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When Does the Binding of Satan's Thousand Years Begin? –

Revelation 19:11–20:3 Supports Premillennialism, not Amillennialism – Ep. 3

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It's time for the Biblical Prophecy Program with your host, Alan Kurschner of Eschatos Ministries.

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When does the binding of Satan for 1,000 years begin? Revelation 19:11 - 20:3 supports premillennialism, not amillennialism. Now, there is going to be two main points I'm going to make in this program today. The first point serves to introduce the second point. The first point is what the millennial debate is not about and what it is really about. And second I'm going to show how Revelation 19:11 - 20:3 supports a premillennial interpretation, not an amillennial interpretation.

As a preface, I'm going to just very briefly outline the three main millennial views out there. First premillennialism, the view that I hold to. Since the prophets of old described that the Messiah Christ will establish His Kingdom of Peace and Righteousness on Earth, and reign for 1,000 years. So at His Second Coming, the nature of the world would be a renewed culminating in a new physical, political, ethnic, social, spiritual existence; where Jesus will rule the nations and His people will dwell with them. It's another topic, but the nature of the millennium, the very nature of it is going to be very earthy mode of existence. It will be literally heaven on earth. That's why I chuckle when I hear the misrepresentation of premillennialism that somehow we believe that we are looking to escape this world to live in some immaterial existence far away from earth. No, that's not the case. We agree with Peter when he writes in 2 Peter 3:11-13, "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be to live in holiness and godliness waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of the God. Because of which, the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn." Now listen to this, "But according to His promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." We see in the Book of Revelation, heaven literally will descend from where it is at to the earth. There will be a coalescing of two realms together, in which we will dwell with the Lord in this renewed earth.

Now, amillennialism, this other view. Amillennialism does not believe in a future millennial kingdom of peace and righteousness. Instead they would view the church age, right now, as experiencing the kingdom of peace and righteousness. When Christ returns, it will complete the millennial kingdom, they would argue, and in some momentary simple event, they believe, we will be immediately ushered into some eternal state. I understand it's an oversimplification, and I could take a lot more time to describe these views but I'm just giving you a thumbnails sketch. The third view, postmillennialism, basically teaches that the return of Christ will occur at the end of the millennium. One postmillennial

author describes it as such quote, "A golden age of spiritual prosperity during this present dispensation that is the church age. This is to be brought about through the forces now active in the world. The world-at-large will enjoy a state of righteousness which up to now has been seen in relatively small and isolated groups." Continue saying that, "Christian principles will be the rule not the exception in that, Christ will return to," this is key, "Christ will return to a truly Christianized world." That's in stark contrast to the premillennial view in which I believe that, No, He is going to be returning to a very wicked, very wicked world. But today there is different forms of the postmill view known as Reconstructionism, Dominion Theology, Kingdom Now Theology, different forms of that.

Let's get into our material. The title of this program, this episode - notice I'm referencing a passage in the Book of Revelation. We do not have to go the Book of Revelation for support of premillennialism. I know that might be come as a shock to many people. But the Old Testament itself alone provides sufficient reasons. The prophets spoke of a time that was described, not as our current condition of the church age, but when the Messiah would rule the nations physically on earth. Again, there would be a new era of political, national, ethics, spiritual righteousness. The Old Testament itself speaks of a blessed-peaceful millennial period of time. We don't need the New Testament or the Book of Revelation to establish this period that's still in the future - this period of righteousness and peace Messianic Era. Myself, as a premillennialist, I often hear from amillennialists that, "Revelation 20 is the only passage that premillennialists use to support a millennium." And that is just simply not true. It's a cliché. You hear that often. Right? And just like, "Okay, here we go again." In fact, it's funny when I do hear them say that I'm like, "Okay, so let's go outside of Revelation 20. Let's go to the Old Testament." And then I show them passages from the prophets. And then of course their stark response is, Well, let's--, you know they start beginning to spiritualize these passages. So it's like, Okay, I went outside of Revelation 20. Here's passages that establish, that show, that describe a period of righteousness, a messianic period of righteousness, that does not describe the church age era, but a future time. And it's like now they start spiritualizing it. So I find it ironic that it's the premillennialist that can use the Old Testament to support their position but I don't believe the amillennialist can do the same thing.

