

The Millennial Maze—Why 1,000 May Equal 40¹

*. . . they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Rev. 20:4b, KJV).
They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years (NIV).*

It's *not* the “millennial reign of Christ,” *nor* the “1,000-year reign of Christ,” and *not* a “millennial kingdom.” Likewise, the terms millennium, millennial, and millennialism are not found in the Bible. Scripture never uses this terminology, and for a good reason. It's inappropriate.²

Yet the idea of an interim, temporary, and thousand-year reign of Christ has been the subject of vast eschatological speculation and divisiveness throughout church history. The only place in the Bible where this reign is mentioned is in Revelation 20:1-10. Therefore, Ladd rightly laments that “the Revelation nowhere expounds the theology of the millennial kingdom. . . . the New Testament nowhere explains the need for this temporal kingdom, except to indicate that in some undisclosed way it is essential in the accomplishment of the reign of Christ”³

Today, this short and solitary passage is a volatile subject that is “hotly debated.”⁴ Disputed are its timing, duration, and nature. Many books have been written denouncing and ridiculing opposing views. Hence, Spykman calls these 10 verses a “war zone.”⁵ Morris bemoans that it is “one of the most difficult parts of the entire book. There have been endless disputes, some of them bitter, over the way to understand this chapter.”⁶ And yet, as Sproul emphasizes, “whole systems of eschatological thought have been labeled, defined, and identified in accordance with

¹ This article was previewed in Appendix B of my book, *A Once Mighty Faith: Reclaiming the central teaching of Jesus, reengaging the miraculous*.

² See Chapters 8, 9, and 10 in *ibid*.

³ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1974, revised ed. 1993), 680.

⁴ G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 972.

⁵ Gordon J. Spykman, *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1992), 531.

⁶ Leon Morris, *Revelation* (Leicester, England & Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity & Eerdmans, 1987, reprinted 2000), 227.

the place the millennium holds within each system.”⁷ It’s the centerpiece of these three end-time views: premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism. There is a fourth significant view we shall consider herein, the preterist view, even though the word “millennial” is not part of its name.

Unfortunately, the position of the millennium not only divides believers, it also sets the precedent for one’s worldview and view of the future. It also affects how Christians understand the current role or non-role of the Church and individual responsibilities in society. Once again, ideas and beliefs have consequences. Not surprisingly, therefore, the entire field of eschatology (the study of end-time views) has been termed “one of the most divisive elements in recent Christian history. . . . few doctrines unite and separate Christians as much as eschatology.”⁸

Consequently, I agree with Morris when he counsels that “it is necessary to approach this chapter with humility and charity.”⁹ But we also need to approach this “1,000-year reign” with a broader perspective than the proponents and opponents of these views have offered to date.

The Thousand-Years Passage

1 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.

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 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. 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.

The *Terminus ad Quem*

7 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.

⁷ R.C. Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Books, 1998), 193.

⁸ Kenneth S. Kantzer, ed., “Our Future Hope: Eschatology and Its Role in the Church,” *Christianity Today*, 6 February 1987, 1-14 (1).

⁹ Morris, *Revelation*, 227.

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

A Brief Historical Review

When the change of millennium first drew near in A.D. 999, hardly anyone knew it. Most of the world of that day did not use the Christian-based calendar nor could read. Europe was the exception. And Christian expectations of an imminent end of the world flooded the continent. Accounts vary, but masses feared the 1,000 years spoken of in the biblical Book of Revelation would be up and Christ would reappear to end it all. Signs and warnings were eagerly sought in the final months leading up to A.D. 1000. It is said that activity in European monasteries nearly ground to a halt as A.D. 999 wound down. When Christ didn't make an appearance in A.D. 1000, quick recalculations were made on the premise that Revelation's 1,000 years should be figured from his ascension and not from his birth. But A.D. 1026, 1030, and 1033 were also busts.¹⁰

Most early-Church fathers believed in a future and earthly millennial reign of Christ. Called "*chiliasts*," from the Greek word for "thousand," this group included Justin Martyr, Papias, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Methodus, Commodianus, and Lactantius. They believed that they were living in the last times, that Christ's return was imminent, and that it would occur prior to a coming millennium period. But in contradistinction with popular millennial beliefs today, they did not believe it would be a Jewish kingdom with reestablished Jewish practices, institutions, and the priesthood. Yet chiliasm embraced the ancient Jewish end-time expectation of an earthly Messianic kingdom. Thus chiliasm was the ancient name and forerunner of what today is known as premillennialism.

