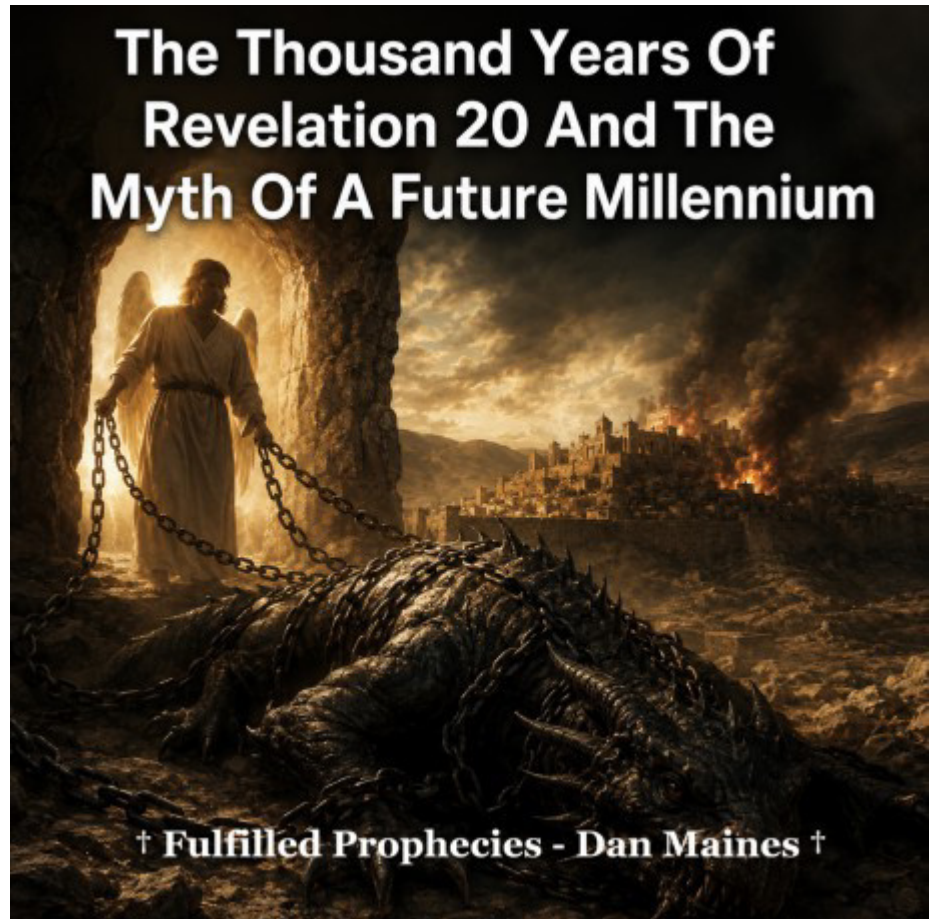


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The Thousand Years Of Revelation 20 And The Myth Of A Future Millennium



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† Many Christians have heard the word millennium their entire lives, yet the Bible never uses that word.

† The term millennium comes from the Latin word for one thousand, but Scripture simply speaks of the thousand years in Revelation 20.

† The question is not whether Revelation 20 mentions a thousand years. It does. The question is when those thousand

years occurred and what they represented.

† The fulfilled perspective understands the thousand years as Christ's first-century reign leading up to the judgment of apostate Israel and the full establishment of the New Covenant kingdom.

Revelation 20:1-3

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he took hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 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 is a book filled with symbols. No one believes Satan is literally a dragon or that a spirit being can be restrained with a physical chain.

† The binding represents a restriction placed upon Satan's ability to deceive the nations as he had done before Christ's victory. (Matthew 12:29)

† Christ's earthly ministry marked the beginning of Satan's defeat. (Luke 10:18)

† The binding allowed the gospel to go beyond Israel and reach the nations. (Matthew 28:18-20)

† The thousand years appears only in Revelation 20, a highly symbolic chapter filled with signs and imagery.

† No New Testament writer ever instructed believers to look forward to a future millennium.

† The emphasis throughout the New Testament is Christ reigning in the present tense. (Acts 2:36; Ephesians 1:20-23)

Matthew 12:28-29

But if I cast out the demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or, how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first ties up the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

† Jesus connected the arrival of the kingdom with the binding of the strong man.

† He did not say the binding would occur thousands of years later.

† The kingdom had already arrived in His generation. (Luke 17:20-21)

† Christ was actively plundering Satan's house during His earthly ministry.

Luke 10:17-18

Now the seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name!" And He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like lightning.

† Jesus described Satan's fall as something already taking place during His ministry.

† This is consistent with the binding imagery found in Revelation 20.

† Christ was already exercising authority over the kingdom of darkness. (Matthew 28:18)

John 12:31-32

Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself.

† Jesus said now was the judgment of that world.

† He said the ruler of that world would be cast out through His redemptive work.

† The defeat of Satan was connected to the cross, not a distant future age.

† Revelation 20 builds upon this victory already accomplished by Christ.

Colossians 2:15

When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

† Paul described Christ's victory as an accomplished fact.

† The powers of darkness had already been defeated through the cross.

† This fits perfectly with the symbolic binding of Satan described in Revelation 20.

Hebrews 2:14

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, so that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,

† Jesus defeated the devil through His death.

† The writer does not place this victory thousands of years into the future.

† Christ's triumph had already begun in the first century.

Acts 2:32-36

It is this Jesus whom God raised up, a fact to which we are all witnesses. Therefore, since He has been exalted at the right hand of God, and has received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD,

"SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,

UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET."

Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ - this Jesus whom you crucified."

† Peter declared that Jesus was already enthroned at the right hand of God.

