

Revelation 20 and the "Thousand Year Reign"

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Robert is a native of Tennessee, born in Bradford, Tennessee October 30, 1931. He was baptized into Christ in 1944 and began preaching in 1949. He is a graduate of Freed-Hardeman University, David Lipscomb University and George Peabody College for Teachers. He has done local work for over 49 years, over 30 of those years with the church in Ripley, Tennessee where he still labors. He preaches in about a dozen gospel meetings yearly and speaks on 20-25 lectureships. He has written 30 books, contributed chapters to well over 150 books and written some 25-30 tracts. He is staff writer for a number of religious publications. For 12 years (1974-1986) he wrote manuscripts and extended outlines for V.E. Howard and the International Gospel Hour. For 17 years he wrote the Gospel Advocate Senior Quarterly (1 ½ years), the Gospel Advocate Adult Quarterly (10 ½ years) and the Gospel Advocate Annual Lesson Commentary Companion (5 years). For more than 18 years he has been involved with a prison ministry. He does radio and television preaching and is an instructor with the Online Academy of Biblical Studies. He is married to the former Irene Crump of Nampa, Idaho. They have 2 children (Rebecca Davis and Tim). They have grandchildren (Ryan Philip Davis, Jonathan Taylor Davis, Jeff Andrew Taylor and Lori Beth Taylor). Robert's late parents were members of the church more than 50 years each and his father served as an elder for a number of years during the 50's and 60's.

Introduction

It is an annual delight and high honor to come here each September for this good and great lectureship as I have done for many years. Gratitude is extended to Jack Williams, the elders and all members here at 39th Street for this invitation to come and speak.

In my judgement, Revelation 20 and Matthew 24 are the most misunderstood and misapplied chapters in the whole of the New Testament. Dispensational premillennialism makes shambles of Revelation 20.

Premillennialism Defined and Depicted

This very long term is out of literary company with a Book that majors in the usage of short words. The average Word in the KJV is composed of five letters. This unbiblical term has sixteen letters. The "pre" means before; the "millennial" refers to a thousand years; the "ism" part means its doctrine or teaching. Quite correctly, it means the doctrine is not so!

Old historic premillennialism dates back to the second and third centuries of the A.D. era. This is not far enough back to be apostolic which it is not! Dispensational premillennialism is less than two centuries old beginning with John Darby of the 1800's. Dispensational premillennialism is less than two centuries old beginning with John Darby of the 1800's. He was born in 1800 and thus it would have been some years later when he originated this heresy. Scofield's Reference Bible helped popularize this movement during the 1900's. A whole corps of men like Hal Lindsey, Billy Graham, John R. Rice, John F. Walvoord and Taylor's *Living Bible Paraphrased* gave the movement much support during the past century and some of them are still its avid supporters. Two of the most

prominent patrons of this heresy now are Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins and their best sellers in the "Left Behind" series. These books are selling into the multiplied millions. Somebody is making a mint of money from these. Purchasers of such prefer error to truth!

Basically, this movement says Jesus came to establish the kingdom the Old Testament prophets saw, was rejected by the Jews, the Father and Son tabled kingdom establishment plans, hastily ushered in the church period, Jesus will come a second time to do what they say He failed to do the first time here, there will be a Rapture, the great tribulation, a thousand and seven years of interval between the resurrection of the righteous and that of the wicked, the Babble of Armageddon and a literal rule of Christ on earth for a thousand years. They situate this reign from David's throne in literal Jerusalem. According to them this thousand-year reign will be unlike anything previously known on this war-torn earth. The proponents of this totally materialistic theory look for a Golden utopia on earth with no sin, no violence, no war, no military, no dangerous animals and all will be rulers—kings, presidents, governors, mayors, etc. I know of no premillennialist who thinks he will be ruled by others, will be a servant or do any type of servile work during this unparalleled period of peace, happiness and total tranquility. All this requires a total overhaul of humanity and a totally new type of animal husbandry when children can and will play innocently and safely in the presence of formerly vicious animals like lions, tigers, etc. They rewrote Isaiah 11 seeking to make all this plausible. It all adds up to sheer nonsense. It is stupidity to the nth degree and then some!

Premillennialism and Revelation 20

The imaginative proponents of this malicious movement go wild when they get to Revelation 20. It is the sugarstick and the primer of their whole movement. They see the thousand years, saints reigning and a first and second resurrection and their fertile imaginations race into high gear and stay there! Their expertise with fiction is almost without parallel. LaHaye and Jenkins prove that with each book they produce in the "*Left Behind*" series. Their books would not be best sellers if they would write truth and nothing but truth relative to the Bible doctrine of final things. The same would be true with Hal Lindsey and his far-out books.

Listed here are fourteen major tenets of dispensational premillennialism not mentioned in Revelation 20—not even hinted at in any fashion.

1. National Israel and Palestine are not mentioned in Revelation 20.
2. The throne of David situated in literal Jerusalem is not mentioned in Revelation 20.
3. The second coming of Christ in order to establish a millennial reign on earth is not mentioned in Revelation 20.
4. The end of the so-called church age, called by them the era of grace, and the commencement of the millennial kingdom are not mentioned in Revelation 20.
5. The coronation of Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords is not mentioned in Revelation 20.
6. Earthly Jerusalem in Palestine is not mentioned in Revelation 20.
7. A Messianic reign for one thousand years—no more and no less—is not mentioned in Revelation 20.
8. The Rapture is not mentioned in Revelation 20—not even hinted at in any fashion.