But this millennialist belief was not shared by all early-Church fathers. For example, the writings of Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria, and Athanasius suggested a preterist understanding of past-fulfillment and the coming of Jesus in association with the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.¹¹ So from the very beginning of church history, we can see quite a difference of opinion. The early-Church fathers were divided. But chiliasm (premillennialism) was the dominant view for the first three centuries of Christianity. And today most conservative evangelical Christians see millennialism as a mark of orthodoxy.

This situation changed with the advent of the Roman Church in the 4th century when chiliasm—i.e. limiting the reign of Christ to a future, literal thousand-year period on earth—was formally condemned and rejected by the Church at the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431-2. No doubt, this was a reaction to nonoccurrence. As the first three centuries had worn on and nothing of any eschatological significance had apparently occurred and as the Roman state had continued its persecution of the Jews, the Church became more and more Gentile, a strong bias began to develop against anything Jewish (the "Christ-killers). So by the 4th Century, end-time visions and millennial expectations had waned. The Edict of Milan in A.D. 313 ended the Roman persecution of Christians and the Holy Roman Empire was born with Christianity as its official religion. Eschatological thought was now primed for a change.

¹⁰ For more on this and the 19-centuries-long trail of other failed occurrences, see Noe, *The Perfect Ending for the World*, 26-47. Also, note that Jesus was most likely born in 4 or 3 B.C. That would place his ascension in A.D. 26-27 and the terminus of this thousand-year period in A.D. 1026-1027.

¹¹ For these excerpts and source references, see Noe, *Unraveling the End*, 103-107.

Next in development was a bold attempt to explain why Jesus had not returned and no end-time events had happened, as had been expected. Augustine penned his famous book, *The City of God*. In it, he moved the Church away from literal apocalypticism and a belief in the imminent coming of Christ by applying Origen's (A.D. 185-253) allegorical method of interpretation. Origen had rejected chiliasm as the old Jewish expectation and error of a Messianic kingdom on the present earth—"imagining to themselves that the earthly city of Jerusalem is to be rebuilt . . . that they are to receive the wealth of the nations to live on, and that they will have control over their riches. . . ." ¹² With the symbolic approach, however, the Church was now able to escape being pinned down as to the time for Christ's so-called Second Coming and the beginning of a literal millennium period.

Augustine claimed "the city of God" was a spiritual state, over "the city of the world." Likewise, he reinterpreted the millennium as being spiritually fulfilled in the life of the Church and taught that the Church (and its age) was the Messianic kingdom. It began with Christ's so-called first coming (birth) and has been present on earth ever since. ¹³ Hence, Augustine rejected the idea of a future kingdom or literal millennial period. After the Council of Ephesus condemned belief in millennialism, the doctrine was officially discarded by the Church. Augustine's allegorical (or amillennial) view so dominated the Church from the 4th through 16th centuries that it became the Church's official position and the only view expressed in the creeds.

Thus, for almost three-quarters of church history chiliasm was not considered orthodox. But it wasn't considered heresy, either. During this time it remained relatively dormant except for an occasional association with a few fringe and apocalyptic groups who were viewed as fanatical and heretical.

By the early 16th century, some historicists (in keeping their view of Revelation as being progressively fulfilled during the history of the Church) felt that the millennium was past—from Constantine to the Middle Ages (from A.D. 300 to 1300). But to fuel reformation fervor, the Reformers criticized chiliasm as "too childish" and "error," ¹⁴ and adopted a different historicist view. They taught that church history was only half way through the Book of Revelation. With this tactic they demonized the Catholic Church as being the Beast of Revelation 13 and accused the Pope of being the Antichrist. Still today, the Westminster Confession of the Faith teaches a Vatican and papal fulfillment of the Harlot and Beast of Revelation. ¹⁵

The Catholic Church, however, did not take this attack lying down. The Jesuit priesthood launched a two-pronged eschatological counterattack. In 1585, a Jesuit priest named Francisco Ribera (1537-1591) employed an opposite tactic to deflect the Reformers' apocalyptic heat. He sought to postpone the fulfillment of prophecy and became the first to separate Daniel's 70th week from the other 69 weeks. He claimed that God had extended it out into the future. Hence, this end-time period could not then be present, the Pope could not be the Antichrist, nor could the Catholic Church be the Beast. Around 1614, another Jesuit by the name of Alcazar reactivated the past-fulfillment, preterist view. It served a similar defensive purpose. Ironically, the Catholic Church never has officially subscribed to either of these views. But the Protestant Church in America readily bought into Ribera's bifurcated scheme.