This brings us to the Book of Revelation. We believe that the New Testament is progressive revelation, even amillennialists agree with that. So the question is what does the Book of Revelation contribute to this whole millennial debate? Well it contributes at least two points. First, it informs us of a temporal framework for the millennium. Which, in Revelation 20 says it will be for 1,000 years. And this is where I want to stop here and really stress a point of what the millennial debate is not. I repeat, not about. It's not about the length of the millennium. I can't tell you how many times I have heard the premillennial versus amillennial debate framed by this question of is the 1,000 years literal or not? That is completely irrelevant to the debate. I know this will surprise some people or come as a shock, because they believe that - this whole debate is framed on whether the 1,000 years is literal or not. It is not. That's not the issue. It's never been the issue. To be sure I do believe that the millennium will be 1,000 years in length. But it is possible that the 1,000-year period, it may symbolize just simply a very long period of time. Maybe the millennium will last 10,000 years. But like I said, I don't think there is any reason not to take it for 1,000 years.

Here's actually a very important point of common ground that both amillennialists and premillennialists can agree on. Well, actually two points we can agree on. First, we can agree together that there is a period of time between the binding of Satan and his ultimate destruction. So both camps can agree on that. Let me repeat that. We can agree that there is a period of time between the binding of Satan and his ultimate destruction. Both camps can also agree that this period of time that is said to last 1,000 years, we can both agree that it begins with the binding of Satan. So one, there is a period of time, and number two, this period of time begins with the binding of Satan. Now there may be some people listening who are asking, "Well then, what is the millennial debate really about?" The watershed question is this, when does the binding of Satan begin? Did the binding of Satan-- did it happen at Christ's first coming as amillennialism teaches, or will the binding begin at Jesus' second coming? That is the big question. That is the watershed question. And it's interesting it's very similar to the rapture debate. The prewrath and most pretribulationists believe that the rapture will happen on the very

same day that the Day of the Lord begins. So the watershed question is - in the rapture debate - the watershed question is when does the Day of the Lord begin in relation to the future seven-year period?

So let me introduce - getting back to the millennial watershed question - let me introduce a Latin expression I think is helpful. It's an expression that you can-- historians use it in their historical studies. The expression is the terminus a quo. The terminus a quo, which basically just means it's the earliest possible date for something. In other words, something cannot happen before a certain date. And in our context, we are asking what is the terminus a quo of the binding of Satan. So, the pre-millennialist, such as myself, would argue that the terminus a quo cannot happen before the second coming of Christ. So, the binding of Satan cannot happen before the second coming of Christ because as we're going to see later there is a cause and effect action. There's going to be a cause, a second coming of Christ victory at the battle of Armageddon and the effect will be the binding of Satan. In other words, you can't have the effect before the cause, logically. So, the terminus a quo. So just to recap here, the millennial debate is not about how long the millennium will last. It is about when the binding of Satan begins.

This brings us to a second point I want to make in this program today. And that is to demonstrate how Revelation 19:11 - 20:3, how it supports premillennialism, not amillennialism. Notice I did not say Revelation 20:1-6. This is precisely the problem I want to highlight that plagues the millennial debate. Without exception, when the millennial debate is broached with amillennialist, they will reference Revelation 20:1-6. They always begin at verse 1, Revelation 20:1. But that is not where the passage begins. That's not where the narrative begins. By the way, incidentally, premillennialists can fall in to this trap as well. I've seen that before. The amillennialist dives right in the middle of the context, which results in it bifurcates - the passage bifurcates the narrative, the intended meaning in it. So it disconnects the narrative of what comes before Chapter 20. Let me say a couple of comments on chapter breaks. It should be a foregone conclusion that they are not inspired. I think most people if not everyone can agree with that. They're not inspired. As helpful as they are in locating, referencing Bible passages, they do end up breaking up the flow of narratives. Sometimes they cut short the conclusion of a narrative or a teaching, maybe in Paul's Epistles. Or they can cut off the beginning of a narrative. Which actually happens in our case here as we'll see in a few minutes.

