

The Coming Earthly Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, Part 1

Revelation 20

Well, now it's our joy to turn to the Word of God and most particularly to - book of Revelation. And we come now to chapter 20 in Revelation, "The Coming Earthly Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ." This is one of the most significant chapters in all the Bible. It is in every sense of the word a climactic chapter, bringing us to the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth in His coming glory in His Kingdom. His Kingdom is the climax, it is the culmination of redemptive history as it unfolds in this world, and so we're really reaching the climax, the culmination of all of human history.

This is a day that was described by the prophet *Jeremiah* in **chapter 23** and **verses 5 and 6** with these words, "***Behold, the days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I shall raise up for David a righteous branch, and He will reign as King and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days, Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is His name by which He will be called, the Lord our righteousness. Behold, the days are coming.'***"

All of God's redemptive purpose since the fall of man culminates in the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, as it has been called, paradise regained. Paradise. Paradise lost, paradise regained.

This glorious paradise regained, this Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, this one-thousand-year millennial reign of the Savior over the earth is the fulfillment and the climax of all redemptive promise and the realization of the hope of all the saints of all the ages because at that particular time, God will bring salvation and righteousness and peace to the very center of the universe.

It is at that time that Jesus Christ will reign fully as King of kings and Lord of lords over all creation. This thousand-year Kingdom is the end of human history, the end of the present universe as we know it. And after the thousand-year Kingdom is completed, is over, everything as we know it now in the created order will be completely destroyed because it has all been tainted by sin. Even though Christ is reigning, He is reigning over a renewed and regenerated and restored earth and universe, but not a re-created one, and so it still bears the marks of sin.

And after the thousand years is over, the Lord will destroy completely the universe and create a new heaven and a new earth in eternal perfection, unstained by sin, and that will become the everlasting Kingdom.

So redemptive history runs from the fall of man through this period of time until Jesus comes back in judgment, judges the world, sets up His Kingdom, His Kingdom lasts for a thousand years in a renewed and rejuvenated world, and then the whole universe as we know it, even in its renewed state, is destroyed and makes way for the new heaven and the new earth untouched by sin of any kind, and that is the fullness of God's eternal paradise.

Now, it is this thousand-year Kingdom, known as the millennial Kingdom, that is the theme of the chapter that we look at, chapter 20 in the book of Revelation. The final reign of the Lord Jesus Christ during those thousand years is in the city of Jerusalem on the throne of David over Israel as a nation and over the whole world.

There are a couple of things that I need to say to you before we look at the text itself because, of course, this has been a theological battleground, this matter of the Kingdom, for years, and I want to help you to get an understanding of why we believe and teach what we do. First of all, let me say that foundational to any understanding of the Kingdom is to capture the chronological order of the book of Revelation.

The passage fits into the chronology of the book. If you go into chapter 19 and verse 11, you have the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ comes. At the end of chapter 19, that is described in great detail. He arrives in verse 16 as King of kings and Lord of lords. There is an immense battle that ensues. He is the conqueror and the victor. The holocaust of that battle is described at the end of chapter 19 as the carnage lays all over the place and is devoured by birds. And then we read about the beast and the false prophet in verse 20 being thrown into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.

And all the rest were killed with a sword which came from the mouth of the Lord who returned. All the birds were filled with their flesh. So, there you have the devastating judgment at the return of Jesus Christ.

Over in *chapter 21 and verse 1*, “*I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth passed away.*” Here you have the eternal state at the end of the Kingdom.

So, you have the Lord Jesus Christ returning in chapter 19, you have the creation of a new heaven and a new earth in chapter 21, and in the middle you have chapter 20. **Chapter 20 describes the thousand-year Kingdom. The chronology is very simple.**

- **You have a period of time called the tribulation. It started in Revelation 6, it ended in Revelation 19. It ends with the return of Christ and His total judgment of the ungodly.**
- **After that judgment, chapter 20, He sets up His Kingdom.**
- **At the end of His Kingdom, He creates the new heavens and the new earth.**

That is the simple, clear chronology of the book of Revelation and certainly is an interpretive key. Whatever you're going to do with this Kingdom, you have to deal with the chronology that is here in the book of Revelation. And clearly the Kingdom is placed between the great tribulation, the return of Christ at the end of the tribulation, and the creation of the new heavens and the new earth. It fits right in between those events.

