



NUMBER 4 – MILLENNIUM

We're moving towards the climax of the book of Revelation. Millennium means 1000 years and there are many and varied theories about when this happens and what occurs before and after it. You probably won't be able to cover all aspects of millennialism but here's a brief summary of the three main views.

PRE-MILLENNIAL

Christ will return – the dead are raised and believers still living will be caught up 'in the air to meet him' (1 Thess 4:17) They will then reign on earth with Christ for 1000 years.

Then comes Satan's release, then the rest of the dead are raised and judged

POST-MILLENNIAL

First the 1000 years with martyrs reigning in heaven with Christ. Then Christ returns. The millennium may be a literal 1000 years at the end of history, or it may stand symbolically for the triumph of the gospel in the present age.

A-MILLENNIAL

No literal millennium. The 1000 years symbol stands for the time between Jesus' first and second coming. The first resurrection may even be the new birth of a believer.

(We have a more detailed version of this – if you would like it, please contact the office and we will get it to you)

The main difficulty with literal periods of 1000 years is what we already learned about the book of Revelation – numbers are not to be taken literally so why should the millennium be a literal time period.

1. In chapter 19 we read about the conquest of Satan.
How does this ultimate fact change the way you see your own life?
Does it help to know that the creator of evil will finally meet his end?
Does it help you keep going when wicked things crop up in your own life?

In chapter 20, an angel of great authority comes from heaven and seizes Satan and casts him into the abyss (v2) for a set period of 1000 years. He is locked up so that he cannot get to the nations of the world to convince them he is the ultimate power and authority.

2. Not only are we destined to be 'with Christ which is far better' but the person of Satan who has brought great pain on every age of the church, will not triumph in the end.
Consider how that fact will have been received by the persecuted church at the end of the first century?
Does that change the way we deal with our past, present and future?

John's next vision is of thrones (v4) which are seats of authority, power and judgement. The church of God is preserved through this 1000 years - with the a-millennial view that is the whole of its lifetime from the life of Jesus to his glorious return. However, many Christians have died in that period ('Beheaded' v4). 'They came to life and reigned with Christ' because they had 'not worshipped the beast' and been 'faithful in their testimony for Jesus'.

3. It is wonderfully true that followers of Jesus will reign with him – their suffering was not in vain.
Remember the context – what effect would these words have on those who suffered in the years following Jesus' ministry'?

Talk about some of the individuals and people groups who have suffered for their faith right up to the present day

The fact that they reign with Christ tells us that we, as believers, have a meaningful existence after death. Look back to the Laodicean letter (3:21)

'To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne'

Hence John's vision of heaven has us sitting on a throne in the presence of the King sat on his throne. Such people are described as 'blessed and holy' (v5).

4. Here is the ultimate goal for the faithful follower of Christ.
How much do you look forward to being with Christ?
What do you think it will be like ?
You may like to share about the one person you long to meet there.

The first resurrection and the second death cause some difficulty. The first resurrection probably refers to people becoming Christians, because, at that point, they have been 'raised' from the death of sin to eternal life. Those who died without faith face the second death which separates them from Christ. But this second death has no power over believers (v6). So, we may have to face a difficult death but that should be the limit of our fears.

5. Death should hold no ultimate fear for us because it leads to eternal joy in the presence of Christ. But is that always true? Do we fear death or do we fear dying or both?
Do we talk about death enough or does it just come up at funerals?
Should it be something we're excited about?

The thousand years are over at the end of the age of the church when Christ returns. Satan is released for a short time to go and deceive the nations. (v7) In his last desperate attack Satan is caught and thrown into a lake of burning sulphur where he will be punished for ever – there is no escape.

The last five verses of chapter 20 are sobering. They remind us of the fate of those who have followed Satan. John sees a 'great, white throne'. This tells us that God is pure, righteous and just. Those who have rejected Christ will do anything to avoid this moment. If we know and love the Lord Jesus our names will be written in the 'book of life' (v12). Each person is judged 'according to what he had done'. This needs to read carefully. It is NOT saying that good works can get you into heaven. Rather it should be read as what a person has done with THE FAITH in Christ they have been offered will determine their eternal destiny.

6. This raises many difficult and deeply disturbing questions. Not least about our family and loved ones.
If you struggle with the separation of believers and non-believers at the time of death, think about some of Jesus' teaching (e.g. the sheep and the goats, the rich man and Lazarus, the two thieves crucified with Jesus)
If there is separation, what actions should that prompt in our lives?
Why not pause to pray for those you know who are not yet believers.

A POSSIBLE EXERCISE

During the coming week read these chapters in Revelation (chapters 19 and 20)

Ask God to help you understand that your eternal destiny is the most important factor in your own life.

Ask God to give you the names of (maybe) 3 people who you could pray for that they may have the faith that you have and so be sitting at the feet of the risen Christ in glory.

DON'T GIVE UP – once you get into it you will find Revelation such a blessing and, in the end, you'll get to the wonderful place where you'll rest in Christ forever and all that is evil will be banished.

WE'RE NEARLY THERE !!!!!!!!!!!