

Since part of Revelation 20 appears to be literal, a Dutch Reformed theologian, Jean de Labadie, concluded in 1640 that Jesus would return to rule over the earthly kingdoms of men for 1000 years at the end of the Christian Era.

This “millennium,” so-called, was then to be followed by another Armageddon, Rev 20:8, after which we would have the great white throne, and eventually the saints would enter into the Eternal Kingdom of God.

Jean de Labadie’s millennial theory fit in perfectly with the Lacunza-Darby-Macdonald-Scofield pre-trib rapture scheme of things, so the Dispensationals added pre-millennialism to their body of doctrine.

However, the Church of de Labadie’s own day considered his view heretical, so the Dutch brethren threw de Labadie out of the church. Here is why:

Rev 20 verse 2 is the ONLY support in the whole Bible for the premillennial view, and it only works then if you interpret literally one verse in a book that most serious eschatologists understand to be figurative.

Even to arrive at that view, de Labadie had to ignore two universally accepted rules of Bible interpretation:

1. No scripture should be interpreted apart from its context. As already stated, most of Revelation is figurative and there is no textual reason to believe that Rev 20 should be interpreted differently than its context.

2. A word study should be done in the original language to be sure that the passage is correctly understood.

The Greek word translated “thousand” in Rev 20:2, and throughout the chapter, is *chilioi*. *Chilioi* is an indefinite plural, and may not mean just one thousand. It could mean one thousand, but it could also mean many thousands.

That is the point, *chilioi* is an indefinite plural. It seems that Premillennialists base one of their definite doctrines on a very indefinite plural. Even though the translation of *chilioi* as one thousand is technically correct,

if we insist on it meaning exactly 1000 years, then the sense of the passage could be lost.

THIS CHAPTER COULD BE ABOUT THE WHOLE CHRISTIAN ERA

A figurative interpretation of Rev 20 is not as wild as one might think. Most of the Church considered Rev 20 to be figurative until de Labadie came along.

Since it is scripturally provable that the saints reign with Christ, in His spiritual kingdom right this instant, and that we have done so throughout the Christian Era (Eph 1:3, 1Pe 2:9,

Rev 1:6, Rev 5:10), then this “thousand” year reign of Christ could be a pictorial representation of the whole Christian Era.

So on the off-chance that those earlier saints could have been right, let’s try looking at Rev 20 in a figurative way. REV 20 is quoted in full below. Bible text is in boldface, while supporting verses and comments are inserted in italic.

THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST

REV 20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven,

[that angel is Jesus. "Who hath ascended into heaven and descended?" and REV 10:1 "And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire..."]

having the key of the bottomless pit

[Jesus has been given the keys of Hades, REV 1:18]

and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil,

["Now the ruler of this world shall be cast out," JOH 12:31, spoken before the Cross]

and Satan, and bound him

["How can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his property unless he first bind the strong man?" MAT 12:29.

Spoken when Jesus was casting out demons. When we were lost in our trespasses and sins we were Satan's property, and in his kingdom. Jesus is now plundering Satan's house through the church.]

THE CHRISTIAN ERA

...a thousand years,

[the Greek word translated thousand here, and throughout the rest of the chapter, is "chilioi," Strong's 5507, the indefinite PLURAL form for thousand. Thus it could mean one thousand or many thousands.]

REV 20:3 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,

[note that the binding was scripturally limited to deceiving nations. Through the whole Christian Era, the western nations have been nominally Christian. Kings have been crowned; and wars have been fought in Jesus' name.

Thus the nations were not deceived that Jesus is Lord.]

till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

[See Rev 12:12 for another mention of this "little season." By context we can pin the beginning of that "little season" to 1948-1967. It is since that time that the western nations have turned away from the Lord.

Satan is loose and we are in an apostasy unequalled during the Christian Era.]