Having said that this must be understood in terms of its chronology, I want to go outside the chronology and mention also that the details of the Kingdom are only given in a summary fashion here in chapter 20. In fact, it's a very limited presentation.

It gives us just some general perspectives here and does not exhaust, by any means, all that could be said about the character or the nature of that thousand years. And yet there is instruction about the Kingdom itself throughout the Bible.

In fact, if we were to just study all of the places in the Scriptures that deal with the Kingdom, we would be at it for months and months. It is scattered throughout the Old Testament, and it is scattered throughout the New Testament.

What we're going to do in chapter 20 is use chapter 20 as an important framework. And as we go through it, we'll touch some of the passages in the Old and New Testament that will enrich and expand our understanding of the nature of the Kingdom. There are what I would call many explanatory texts that delineate the character of the Kingdom more than we have right here in chapter 20, but it frames for us a marvelous chronological skeleton on which to hang the flesh of the rest of what Scripture says.

So, remember now, chapter 19 closes with the battle of Armageddon, which is the culmination of the day of the Lord, which is a time of judgment in which the hand of God intervenes powerfully and publicly by the coming of Jesus Christ to destroy the ungodly who remain. In that war, the antichrist and the false prophet lead the armies of the ungodly to battle with Christ and they all perish. They are all executed, all of them without Christ.

It is a horror of a slaughter that you see at the end of the nineteenth chapter, and then the antichrist and the false prophet are thrown into the burning lake of fire where they will dwell forever with Satan and the demons and the ungodly from all the ages.

Then, having executed judgment on the earth, the Lord Jesus renovates the earth. And remember, it's been being renovated during the tribulation, right? All kinds of horrible things have happened in the judgments of the seals and the trumpets, and the bowls and we've gone through those in great detail for months and months. But those, in effect, renovate the universe. You have the sky collapsing. You have things flying out of space. You have the earth in convulsions, both in the land and the sea and the fresh water.

You have all kinds of things catapulting into the earth, and there is a terrible chaotic disintegration of the universe as we know it, and particularly the earth. And after the day of the Lord comes, apparently, the Lord then does some more renovation. We remember reading - don't we? - about the fact that He will carve a valley from the Mediterranean toward the Dead Sea and a new river flowing through that period or that location will turn the desert into a blossoming place.

So, there are a number of things that are going to reconfigure the world. Eden will be restored. It will be like the garden of Eden again, paradise will be regained. This renovated earth then will become the place where Jesus rules. He will sit on the throne of David in the city of Jerusalem, that great city from which He will rule the world.

He will be truly the God of that age and the whole world and all of its economics and all of its labor and all of its education and all of its social life and all of its morality, and all of its understanding and learning and opinions and thoughts and ideas and concepts will reflect the mind of Christ.

It will be the opposite of a world like ours today, which has as the god of this age, Satan, and everything in it reflecting him. It is this very utopia, this golden age that men have longed for. From the remotest point of antiquity, men have dreamed of a golden age, they have longed for a utopia. They have written about it. They have desired an age of righteousness and an age of peace and an age when oppression would cease, and injustice would be gone and war would end. And poets have sung of it and - poets, I should say, have written of it and singers have sung of it and politicians have promised to bring it. Prophets have predicted it, the world has cried for it, but it doesn't come until Jesus comes Himself.

By the way, that longing, so strong in the human heart, is one reason why people will fall victim easily to antichrist because they will imagine that he will bring the long-awaited utopia. The true era of blessedness, however, cannot come until Jesus comes.

This thousand-year Kingdom, then, is the subject of the twentieth chapter. It is called by many names in Scripture. Just in the New Testament alone, **there are verses that call it the regeneration, *Matthew 19:28*. The times of refreshing, *Acts 3:19*. The times of restitution, *Acts 3:21*. And the dispensation of the fullness of times, *Ephesians 1:10*.**

And there are many more Scriptures on the subject of the Kingdom age. In fact, there are more Scriptures on this subject than most all other subjects that the Bible deals with.

