

Basic Questions About the Millennium

By Ekkehardt Mueller

The term “millennium” has become quite popular, as have other terms used in John’s Apocalypse. Maybe there is a kind of global sense that the end may come—and even may be near—and that a redeemer is needed to control that which seems to have become uncontrollable. A number of novels, movies, music albums, computer games, companies, and other organizations contain the term “millennium.” We may remember the hype about the millennium bug in computer software toward the end of the nineties. Events and places also relate to the millennium: for example, Millennium Parks in various cities. The millennium plays quite a role in Christianity as well. One of the Seventh-day Adventists’ 28 Fundamental Beliefs deals with this subject.¹

This raises some questions: What are some of the millennium issues being discussed? What difference does our view make? What is the doctrine’s relevance for Adventists today?

Interpretations of the Millennium and Issues Arising from Them

Different views on the Thousand Years² have developed during church history.³ While Christians agree that the Millennium has to do with the reign of Christ, they disagree regarding its nature and timing.

Some claim that the entire Christian age is the Millennium from the first coming of Christ to His second coming and that therefore, “one thousand” has to be understood figuratively. This is “amillennialism,” which has become widespread. Others hold that the Millennium precedes Christ’s second coming. This view has been called “postmillennialism.” Finally, some suggest that the Millennium follows the Second Coming and precedes the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth (Rev 21:1). This position has been named “premillennialism.”⁴ In addition, there is “chiliasm.”

Chiliasm

The term “chiliasm” is derived from the Greek numeral *chilioi* (thousand), while the word “millennium” comes from Latin *mille* (thousand) and *annus* (year). Both terms describe the time period of one thousand years found in Revelation 20, whether understood literally or figuratively. Apparently derived from Revelation 20, the term “millennium” has influenced its modern usage in various contexts. In spite of a long theological discussion on this topic, Christianity is not unified on how to understand this period and locate it in time.

Chiliasm took on a life of its own. According to this view, Jesus will visibly come back to earth and establish His kingdom, which will last a thousand years. After the thousand-year period the end will come. This teaching had already developed in the first few centuries AD and was accepted by some church fathers and religious movements such as Montanism.⁵ It was quite materialistically oriented and appealed to the senses.⁶ The hope of an earthly Messianic kingdom reappeared in difficult times. It was expected that the evil one would be judged and Christians would place their feet on the necks of their enemies.

Papias talks about a time when vines will grow, each having 10,000 branches, and each branch 10,000 twigs, and each twig 10,000 shoots, and each shoot 10,000 clusters, and each cluster 10,000 grapes, and each grape will yield 25 amphoras when pressed. And when one of the saints lays hold of a cluster, another cluster will cry out, “I am better, take me, bless the Lord through me.” Similarly a grain of wheat will

produce 10,000 ears, and each ear will have 10,000 grains, and each grain will yield five double pounds of pure fine flour.⁷

Such ideas may sound harmless, but chiliasm had representatives, among them Lactantius, who dreamed of bloody vengeance on the impious, and Commodianus, whose ideas may have influenced people to take up weapons and get involved in warfare.⁸ Even the theology of Joachim of Floris in medieval times may have unintentionally furthered violent movements.

Typically, these movements had a strong lay leader who was considered to be a holy person and a kind of Messiah. Cohn suggests that these movements irrupted when there was a growth in population and industrialization, when social relations were weakened or destroyed and the gap between the rich and the poor widened. Then the collective feeling of helplessness, anxiety, and envy led to an urgent desire to eradicate the ungodly and bring about the final kingdom through inflicted and endured suffering. In this kingdom the saints would be gathered around their Messiah and would eternally enjoy happiness, riches, security, and power.⁹

The revolutionary form of chiliasm appeared throughout the centuries when the normal way of life was disrupted and damaged to such an extent that restoration seemed unlikely and impossible. But it may have also been triggered by a failure of Christianity—namely a lack of spiritual guidance and the perception that the church is silent and has nothing to say to evil and injustice, does not uphold biblical principles, and has ceased to be a moral compass in society.¹⁰

Amillennialism

In the the third century AD, chiliasm, with its sensuous ideas and its desire for vengeance, provoked a reaction that came in the form of amillennialism.¹¹ Origen taught that the kingdom of God would be anchored in the soul of the believer, suggesting an individualized eschatology. He condemned literalism as taught by chiliasm and replaced it with his allegorical interpretation. It seems that he spiritualized a literal, bodily resurrection, and to some extent the final judgment.¹²

In the fourth century, Augustine took a position against chiliasm. Christianity had become the state religion, and Augustine was so successful in battling chiliasm that it had become obsolete for centuries.¹³

