

The Millennium in the Book of Revelation

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The millennium is one of the most written about, and it deserves our attention. After all, all the events of biblical prophecy are associated with the millennium. The millennium is not hard to figure out – that is, if you are first century Christian to whom the Book of Revelation was written. For us however, who are living two thousand years displaced from the writing of this book, we have the difficult task of reading this book through first century glasses. This task is made even more difficult by the fact that there were no glasses in the first century. So, perhaps we should examine this subject through first century mud and spit – which, even then, we may still end up seeing men as trees walking. The millennium is marked by the binding and loosing of Satan, the vindication of the martyrs, and the arrival of the New Heavens and New Earth. I am no scholar. I pretend to be sometimes, and I am good with a Thesaurus, but my ability to interpret and teach Scripture is limited by my lack of education, young age, and slow intellect. That being said, I will do my best in the following pages to present the best case I can from the evidence that I have gathered. I do not claim to have all the answers, and I do not expect you to agree with me. I simply wish to present my current understanding of the subject – which may be lacking.

The Other 21 Chapters

One of my pet peeves is people reading the Bible out of context (all the ants collecting crumbs from this coffee shop patio just said amen). When most people say this, they just mean that you didn't interpret the Bible in the way that they would like you to. What I mean, however, is people jump to 1 Thessalonians 4 or Revelation 20 or 1 Corinthians 15 or Romans 6 or 1 Peter 3 without reading anything else in the book and expect to have a perfect understanding of the passage. While they may give the "right answer", it's usually just surface level stuff that doesn't try to tap into the meaning of the entire letter, history, vision, or whatever. That would be like skipping around in Harry Potter or Lord of the Rings and expecting to be able to keep up.

Revelation contains 22 chapters. Many Christians are somewhat familiar with the letters to the seven churches and chapters 20-22, but, for some reason, their ability to read the entire book as a unit is lacking. I do this as well, but I'm trying to break the habit. I hope that this section will not only serve to teach you about the Millennium but will also serve to teach you how to read the Bible.

"It is the Revelation – not Revelations!" said every Bible class teacher. And they would be right! But, what does this mean for us? It means that the book is about a singular uncovering of who Jesus is. Now, this point may seem insignificant, but stick with me. There are several climaxes in the Revelation. That is, the Day of the Lord takes place multiple times (e.g. Revelation 6:17; Revelation 11:15-18). Is that multiple revelations? No. It is one Revelation of Jesus told from multiple perspectives. It is likened unto seven seals being opened, seven trumpets blowing, seven bowls of wrath being poured out, etc. Same Revelation; different visions. Now, this makes our job considerably easier.

For example, read the following passages and note their similarities:

And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth. (Revelation 11:18)

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. (Revelation 20:12)

Are these two different times that the dead are judged or is this the same event? To me, it is obviously the same event, but you may find a way to disagree, and that doesn't really bother me. My opinion of you isn't based on eschatology – it's based upon your faith in Christ and love for your neighbor. However, if you do not agree with me on this point, then there will not be much in this paper with which you would agree because much of this paper assumes the connection between these two passages.

So, if these are the same events, and I think they are, AND the judgement of Revelation 20 takes place *after* the millennium, do you know what that means? It means that the judgement of Revelation 11 takes place *after* the millennium too. Which means that if we can identify the judgement of Revelation 11, then we can know when the end of the millennium is! Ah, but there is more.

If the Day of the Lord of chapter 11 is the same Day of the Lord of chapter 6, 14, 19, etc. then we can identify the end of the millennium simply by identifying what that Day of the Lord is. Our job has just gotten a lot easier, but today we will not make it too easy. This would be a good direction in your own study, but as for me and my house, we will return to the specific elements in Revelation 20.