In fact, you could argue that the Kingdom is the key theme in all of Scripture. That all of Scripture really moves toward the fact that God rules, that God is sovereign, and that the goal of redemptive history is an eternal Kingdom in which God rules.

The Kingdom, then, becomes a major - a major comprehension. Anyone who is going to understand the Bible must understand the Kingdom. Everything points toward that. All through the Old Testament, vast numbers of passages deal with it, far too many, as I said, to cover in this message.

You can go to **2 Samuel chapter 7** and read about the Kingdom. You can go to **Psalms 2** and read about the Kingdom. You can read about it in **Isaiah 2, in Isaiah 11, Isaiah 35, and Isaiah 40 to 48**. You can read about it in **Ezekiel** in a number of places - chapter 34, for example. You can read about it in **Daniel chapter 2, chapter 7**. You can read about it in **Hosea chapter 3, Joel chapter 3, Zephaniah chapter 3, or Zechariah chapter 14**. And those are but a brief smattering of samples where you can read about the Kingdom.

It was so much a part of Jewish thought, the Jewish writers in the post-biblical times used to talk about the ***malkuth shamayim***. The ***malkuth shamayim*** is another - really a term for the Kingdom, it's the term Kingdom of heaven. **Malkuth shamayim is a Hebrew phrase indicating God's coming world dominion.**

And even after biblical times, the Jews looked forward to the Kingdom of heaven. They saw it as a time when God would exercise power over the heathen and when He would subject the world to Himself. **The *malkuth shamayim* means the kingship of God is extended over all mankind, it is fully realized.**

And the *malkuth shamayim* is a part of the prayers of Jewish people. It is the object of Jewish prayers since ancient days. The Kaddish, for example, opens with these words, “*Glorified and sanctified be His great name in the world He has created according to His own pleasure. May He establish His royal dominion and start His deliverance of His people and may He bring His Messiah and redeem His people in the time of your life and in your days and in the time of the life of the whole house of Israel with haste and in a short time, and thou shalt say, Amen.*”

The Old Testament is so loaded with the anticipation of the coming Kingdom of God on earth that the Jews continue to pray that it might come to pass. Someday God is going to reign over this earth and He’s going to reign through the Messiah, and His reign rises out of His own sovereign nature. It rises out of His own sovereign purpose. It was reflected in the garden before Adam sinned when God reigned, and it will be restored by the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, and God will reign again. It is really in the biblical doctrine of the Kingdom that we have the Christian view of history.

History is headed toward the reign of God. We find God exercising His sovereignty spiritually throughout redemptive history, but He will exercise it temporally in the coming earthly Kingdom.

But God certainly exercised His rule in the garden before the fall, and even after the fall, He exercised His rule over mankind in a spiritual sense by saving them from their sin. The Kingdom of God is the sphere in which God rules by means of His sovereign power. Now it is the sphere, of course, of salvation as well.

So, God rules spiritually now over the hearts of those who know Him by faith. And that's been the case since His saving work began. There is a spiritual element of the Kingdom that has existed since God started redeeming men. But this is not that spiritual Kingdom of which we read here, but rather that earthly literal Kingdom which comes at the culmination of human history.

Now, let me just take you a step further by helping you to understand what is involved in this debate about the Kingdom. If you just read the book of Revelation, you're going to come up with what is known as a premillennial view of the Kingdom, that is to say that the Lord Jesus comes and sets up His Kingdom; that is, His coming is premillennial. **Millennium is simply a word for a thousand, a Latin word at that. So, the thousand-year Kingdom, premillennialists believe, follows the return of Christ - that is, Christ has to come and set it up. That is the chronology of the book of Revelation.**

And that has been the hope of the hearts of Jews, as I quoted to you from the Kaddish. The Jews have said to God through this prayer, “**Come, come, come, bring your Messiah and set up your Kingdom.**” So, they understood the Old Testament Kingdom promises were connected to the coming of the Messiah, and the Kingdom could not come apart from the arrival of the Messiah, and then He would establish His reign.

So, we can say safely, then, that everything - everything up to chapter 20 is premillennial. The tribulation, the day of the Lord, the return of Christ, it's all been premillennial. Now chapter 20 is millennial, and chapter 21 is postmillennial, the new heaven and the new earth.