¹² Origen, *De Principiis, Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. iv, 2.11.2 (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, reprinted 1982), 297.

¹³ For the reason Jesus' birth is never called his "first coming" in Scripture, see: Noë, *Unraveling the End*, 261-284 or Noë, *The Greater Jesus*, 21-56.

¹⁴ John Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), [3.25.5], 995.

¹⁵ WCF Ch. 25, sect. 6; Ch. 1, sect. 6.

In America during its first three centuries, postmillennialism was the dominant view. It flowed off the heels of the Enlightenment and pressed forth a progressive view of the world becoming more and more converted to Christ and his kingdom. This optimistic, kingdom-expanding eschatology remained the dominant view through the first quarter of the 20th Century. Then two world wars, the invention of the atomic bomb, and the threat of a nuclear Armageddon discredited postmillennialism's optimistic outlook. Springing into the void and next onto the stage of prominence was a new, pessimistic version of premillennialism. Birthed in Europe, this previously unknown view was brought to America by John Nelson Darby. Darby rediscovered the old chiliasm view (after a 15- to 16-century hiatus). But he added a few things.

Darby married the ancient notion of "chiliasm" to a new idea of a "rapture," and also adopted Ribera's severance of Daniel's 70th week. This novel combination caught on like wildfire in 20th-century America. Hence, the centerpiece of millennialism has moved far away from its Jewish roots and into modern-day, evangelical Christianity. But as previously noted, for most of church history (4th – 18th Century), the belief in a literal 1,000-year reign of Christ was condemned and rejected. Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, Augustine, the Catholic Church, the Reformers, Luther, Calvin, and Knox, and even the fathers of the 18th-century Great Awakening in America, Wesley, Whitfield, and Finney, did not believe in it. The important thing, however, is not what some church leaders did or did not believe about a future 1,000-year millennial reign, but what Jesus said about it? He said nothing! Nor did the Apostle Paul, the other New Testament writers, or even the creeds. Nowadays, nevertheless, millennialism is considered as a mark of orthodoxy by most evangelicals.

Adding to the Confusion—'Four Views' Books

During the late 90s, a number of "four views" books came out. Two of those books dealt with four views on the Book of Revelation. Unfortunately, they have not helped resolve this ongoing and divisive debate. Instead, they have added to the confusion.

Quite tellingly, in *Revelation Four Views: A Parallel Commentary*, the four views of preterist, historicist, futurist, and spiritual (or symbolic or Idealist) run along side-by-side in a parallel format from Revelation chapter one through nineteen. But at chapter twenty, the millennium chapter, the format changes to premillennial, amillennial, and postmillennial—all futurist positions. The preterist, historicist, and spiritual views were dropped. Apparently, the editor, Steve Gregg, assumed that there are only three millennial positions. The only explanation he offered for this change of format was:

Unfortunately for our adopted arrangement, the four categories considered throughout our treatment thus far cannot be applied to these final chapters Our problem arises from the fact that none of the four approaches treated in the earlier chapters monolithically adheres to a single interpretation of Revelation 20, which is unique among the chapters of the Bible in that it speaks of a 1000-year reign of the saints, commonly called the *Millennium*. Controversy attaches to almost every feature of this Millennium.¹⁶

In the other book titled, *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, four contributing authors discuss one view each—preterist, idealist, progressive dispensationalist, and classic

¹⁶ Steve Gregg, ed. *Revelation Four Views: A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 458.

dispensationalist. Most notable was the preterist-view's author, Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.'s abandonment of his past-fulfillment position and taking on a futurist, amillennial/postmillennial position when he arrived at the millennium chapter. Gentry justifies his bifurcation of Revelation's prophecy by simply asserting that "in Revelation 20 he [John] glances into the distant future (the Millennium begins in the first century, but its length necessarily requires its extension beyond the near/soon time frame of the book)."¹⁷ Again, most telling.

Six Millennial Views and Their Problems

Over the course of church history a wide variety of views have attempted to explain Revelation 20's infamous and divisive 1,000-year period. In this article we shall limit our presentation to four primary views (along with two minor ones) starting with the most popular through the lesser known. Each will be briefly summarized and its major problems highlighted.