The Binding of Satan

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ² And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. (Revelation 20:1-3)

Satan is bound for 1000 years then he is released for a short time:

Satan bound -----**1000 years**-----Satan Loosed-----**Short Time**-----Satan Destroyed

Thus, if one can identify when Satan is bound, then they can identify the beginning of the millennium. If one can find out when Satan is loosed or destroyed, then they can identify the end of the millennium or at least close to it. I will try to do all three in this short section. Before continuing, I must admit that there is some speculation as to who Satan is in the Bible. Most believe

in a literal being called Satan or the Devil, and they assume that it is he who is being discussed in most passages that uses the terms Satan or Devil. There are others who also believe in a literal being called Satan or the Devil, but they do not believe that every mention of Satan or Devil is necessarily that same being. They would most likely say that the serpent in the Garden, the tempter of Jesus, and the being in Revelation 20 are all the same, but there are other occasions, such as 1 Peter 5, where they may have a different opinion. Another group believes that no passage in Scripture speaks of an actual being but a personification of temptation or a regular human that acted as an adversary or slanderer (such as Peter in Matthew 16:23; “Get behind me, Satan!”). In this paper, the identity of Satan in Revelation is not under consideration but the time of his/ its binding, loosing, and destruction is.

The binding of Satan took place at the Cross of Christ. By “the Cross of Christ” I mean the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. The reason for grouping them together under one heading will be made plain shortly through the passages I share. **Hebrews 2:14-15** was used by me in the past to teach that Satan was *destroyed* at the Cross of Christ. This was based upon the wording of the King James Version; however, after examining other versions throughout the years (as well as the Greek), I believe the New American Standard renders it best:

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,¹⁵ and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

Jesus took on flesh and blood so that *through death* He *might render powerless* the devil. The way that Jesus would render the devil powerless was through death. The verb translated *render powerless* is subjunctive because it speaks of the plan of God prior to the incarnation. This is not saying that the death of Jesus had **yet to accomplish** the act of rendering the devil powerless at the time of the writing of Hebrews. Notice how the subjunctive is used in verse fifteen as well connecting the setting free and the rendering powerless. Using the Second Exodus theme of the New Testament, the saints had already left the bondage in figurative Egypt because Paul said, **“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery”** (Galatians 5:1). Since the act of being made free had already been accomplished, then the act of rendering the devil powerless had already been accomplished.

Now, how does one render someone else powerless? I can render you powerless by taking away your freedom, putting you into jail, stripping away your authority, and in many other ways. In Ephesians 4, the apostle Paul describes the victory over Satan through the death of Jesus in this way: **“When He ascended on High, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men” (Ephesians 4:8)**. In Revelation 20, Satan is bound. In Hebrews 2:14-15, Satan is rendered powerless. In Ephesians 4:8, Jesus leads captive a host of captives (mimicking the ancient tradition of parading your captured enemies after a military victory). Jesus, in His ministry, also spoke of the time when Satan would be judged (John 12:31; John 14:30; John 16:11). This would happen after the Last Supper (John 13) and prior to the sending of the Holy Spirit (John 16:11). Therefore, the most logical time to place the judgement/ binding/ rendering powerless/ capture of Satan is the time surrounding the Cross. This would place the binding of Satan at the Cross of Christ.

Remember, the loosing of Satan takes place at the end of the millennium and introduces the “short time;” so, if I can demonstrate when Satan would be destroyed, then I’ll at least have an ending of the short time. The devil is thrown into the lake of fire in Revelation 20:10. This is

accompanied by a great white throne judgement of the dead. If you look at the comparison in the preceding section, you will find that it is the same judgement of Revelation 11. I did not take the time to write out syllogisms in their technical form for the following, but I hope that the argument can be easily followed.

Satan is destroyed at the end of the short time.

The short time follows the millennium.

The great white throne judgement accompanies the destruction of Satan.

Thus, the great white throne judgement follows the short time which comes after the end of the millennium.

The great white throne judgement is the same judgement of Revelation 11.

So, judgement of Revelation 11 follows the short time which comes after the end of the millennium.

Thus, if one can determine when the judgement of Revelation 11 takes place, then one can know when Satan would be destroyed and thus know roughly when the millennium would come to an end.