Now, at this point let me see if I can't help you to understand the three views that exist about the millennium. The first one, as I just mentioned, is the premillennial view. And that just means Christ will come before, preceding the Kingdom. Christ comes in person, visibly, publicly at the end of God's wrath and judgment on the world to set up the Kingdom. At that time, Satan is bound for a literal thousand-year Kingdom. Kingdom is set up on earth in the city of Jerusalem on the throne of David. **All of that is based - and here's the key - on a literal interpretation of Scripture.**

All of that comes out of a literal interpretation of Scripture. If you just take what it says obviously, interpret it in the normal manner of interpreting, you'll come up with a premillennial view. As I said, the chronology of Revelation is explicit, and the promises of the Old Testament about the Kingdom identify the throne of David, the city of Jerusalem. They talk about a real Kingdom.

They talk about a time of refreshing, of restitution, a time when Israel is in the land and prospering and the real desert blossoms like a rose, a time when the warfare and the animosity and hostility in the animal kingdom is ended, a time when people live prolonged lives and someone who dies at a hundred dies as a baby. An incredible time, a time with a completely renewed and regenerated world.

If you just take all of that literally, you come up with a premillennial view. And one of the compelling reasons to take it all literally is because there's no other way to interpret the Bible because as soon as you say you don't have to interpret the Bible literally, then what in the Bible don't you have to interpret literally?

I mean how do you - how can you just say, "*Well, we don't interpret prophecy literally, but we interpret everything else literally*"? **On the basis of what? We maintain what we call a literal, historical, grammatical, contextual hermeneutic of interpretation because that's the only way that we can understand the Bible, to take it at its historical, contextual, linguistic face value. And when you do that, you find you're drawn to be a premillennialist because that's the literal aspect.**

Now, one of the compelling things is this: The Kingdom in the Old Testament is promised over and over and over and over to Israel. And when you look at the texts in which God makes that promise to Israel, there is also a corresponding negative promise. It kind of runs like this: When you obey me, when you follow me, when you truly worship me, I'll bring you the Kingdom. When you don't, I'll punish you. Right? It's that old blessing-and-cursing thing.

And we only simply need to ask one question when you go to a passage where the Lord promises chastening on Israel's disobedience and promises the Kingdom when they obey, all we have to ask, really, is one question, and the question is this: Did the promises of punishment and the promises of chastening and the promises of judgment on Israel come to pass literally? What's the answer? Yes. I mean they were all fulfilled in the actual, literal nation of Israel.

Now, if all of the promises of judgment and punishment and cursing were fulfilled historically on the nation Israel - and that can be verified - if all of those were literal, then why would we imagine that those promises of blessing would be figurative? Would be spiritualized? Now you have no justification for splitting your interpretive principle and saying, "*Well, all the curses are literal, and all the blessings are figurative.*" **All the curses literally will be fulfilled and have been, we know that, historically, on the nation Israel, but all of the promised blessing will be fulfilled in the church. And Israel has no future.**

That's one of the problems. The problem is really a hermeneutical problem, that is to say that's - it's an interpretation problem. If you just take the Bible at face value, take the chronology of Revelation at face value, you're going to come up with a real Kingdom for Israel in the land in Jerusalem on the throne of David with a Messiah who comes out of the line of David, reigning not only over Israel, but over the whole world. You're going to have the apostles there, you're going to have the redeemed there of all the ages, you're going to have the glorious characteristics of the Kingdom as they are clearly defined.

It's going to last a thousand years. It's going to follow the return of Jesus Christ because that's explicitly what the literal text yields.

By the way, the premillennial view says things will get worse. Right? I mean they're going to get worse. Just read the book of Revelation. It's going to get worse before He comes, it's not going to get better.

Let's turn to a second view. It's called postmillennialism. This view flourishes generally - historically, it flourishes in America, and it flourishes in America when it's been a long time since we had a big war. Now, that may seem a little facetious but it's pretty much true. It sort of dies out when we enter into a world war because then the postmillennialists have a problem.