Caveat: These presentations should not be considered merely an academic exercise. Remember, one's view of this passage's prophetic content has real ramifications and practical consequences. R.C. Sproul drives this point home thusly: "What is in view is not simply *chronology*, but the *nature* of the kingdom of God. These positions also differ in their understanding of history, whether it be optimistic or pessimistic, and in their views of the Church's strategy in fulfilling her mission."¹⁸

Premillennial View: Premillennial means Christ returns before (*pre-*) a future, literal 1,000-year (*millennial*) reign of Christ takes place on this earth. Just before that time, the physical bodies of dead believers will be raised out of their graves and, along with the bodies of alive believers, be raptured off this earth, into the sky, and onto heaven. However, this spectacular event may not be visible. It can occur prior to (pre-trib), during (mid-trib), or after (post-trib) a preceding, 7-year great tribulation during which the Antichrist wreaks havoc on the earth. After this tribulation, Jesus comes back to earth, along with his raptured and resurrected saints, destroys the Antichrist, binds Satan for 1,000 years, and removes all bad people, evil, pain, and suffering. Then Jesus will physically reign and rule the entire world while sitting on a literal throne, inside a literal and rebuilt Jewish temple in Jerusalem. And along with his raptured, resurrected, and returned saints, He will resume Old Covenant temple worship and animal sacrifices.

This time will be the fulfillment of the kingdom Jesus was bringing and promising to the Jews during his 1st-century, earthly ministry. But it was postponed and withdrawn by God when the religious Jews refused to accept Him as Messiah. Hence, it will be Jewish centered with the Jews elevated to supremacy over all people. In the meantime, the church age has been inserted as a "parenthesis" in between these two Jewish times, and as a apparent afterthought of God or, at least, a "Plan B." During this millennial period his resurrected saints will rule with Him over non-resurrected subjects and a golden age of perfect peace, righteousness, and justice will prevail until Satan is loosed to join forces with a last generation of unbelievers on the earth for one final rebellion and battle against Christ. After they are defeated, dead unbelievers of all ages will be resurrected, and along with the alive unbelievers, will face judgment. Finally, the eternal state

¹⁷ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. in C. Marvin Pate, gen. ed. *Four Views on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 82.

¹⁸ Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus*, 195.

arrives. It's a new heaven and a new earth on which only believers will live forever. This convoluted view is the most popular view in evangelical Christianity today. It also contains the greatest and most numerous scriptural problems.

Numerous Problems:¹⁹

- No place in the Bible says that Christ will reign from an earth dwelling or his reign is limited to only 1,000 years. His reign over all things everywhere began in that 1st century and is unending and ever-increasing (see Isa. 9:6-7; Luke 1:33; Matt. 20:18b).

- Most Bible literalists are selective literalists. For instance, Revelation 20 specifically states that “they [those ‘given authority to judge ‘ and ‘the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God’] came to life and reigned *with* Christ a thousand years” (Rev. 20:4-5, *italics* mine). Thus, one of my favorite questions to ask a dispensational premillennialist (they take this passage literally), is, “Are you planning on reigning and ruling with Christ during his future and literal 1,000-year reign here on earth?”

“Oh, yes,” he or she will confidently answer.

“Then when do you literally plan on getting beheaded? That is what this passage literally says, isn’t it?”

“Oh, that’s spiritual,” they usually respond.

“Then how about that other stuff, like the thousand years, chain, lock, key, pit, and thrones? Could those be spiritual, too.”

“Not a change,” is the common and defensive reply.

- What does the Bible say about a future 7- or 3 ½-year period of tribulation, the Antichrist making a 7- or 3 ½-year covenant with the Jews, or God withdrawing Jesus’ kingdom? The answer is, nothing.

- The Church rejected this view for over 15 centuries. It was essentially dormant from at least the 4th through the 18th centuries. Hence, no creed or confession of the historic Church espoused it.

- The loosing of Satan to join forces with a rebellious last generation of unbelievers for one final battle against Christ doesn’t speak well of Christ’s legacy and influence during this 1,000-year period of perfection. This seems a strange or awkward explanation, at best.

- Is a believer’s final home really in a new heaven and a new earth? Then is the current heaven temporary and a believer’s destiny ultimately an earthly one? This is not what the Bible teaches (see Psa. 23:6; Phil. 3:20).²⁰

- It violates (by ignoring and/or non-literally manipulating) the plain, face-value meaning of Revelation’s time statements and parameters. This last book of the Bible imposed these contextual restrictions upon itself in both its first and last chapters concerning the whole of its prophecy. It was said to contain things that were “shortly to

¹⁹ For more about this view’s beliefs and problems, see: Noë, *Unraveling the End*, 49-62.