Many of you have probably never heard of a man named Stephen Langton. Well, Stephen Langton, he was the Archbishop of Canterbury in the early 13th century. Though you may have never heard of him, I can guarantee you he has certainly influenced how you read and interpret the Bible. And you may say, "What, what are you talking about, Allan?" Well Stephen Langton is the one who is responsible for introducing chapter divisions or chapter breaks. And he introduced them in the Vulgate. And then they were-- he was highly influential. They were incorporated in the eastern Church and even in the Jewish Old Testament. For our purposes, for the English translations, they were introduced in the Wycliffe Bible. Then, of course, subsequent English translations. And Stephen Langton, he was a very theologically learned man of his time. When he devised this thought of this idea of chapter divisions, he wasn't throwing a dart at the Bible and wherever it landed, it determined for him the chapter division. No, of course, he gave it some thought. But at the end of the day, it was his interpretation. In many instances in the Bible, his choices of chapter divisions were-- well they're really bad, and misleading, breaking up the unity of the flow of the narrative and passages that need to be read together.

Just to mention a few eschatological passages, we always talk about the Olivet discourses found in Mark 13, Luke 21, and is found in Matthew 24 and 25. It's like, there should not be a chapter division here. It breaks up Jesus' discourse. Just to name a couple more of Paul's Thessalonian epistles and both of his epistles. First Thessalonian 4 and 5. There should not be any chapter break between chapters 4 and 5. By the way, that has caused bad interpretations of chapter 5 because a lot of people think that chapter 5, First Thessalonians 5 is disconnected from First Thessalonian 4 and it is not. The fact in my book, Antichrist, Before the Day of the Lord, I belabor at this point that no, this is a unified section. That is both chapters 4 and 5 are unified, there should not be any division. And of course, the second epistle to the Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, there is a chapter division between chapter 1 and 2 and there

shouldn't be. In fact - to understand and make this point in my book - to understand 2 Thessalonians 2 in a coherent manner, you have to understand chapter 1. So there shouldn't be any chapter division there. Those are just a couple of instances. Let's look at the very first chapter break in the Bible. This is 1 and 2, right? There should not be any chapter break in between chapters 1 and 2. And it has led to really bad conclusions. It actually breaks up the creation story.

This leads me to my point about Revelation 20, where there should not be a chapter break because the narrative begins in chapter 19. It's essential to the meaning of what comes at the beginning of chapter 20. So listen. I give you permission to strike out the chapter break there - the 20. Just put a big black X on the number 20 in your Bible. So I'm giving you permission to do that, and don't feel guilty at all. Trust me, they're not inspired. It's not surprising that the Greek scholar A.T. Robinson once said that, "The very first step in interpretation - the very first step in biblical interpretation is to ignore the modern chapters and versification." I mentioned versification. I've been talking about chapter divisions and how they're misleading. But even verses - versification can be very misleading as well, breaking up smaller units. So my contention is, that the passage at issue is not Revelation 20, verse 1-6. Okay, so don't allow an amillennialist to begin there. You need to give push back here. Force them to begin in Revelation 19:11, and through chapter 20:3. Even the larger narrative can extend to Revelation 20:10. But for our purposes of showing a cause and effect action, verse 3 is sufficient.