So, turning our sights to Revelation 11, we must first read the passage. Due to space, I will leave out the verses about the activities of the two witnesses. Their precise identification is not necessary in order to interpret the passage. In fact, the precise identification of most signs and symbols in Revelation is not necessary in order to understand the book. If you are not familiar with Revelation 11, I ask that you read the entire chapter online or in your Bible before reading the following. Pay close attention to the underlined portions:

Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, “Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. ² “Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months... And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified... ¹³ And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. ¹⁴ The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly... ¹⁸ “And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets... (Revelation 11:1-19 abridged)

What city is under consideration here? Think about each underlined portion and ask yourself what city in Scripture best fits the description.

The temple of God

The temple of God, as I am sure you are aware, was in Jerusalem before its destruction in AD70.

The holy city

There are two cities called the holy city in the Bible: Old Jerusalem and New Jerusalem (OJ: Matthew 4:5; Matthew 27:53; NJ: Revelation 21:2). Which of these cities is prone to destruction? Furthermore, which of these cities was able to be trampled by the Gentiles for forty-two months. Consider the fact that the New Jerusalem does not come down from God out of Heaven until *after* the millennium whereas this city is around *prior* to the end of the millennium.

Where also their Lord was crucified

Jesus was executed in Jerusalem.

The third woe is coming quickly

After a portion of the city falls, the third and final woe comes **quickly**.

The time for the dead to be judged

This is the same judgement of Revelation 20 that *follows* the millennium. This is the time when Satan would be destroyed. One reason why Satan is not mentioned in this section of Scripture, is that he has yet to be introduced as a foe. That happens in Revelation 12. This vision tells the story from a different perspective.

And the time to reward your bond-servants the prophets

This is the reception of the New Jerusalem – the inheritance promised to Abraham. “**...for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God**” (Hebrews 11:10).

Hopefully, this short commentary is one that agrees with the text and serves as the best explanation for some of the language therein. To sum up my point from all this, the end of the millennium would take place shortly before the fall of Jerusalem – the holy city where Jesus was crucified. Thus, the loosing and destruction of Satan would fit within this timeframe.

The Short Time

Following the millennium is a time period called the “short time” (Revelation 20:3). I believe that this time is identifiable to an extent and there are extra-Revelation passages that discuss it. Before attending to those, let us first stay within the book. We will work backwards from chapter twenty to the best of my ability.

Revelation 12 is a picture of the millennium. Revelation 12, however, does not take into account the “long while”, “delay”, or “longsuffering of God” (Matthew 25:5, 19; 2 Peter 3:9). The apostles, because of the Old Testament, did not understand this time until the ascension of Jesus. They assumed, as does the Old Testament, that the Day of the Lord would take place immediately following the Passion. This is demonstrated in Acts 1:6 when they asked, “**Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?**” In the Old Testament, the immediacy of the Day of the Lord can be seen in Daniel’s seventy weeks (Daniel 9) and Zechariah 12-14. In Zechariah 12:10, for instance, the Day of the Lord would happen when the people looked on the Pierced One. This was fulfilled in two parts: at the death of Jesus and His coming again (John 19:37; Revelation 1:7). The coming of Christ, though separated by forty years, took place in the same *eschatological day* as the Cross (Zechariah 12:11; 13:1 – “In that day”). Revelation 12 does not take into account this period of grace and tells us the story of the millennium and defeat of Satan in one, unbroken scene. After Satan is thrown down to the earth (or “loosed” as Revelation 20 says), he realizes that

he only has “a short time” before he is destroyed (Revelation 12:12). Thus, Revelation 12 is a picture of the millennium.

Revelation 4-6 is also a picture of the millennium. It begins with a throne scene and Jesus emerging with the power of a lion but the peacefulness of a slain lamb. Then, in **chapter 6**, the lamb begins to open a book that was sealed with seven seals. In the fifth seal, martyrs are found:

When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained;¹⁰ and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”¹¹ And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also. (Revelation 6:9-11)

This group of martyrs is the same group that joined Jesus in His reign (Revelation 20:4). The thousand years is not about *duration*. It is a figurative number depicting the *quality* and *purpose* of the reign. These saints have one question: “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will you refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” The answer is that they should rest for *a little while longer*. This little while, I believe, is the same little while of Revelation 20. The sixth seal contains a depiction of “the great day of their wrath” (Revelation 6:17). This is the same day of wrath at the great white throne judgement: “And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged...” (Revelation 11:18). Again, this takes place *after* the short time or little while. Thus, the events of Revelation 6 mirror those of Revelation 11 and 20, so the little while and short time of both is the same.