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them:

[Refer to the 1PE 2:5,9 and REV 1:6 and 5:10, quoted earlier, which state that we reign with Christ right now, today.]

and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus,

[thousands of saints have been beheaded early in the Christian Era, see Fox's Book of Martyrs.]

and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands;

[Satan is this beast, and he has struck his mark on the foreheads of his servants throughout time.]

and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

[Do we not reign with Christ right now, 1PE 2:5-9, REV 1:6, 5:10?]

REV 20:5 But the rest of the dead

[those who were unsaved]

lived not again until the thousand years

[the Christian Era]

were finished. This is the first resurrection.

[How many resurrections are there? Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the Life." Jesus is the firstborn of the dead, and there is no other resurrection in Scripture.]

REV 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power,

[Blessed indeed are those who have part in the resurrection of Jesus our Lord! Indeed, they are the born again, and over them the second death has absolutely no power, praise God.]

but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

[REV 1:6 and 5:10 states that we have been made priests and reign with Jesus, right now!] REV 20:7
And when the thousand years

[as an indefinite plural this "thousand" can refer to the Christian Era regardless of duration.]

are expired,

THE END TIMES

Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, REV 20:8 And shall go out to deceive the nations,

[Since 1948 and 1967 there is a general falling away of the church unprecedented in the Christian Era. We have the second rise of the Islamic States. Parallel the following verse with other descriptions of Armageddon in REV 6,9,12,14,and 19.]

which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog: to gather them together to battle

[how many Armageddons and fulfillments of EZE 38-39 are we going to have? Note the details of this

battle here parallel other descriptions of Armageddon in the Bible which we have already studied.

When we understand the repetitive chiasmic structure of REV, this ceases to be a problem.]

the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

[REV 9:16 states 200,000,000]

REV 20:9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city:

[is this not parallel to JOE 2-3, which all equate with Armageddon?]

and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

THE ETERNAL KINGDOM OF GOD

REV 20:10 And the devil that deceiveth 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.

REV 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.

REV 20:12 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:

[There are two sets of books here. The book of deeds, and the book of life. When the Lord blotted out our transgressions, what do you suppose He blotted them out of? The book of the deeds, of course.

Since all of our righteousness is as filthy rags, if even one deed, no matter how "good" or "sanctified" remains in that book we are going to the lake of fire.

To eat of the tree of life our names must be first written in the Book of Life " . . . Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way nailing it to His Cross." COL 2:14.]

and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

REV 20:13 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.

REV 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

REV 20:15 And whoso-ever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

[COL 1:13-17 "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And

He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."]

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE "MILLENNIUM"

Besides the last trumpet itself, there are other verses which call the premillennial view into question. According to that view, when Jesus returns for His 1000-year reign, He will rule from Jerusalem in all His power and glory.

During that 1000 years, we (the saints) are presumed to be ruling with Him in our new glorified and sinless bodies. At the end of the 1000 years, Satan is somehow supposed to deceive the rulers (now sinless us) for a short season.

If that could be so, then we would again be in sin, which would result in our again being separated from the Lord. That is contrary to 1TH 4:17, which clearly states:

1TH 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up...to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall ever be with the Lord." Saints will never again be separated from the Lord!

But there is more . . .

MAT 12:29 How can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless He first binds the strong man?

When Jesus asked that question, He was in the act of casting out demons. The Lord was plundering Satan's house then, and He is still doing so today:

COL 1:13, "For He delivered us from the kingdom of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.

Jesus permitted Himself to be bound once, at the Cross, but it will never happen again. When Jesus returns to Jerusalem, He will be ruling in all His power and glory. It will be Jesus' kingdom. He will be the "strong man"!

Released or not, Satan could only plunder Jesus' kingdom if he could again bind Jesus. Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God the Father. He is King of kings and Lord of lords, forever!

Eph 1:20-21 declares, "...when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come."

That age to come would have to include any future time that Jesus is on Earth, and beyond. No future time of lost power for the Lord. When the Lord returns at the end of this age, He will rule absolutely...and eternally!

IT'S A QUESTION OF DOMAIN

God gave the Earth to Adam. Adam was made the ruler of the Earth and all that it contained (Gen 1:28). When Adam fell, he delivered his God-given authority into Satan's hands (Luk 4:6). All mankind then became Satan's legal possession.