The Council of Ephesus condemned the belief in a future Millennium as a superstitious error. Augustine suggested that the church would be the city of God on earth. According to him, the Millennium had already become a reality and had actually begun with Christ's first coming; the resurrection had happened when the believer died to sin and rose to a new life in the church; and Satan had been bound through Jesus. Therefore, conditions on earth would not deteriorate but improve. While Satan would once again actively fight the church for three and one half years, the church would successfully survive the onslaught. Those who would apostatize would not belong to those predestined to salvation anyway. The judgment would condemn the ungodly to eternal punishment, while believers would receive immortality.¹⁴

W. Cox suggests that Luther, Melanchton, Zwingli, Know, and Calvin were amillennialists.¹⁵ This tradition continued in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Postmillennialism

Not only amillennialism has its roots in Augustine: postmillennialism does as well.¹⁶ Both views expect the Millennium to precede the Second Coming. A separation into two distinct positions happened quite late. The Augsburg Confession and the Westminster Confession may subscribe to an amillennial/postmillennial eschatology.¹⁷

The father of postmillennialism is Daniel Whitby. He synthesized views already in existence. It is only from 1725 or 1726 onward that one can talk about postmillennialism in the strict sense. Other important representatives were John Winthrop and Jonathan Edwards.¹⁸

Postmillennialism went through cycles of acceptance, sometimes being more prominent, sometimes being less. This is due to the fact that postmillennialism holds a positive view of the world and its societies, believing in a gradual growth of the kingdom of God, which is considered to be a present reality. This view was easier to maintain during times of the expansion of Christianity and more difficult to maintain during the two World Wars. B. Warfield is a prominent representative of postmillennialism. The idea is that the kingdom of Christ is being established through the worldwide proclamation of the gospel. Some representatives favor what has been called the social gospel. The period of one thousand years is typically understood as an extended period of time.¹⁹

Premillennialism

Premillennialism comes in two major forms: classical and dispensational premillennialism. It is also distinguished in terms of its relation toward the great tribulation.

Those who advocate pretribulationism believe that Christ will rapture the church before the great tribulation on earth. Another view is the posttribulationist view, which maintains that Christ's coming will occur after the great tribulation.²⁰

Historic Premillennialism

Historic premillennialism has its origin in the early church. Obviously, it was the predominant understanding in apostolic times and in the first few centuries. Justin knows only two classes of believers: those who believe in Jesus's earthly kingdom and the heretics who reject the Millennium. At this time, premillennialism and chiliasm are almost identical. Chiliasm may be the fanatical form of premillennialism. It was rejected because of its crude materialistic views. As chiliasm was rejected so was premillennialism, being replaced by amillennialism in the mainstream church.

When premillennialism reoccurred in church history, for instance in the Medieval Ages, it frequently manifested chiliastic-fanatical features. Since premillennialists determined time periods and set dates for Christ's second coming, it was easy to discredit it. Therefore, Reformers preferred to follow Augustine's amillennialism. Some Anabaptists were premillennialists. Unfortunately, radical groups among the Anabaptists caused damage to the repudiation of their movement as well as to premillennialism. Nevertheless, in spite of these unfortunate developments, premillennialism is vibrant today in various Christian communities of faith, especially in evangelical and charismatic churches as well as the Seventh-day Adventist Church.²¹

However, historic premillennialism is not a completely unified system, although there are some tenets that are generally agreed upon. There is agreement that a cataclysmic event, namely Christ's second coming, is necessary to bring about His kingdom of glory and usher in the Millennium. Premillennialist representatives believe that there are two different resurrections and that Jesus will be literally— not just spiritually—present during the Millennium. But some claim that Jesus will reign on earth for a thousand years, while others insist that He is in heaven with His redeemed people. Some speak about a special importance of the Jews during the Millennium, while others focus on a

group of redeemed people consisting of both Jewish and non-Jewish followers of Christ. Some understand the Millennium to last one thousand literal years while others would take it as a symbolic time span.²²

Dispensational Premillennialism

Dispensational premillennialism is a latecomer. It was established around 1830, with John Nelson Darby and the Plymouth Brethren exerting an important influence.²³ It spread widely in a short time through the Scofield Reference Bible and Bible institutes such as the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Today, dispensational premillennialism is quite popular in evangelical circles. It is so prominent that for some people premillennialism is equated with dispensational premillennialism, as if there were no other premillennialist position.²⁴ Other well-known representatives of dispensational premillennialism are L. S. Chafer, J. Walvoord, H. Lindsey, and C. Feinberg. However, Grenz points to recent developments in dispensational premillennialism which need to be noticed:

Beginning in the 1980s, certain dispensational scholars launched an even more radical rethinking of the system. As a result, there now exists alongside classical dispensationalism a growing circle of “moderate,” “modified” or “progressive” dispensationalists who no longer accept many of the features of the older view. It would be a mistake, therefore, to view dispensationalism as a static, monolithic viewpoint.²⁵

Below are the major positions of classical dispensational premillennialism.