²⁰ For a scriptural and historical exposition of the three different entities in the Bible termed “heaven and earth,” see Noë, *The Perfect Ending for the World*, 279-319.

take place,” “at hand,” “soon” [quickly] and “not to be sealed up” —i.e., it was totally relevant to the lives of this book’s original recipients (see Rev. 1:1, 3; 22:6, 7, 10).²¹

- Many premillennialists cite 2 Peter 3:8: “With the Lord a day is like a thousand years” as a “scapegoat” to make null and void Revelation’s time statements (and all New Testament time statements, as well). They take this verse to mean that when the Lord says a day, He may mean a thousand years. By this same interpretative logic, and if they are consistent, shouldn’t the second half of this verse, which reads, “. . . and a thousand years are like a day,” be understood to mean that the millennium of Revelation 20 is only 24 hours long?

- With the discipline of Scripture’s time statements disposed, this view then interrupts the integrity and relevancy of the whole of the prophecy of Revelation by postponing the fulfillment of chapters four through twenty-two beyond the life time of this book’s original recipients and inserts a gap of nineteen centuries and counting. What is the textual warrant for such an imposition? None. It’s totally assumptive and arbitrary.

- It cherry-picks, or lifts out of its time-restricted context, the thousand-year passage (as well as others) and fabricates a postponed, futuristic meaning.

- It imports other details into this passage that are not mentioned therein:

- Where in this passage is any mention of a Second Coming, a temple, a rebuilt temple, re-institution of animal sacrifices, or Jesus sitting on an earthly throne?

- Where does this passage speak of Israel, an earthly Jerusalem, a gathering of the Jews back to Palestine, a revived Jewish kingdom, an earthly utopian paradise, or material prosperity on the earth?

- Where does this passage even speak of a “1,000-year reign of Christ?” It doesn’t. It only speak of some saints reigning *with* Him a thousand years?

- Not only are these above popular elements are conspicuously absent from this short passage, they are also totally absent from the entire New Testament and the whole Bible. And yet they are vital elements of this most popular millennial view.

- This all-to-common tendency to import or add *things not in the text* is specifically warned against in the Book of Revelation, along with major consequences for those violating this warning (see Rev. 22:18-19). And yet this practice of adding content in Revelation 20 (and elsewhere) has developed during the course of church history. Today, it is casually done and has become an accepted practice—much to our detriment.

- As Origen first described, this concept of a future, physical, earthly (millennial) kingdom is the ancient Jewish expectation and error.²² It’s the *very same* mistaken messianic expectation that prevent 1st-century Jews from receiving Jesus as the Messiah.

- Taking the 1,000-years numerical figure literally takes it out of the category of being a sign and a symbol in a book filled with signs and symbols (which point to literal realities). Are we then to take literally the other numerical figures in this book. For example, does Jesus really have “seven horns” and “seven eyes?” (see Rev. 5:6).

²¹ For more see: Noë, *The Greater Jesus*, 97-104 and Noë, *Unraveling the End*, 331-362. Also, for an excellent preterist-premillennialist debate of these time statements see: Thomas Ice & Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., *The Great Tribulation Past or Future?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1999), 107-119, 123-125, 178-186. .

²² Origen, *De Principiis*, 2.11.2, 297.