In the millennial debate, discussion, dialogue, whatever term you want to use, you have to begin at Revelation 19:11, not 21. And the reason is because the narrative - I call this narrative, this larger narrative, I call it the defeat of the three adversaries of God. Not the two adversaries of God, but the three adversaries of God: the beast, the false prophet, and Satan. It's necessary to recognize in this passage that there is a cause and effect action happening. The amillennialist ignores this cause and effect action. The cause section which is found before chapter 20. And this is why they end up with a flawed conclusion. So what is the cause to the defeat of the three adversaries or enemies God? I'm going to go through this passage. I'm not going to be expounding in every part of this passage. I'm only going to highlight the main points in this passage. And then, what I'm going to do is, I'm going to tie this all together.

Revelation 19:11, in verse 11 it says, "Then I saw heaven open and behold a white horse. The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True. And in righteousness, He judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire. And on his head are many diadems. And He has a name written that no one knows but Himself. He is clothed in the robe dipped in blood. And the name by which He is called is, the word of God." So we have here a depiction of the Yahweh warrior. Jesus is-- when He returns, He will be a warrior. Verse 14, "In the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen - white and pure - were following Him on white horses." By the way, I believe that, that is the people of God because just before that the bride in Revelation 19:6-8, are described in almost identical terms. It may very well be that the armies here are not just either or. Some people will argue that, "No, it's only angels. It's not God's redeemed people or either or." I'm actually amenable to that it's both groups. Maybe angels and the people of God are referenced as the armies of heaven arrayed in fine linen.

Verse 15, "From His mouth comes a sharp sword, with which to strike down the nations. And He will rule them with a rod of Iron. He will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God, the Almighty. On His robe and on His thigh, He has a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly over head, 'Come gather for the great supper of God to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.'" It's kind of interesting that the-- of course this battle is referencing back to in Revelations 16. We're given a name of this battle that is-- where it would be Armageddon. And it's not so much going to be a battle, it's actually when you read that in verse 18, in 19, or 17 and 18, it's more of a summons. A summons to, "Hey, come and receive your judgement." Verse 19, "And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against Him who was sitting on the horse and against his army." So the nations foolishly, are going to try to defeat Yahweh, Jesus the

warrior. Verse 20, "And the beast was captured."

Actually, let me just stop there for a moment. Up to this point, what's being described? This is very important. This is the cause part of the action. The cause is Jesus is having victory. He is victorious over the nations. Now comes the effect - verse 20, "And the beast was captured." The effect against the three adversaries of God, that is, "And the beast was captured" - i.e. anti-Christ figure. "The beast was captured, and with it, the false prophet who, in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of Him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh." Unfortunately, the vast majority of interpreters will just stop there. And then they'll see a chapter break but there's nothing here that indicates that a shift has happened from. For example, we've been talking about the second coming of Christ and there's nothing that indicates, as all millennialists would argue, that "Okay, we're shifting now to the first coming of Christ beginning in Chapter 20." There's no shifting here. Instead, what you see here, when we continue in Chapter 20:1, there's just a natural progression narrative; it's developing and it's continuing to describe the effect of Christ's military victory upon the third adversary of God. So, it described the effect on the two adversaries of God, the beast and the false prophet, and it's simply going to now describe the third adversary of God that is Satan.

Verse 1, it says, "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit in a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan and bound him for a 1000 years. And threw him into the pit, and shut it, and sealed it over him so that he might not deceive the nations any longer until the 1000 years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while." So here's the outworking of the unity of this text, Christ and the armies of heaven have victory over the nations. The result of this is that both the beast and the false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire. Then rather than Satan being thrown in the lake of fire along with the beast and the false prophet at the same time, Satan's doom - according to God's purposes - Satan's doom is delayed 1000 years, for the purpose of, well, not deceiving the nations.

So the destiny of the three enemies of God should be viewed as a unified message. It should not be disconnected with lifting up the account of the body of Satan. And then, lifting it up out of its text and then placing it, retrograding it back to Christ's First Coming. No. What it does, it disrupts the natural flow of the narrative and that's simply unwarranted. So the premillennialists can just naturally recognize this cause and effect action happening.