(1) Classical dispensationalists understand Scripture as the Word of God and take a conservative approach to its interpretation. However, they allow for an allegorical interpretation of the Bible’s historical books that Adventists would consider questionable. A true typological approach, although found in both the Old Testament and New Testament where typology points from a type to the fulfillment by a greater antitype, is typically not pursued. Dispensationalists insist that there is no difference between classical and apocalyptic prophecy and that all prophecy must be understood literally and in detail and will be fulfilled as stated in the Old Testament.²⁶ This is a denial of the principle of conditionality in classical prophecy and also of the fact that unfulfilled prophecies addressed to Israel in the Old Testament have a larger scale or universal fulfillment than in the New Testament.

(2) This approach leads to a special understanding of Israel and the Christian church. Since God’s covenants are supposedly unconditional, God will fulfill them in the future, independent of the original audience’s response and obedience. Consequently, Israel must play an important role again.²⁷ The church was not foreseen in the Old Testament. It is only a divine afterthought after Israel rejected salvation. So there is sharp discontinuity between Israel and the church. National Israel will receive the kingdom again, and the climax of Israel’s story will be the time of the Millennium. The church is an insertion between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week of the seventy weeks prophecy in Daniel 9. It is also claimed that the “kingdom of God” and the “kingdom of heaven” are different things. One is universal, while the other one applies to the Jews only. Consequently, there are different dispensations. While Israel has to keep the ceremonial law and will reinstall the old cultic system with animal sacrifices, Christianity does not need to keep this law.²⁸

(3) At the end of time there will be a seven-year period of great tribulation, caused by the antichrist, a person. At the beginning of this period, Jesus will return invisibly for His church and will snatch away from this earth His elect people, whether living or dead.²⁹ This event concludes the time of the Gentiles. Israel, which will still be on earth, will return to God and accept Jesus as Messiah. The Jews will be involved in a great work of evangelizing the world. Many people will be won. After the seven years, Jesus will come visibly, this time not for His church but with His church, and the Millennium will be ushered in. Satan will be bound. The Jews will be reinstated in their original Old Testament

position. They will live in Palestine. Jesus will sit on the literal throne of David and will rule the world from Jerusalem, His headquarters. The unfulfilled prophecies pertaining to Israel in the Old Testament will be fulfilled.³⁰ The righteous will rule with Christ in a golden age of peace and security. At the end of the Millennium, Satan will be released, the general resurrection will happen, and after a short period of rebellion, which will be the overthrown, the final judgment will take place and the new heaven and earth will be established.³¹

A major difference between dispensational premillennialism and historical premillennialism is hermeneutics. The latter allows for biblical typology to function as a hermeneutical approach to understand the biblical message without subscribing to an unjustified literalism.³² Also the approach to Israel is different.³³

T. P. Weber compares historic premillennialists with dispensationalist premillennialists and concludes:

Perhaps, in the end, what separates the two versions of futurist premillennialism is that dispensationalists simply have a better story to tell. Laying all matters of truth aside, in a popularity context the pretribulation rapture is always going to easily beat the posttribulation rapture. No matter what they do, historic premillennialists have a hard sell: going through the tribulation is not nearly as appealing as escaping from it.³⁴

Arising Questions

These different views trigger the question of which approach should be favored. What is the timing and nature of the Millennium according to Scripture? While it is commonly assumed that a number of biblical texts refer to the Millennium, Revelation 20 is the the least ambiguous to speak about a thousand-year period. So we will focus on Revelation 20 in the rest of this article. But how should Revelation 20 be understood? What do we do with the two resurrections mentioned in this chapter? Why is it at all necessary or even helpful to study questions regarding the Millennium?

Timing of the Millennium

The timing of the Millennium at least partially determines its nature. Those who have suggested that the entire Christian age is the Millennium have also understood it as a period of improvement, in which people can repent, turn to God, and thus experience their personal “resurrection.” Some of those who understand the Millennium as following Christ’s return would see it as a period of evangelism under the reign of Christ.

While being premillennialists, Adventists do not easily fall into this camp because they differ in a number of aspects from the major premillennial consensus. They understand the Millennium as a time of desolation of the earth. During this time, when nobody lives on earth, the heavenly judgment on Satan and the wicked dead will determine what final justice will look like. After the Millennium the lost will be resurrected. Satan will be able to deceive them again (Rev 20:5a, 7–8, 13a). After their attempted attack of the New Jerusalem (Rev 20:9a) that in the meantime has come from heaven (Rev 21:2), they will find themselves in front of God’s throne to be judged (Rev 20:11–13), while God will be vindicated before the universe. Finally, the verdict against the wicked will be executed (Rev 20:9b, 10, 14–15), the new Paradise ushered in, and the plan of salvation completed.