The final Revelation passage is Revelation 2:10:

‘Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

When you first read this passage, you may think that I believe that the “ten days” of this verse means “a short time.” That is not necessarily true. The number ten is a number of completion (such as in the thousand-year reign). I believe that he is telling them that they will receive tribulation until the cup of iniquity has been filled (Matthew 23:32; 1 Thessalonians 2:16; Revelation 18:6). Or, as John would write in a few chapters, “...**until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also**” (Revelation 6:11). So, I do believe that it is the same time – just not for the seemingly obvious reason. To further support this, notice that it is the devil that carries out this action of persecution. Returning to Revelation 12, we find the same thing happens during the “short time” (Revelation 12:12-17):

“For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.”¹³ And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child.¹⁴ But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so

that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. ¹⁵ And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. ¹⁶ But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. ¹⁷ So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

This means, and it is a bold conclusion, that the millennium had already ended or was about to end at the time of John's writing. Satan was about to be released and a period of severe persecution would be followed by the fall of Jerusalem. Then again, this conclusion is not so bold when one considers that John himself said that the events of the Revelation would be fulfilled quickly (Revelation 1:1, 3).

It is at this time that we turn to two passages outside of Revelation. The first is from 1 Peter 1. Before this, though, allow me to make a few introductory comments. Peter, who was an elder at the church at Jerusalem, was called "the apostle to the circumcision" while Paul was the "apostle to the uncircumcision" (Galatians 2:7-8). Peter, fulfilling his role, wrote two letters to Jewish Christians who were spread abroad. This included the same audience as John's letter of Revelation: Asia Minor (1 Peter 1:1). There is no doubt that Peter wrote close to the end of the Jewish age, for he said in **1 Peter 4:5-7**,

...but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶ For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God. ⁷ The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.

Two things in this passage stand out to me: 1) the judgement of the living and the dead and 2) the end of all things being at hand. As to the judgement of the living and the dead, I must call again Revelation 11 and 20 to your attention, but one other series of verses comes to mind. Notice the underlined portions below:

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. (Revelation 20:13)

Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. (Revelation 22:12)

For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS. ²⁸ Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. (Matthew 16:27-28)

The "quickly" of the second reference answers to the "little while" and "short time" under consideration. The purpose of this coming in all is the same: to judge those who persecute the saints and to reward the faithful. This is the judgement that Jesus was **ready** to perform at the end of all things in 1 Peter 4. Later in 1 Peter 4, Peter writes, "**For it is time [or, "the appointed time has come" – *Kairos* – G2540] for judgement to begin...**" (1 Peter 4:17). This is the same time

of judgement as discussed in 2 Peter 2: **“...bringing swift destruction upon themselves...their judgement from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep”** (2 Peter 2:1, 3.).

Two more important passages from 1 Peter come from chapter 5. The first is 1 Peter 5:8: **“Be of sober spirit, be on alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”** Could it be that Peter is writing after the end of the millennium and at the beginning of the “short time” or “little while” like John? Could it be that Satan had already been released at this time?

The second passage from chapter 5 is 1 Peter 5:12: **“She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings...”** Had Peter read the Book of Revelation? Or, at the very least, was the language used to discuss Jerusalem and her fall in the Revelation already in use by the saints?

The most interesting evidence concerning the “short time” or “little while” comes from **1 Peter 1:5-6**:

...who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials...

