they refer to a “partial restriction” in which Satan’s activities are limited but not eliminated
- A premillennial response:
  - “The degree of Satan’s restriction is determined not by the purpose clause *alone*, but also by the location of his imprisonment, the abyss, which removes him from earth and cuts him off from any influence there.”<sup>12</sup>
  - Additionally, Satan IS deceiving the nations today (see for example 2 Cor 4:4; 2 Tim 2:26; 1 John 5:19)
  - Furthermore, John has already stated that Satan will continue to deceive the nations right up until the time Jesus returns: Rev 12:9 ~ And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

### 3. Parallel Passages

- Amillennialists argue that numerous NT passages support the fact that Satan was bound at Christ’s first coming including the following:

**John 12:31-32** ~ Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.

**Colossians 2:15** ~ When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

**Hebrews 2:14-15** ~ Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

**1 John 3:8** ~ the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

- Therefore, they argue that the thousand years of Revelation 20 is a present reality
- A premillennial response:
  - “In making this argument, amillennialists appeal to the hermeneutical principle ‘that Scripture should interpret Scripture and that the more obscure passage should be interpreted in the light of the more clear passage.’ In this case, amillennialists see Rev 20:1–3 as the more obscure passage and Matt 12:29, Luke 10:17–18, John 12:31–32, Col 2:15, Heb 2:14–15, 1 John 3:8, and Rev 12:7–12 as those clearer passages which should be used to interpret the binding of Satan. The problem is that none of these supposed parallels actually refer to what is described in Rev 20:1–3, and therefore this approach fails to bring clarity to the divinely intended meaning of John’s vision.”<sup>13</sup>
  - Additionally, the amillennial argument cannot account for the release of Satan in Rev 20:7 because, if the binding of Satan in Rev 20 refers to Christ’s work of redemption, then apparently that work will be undone when Satan is released

<sup>12</sup> Matt Waymeyer, *TES Premillennialism Seminar Session 3* notes

<sup>13</sup> Matt Waymeyer, “The Binding of Satan in Revelation 20” in *The Master’s Seminary Journal*, 26/1 (Spring 2015), 36.