While a number of Christians would see the Millennium as something like a second chance for conversion, based on Scripture Adventists do not support such a teaching, which—if they are right—would actually be detrimental to those who do not make a decision for Jesus in this life but postpone it until they can no longer make that decision.

Timing and the Larger Context (Rev 15–19)

To determine the timing of the Millennium we have to consider the context of Revelation 20. The second part of Revelation, beginning with chapter 15, largely follows a chronological sequence with only a few blocks of material—but not entire visions—being parallel.³⁵ This is important for interpretation. In Revelation 11:18, the remainder of the Apocalypse is already summarized as the wrath of the nations (Rev 12–14), the wrath of God and the destruction of the destroyers (Rev 15–19), the time of judgment of the dead (Rev 20), and the reward of God’s servants (Rev 21–22).

While it is true that in the first part of the book recapitulation occurs on a large scale—entire visions being parallel—recapitulation is much more limited in the second part of Revelation.³⁶ The Apocalypse operates with a perspective reaching from the time of John to the final consummation. This can clearly be seen in its central vision (Rev 12–14), which begins with the birth of the Messiah, His ascension to God, Satan’s attack on the Messianic community throughout the centuries, and his war against the remnant at the end of time. The last message to be proclaimed as well as a symbolic description of Christ’s second coming are found in chapter 14. The same time span applies to the other visions—the septenaries—in the historical part of Revelation.³⁷

However, this basic perspective changes with Revelation 15. This chapter forms an introduction to the seven plagues (Rev 15:1, 7), which represent the fullness and completion of the wrath of God. They are described in Revelation 16. With the sixth plague, the dragon (Satan), the sea beast, and the false prophet are mentioned (Rev 16:13). These three entities form end-time Babylon, also called satanic or “unholy trinity,”³⁸ and prepare for the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:14, 16), while the kings from the East, Jesus, and His army are about to come (Rev 16:12).³⁹ With the seventh plague, Babylon is being judged and disintegrates into its three constituent parts (Rev 16:19).

Revelation 17 and 18 describe the seventh plague in more detail.⁴⁰ In chapter 17 the judgment on Babylon, a worldwide religious alliance, is depicted as judgment of the great harlot. In chapter 18 it is depicted as judgment on the great city.

Revelation 19 briefly mentions this judgment again (Rev 19:2–4) to move on to the marriage supper of the Lamb, Jesus (Rev 19:7–8). Then follows a description of Armageddon.⁴¹ Jesus, the rider on the white horse, with His army defeats Babylon. This is a symbolic description of Christ’s second coming.⁴² While the dragon still lives on, the beast and the false prophet end up in the fiery pool (Rev 19:20). Thus two parts of Babylon are being destroyed at the end of Revelation 19. The dragon that is still alive will be confined to the abyss at the beginning of the Millennium (Rev 20:1–3). He can no longer be active on earth.

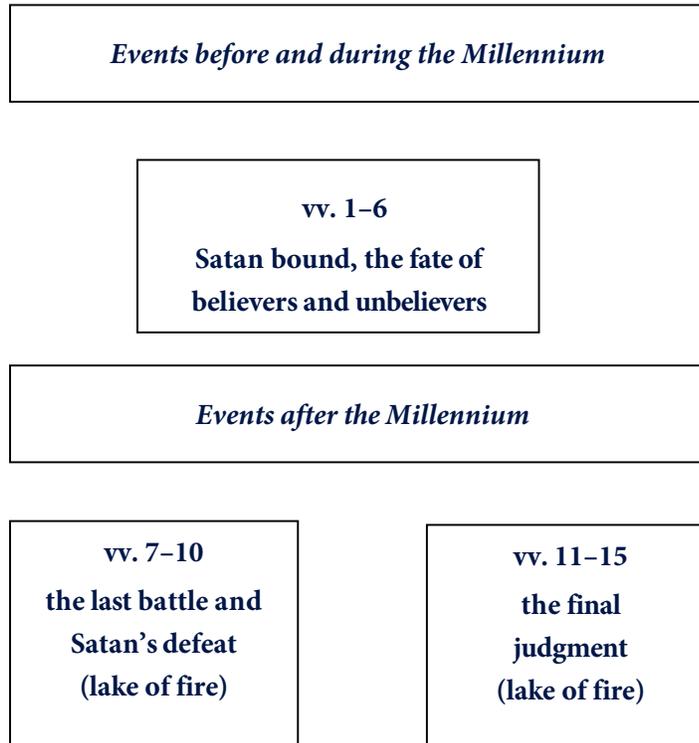
Timing and Revelation 20

What about Revelation 20? It also describes a chronological development. Following Christ’s second advent, Revelation 20:1–3 depicts the time at the beginning of the Millennium. Verses 4–6 mention the reign of Christ with the redeemed of all ages in heaven during the Millennium.