Because postmillennialism says this: Premillennialism says things are going to get worse. The postmills say things are going to get better. And things will get better and better and better and better, and we're just going to go waltzing into the Kingdom, and Christ isn't going to come until the end of the Kingdom, until the Kingdom's over. He's going to come at the end. You say, "***Who's going to set it up?***" **We are. That's the postmill view. We, the church, will bring about on the world a period of righteousness.**

Christ will not be here literally, only spiritually, working through His church, and by His power in His church, He will triumph over the world of men, He will triumph over the world of demons, and He will bring about, through His church, really, a Kingdom, and His personal return will occur at the end of that period.

And they wouldn't be literal enough to say it's an actual thousand years, necessarily, but it's a period of time.

You say, "***Is that based on a literal interpretation?***" No, it's based on a combination of literal and non-literal interpretations, and it utterly and totally ignores the chronology of the book of Revelation.

You're, I know, familiar with this even though you may not know it. Postmillennialism today has taken on the form of Kingdom theology. Sometimes it shows up in a spiritual warfare mode. That is to say, we're going to conquer the demons, and we're going to conquer Satan, and we're going to bind Satan, and we're going to bind the demons, and by this exercise of the church's power, we're going to take the authority of Satan and all of his demons, and we're going to push them down, and we're going to stand on their necks, and we're going to bring the work of Satan to a halt, and we're going to take all these demon powers captive, and we're going to bring the Kingdom.

That's the Kingdom theology concept. That's espoused by the people in the signs-and-wonders movement who believe that they are going to enter a spiritual warfare with Satan and all of his demons and conquer them by virtue of the power in the church and that's going to bring the Kingdom. It's a form of postmillennialism, and it has a lot of different nuances, according to whoever you might be talking to. So, it's hard sometimes to define this as a single thing because it can take many forms.

There's another form of it that you might even call, in a more liberal sense, the liberation theology. Liberation theology says we have to bring the Kingdom, and so in order to bring the Kingdom, let's go get machine guns and mow down the establishment. And it was liberation theology that the liberals espoused, for example, in Latin America and they used it to start some revolutions. It is also a form of postmillennialism that would be held by someone, say, like a Pat Robertson who believes - he said when he was running for president, *"If I'm elected president, we'll be well on way to offering the Kingdom to Christ."*

His view would not be that we capture the satanic world, his view would be we capture the institutions of men. We capture the government. We capture the Congress, the Senate, the presidential office, the judicial system, and we take control of all of that, and we bring in the Kingdom through the body politic. And so we are, as a church, we need to mobilize, we need to spend millions of dollars to capture the airwaves and the media and the newspapers and all of that kind of thing and we need to get all the places of influence and the universities, and we need to be the educators.

And we'll literally take over society and we'll make it Christian, we'll take control of the cultures of the world, and then when it all gets into our hands, we'll give it to Christ. **That's postmillennial, that the church becomes the agent that brings the Kingdom. At the end of that period of time when the church has taken over the world, Christ will come.**

So, the premillennialist says things are going to get worse. The postmill says things are going to get better.

That's why it only flourishes when we're a long way from a major war because it seems to me that in my reading, as soon as a major war, a world war hit, the postmill people sort of disappeared because, obviously, things weren't getting better. And even today, though they are vocal, and they are writing and speaking very rapidly on all their fronts, it doesn't seem to be flying if you look at the trends in our contemporary world.

Now, the third view, and the one that's probably more worthy of our attention than the postmill view, is what's called amillennialism. That means those are the folks who don't believe in any millennium. They don't - by the way, the postmill would be both literal and non-literal in the sense that they literally believe there will be a Kingdom, they literally believe there will be a time of peace and righteousness and all that, but it is also figurative because they don't think it's Israel, they think it's the church and that it's not with Christ on the earth but only on the earth mediating through His church. It's not a literal Jerusalem and it's not a literal throne of David, but it is an actual time of righteousness and peace. So, it's kind of a combination of the literal and the non-literal.

Now you come to the amillennialist, and the amillennialist basically says there is no Kingdom. Or better and fairer, all the Kingdom there is what we've got now. Things - things are going to stay the same. The premill says they're going to get worse, the postmill says they're going to get better, the amill says it's going to stay the same. It's how it is and it's just the way it is, and it's just going to be this way, and it'll keep being this way, and Jesus will come.