When “we were bought with a price,” that was not just some theoretical acquisition. We were purchased from Satan’s kingdom by Jesus’ precious blood.

When we accept Jesus as our personal Savior, by a sovereign act of God the Father we are transferred “out of the domain (kingdom, NASB) of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son” (Col 1:13).

If you are looking for the kingdom age, there it is, right where the Bible has been telling us it was all along. The kingdom of the Lord Jesus has existed ever since Act 2:33-36.

At the end of this age, Jesus will indeed return to Earth with His Holy angels and all His “holy ones” (all in their glorified bodies). That’s us, with all the saints who have gone before us and He will reign forever and ever.

Rev 11:15 And the seventh angel sounded [1Co 15:52 states that we go to be with the Lord at the last trumpet]; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”

AVOIDING MUDDY THINKING

As the end approaches, things are going to deteriorate in a hurry. If we are to walk in truth, we must guard ourselves against interpreting Scripture to fit our preconceived notions, for “The Lord takes no delight in fools” (Ecc 5:4).

Insisting on a literal interpretation of a figure may display our orthodoxy before men but rob us of what the Lord would have us learn from Scripture. The premillennial interpretation of Isa 11:6-10 is a glaring example of the “literal hermeneutic” carried to the point of absurdity.

Isaiah 11:1-5 has many allegorical elements: “A shoot [or branch] springs from the stem of Jesse . . . a branch from his root will bear fruit . . . He will judge with the rod of His mouth . . . righteousness will be the belt about His loins and faithfulness the belt about his waist,” etc., etc.

All those expressions are obviously figurative, and all conservative Bible scholars understand this passage to be a pictorial description of Jesus, the Messiah, to be born several hundred years in the future.

This prophecy was fulfilled during Jesus’ life on Earth and takes us to 32-33AD.

The first time the Jews were driven off their land was when Nebuchadnezzar exiled them to Babylon. The restoration after the Babylonian captivity was the first restoration of the Jews to the Holy Land.

By the time of the crucifixion, the Jews had been restored from the captivity and living in the Holy Land for 568 years. Now lets skip verses 6-10 and go to verse 11. There we read that the Lord will restore his people to the Holy Land for “a second time!”

Isa 11:11 Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people.

Thirty-seven years after Jesus was crucified, in 70AD, the Jews were dispersed for a second time into the

nations, so the second restoration would have to take place after that. And it did.

The second restoration took place in the new nation of Israel, established in 1948AD. In that year, after almost 1900 years among the Gentiles, the Jews were restored to the Holy Land . . . for a second time. Now look at the chronology:

Isa 11:1-5	About the coming Messiah	32AD
Isa 11:6-10	About when?	????AD
Isa 11:11	About the 2nd restoration	1948AD

Well, if Isa 11, verses 1-5 are about Jesus' life on Earth, and verse 11 can be positively pinned to 1948, to what time do you suppose the verses in between refer?

Why, verses 6-10 would have to refer to the time in between Jesus' life on Earth and 1948, wouldn't they? The only contextually sound way to look at Isa 11:6-10 is figuratively, as a picture of the Christian Era.

Now Premillennialists recognize the allegorical elements in Isa 11:1-5: the branch, the root, the fruit, the belt, the breath, and so on.

Those common allegories are understood by all. No one really expects a literal branch, with leaves and all, to spring out of the forehead of David's father.

All theologians recognize this passage as teaching that one of Jesse's descendants will be the Messiah. It is allegorical, and they all know it.

But when they read on a couple of verses, and see a lion eating straw, some say: "Ah, that must be literal, and since it hasn't happened yet, it must be going to take place in the millennium. And there is more support for our premillennial view."

They further declare that during the millennium, a "nursing child will really play by the hole of the cobra," and "the leopard will really lie down with the kid," etc., thus doing away with God's natural law.

Anything is possible with the Lord, of course, but a literal interpretation of those verses is not their most probable meaning.

Many well-known Bible teachers are famous for accepting allegorical interpretations for allegories they understand, while demanding a literal interpretation for the allegories they don't.