The rest of the chapter deals with events after the heavenly court session (Rev 20:7–15)—that is, after the Millennium. But it comes in two passages. The first deals with the attack of satanic forces on the New Jerusalem and the defeat of the wicked including Satan (Rev 20:7–10). The second passage describes the heavenly judgment as execution of the verdict (Rev 20:11–15). Both passages end in a similar way—namely by pointing to the lake of

fire. Thus they are parallel, and their events must be understood in an interlocking way. Such a phenomenon is not unique in Revelation but is also found in other places of the Apocalypse.⁴³ Although Revelation 20:7–10 and 20:11–15 run parallel, overall the chapter follows a chronological approach.⁴⁴ This observation may also suggest that this is true for the preceding context of our passage, and this is what we have argued above.

Here is a simple graphic depiction of the structure of Revelation 20:



Timing and Revelation 21–22

However, the mostly chronological approach in the second part of Revelation does not stop with Revelation 20. This becomes very clear when the audience reaches Revelation 21. The Millennium is past; the lake of fire is gone. A new divine creation is described—the new heaven and earth—clearly following the events described under the Millennium. Revelation 21 and 22 portray a completely new situation with death being gone and an intimate face-to-face relationship established between God and His people. Sanctuary terminology permeates Revelation 21 and 22, indicating that God now directly dwells among His children (Exod 25:8) and that the long-desired consummation and fulfillment of the plan of salvation has been reached.

Further Observations Relating to the Timing of the Millennium

The outline of the second part of Revelation makes it abundantly clear that the Millennium should be understood as following Christ’s Second coming, not preceding it. Structural observations have already been mentioned. We must add a few other observations that support our conclusion.

Chronological Progression: The Angels with the Plagues

The angels with the seven last plagues, which are also described as bowls filled with the wrath of God, occur for the first time in Revelation 15:1. After a short aside describing the redeemed beside the sea of glass in heaven (Rev 15:2–4), the focus is again on the angels with the plagues (Rev 15:6–8). Revelation 15 introduces the description of these last plagues in chapter 16.

In Revelation 16 the angels with their plagues are mentioned in verses 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12, and 17. That means that throughout the entirety of chapter 16 the angels with the plagues are present and active.

As soon as we proceed to chapter 17, we are informed that “one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke” with John to inform him about the judgment on harlot Babylon, expanding on the last two plagues of Revelation 16. Verse 3 refers to the same angel. The angel appears again in verse 7, but his activity is not limited in this chapter to these verses only. Revelation 17 contains three angelic speeches (vv. 1–2, 7–14, 15–18). They cover the major part of Revelation 17.⁴⁵

One—if not the same—angel with a bowl appears again in Revelation 21:9, 17—also being involved in verses 10 and 15–17—and in Revelation 22:1, 6. This means that the entire eschatological part of Revelation is connected through the agency of the angels with the bowls who in Revelation 15–17 are involved with the judgment of Babylon and in Revelation 21 and 22 with final salvation for the children of God. It is not possible to understand this part of Revelation as continuous recapitulation but there is clear progression from judgment to salvation, which would support a chronological approach of the second part of Revelation with enlargements of certain aspects here and there.

Conceptual Link: The Undoing of the Satanic Trinity

While Babylon appears with name first in Revelation 14:8, it is clear that it forms an alliance of the three evil powers of Revelation 12–13.⁴⁶ Separately seen, the first of these powers last longer while the others exist for a short time. Satan/the devil/the serpent was already heavily involved in causing problems for the churches of the first century.⁴⁷ The dragon appears again in Revelation 12 where he fights a battle against Michael in heaven (Rev 12:7–12), a battle against the woman, who represents the church on earth (Rev 12:13–15), and a battle against the remnant (Rev 12:17). The sea beast enters the stage of human history in the first part of Revelation 13, while the beast out of the earth becomes active when the deadly wound of the sea beast is healing (Rev 13:12). But these three powers work together in Revelation 16:13. They are opposed to God and His people.

Starting with Revelation 16, the demise of the dragon, the sea beast, and the false prophet (beast out of the earth) is shown. Their alliance falls apart (Rev 16–18). Christ’s second coming puts an end to the sea beast and the false prophet (Rev 19:19–20), the two entities that entered the stage of history later than the dragon. They are thrown into the lake of fire. Satan, the dragon, survives the Second Coming, only to be bound in the abyss for a thousand years (Rev 20:2), finding his end also in the lake of fire after his release from his prison, the deception of the resurrected human opponent of God, and their attack of the “beloved city” (Rev 20:7–10).