Because they say the Kingdom is now. The Kingdom is the church age, the Kingdom is now. Christ is ruling now. Christ is here. And at the end of this period of time, it's not a thousand years, they would completely reject a literal interpretation of Revelation with regard to prophecy. They either would try to put it into history or make it all figurative. They would either take the book of Revelation and make it describe the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. or they would just make it figurative, a non-literal interpretation of Kingdom passages.

They would say all the promises of the Kingdom, for example, to Israel in the Old Testament, all the promises of the Kingdom to Israel will be fulfilled in the church in the church age right now. We are the Israel of God. There's no future for Israel. God will never revive Israel. They'll never be redeemed as a nation. They'll never go back into a Kingdom. There never will be a real throne in Jerusalem. That's all figurative stuff. Everything is fulfilled in the church.

But that is the amillennial view, that things are going to stay the same because this is the Kingdom, this is all there is of it. The reign of Jesus Christ is figurative. Christ is here ruling, and He'll just keep ruling in a spiritual sense until finally He comes and takes us to heaven, and it'll all end in one moment.

Now, that tends to be the view of most reformed theologians. Some of them are what we would call historic premill, I might comment on that in a moment.

But traditionally, reformed theology, which is great theology, great soteriology, great pneumatology, sometimes not-so-great ecclesiology and usually not-so-great eschatology, but that is the tendency to be the view of the reformed and also the puritan era. And part of the reason for that is that by the time - or at the time that they refined and defined their theology, the eschatological debate had not really engaged itself.

There's a progress of dogma - I don't want to lose you on this, but the doctrines of the Scripture have defined themselves through history. Church councils and writers and scholars and authors have dealt with doctrinal issues, and they've moved through the various doctrines until coming ultimately to a study of eschatology, which has really been in the last couple hundred years. **So, the reformation and the puritan era kind of came before the crystallizing of eschatology as the church hammered out its doctrine.**

Remember, now, the church was in the Dark Ages until about 1500, and so from 1500 to the current time, there was the development and understanding of all the great doctrines of Scripture, and the last to come along were the doctrines of last things. And in the time of the puritans and the reformers, they weren't nearly as fine-tuned as they are today.

So, when you read puritan literature or read reformed theology, very often you find it to be amillennial.

And you want to ask this question, because this is what the amillennials would say, *“Has the Kingdom already come? Is it here? This is it? Are we in it right now? Is this as good as it gets? Is this paradise regained? Is this the rule of God? Is this Eden? Or should we join the postmills and say it’s just going to get better and better and better and better?”* **Frankly, either one of those two views is untenable if you interpret Scripture literally.**

Frankly, postmillennialism has nothing in the Scripture to commend it - nothing. I remember when Dr. Feinberg wrote his book called Premillennialism or Amillennialism, and a few postmillennialists were insulted because he didn’t even deal with it. It’s very hard to deal with in the Bible since it doesn’t really have any Scripture to commend it. And it’s sort of a mishmash of the literal and the non-literal approach. Amillennialism spiritualizes the text to make its case, and spiritualizing the text opens Pandora’s box because once you deny the literal, if you say a thousand years doesn’t mean a thousand years, then what does it mean?

And, well, you say it means this, and you say it means that, and you say it means this, and somebody else says it means the other, and we have absolutely no way to tell. Once you have escaped the literal, there is no way to confine it.

Covenant theologians who espouse amillennialism have one major problem that is introduced in our text, and just so we can say we did it, let’s read the first three verses.

Revelation 20, verses 1 to 3, “I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years and threw him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him so that he should not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were completed. After these things, he must be released for a short time.”

Now, let me ask you something very plain and very straightforward. Where is Satan during the Kingdom? In one word, bound, out of the picture. Now, the amillennialists say we're in the Kingdom. If we're in the Kingdom, Satan is what? **Bound.** That doesn't make sense. And the postmillennialist says we might be in the Kingdom, and things are getting better and better, but the clear word of Scripture is that during the time of the Kingdom, Satan is bound. Verse 3 says he is bound until the thousand years are completed, and then he's released. Satan is bound during the Kingdom.

