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Sermon Notes

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The Thousand Years

Revelation 20:1-10

After the Second Coming of Christ, one of two things will happen. Either Christ will set up a thousand-year kingdom in which Satan is bound, righteousness and blessings flourish, people will experience lavishly blessed healthy and successful lives with Christ physically reigning on earth, but in which there will still be birth and death, and there will still be sin in the hearts of the people, and which will end in ONE MORE BATTLE with Satan and sinfully rebellious people, resulting in the eternal state I am about to describe

OR

Christ will judge all his enemies at once at the time of his Second Coming, sending Satan, demons and all the reprobate – the unbelievers – into the lake of fire and the righteous will be glorified in resurrection bodies with no internal sin and no possibility of a future fall... in a perfect world in which there is not the slightest hint of decay – the New Heavens and New Earth... the ETERNAL STATE

In other words, after the Second Coming of Christ, there either it will be a MILLENNIAL KINGDOM leading to the ETERNAL STATE... or the ETERNAL STATE will come immediately.

I. The Binding of Satan (vs.1-3)

A. The Millennium Starts with the Binding of Satan

Revelation 20:1-3 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. ² He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³ He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

1. The chapter opens with a powerful action, the binding of Satan

2. The one who does the binding here is a single angel coming down out of heaven
3. He has a key to the Abyss... he is in charge of that place of torture and imprisonment
 - a. The word “abyss” means literally “bottomless”... a pit of punishment for fallen angels called demons
 - b. According to 2 Peter and Jude, some particularly evil demons were locked there as a punishment

B. The Binding of Satan by Jesus

Matthew 12:29 how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.

1. Basically, Jesus depicts the advance of his gospel and the rescuing of lost sinners as an act of violence against Satan; and he specifically does speak of BINDING the strong man so that people can be rescued from his dark kingdom
2. This idea of the “binding of the strong man” for the spread of the gospel is a CENTERPIECE of the amillennial argument
3. They say that is EXACTLY what this thousand years is... the restriction of Satan’s power to deceive people from believing in Christ
4. Christ has been building his Kingdom with LIVING STONES rescued from Satan’s dark kingdom for TWO THOUSAND YEARS

Colossians 1:13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves

C. The Purpose and Result of this Binding

Revelation 20:3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended.

D. How “Bound” Is Satan? Is He Bound NOW?

1. The crux of the matter between those who believe in a literal thousand years and those who don’t: IS SATAN BOUND NOW?
2. Amillennialists say Satan is bound specifically now from deceiving the ELECT of the nations...

3. This chapter thus refers to the powerful spread of the gospel over the entire church age

4. Premillennialists answer saying HOW IS SATAN BOUND??

1 Peter 5:8-9 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Ephesians 6:10-12 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

E. The Release of Satan

1. The release of Satan at the end of the thousand years

Revelation 20:3 After that, he must be set free for a short time.

2. Taught again in verse 7, the last mention of the thousand years

Revelation 20:7-8 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth

II. The Millennial Reign (vs. 4-6)

If all we had were verses 1-3, the millennium would be far easier to understand

These next few verses (vs. 4-6) give details concerning saints who will reign with Christ for a thousand years... and these verses cause the most controversy

Amillennialists say these verses refer to martyrs who died during the entire church age, who ended up just fine... gloriously reigning with Christ IN HEAVEN... they argue that's exactly what verse 4 says:

Revelation 20:4 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded...

To amillennialists, this is just more detail about those who are absent from the body, present with the Lord... they are reigning in heaven with Christ; like the martyrs mentioned when the fifth seal was broken:

Revelation 6:9-11 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. ¹⁰ They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord,

holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" ¹¹ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

They argue that the phrase "come to life" refers not to bodily resurrection but to being born again, crossing over from death to life through faith in Christ... they were dead in sin, and came to life on earth... a spiritual resurrection:

Colossians 2:13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins

John 5:24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

Premillennialists say these are actually raised from the dead in resurrection bodies and join with Christ in reigning physically on earth during the millennium

A. A (Somewhat) New Earth

1. The millennial kingdom: if it literally happens, Christ will have to FIX the smoldering planet earth... utterly ravaged and almost totally destroyed by God's trumpet and bowl judgments
 - a. If Christ sets up an earthly kingdom after his Second Coming, he will have to clean up all the wreckage of the seven trumpets and seven bowls
 - b. Remember that 1/3rd of all the green and growing things were destroyed
 - c. Remember that all the seas and oceans were turned to blood and every living thing in the sea died
 - d. Remember that all the fresh water has been turned to blood
 - e. Remember that a massive earthquake has destroyed all the cities of the earth
 - f. Remember that the Second Coming involves a massive battle at Armageddon in which there are huge numbers of corpses and the vultures come and feed on the bodies
 - g. Planet earth will be a smoldering pile of rubble with death and destruction everywhere
2. BUT he is more than equal to the task