This successive undoing of the satanic trinity, which is Babylon, indicates that the second part is chronologically successive.

Conceptual Link: The Judgment-Salvation Theme

Another conceptual link is the topic of judgment-salvation. Revelation 15 and 16 imply that the true believers were persecuted (Rev 15:2; 16:16). Revelation 17:6 speaks about Christian martyrs killed by Babylon. This is repeated

in Revelation 18:24; 19:2; and 20:4. This is one of the major reasons that Babylon is being judged. The extensive judgment in its stages is described in Revelation 15–20.

However, in this long portrayal of the final judgment the idea of salvation for God’s people surfaces. For example, in Revelation 19:1–2, “Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because his judgments are true and righteous; for he has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and he has avenged the blood of his bond-servants on her,” and in Revelation 20:4 which speaks about the resurrection of the persecuted saints. Salvation will finally be realized in Revelation 21–22. The redeemed live in the presence of God and see His face, death no longer exists, and the children of God serve Him and reign with Him (Rev 21:3–4, 6–7, 27; 22:2–5). This conceptual link suggests again progression instead of strict recapitulation for the second part of the Apocalypse.

Terminological Links

There are a number of other terminological links that support our conclusion.

First, the lake of fire with sulfur must be mentioned. In Revelation 19:20 it is the place where the sea beast and the false prophet end up. In Revelation 20:10 the very same place where the sea beast and false prophet *were* (ESV)⁴⁸ is now the place where Satan finds himself. However, in Revelation 20:14–15 Death and Hades⁴⁹ are thrown into the lake of fire which is the second death.⁵⁰ There is a clear progression.

Second, there is the issue of war. While the historical part of Revelation reports about a war in heaven between Satan and Michael (Rev 12:7), Satan’s *making* of war (*poieō polemon*) against the remnant (Rev 12:17), and the sea beast’s *making* of war against the saints (Rev 13:7), the eschatological part of Revelation uses the phrase “gathering for war/to make war” (*synagō eis ton polemon/synagō poiēsai ton polemon*). The satanic trinity gathers to make war, which will be Armageddon (Rev 16:14). The sea beast, the kings, and most likely the false prophet gather to make war against Jesus, the rider on the white horse (Rev 19:19). Finally, Satan gathers the resurrected unbelievers for war against the saints and the “beloved city” (Rev 20:8–9). The verb *polemeō* is used in Revelation 17:14 and 19:11. While the scarlet beast and the horns make war against the Lamb, Jesus makes war against the enemies (Rev 19:11).

Third, the term “death” points also to a progression in the final chapters of Revelation. Rev 18:8 indicates that Babylon will be taken over in one day by a plague that includes death. Believers have no part in second death (Rev 20:6). There will, however, be a resurrection from death to judgment (Rev 20:13) and the end of death in the lake of fire (Rev 20:14). Then death will be no more (Rev 21:4) while unbelievers are still affected by the second death (Rev 21:8).

Summary

By way of summary, we must state that the final wrath of God is poured out in the form of the seven plagues (Rev 15–16). These plagues seem to follow each other subsequently, even if they may overlap. Revelation 17 points to the formation of a super-alliance directed against God and His people, consisting of the religious alliance called Babylon and the political alliance spearheaded by the scarlet beast and supported by the kings of the earth. However, the super-alliance will break apart, causing the political alliance to go after the spiritual alliance and destroy it. Revelation 18 describes from another perspective the collapse of the economic system Babylon (the great city). The impending judgments trigger the message for believers to come out of Babylon (Rev 18:4) before the judgment is executed.

The second coming of Christ follows chronologically the preceding chapters (Rev 19). It causes part of the satanic trinity to be destroyed in the lake of fire. A thousand-year period follows, which allows for the heavenly court to meet and determine the verdict on sinners after the Millennium (Rev 20). Then a new heaven and earth is created in which Jesus and the redeemed live in an intimate relationship (Rev 21–22).

These observations suggest that Revelation does not support amillennialism or postmillennialism. The data suggest that the best option to interpret the Millennium is premillennialism.

To be continued.

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¹ For further material on this topic, see Eric Claude Webster, “The Millennium,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 927–946; *The Seventh-Day Adventist Encyclopedia*, vol. 11, 2nd rev. ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1996), 378–380; Ekkehardt Mueller, “Analyse und Kritik der verschiedenen Interpretationen des Millennium,” *Aller Diener* 1/88, 19–32; Ekkehardt Mueller, “Microstructural Analysis of Revelation 20,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Autumn 1999, vol. 37, no. 2, 227–255; Ekkehardt Mueller, “The Final Judgment (Rev 20),” <https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Final%20Judgment%20%28Rev%20%29.pdf>, accessed March 29, 2016.