They were being protected by the gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16) as they looked forward to the **revelation** (*apokalypto*) of salvation in the “last time” at the **revelation** (*apokalypsis*) of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:7). The word translated revelation is the same Greek word from which we get the word Apocalypse, and it is the word translated Revelation in Revelation 1:1 – *the apokalypsis of Jesus Christ*. This would happen after **the saints to whom Peter wrote** [NOT YOU] went through a necessary “little while” tribulation. This is the same ten-day tribulation of Revelation 2:10 and the little while of Revelation 6! This is not just similar language but a consistent account of the “end of all things” or “last time.” Both “little wholes” of tribulation were **necessary** as Peter says (“until the number...would be completed” – Revelation 6:11).

Speaking of last times, we come to our final verse in this section: **“Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour”** (1 John 2:18).

Any study of the antichrist will take one to 2 Thessalonians 2 where Paul reveals that, prior to the coming of the Lord, the man of lawlessness would appear (2 Thessalonians 2:3). In fact, the mystery of lawlessness was already at work when Paul wrote this second letter (2 Thessalonians 2:7). The man of lawlessness’ coming (from the Greek word *parousia* – the same word used to discuss Christ’s coming, e.g. James 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 2 Thessalonians 2:8) would be in accordance with the activity of Satan (2 Thessalonians 2:9). He would come with false wonders to deceive the elect. This is the same false Christ as Matthew 24:11-12, 23-26 and corresponds to the beasts in Revelation 13. According to John in the passage above, this figure had already arrived and by it they knew it was the last hour. The arrival of the antichrist is the very sign that Paul told his audience would precede the coming of the Lord.

So, there is convincing exegetical reason to believe that the short time of Revelation 20, 12, 6, 2, and 1 Peter 1 and 1 John 2 are all the same: the short period of time following the millennium but preceding the judgement in which Satan would be loosed. This would place the ending of the millennium and beginning of the short time sometime in the mid-60s. The death of

Peter occurred sometime between AD64 and AD68 which means that any of those dates is plausible for the writing of his epistles.

One solution, which I admit seems very convenient, is to place the end of the millennium at the beginning of the Jewish-Roman war (AD66). This corresponds to the possible date of Peter's martyrdom, and it also fits a few key passages in the Revelation. For example, in Revelation 12:6, the short time is 1260 days. A few passages later, in verse 14, it is called "a time and times and half a time." Typically, this is defined as roughly three and a half years (time = 1 year and times = 2 years). These numbers and expressions are used several times throughout the Book of Revelation, but, most notably, they appear in Daniel 12:7. It would do you, the reader, well to read that entire chapter and compare the imagery in it to Matthew 13, 24 and Revelation so that you may understand (see Matthew 24:15 to get the joke). For our purposes, we find that the end of the time, times, and half a time brings about the resurrection and the shattering of the holy people's power at the time of the end (Daniel 12:2, 7). Daniel is also told that he would receive his inheritance at the end of the age (Daniel 12:13 - NASB). This should remind us of Revelation 11:18 where the prophets are rewarded at the end of a forty-two-month ($42*30=1260$ days) period (Revelation 12:2,3).

To summarize:

The beginning of the millennium marked by the binding of Satan: AD30 or AD33 depending on how you date the death of Jesus

The end of the millennium and beginning of the short time marked by the loosing of Satan: AD66

The end of the short time which would be 42 months after the end of the millennium: AD70

Conclusion

I am not dogmatic about the specific dates and numbers; they are general timelines and rough but educated guesses. I'm sure that someone out there would be willing to comb through Josephus and try to get exact dates (if that is even possible), but that is not the purpose of this paper. Also, the purpose of the paper is not to convince you one way or another but to simply give my position and allow me to work through some thoughts that I have had in recent years and months. There are several things that need to be accomplished before this study would be concrete and fully convincing: 1) ascertaining the date of death of Peter and the writing of his epistles, 2) taking into account the length of the Jewish-Roman war (AD66-73), and 3) ironing out plenty of textual and exegetical questions and concerns that have been intentionally avoided or unintentionally overlooked in this paper for the purpose of brevity.

This means that I do not claim to have all the answers or every passage in Revelation figured out, but I do believe that my thoughts here are worthy of your sincere consideration and critique.