- a. By Jesus Christ the entire universe was spoken into existence
 - b. Jesus is more than able to clean up planet earth and make it flourish again if there is to be a thousand year kingdom
3. WHO will Christ reign over??
- a. He will be coming to rescue his own people, believers who have survived the Antichrist's terrible reign
 - b. Many of those survivors will be JEWS now converted
 - c. It seems like the Second Coming will result in the deaths of all those who followed the beast and received his mark...

Revelation 19:17-18 And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, ¹⁸ so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great."

- d. The godly remnant will make up the population of the millennial kingdom... and they will continue in the same physical existence... marrying, having children... within a generation or two, the earth will be repopulated
- e. BUT their children, grandchildren, or great grandchildren as the millennium continues will not all believe in Jesus

B. Walking through these Verses

1. Thrones for Judges (vs. 4)

Revelation 20:4 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge.

- a. These are positions of power for certain followers of Christ
- b. Jesus delegates his authority and empowers them to judge and to rule in his name

Revelation 3:21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

2 Timothy 2:11-12 Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; ¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him.

- c. We should expect this in our future lives **in the eternal state**... some of the redeemed given authority and power greater than others

Luke 19:17-19 *"Well done, my good servant!" his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.'* ¹⁸ *"The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.'* ¹⁹ *"His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.'*

2. Rulers Identified (vs. 4)

Revelation 20:4 *And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands.*

- a. There is a specific aspect of this verse that gives trouble to everyone...
- b. Why are the martyrs who were killed in a specific way (beheading) during a specific time (the years when the beast was reigning and when people were receiving the mark of the beast) WHY ARE THEY selected out from among all the servants of Christ in church history?

3. Rulers Honored for Courage

- a. Some believe these martyrs suffered more and showed more courage than anyone else in church history
- b. Despite the overwhelming pressure of Antichrist's government and the religion of the false prophet, despite the clear death penalty inflicted on those who refused to worship the beast or his idol, or to receive his mark, they STOOD FIRM... boldly proclaiming their faith in Christ
- c. They are therefore selected out for a special role in the millennial kingdom
- d. Others think that we should not limit it to just a subset of Christians, but that it represents all Christians who followed Christ throughout church history
- e. However, the number of the redeemed throughout church history is a number SO GREAT THAT NO ONE CAN COUNT IT!
- f. If Christ is literally going to empower these to reign and judge with him, he doesn't need several hundred million or one billion of them

4. Rulers Resurrected ("Came to life")

Revelation 20:4-6 *They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.* ⁵ *(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.* ⁶ *Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.*

- a. These words have caused so much discussion and debate
 - b. But if there will be a literal thousand year kingdom on earth, then these martyrs, BEHEADED for refusing to bow down, are physically and literally RAISED TO LIFE in a RESURRECTION... we would not think of these as merely having come back to their original life, but that they are glorified in resurrection bodies
 - c. Therein lies the rub!**
 - d. Why would Christ give only some of the saints their resurrection bodies, and make the others wait for another thousand years?
 - e. Also, we can see the difficulty of mingling resurrected, glorified saints with not-yet resurrected or glorified saints (the believers of the millennial kingdom!)... a clearly UNEQUAL situation in which some of the Christians never sin or age or feel pain or die, and others are more normal and do sin, and do get sick, and do age, and do die**
5. "Reigning With Christ"
- a. First, Christ himself will reign physically, obviously and clearly... in an earthly Kingdom, Zion, Jerusalem

Isaiah 2:3-5 The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. ⁵ Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

- b. Christ will rule the world with a rod of iron... and judge with perfect justice

Isaiah 11:2-10 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD-- ³ and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; ⁴ but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. ⁶ The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. ⁷ The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. ⁹ They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰ ¶ In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.