9. Unparalleled tribulations for three and one-half years on earth are not mentioned in Revelation 20.
10. The various comings of judgment demanded by the Rapture and a so-called reign of Christ on earth are not mentioned in Revelation 20.
11. No mention is made of the Anti-Christ anywhere in Revelation in general or in chapter twenty in particular.
12. The carnal Battle of Armageddon is not mentioned in Revelations 20.
13. One thousand years or one thousand and seven years separating the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked are not mentioned in Revelation 20.
14. A Golden Utopia on earth filled with earthly comforts and worldly glory is not mentioned in Revelation 20.

In baseball, the umpire calls out a man who makes three strikes. What shall we say of a movement that strikes out fourteen times consecutively? It is a strange game the millennial proponents play in the realm of religion.

What Is the Millennium?

Revelation 20 is easily analyzed. Verses 1-3 speak about the binding of Satan. Verses 4-6 speak about the reign of certain ones with Christ. Verses 7-10 speak of Satan's final fling and then his eternal banishment to never ending Gehenna. Verses 11-15 speak of final judgment, the lake of fire for the ungodly and the implied destiny of those whose names are inscribed in the Lamb's Book of Life—the eternal home of the soul which is delineated so gloriously and beautifully in Revelation 21-22.

The thousand years, the most abused number in all the Bible, do not refer to Christ's reign on earth subsequent to His second coming and for good reasons. His reign ends then and He will return the Kingdom to his Heavenly Father as per 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. Furthermore, as per 2 Peter 3:10-14, there will be no earth in general or Jerusalem in particular as a reigning site for Him. The earth will then be burned up with all component elements melted.

Revelation 20 does not establish the exact duration of His reign, viz., a thousand literal years as per this pernicious fallacy. He has already reigned nearly twice the limit the premillennialists allow for Him. They think of themselves as being totally in the driver's seat about the duration of His reign, where it will be and the circumstances thereof. Verses 4-6 speak of those who reigned with him for a thousand years. It does not tell us a definite number of years for His reign. I have often used this illustration from my youth on a West Tennessee farm. I lived and worked with my father on this farm for fifteen years. But this does not establish the number of years he lived on that farm and worked its soil. Relative to this momentous matter two main thoughts or positions have been taken by our brethren through the years.

Some contend that the thousand years refer to the whole of Christianity from Pentecost to Christ's second advent. If Satan is bound for this entire period by gospel power, where does the little season

where he is loosed and deceives the nations again fit (vs. 7-8)? This view abets none of the premillennial poison we are fed constantly. Yet, I do not believe it is the better position of the two.

Another widely held view among our brethren connects Revelation 20 to Revelation 6. There, in the opening of the fifth seal, the aged prophet of Patmos envisions the souls of the martyred for the Master and for the testimony they heroically held. Underneath the altar they cried out,

How long, O Lord, holy and true, doest thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given to every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled (Revelation 6:10-11).

In Revelation 6, they are under the altar. In Revelation 20 they have ascended to thrones with reigning powers granted them. The passage lends emphasis to *their* reign, not Christ's reign. Hence, we have the resurrection of a cause from underneath the altar to thrones—reigning thrones. This is the first resurrection and no way is it connected with some type of fabricated Rapture. Mention is made specifically of seeing the *souls* of the *beheaded* and the *martyred*. Because they, like the ardent Antipas in Revelation 2:13, died as faithful, fervent martyrs, they will not be harmed at the second death or Eternal Gehenna.

The release of Satan will be a brief period of apostasy, deception, sin, etc. Then comes final judgment as depicted in Revelation 20:11-15.

This second described position has long been my preferred judgment on this controversial passage. I wish I knew more about Revelation 20 but I do know it is not premillennial in any of its fundamental facets.

Concluding Implications If Premillennialism Is True

If premillennialism is true, there should be *two* hours for the resurrection of all—not just one as per John 5:28-29. Premillennialists stretch that hour in John 5:28-29 into 1,000 years, 12,000 months, 52,000 weeks, 365,000 days and 8,760,000 hours. Some hour!! Include the Rapture for seven years and the interval added is even greater than the foregoing. There should be *two* last days and not just one as we have in John 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24 and 12:48. There should be *two* voices and not just one as per John 5:28-29. There should be *two* trumpets and *two* soundings and not just one trumpet and one sounding (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thes. 4:16). There should be *two* harvests and not just one as per Matthew 13:39. There should be two final judgments and not just one (Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10, 12). In fact, they stretch some of these twos into threes or more. They do not mind adding as long as it abets their materialistic theories. Finally, if premillennialism be true, the Bible should have been written in such fashion to serve as support for premillennialism and not as a militant refutation of every major facet of this poisonous philosophy.

Premillennialism is anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Spirit, anti-gospel, anti-spiritual and anti-Biblical. Yet countless millions subscribe to it hook, line and sinker. Sink it, they surely will. The why of such allegiance to it baffles me no end. It is deserving of *no* respect at all by any religious person.