Now, that poses a rather significant problem because - and, of course, they'll use **Matthew 12:22 to 29** - actually, 29 says - about **binding a strong man**, and here's what they'll say. They'll say, “*Well, at the cross*” - **this is an amillennialist.** “*At the cross, Satan was bound.*” Is that true? In the first place, they're immediately cast into a figurative role because the cross is more than a thousand years ago, so that ignores the one-thousand-year period.

And, furthermore, how in the world can Satan be bound when Acts 5:3 says Satan entered the heart of Ananias and Sapphira and made them lie? And how can Satan be bound when 2 Corinthians 4:4 says that he is blinding the minds of those who do not believe? And how can Satan be bound when Peter says he goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour in 1 Peter 5:8? And how can he be bound when 1 Thessalonians 2:18 says that the devil hinders the ministers of God? And how can he be bound when it says he goes around disguised as an angel of light along with all the rest of his ministers? And if he's bound, then the binding is useless.

Revelation 20 could never describe the present age. The god of this world is alive and moving, he's everywhere. Chapter 20 has to be future.

Amillennialists who try to tell us this is the kingdom have a difficult time explaining Satan being bound. And if he is bound, why are these folks going around binding him again? And the postmillennialists who want to say we probably are in the Kingdom, it sure feels good, you know, we won the election in some city or, you know, we knocked off some demons the other night in our warfare session, would say we might be in the Kingdom. If that's true, then is Satan really bound? Are all of his demons bound?

Just another question that comes to my mind. It's basic to interpret numbers the way we would normally interpret them. If you go into the book of Revelation, for example, here's a little exercise.

Everywhere in the book of Revelation, numbers are used literally. It talks about seven churches having seven ministers. Seven literal churches. The book of Revelation refers to twelve tribes, does it mean twelve? Yes. And twelve apostles, does it mean twelve? Yes.

And it refers to ten lamps, five months, one third of mankind, two witnesses, forty-two months, twelve hundred sixty days, twelve stars, ten horns, sixteen hundred stadia, three demons, five fallen kings. Now, what are we going to do with all those numbers? You say seven isn't seven, five isn't five, a thousand isn't a thousand, twelve isn't twelve? Then what are they and who do we turn to to tell us?

All those numbers are used in a normal sense. John says, *"I saw this many kings in the vision, and I saw that many horns, and I saw that many crowns, and I saw that many churches, and that many letters and this many months and that many days and this many years, and this many people, and a fourth, and a third, and two thirds."* **The only symbolic numbers in the whole book of Revelation are in chapter 1, verse 4, where it talks about the seven spirits and it refers to the sevenfold work of the Spirit of God or the number 666 in 13:18. But apart from that, all other numbers are used in a normal sense.**

Now, that doesn't prove that the one thousand years is literal, but it forces those who say it isn't to prove it isn't. There's certainly nothing in this text. By the way, the term one thousand appears six times, and what is there in the text that would make us make it symbolic?

Never in the Scripture is the word “year” used with a number that is not literal. The number “one thousand” is not used in Scripture ever as a symbol, and it’s used in a number of places in the Scripture, and it’s never used symbolically.

Even St. Augustine, in the fifth century, who popularized the idea that the church received the promises to Israel in the Scripture and sort of invented that concept, even Augustine, who believed that Israel got all the curses but the church becomes spiritual Israel and gets all the blessings and there’s no more future for Israel, even Augustine believed that the one thousand was a literal period of time because there was no reason not to believe that.

From the earliest post-apostolic era, the church understood the millennium of Revelation 20 as a literal one thousand years, Papias, Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian all give evidence of this fact in their writings. And the church taught nothing else until the fourth century and then Augustine popularized it even more.

A literal Kingdom of one thousand years after Christ’s return and before the new heavens and new earth is the subject of this chapter, and any other viewpoint just gets so confounded that you can’t find your way through here without some magic.

The bottom line in all this discussion is to take a literal interpretation of the Scripture and simply follow the chronology of Revelation and you’re going to come up with a premillennial view.

And John Walvoord is correct when he suggests, “***The only reason for denying such a conclusion would be to avoid being a premillennialist.***”

So, as we come to this passage, the golden age arrives. I just had to get all that out of the way because I know some of you would be sitting there and wondering whether you even accepted this Kingdom, so I wanted to clarify that for you. We come in the chronology and with the literal interpretation, and we take Scripture at face value because I'm sure not going to tell you some secret meaning.