² The Millennium is clearly found in Revelation 20. All biblical quotations are from the NASB unless otherwise indicated.

³ Various views on the Millennium have been compiled in Don F. Neufeld and Julia Neuffer, eds., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Student's Source Book* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1962), 636–657. See also J. Massyngbaerde Ford, “Millennium” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:832–834.

⁴ For a wider discussion of these three positions, see Darrell L. Bock and Stanley N. Gundry, eds., *Three Views On the Millennium and Beyond* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999); Robert G. Clouse, *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977). Premillennialism can be divided into historic premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism. This is what is done in the second work.

⁵ See R. G. Clouse, “Millennium, Views of the” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 716; J. Massyngbaerde Ford, “Chiliasm,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. Daniel Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:908.

⁶ See Hans Bietenhard, *Das tausendjährige Reich: Eine biblisch-theologische Studie* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1955), 39; Millard J. Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology: A Study of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1977), 95–96.

⁷ *Iren. Haer.* 5.33.3f, quoted in *Early Christianity in the Lycus Valley*, by Ulrich Huttner (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 227.

⁸ See Norman Rufus Colin Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (Fair Lawn, NJ: Essential Books, 1957), 12.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁰ See Cohn, 310; Abraham Kuypers, *Chiliasm or the Doctrine of Premillennialism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1934), 8.

¹¹ Webster, “The Millennium,” 935–942, provides a short description of amillennialism, premillennialism, and postmillennialism and shows how throughout history the concept of the Millennium was understood.

¹² See Case, 174; Cohn, 13. On Origen, see also Daniel L. Akin, *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), 877–878.

¹³ It was, e.g., partially recovered among some of the Anabaptists. See Akin, 881.

¹⁴ See Cohn, 14; Bietenhard, 8; Webster, 937–938; Akin, 878–879.

- ¹⁵ William E. Cox, *Amillennialism Today* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972), 8. See also Akin, 880–881.
- ¹⁶ See Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*, 76.
- ¹⁷ Cf. Akin, 882.
- ¹⁸ Akin, 883, also points out that some Puritans held a postmillennial view, while others preferred amillennialism.
- ¹⁹ See Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 1214–1215.
- ²⁰ Erikson, *Christian Theology*, 1211.
- ²¹ See Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*, 94–106. Bietenhard, 9, also mentions the Bogomils and Cathars of the Medieval Ages and the Pietists in later times.
- ²² On premillennialism, see Craig L. Blomberg and Sung Wook Chung, eds., *A Case for Historic Premillennialism: An Alternative to “Left Behind” Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2009).
- ²³ See Akin, 886–888; Bietenhard, 10; and Clouse, 717–718.
- ²⁴ See Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*, 96–97.
- ²⁵ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Millennial Maze: Sorting Out Evangelical Options* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 93.
- ²⁶ See Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*, 115–117.
- ²⁷ See Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1218.
- ²⁸ See Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*, 110–111, 117–122. This question is also discussed in Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983).
- ²⁹ Grenz, 98–99, points out that some dispensationalists adhere to a pretribulational rapture, while others maintain a midtribulational rapture, i.e., a rapture after three and one half years into the final tribulation.
- ³⁰ See Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1218.
- ³¹ Grenz, 98, notes that “classical dispensationalists are interested in offering a detailed eschatological chronology,” and presents one on pp. 98–100. See also George Lewis Murray, *Millennial Studies; A Search for Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1948), 87; Cox, 63; Robert D. Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days* (Westwood, NJ: F. H. Revell, 1954), 24–27, 46–47, 77–80, 91–97, 102–108.
- ³² See George Eldon Ladd, “Historic Premillennialism,” in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 26–27. He shows through biblical examples that “the OT is reinterpreted in light of the Christ event” (21), “the ‘literal hermeneutic’ does not work” (23), and “the OT is interpreted by the NT” (27).
- ³³ Ladd, “Historic Premillennialism,”²⁵ states: “Paul avoids calling the church Israel, unless it be in Gal. 6:16, but this is a much disputed verse. It is true however, that he applies prophecies to the church which in their OT setting belong to literal Israel; he calls the church the sons, the seeds of Abraham. He calls believers the true circumcision. It is difficult therefore to avoid the conclusion that Paul sees the church as spiritual Israel.”
- ³⁴ Timothy P. Weber, “Dispensational and Historic Premillennialism as Popular Millennialist Movements,” in *A Case for Historic Premillennialism: An Alternative to “Left Behind” Eschatology*, eds. Craig L. Blomberg and Sung Wook Chung (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2009), 21.
- ³⁵ According to Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1219, amillennialists “see the Book of Revelation as consisting of several sections, seven being the number most frequently mentioned. These several sections do not deal with successive periods of time; rather, they are recapitulations of the same period, the period between Christ’s first and second comings.” While this observation is true for the first part of Revelation, it does not work for the second part.
- ³⁶ See Ekkehardt Mueller, “When Prophecy Repeats Itself: Recapitulation in Revelation,” in *Biblical Research Institute Releases–14* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2015).
- ³⁷ Jon Paulien, “Eschatology and Adventist Self-Understanding,” in *Lutherans & Adventists in Conversation: Report and Papers Presented 1994–1998* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000), 237–253. This article deals, among others, with the historicist approach to apocalyptic literature.
- ³⁸ Paige Patterson, *Revelation, The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2012), 310. J. Webb Mealy, *After the Thousand Years: Resurrection and Judgment in Revelation 20* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 97, calls it “devilish troika.”