† Christ was not waiting for a future kingdom to begin.

† The reign of Christ was a present reality in the first century.

† This perfectly fits the thousand years as a present reign rather than a future one.

1 Corinthians 15:24-26

then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to our God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all

authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

† Paul said Christ must reign until all enemies were placed under His feet.

† Notice that Christ was already reigning when Paul wrote.

† The kingdom was not postponed.

† The thousand years must be understood within Christ's ongoing reign.

Revelation 11:15

Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying,

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."

† Revelation itself presents Christ as reigning.

† The kingdom is not portrayed as something delayed for thousands of years.

† The focus is on Christ's victory and authority.

† This harmonizes with the rest of the New Testament.

Revelation 20:4-6

Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their foreheads and on their hands; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

† John saw souls reigning with Christ, not physical bodies ruling from an earthly throne.

† The scene is heavenly in nature.

- † The first resurrection is associated with life and reign in Christ.
- † Those participating in this reign are protected from the second death.

Revelation 20:7-10

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

† The release of Satan demonstrates that the binding was never absolute inactivity.

† Satan was restrained for a purpose and later released for a short time.

† The focus remains on God's sovereignty over the entire process.

† Christ's victory is complete and final.

Revelation 1:1-3

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, everything that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads, and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

† Revelation was written about things that would shortly come to pass.

† The time was at hand for its original audience.

† A future millennium thousands of years later ignores the book's own time statements.

† The first-century churches were expected to understand and

benefit from this prophecy.

Revelation 22:10

And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.

† The same message appears at the end of the book.

† The events of Revelation were near when John wrote.

† The thousand years must be understood within that first-century context.

† Scripture repeatedly points us to fulfillment within the generation that received the prophecy.

Historical References

† Josephus recorded the events leading to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and described the judgment that ended the Old Covenant age.

† Eusebius preserved accounts of Christians fleeing Jerusalem before its destruction in obedience to Christ's warnings.

† Early church history confirms the first-century significance of the events surrounding Jerusalem's fall.

† The fulfilled perspective sees Revelation's judgments culminating in those covenantal events.

How It Applies To Us Today

† Christ is reigning now and His kingdom is not waiting to begin. (Ephesians 1:20-23)

† We do not need to fear future prophetic timetables because Christ has already fulfilled His promises. (Matthew 24:34)

† The victory over Satan belongs to Christ and His people today. (Romans 16:20)

† We live in the reality of the New Covenant kingdom established through Christ's completed work. (Hebrews 12:22-24)

Q: Does the Bible ever use the word millennium?

A: No. The Bible speaks of the thousand years in Revelation 20 but never uses the word millennium.

Q: Was Satan completely inactive during the thousand years?

A: No. The binding restricted his ability to deceive the nations as before, allowing the gospel to spread among all nations. (Revelation 20:3; Matthew 12:29)

Q: When did Christ begin reigning?

A: Christ began reigning following His resurrection and ascension. (Acts 2:32-36)

Q: Why is the thousand years understood symbolically?

A: Revelation is a symbolic book filled with signs, symbols, beasts, dragons, horns, and numbers. The thousand years fits that symbolic context. (Revelation 1:1)

Q: If the thousand years is literal, should the chain, key, dragon, abyss, and pit also be literal?

A: The context is symbolic throughout. The thousand years appears among symbols and should be interpreted consistently with the surrounding imagery. (Revelation 20:1-3)

Q: Where does the Bible say the thousand years begins?

A: The Bible never gives a starting date for the thousand years. However, Jesus spoke of binding the strong man during His earthly ministry, and the New Testament repeatedly presents Christ as already reigning in the first century. (Matthew 12:28-29; Acts 2:32-36)

Q: If Christ is reigning now, what kingdom is He ruling?

A: Christ is ruling the kingdom He received from the Father. The New Testament consistently presents Him as King, Lord, and reigning at God's right hand. (Acts 2:34-36; Ephesians 1:20-23)

Q: Does Revelation 20 teach an earthly kingdom headquartered in Jerusalem?

A: Revelation 20 never says Christ reigns from earthly Jerusalem. The passage speaks of souls reigning with Christ and places the scene within the symbolic imagery of Revelation. (Revelation 20:4-6)

Q: Why don't the other New Testament writers teach a future millennium?

A: The thousand years is mentioned only in Revelation 20. The rest of the New Testament focuses on Christ's present reign, His kingdom, and the fulfillment that was approaching in their

generation. (1 Corinthians 15:24-26; Hebrews 1:3)

Q: What is the strongest argument against a future millennium?

A: Revelation repeatedly states that its prophecies would shortly come to pass and that the time was at hand. Any interpretation must begin with those time statements.

(Revelation 1:1-3; Revelation 22:10)

Q: Is the thousand years the main focus of Revelation 20?

A: No. The main focus is Christ's victory over Satan, the reign of the saints, and God's final triumph. The thousand years is simply the timeframe used within that larger message.

Q: Why does today's traditional church teach a future millennium where everything is peaceful and ideal?

A: Much of today's teaching comes from later prophetic systems that read Revelation 20 as a future earthly kingdom. However, the New Testament repeatedly presents Christ as already reigning, His kingdom already established, and the fulfillment of prophecy as near to the first-century audience. (Acts 2:32-36; Revelation 1:1-3; Revelation 22:10) The fulfilled perspective seeks to begin with those time statements and understand the thousand years within that first-century context.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Revelation 20:1-3, 4-6, 7-10; Matthew 12:28-29; Luke 10:17-18; John 12:31-32; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14; Acts 2:32-36; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26; Revelation 11:15; Revelation 1:1-3; Revelation 22:10

† Historical Writers: Josephus, Eusebius

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