This is it. As the Kingdom opens, the temple has been built, the nations of the earth are coming there to worship the true God and Christ. Prosperity reigns from pole to pole in a paradise regained. The garden of Eden is worldwide, it's back. Poverty is unknown, so is injustice. Everyone has his heart's desire. Ah, it's an incredible, incredible time.

We don't know exactly what it'll be like. It could be a time with no prisons, no hospitals, no mental institutions, no barracks, no saloons, no houses of ill repute, no gambling dens, no homes for the aged and the infirm. The bloom of youth is on everyone's cheek. Cemeteries are crumbling relics of the past and tears are infrequent. The wolf and the lamb, the calf and the lion, the cow and the bear, the child and the scorpion are all at peace. Jesus is come. The golden age has dawned. The earth is filled with the knowledge of God. Jesus is Lord. He rules the nation with a rod of iron.

His reign is righteous and the nations obey. Sin is visited with swift and certain judgment. It's everything that you could never even imagine beyond your wildest dreams, that kind of life. This is the Kingdom. This is what we live for. This is what we wait for. This is what we hope for. And, beloved, this is what is really coming. And this isn't it. We're not in it. And believe me, Satan is not bound. We're waiting for him to be bound, but he can't be bound until Jesus comes.

Now, as this text unfolds and we run down through the first ten verses, we're to talk about five things: the removal of Satan, the reign of the saints, the return of Satan, the revolt of society, and the resurrection of sinners. That's going to be the framework that we're going to deal with as we go through these verses. As I said, it won't be comprehensive, but it will be exegetical. And we'll expand it so that we understand these areas.

Well, I had hoped to do the first point. We'll save it until the next time, the removal of Satan. Bow with me - will you? - and we'll have a word of prayer.

We thank you, Father, that you are the author of history, that you have laid it out from before the foundation of the world. We thank you that the Kingdom will come. We're not in it, this isn't it, though Jesus Christ reigns in the hearts of His own, and in that sense, the Kingdom is here. And though in its fullness soteriologically it operates now as all the elect come to faith, yet in its earthly aspect, it awaits the return of Christ.

You could never be satisfied until paradise was regained. You could never be satisfied until the earth was restored to the way you wanted it. You could never be satisfied until man, the ultimate man, the Son of man, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself becomes the King of the earth. You could never be satisfied until it was the way it ought to be, until the god of this age was dethroned and all of his demon hosts with him and all of the wicked who followed him destroyed and the world knew only the peace and bliss and righteousness and joy of the Lord Jesus Christ's dominance.

And we thank you that we'll be a part of the Kingdom, even though we be caught up to heaven to be with Jesus Christ, we'll come back with Him when He returns to reign for those thousand years. And then after that, forever and ever in the new heaven and the new earth.

We thank you that we can take Scripture at its face value and know that you're in charge of history. We don't have to bring the Kingdom; only Christ can bring it. Ours is not a political agenda but ours, rather, is a spiritual ministry. The Kingdom will come into the hearts of those who believe, and it's our task to bring them the gospel. We're not to - we're not to accept the mandate that comes at us so often to try to bring the kingdom politically, but we must work to bring it spiritually into the hearts of those who believe.

Father, we thank you that the Kingdom has come to us. We who love you, serve you. You are our God, you are our King, you are our Lord and Master, and we obey you. You rule over us. You chasten us and you pour out great blessing, the blessing of inheritance upon us.

We thank you that we're the subjects of your kingdom and we can't wait until the whole world knows it, for that glorious time when rebellion is over and when Christ reigns. And we would pray for your kingdom to come, to come soteriologically; that is, to come in a saving way in the hearts of men now, and to come temporally and earthly and in its fullness in the consummation and the fulfillment of the great millennium. We would pray that it would come soon.

We live, Lord, in a disintegrating world. Things are not staying the same and things are not getting better, they're getting worse, and they keep getting worse until you intervene. We say with John, **"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."** Thank you for that great hope that we, too, will live in the regeneration, in the restitution, in the glories of the Kingdom and then on into the new heaven and the new earth.

What a blessed hope, what a privilege, for which we give you all the glory and praise, in Christ's name, Amen.