³⁹ A preterist view of this part of Revelation which is clearly eschatological in nature does not make much sense. George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 213, is on target when stating, “Many commentators assert—as though it were a self-evident fact in the text—that the ‘kings from the east’ represent the Parthians who now invade the civilized world under the leadership of *Nero redivivus*. This, however, is sheer speculation.” While some commentators notice the typological connection between the kings of the east and Cyrus with his armies as well as the topic of drying out or parting of the waters as it relates to judgment of God’s enemies and salvation of his people—G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 828–829; Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 151–152—they still do not take advantage of their insight into the Old Testament background but divert to majority views. Craig R. Koester, *Revelation*, The Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 665, notes: “From this perspective, the invasion of the eastern kings foreshadow the destruction of Babylon in Rev 17–18.” This is an important insight that should be exploited. Indeed, the last two plagues are further described in Revelation 17, 18, and even 19, where the actual battle of Armageddon takes place. In Revelation 19 the opponents are the satanic trinity with its supporters and Jesus as King of Kings. For a discussion of the kings of the east as Jesus and his army, see Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 494–495, 498–499. See also Milligan’s arguments as noted in Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 408.

⁴⁰ See the introduction by one of the angels with a bowl in Revelation 17:1. Another angel with a bowl is found in Revelation 21:9, tying together the eschatological part of Revelation.

⁴¹ Although the term “Armageddon” is not mentioned in Revelation 19, this chapter is a clear fulfillment of Revelation 16:16. See Ladd, *Revelation of John*, 216; also Koester, *Revelation*, 668.

⁴² See, e.g., Brian K. Blount, *Revelation*, The New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 349; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 679. Mealy, 89, summarizes the second part of Revelation 19 under the following aspects: “Christ as Judge, the Parousia as judgment on Babylon, the Parousia as judgment on humanity as a whole, and the Parousia as an event of eschatological salvation.”

⁴³ E.g., Revelation 13:1–4 and 13:5–8 are parallel paragraphs, as are Revelation 17 and 18.

⁴⁴ Mealy, 180–181, suggests verses 4–10 and verses 11–15 to be parallel.

⁴⁵ For an outline of Revelation 17, see Ekkehardt Mueller, *The Beast of Revelation 17: A Suggestion (Part 1)*, *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 10.1 (2007): 34.

⁴⁶ The sea beast (Rev 13a) is linked to the dragon (serpent, devil, Satan) in 13:2, 4 and 16:13, while the land beast is linked to the dragon in 13:11 and to the sea beast in 13:12, 14, 15, 17. All three entities appear together in 16:13 and are most likely referred to in 16:21.

⁴⁷ See Revelation 2:9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 24, 3:9.

⁴⁸ The Greek text does not contain a copula (the auxiliary verb “to be”). Therefore some translations render verse 10 “where the beast and the false prophet *are*” (e.g., NKJV). This may make sense in light of the following verb appearing in a plural form—“they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” However, verse 9 indicates that the torment should be understood in terms of the fire “consuming” or “devouring” them. This may imply that the sea beast and the false prophet are not burning for a thousand years. From this perspective the ESV translation “were” would be preferable. On the phrase “forever and ever,” see Stefanovic, 580; against Kistemaker, *Revelation*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 544.

⁴⁹ Death and Hades come as pairs in Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14. According to Revelation 1:18 Jesus, who was dead and is alive, has the keys to Death and Hades. In Revelation 6:8 Death and Hades are personified, following the rider on the pale horse. According to Revelation 20:13 Death and Hades release the unbelieving dead at the end of the Millennium to face the divine verdict. While some understand Death and Hades as demonic forces—Stefanovic, 108—they could also be understood as first death from which people are resurrected, Hades typically referring to the grave. This death will also end in second death and be no more. Cf. Beale, 723.

⁵⁰ Revelation 21:8, by way of contrasts, refers back to the lake of fire with sulfur which is the second death.

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