- c. And the chosen and resurrected saints will rule with him, extending his rule to the ends of the earth
- d. Who do they rule over?
- e. Who do they judge?
- f. The idea is that the Second Coming of Christ does not result in all his enemies being slaughtered, but some of them given a chance to repent and follow the true King of the world
- g. Many of them do, some do not
- h. So also genuine followers in Christ who were holding out for him at his Second Coming will have been rescued and survived Second Coming but were not martyrs... they continue in their normal physical lives and have children
- i. The children of both sets of people will have to be evangelized like anyone else
- j. Over the course of the thousand years, there will be quite a population on the millennial earth
- k. There will be commerce, worship, service... NO WARFARE

Isaiah 19:23-25 *In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. ²⁴ ¶ In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. ²⁵ The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance."*

Zechariah 14:16-18 *Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁷ If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, they will have no rain. ¹⁸ If the Egyptian people do not go up and take part, they will have no rain. The LORD will bring on them the plague he inflicts on the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.*

6. The Rest of the Dead

Revelation 20:5 *(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.)*

- a. In the amillennial view, this represents the unbelievers, the non-elect, who are raised for WRATH and JUDGMENT

- b. In the premillennial view, this represents the saints who weren't martyrs during the time of the antichrist... they were absent from the body, present with the Lord in heaven for the thousand years and receive their resurrection bodies after the millennium

7. The First Resurrection

Revelation 20:5-6 This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

8. The Second Death = hell

Revelation 20:14-15 The lake of fire is the second death.

9. Priests of God and of Christ

Revelation 20:6 they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

- a. For the amillennialist, this just refers to the heavenly position of all true Christians... we are all priests in Christ= the “priesthood of all believers”
- b. For the millennialists, “Priests of God and of Christ” speaks of the millennial religion that these saints will help administer... as children of the survivors grow up in Christ, these resurrected glorified saints will help grow them in their walk with Christ

III. Satan Loosed and Assembles a Wicked Army from the Earth (vs. 7-9)

Revelation 20:7-9 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth-- Gog and Magog-- to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. ⁹ They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves.

A. The End of the Thousand Years

- 1. For the amillennialist,
 - a. this is speaking of the end of human history... the very time that we just have been studying in Revelation—through all the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls
 - b. The end of the church age, the end of the time in which the gospel has been making such progress

- c. When all that is done, there will be a time of apostasy, of falling away through the influence of the devil... (perhaps including a specific Antichrist)
 - d. Satan deceives the nations and gathers everyone for the final battle, Armageddon, as we've said
 - e. The amillennialist just sees the thousand years as the entire church age ending in a cataclysmic battle
2. For the millennialist: the end of the millennial reign of Christ on earth
- a. Despite the amazingly blessed era of human history, a restoration of a kind of modified paradise on earth, there is still SIN residing in each non-glorified person
 - b. Also, as we've said, there will be non-believers... as astonishing as that may seem, despite the fact that the resurrected glorified Christ is reigning physically on planet earth and rendering perfectly just rulings and building and perfectly prosperous world, with NO SATANIC influence, no evil governments, no false religions, no allure to lusts, no persecution... there will STILL be many unbelievers ready to join Satan in one last rebellion

B. Satan's Last "Tour" of Deception

1. Satan is released and travels to and fro over the surface of the earth
2. God allows him freedom to roam, freedom to deceive
3. It is the final test of the human heart, and many FAIL IT MISERABLY
4. Satan goes to the ends of the earth and recruits people to defy Christ and attack the earthly holy city where he rules
5. The phrase "Gog and Magog" come from Ezekiel 38-39... there are a tremendous number of details that Revelation has employed from Ezekiel 38-39
6. In Ezekiel, Gog and Magog refer to Gentile rulers from the most distant parts of the earth who assemble and invade Israel to destroy her
7. Here, these are just symbolic names to refer to the last vestiges of hostile unbelieving people from the distant parts of Christ's millennial earth who are ready to defy him and fight against him under Satan's leadership

C. Their Purpose: To Surround the Holy City and Defeat Christ the King

Revelation 20:8-9 to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. ⁹ They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves.

1. This may well be one of the most significant purposes of the millennial kingdom... to show how STUBBORN and REBELLIOUS the human heart is, how deep-rooted is our sin
2. After the most perfect era in the history of planet earth, people still HATE CHRIST and GOD and want to fight them

D. The Education We Always Wanted

1. Sin entered the world when Adam ate from the TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE of good AND EVIL
2. We asked for an education in evil... and redemptive history has shown it to us
3. In every single era of human history, sin has abounded more and more
4. God is in the business of DRAWING OUT sin and showing it to us in its ugliest light