All the while, heralding their orthodoxy by broadcasting their faith in a "literal hermeneutic."

But if the passage in question is figurative, a "literal hermeneutic" will not lead us to the truth.

The literal or figurative nature of a Scripture is not determined by the reader, but by the author, and some Scriptures cannot be recognized as literal or figurative unless the principles of hermeneutics are applied without doctrinal bias.

Interestingly enough, many Evangelical groups, including major Evangelical Bible colleges, use the premillennial view as a litmus test for orthodoxy.

One Christian publisher even trumpets proudly that all of its publications are premillennial, as if a differing view on the millennium were mortal sin. But despite its popularity, the weight of scriptural evidence appears to be against the premillennial view.

It will be interesting to see if the Holy Spirit can once again quicken the Church to the possibility that it is standing dogmatically -- on heresy.

BUT IS THIS TRUTH IMPORTANT?

Some brethren ask: "Does it really matter what we believe about the millennium? Isn't soul-winning where it's at, and won't we all end up in Heaven together, regardless?"

The idea that any truth is unimportant is of the devil. It ignores the spiritual nature of the Christian's battle and the shrewdness of the enemy. Spiritual warfare is a never-ending contest for truth.

As the father of lies, Satan is the author of every heresy that gets into the Church. Every false doctrine we believe or teach, no matter how minor it may seem to us, helps the enemy and weakens our witness.

But how can premillennialism hurt anyone? In the same way that the pretribulation rapture myth can hurt us. By rocking the Church to sleep with the sweet lullaby of "Judgment deferred," with the siren song that "hard times may be coming,

but they're coming for the lost during the Great Tribulation, while we, the Church (because of our great piety and holiness), will be at the marriage supper of the Lamb, and later, ruling with Jesus in His wonderful millennial kingdom."

Nothing could be further from the truth! We were appointed as Jesus' spiritual priests and kings for this present age to despoil the domain of the enemy. Every time a saint leads a sinner to the Lord, he is breaking into Satan's house, and carrying off his goods (Mat 12:29).

Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ as affirmed by the blood of the martyrs and the prayers of the saints, the enemy was bound throughout this age, "that he might not deceive the nations." And he didn't.

The whole western world once recognized Jesus as the Christ and that knowledge changed the world, but not any longer. Now the world is changing the Church. Why now, you ask?

Hasn't sin always been bad and hasn't Satan always been the father of sin? Of course, but in this generation, the individual saint has forgotten his responsibility for the lost:

Eze 3:18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

The world is in the condition it is today because we have not done our job. And just as Scripture warned, Satan has been loosed upon us:

Rev 20:7-8 And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.

Jesus bound the enemy at the cross (Joh 12:32) and then gave the Church the keys:

Mat 16:19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

But the lukewarm Laodicean church of our own day has again set Satan free. Look at the disgraceful spiritual conditions which have enveloped America during the last three decades.

We Christians are responsible -- we are Jesus' kings and priests -- and if we really understand that we are responsible, then we will get busy serving the Lord so we will "not be ashamed at His coming."

If we really believe that "judgment begins at the household of God," then we "work out our own salvation in fear and trembling," in godly fear of those trials "which are coming upon the earth":

Rev 12:11-12 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death.

For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.

However, if we believe that judgment is for the other guy, after we've been raptured out, or believe that judgment is still a thousand years away, ah, that's a different story.

Then we can dabble in the world for a while, repenting when we see the Antichrist coming or when the Great Tribulation begins.

Meanwhile, to show our pro-life conservatism, we can lie down in front of an abortion clinic or two while our lost friends and neighbors go to Hell because we did not tell them that in God's pure eyes, we are all monsters of iniquity, in desperate need of the cleansing blood of His dear Son.

Oh, my God, how far we have fallen from the faith. So as You declared, judgment indeed begins at Your household, and it justly comes for us. Some think all this to be at least 1000 years away. That is exactly what the Jews thought just weeks before the fall of Jerusalem:

Eze 12:27-28 Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off.

Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord GOD.