Let me conclude with a final observation. There is a link, another link here - not just the causing effect we're looking at that type of link - but there's another link between with the nations being struck down and then the reason for the binding of Satan. This point is often overlooked by amillennialists. In Revelation 19:15 it says, "From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God, the Almighty." So the nations are struck down. And then a few verses later-- well, let me just back up for a moment. In Revelation-- well, yeah a few verses later, we see that they're struck down. And to ensure that the nations do not rise up again, the link is made with Revelation 23 saying, "And he threw him into the pit and shut it and sewed it over him so that," - this is the purpose clause here - "so that he might not deceive the nations any longer." Do you see that connection there? So at the battle of Armageddon, Christ strikes down the nations. That is linked to a few verses later, to ensure that they don't rise up again - at least for a thousand years - Satan is bound.

Here is another aspect of the cause and effect action. And if you recall, it was Satan. Satan was instrumental in the deceit of summoning the nations and the kings to the battle. That's back in Revelation 16:13-14 where it says, "And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. For they are demonic spirits performing signs who go abroad to the kings of the whole world to assemble them for what? Battle on the great day of God the Almighty. So you have that, again that cause and effect.

Christ defeats the nations, and who was behind the nations? The three adversaries of God. And two of them are thrown into eternal perdition in hell, and the other one is bound for a thousand years to ensure that he does not go back and deceive these nations that Christ defeated.

I'm a premillennialist and I'm just trying-- I am, I'm trying to be faithful to the text. I understand that the amillennials will say the same thing but I really believe that this presupposition of the chapter break, and that there can be other factors. I'm not saying they're amillennials because of the chapter break. I'm not saying that. But I think they're-- many are affected by the chapter break. There's other, maybe more complex factors, presuppositions that play in this as well. To highlight this chapter break, and to go back and show where the narrative begins I think is a very strong argument. I think one of the strongest arguments - at least as the new testament provides - that shows that there will be a premillennial nature of the millennium. That is when Christ returns, he will establish a 1,000 year millennium.

So don't allow them to start chapter 20:1. Give them push back and say, "No, no, no. Let's go back to where the narrative begins," and that's chapter 19:11. There are maybe amillennialists - boy, say that ten times real fast - amillennialists who may be asking well-- or not asking, but objecting as if there's no objections to this argument. I'm not claiming that there are no objections to this. And that's another problem because when I do hear objections to this - and I have given this argument many times to amillennialists - and almost without exception, not absolutely all the time, but they have to go outside of the narrative. So, I have my Bible here, right? Let's open to Revelation 19 and 20. And I'm going through this narrative and they have their Bible, so to speak, and - because sometimes this can be an online discussion - but they have to go outside of the Book of Revelation. They cannot stay in this text. They can't go, "Okay, first the first verse." They can't. They can't walk through this text in a natural progression. They end up going to other passages in the Bible. For example they argue that Satan is bound at this time during the church age. In some sense of the term, I don't believe they're good arguments. I will eventually devote a whole program responding to these arguments. But the point here is that they can't stay in the text.

Another tactic they take is that they will, for example they'll impose, if they do stay in the text of the Book of Revelation, what they do is they impose a certain framework. They come to the text with this presupposition. This flawed framework on the text. And they impose it on the text. They'll say, "Well, the book of Revelation is cyclical or recapitulatory" So they impose this framework on the passage. I mean the problem there is that one's overall interpretive framework is only as good as the specific Biblical data, right? We have to begin with the Biblical data. That should develop our framework, not the other way around. Which I see the amillennialists doing to this text. I think I'm trying to be fair to the text. I've shown here that there's a natural progression in Revelation 19:11 through Chapter 20:3 and even up to verse 10 if we wanted continue to talk about these other issues.

I hope all of these has been helpful to you. I trust that you will be more aware of artificial chapter breaks and see larger, natural, unified, narratives in the Bible. Not just our Revelation passage but any section, any biblical narrative that you read or interpret.

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