Romans 5:20 The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more

5. Every stage of redemptive history has shown human sin, then God responding with more grace... then EVEN MORE SIN, and EVEN MORE GRACE in the next stage
 - a. In the age before the flood, lawlessness increased so greatly that the hearts of people were ONLY EVIL ALL THE TIME
 - b. So God sent a flood and raised up a godly man Noah, whose children were to populate the earth
 - c. But Noah's descendants built the tower of Babel and were ungodly
 - d. God raised up Abraham and began the Jewish nation... he poured out his grace to the Jews, so that through them all peoples on earth would be blessed
 - e. God gave the Laws of Moses and the blessings of the Promised Land... but the Jews became as ungodly as the Canaanite nations; though God warned them again and again, their sins overwhelmed them and he exiled them
 - f. Then God gave the greatest gift of all: Jesus Christ, incarnate, born of the Virgin Mary, lived a sinless life under the Law, did incredible signs and

wonders... but the Jews were jealous and the Romans indifferent and zealous for their empire and they killed Jesus; but God raised him from the dead and he ascended to heaven and poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit, thus beginning the church age

- g. Over the last twenty centuries, the church age has unfolded... God has poured out so many blessings on us, but we are still weak and sinful... Romans 7 speaks of the POWER OF INDWELLING SIN,

Romans 7:15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

and the church has labored under our sinfulness and weakness while the gospel has gradually advanced... the end of that age was the greatest time of human sinfulness in history, under the Antichrist

- h. Then the millennial kingdom came... Christ actively ruling physically in the most blessed world one can imagine, and yet still the INDWELLING SIN and the seed of the unconverted spreads like a cancer and Satan is able to rouse one more round of rebellion
- i. WHAT AN EDUCATION IN HOW WICKED AND STUBBORN SIN IS!!
- j. HOW INSANE, HOW IRRATIONAL sin is! To think we can defy God and fight him and try to conquer him and craft a world better than what he has willed!!
- k. Nothing less than the fullness of our salvation, including the final transformation of the human heart to being fully conformed to Christ will conquer sin

IV. Satan and His Army Finally Defeated... Forever! (vs. 9-10)

Revelation 20:7-9 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth-- Gog and Magog-- to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. ⁹ They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

A. Satan's Army Defeated by Fire From Heaven

1. They are assembled... Satanically motivated
2. No mention of an Antichrist here... no one world ruler
3. There is so much we don't know

4. Amillennialists says this is just a recap of the final battle we already saw
5. But if not, this will be a quick final battle
6. The fire from heaven is like Sodom and Gomorrah... also a foretaste of hell

B. Satan's Final Punishment

Revelation 20:10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

1. At last, Satan gets what he truly deserves
2. All these centuries, he has been opposing God, hating God's people, deceiving, tempting, accusing, killing
3. The Lake of Fire was created for him and his demons... the Antichrist and false prophet share his torment
4. The fact that the Antichrist and False Prophet are already there, they had been thrown there already connects to the end of Revelation 19 and implies the thousand years and this final battle are NOT merely telling the same story again.

V. Applications

A. No One Sermon Can Settle this Debate

1. There are so many good arguments on both sides
2. I cannot finally resolve it in my mind... I have ready hundreds of pages in dozens of books on the Millennium and oddly, the more I study, the harder the problem gets
3. Sam Storms makes a very weighty case from the epistles of Peter, John, and Paul that the millennium is not in view and in some cases VERY DIFFICULT to harmonize with the clear texts; it is a problem that the millennium is not clearly mentioned in any other place in the Bible
4. Especially 1 Corinthians 15 and its account of the resurrection of the righteous, it's hard to harmonize with the millennium
5. Storms says we should not make a single reference in a difficult book the tail that wags the dog of all these other scriptures!
6. BUT just reading Revelation and the way its story unfolds, if we seek to be faithful to the details and connect them with a future history, the millennium

just seems like the next phase of God's redemptive plan after the Second Coming

B. Again... It Doesn't Really Matter

1. God has set before us TWO JOURNEYS... the internal journey of holiness and the external journey of gospel advance
2. This week, he wants you to make progress in EACH... put sin to death by the Spirit... repent of known patterns of sin... grow in your prayer life... love your family... serve your neighbors... bless the poor and needy... pray for your elected officials... raise your children in the gospel... work hard for the glory of God in your job... find some lost person at work or in your daily life and share the gospel with that person... send an encouraging email to an FBC missionary serving overseas
3. No matter what you believe about the millennium, you can and should do ALL of these kinds of things!!

C. Study Anyway!

1. God wants us to treasure everything we read in scripture and not ignore any of it or slight any of it

D. See the Stubbornness of Sin... and that the ONLY REMEDY is the Grace of God in Christ!

E. Come to Christ!!

1. The most important thing for you is forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ!!
2. If you don't know Christ as Savior, come NOW while there's time!