- If one insists on the popular notion of a literal 1,000-year period, but also recognizes and literally honors Revelation's time statements (which cover the whole of this prophecy), then simple mathematics leaves no option—around A.D. 1100, it's over! What exegetic grounds or contextual support is there to affirm a future reign? None. Absolutely none.
- Most premillennialists are biblically opposed to the idea of a one-world government, sometimes called “the new world order,” that is being advocated and sought by secular humanists, Marxists, and New Agers. But this is exactly what this view is expecting Jesus to do someday from a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.
- Jesus said that “the kingdom of God does not come visibly” [with observation – KJV] (Luke 17:20). But a future millennial kingdom located in a re-built, physical temple in Jerusalem would certainly be visible, would it not? Who should we believe?
- Several Old Testament, poetic passages are cherry-picked and pieces arbitrarily applied to this millennium period, (for example see: Isa. 2:1-4; 11:1-12; 60:1-22; 62:1-5; 65:18-25). But Jesus said to real air-breathing, blood-pumping people in the 1st century, “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written” (Luke 21:20-22). “All that has been written” included the whole Old Testament (see Luke 24:44). That would have included these above cited passages. History documents that these same people witnessed Jerusalem surrounded by armies four time after Jesus said these words and within the time span of one generation (see Luke 21:32; Matt. 24:34).²³
- If the Jewish rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, resulted in the kingdom He was bringing being postponed and withdrawn by God, then somebody like Peter or the Holy Spirit forget to clue in the Apostle Paul. The Bible documents that some 20 to 30 years after this so-called postponement and withdrawal event, Paul is traveling around the Roman Empire preaching “the kingdom of God” (Acts 28:24; 19:8). He certainly wasn't preaching a postponed kingdom, was he?
- Only one general-resurrection, “last day” event was still being anticipated, by inspiration, in those 1st-century times (see Acts 24:14-15; also John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24). It wasn't two resurrections separated by a thousand-year gap.²⁴
- Where the raptured/resurrected saints who come back to reign and rule with Jesus during this millennium will be located on earth is not clear. Nor is it clear what they will reign and rule over since all evil will have been removed.
- In sum, the premillennial view greatly abuses Scripture to force its end-time, millennial scenario. This opens wide the door to endless confusion and compounding errors.
- Lastly, as Rushdoony charges, premillennialists “must deny Christ's lordship until the millennium . . . but they are emphatically not Biblical. The heart of the Christian confession . . . is that ‘Jesus is Lord.’ Any denial of this is a departure from the faith.”²⁵

²³ For more, see: Noë, *The Perfect Ending for the World*, 171-202.

²⁴ For more, see, Noë, *Unraveling the End*, 379-414.

²⁵ R.J. Rushdoony, *Law and Society*, Vol. II, (Vallecito, CA.: Ross House Books, 1986, 1982), 366.

Amillennial View: Several variations of this second millennial view exist. But the word amillennial is generally taken to mean no literal, earthly, millennial kingdom (prefix *a-* means “not” or “a negation”). However, this meaning is inaccurate since amillennialists do not deny a millennial reign. They only deny a future-literal, 1,000-year duration of the millennium.

Rather, amillennialists believe the 1,000 years must be taken symbolically, spiritually, and as totally relevant to Revelation’s original audience and ever since. They point to other scriptural uses of this same numerical figure in which it symbolizes a larger, indefinite, and undefined number or period of time. For example, the psalmist wrote of God owning “the cattle on a thousand hills” (Psa. 50:10). Certainly, there are more than a thousand hills in the world. This symbolizes that He owns “all” the cattle on “all” the hills. Also, God keeps “his covenant of love to a thousand generations” (Deut. 7:9). This symbolizes an unending commitment and his eternal character. Using Scripture to interpret Scripture in this manner is a proper hermeneutical method for deciphering similar symbolic meanings. So amillennialists are convinced that the 1,000-year symbol should not be interpreted “literally,” nor should the symbolic chain, pit, and beheading in the same passage, or Jesus’ “seven horns” or “seven eyes” in chapter 5, or any of the other symbolic numbers in Revelation.

Hence, they see the 1,000-year period denoting the church age. But this is not a golden age. It’s an indefinite period of both reigning and suffering in which Satan was bound at Christ’s first coming, or during his earthly ministry, or at the cross, or upon his ascension when He sat down on the right hand of the Father in A.D. 30 (Acts 2:34-35). A few advocate that it didn’t began until A.D. 70. And it will continue until his Second Coming. In the meantime, both living and dead saints reign with Christ in the heavenly realm and on earth, respectively. Some amillennialists, however, only see this as a heavenly reign of the souls of deceased believers or only of martyrs since the words “on earth” are never mentioned in this disputed passage.

Other amillennialists feel it is only Christ reigning in the hearts of believers. All agree that this reign and binding of Satan was present in the 1st century, is operative now, and will continue for an indefinite length of time, during which Christ can return at any time. His return at the “end of time” will mark the end of this long period and the beginning of eternity.

A Few Problems:²⁶

- Even amillennialists characterize their own eschatological view as being one of “ambiguity”²⁷ and “uncertainty”²⁸ because the Scriptures are just not clear, they insist.
- Amillennialists spiritualize much, including elasticizing Revelation’s time statements. Hence, they, like the premillennialists, are forced to bifurcate this prophecy. They do it in chapter 20 and lift the fulfillment of the rest of Revelation’s prophecy out of its 1st-century, time context, and insert a gap of nineteen centuries and counting. But, once again, this intrusion upon the text is totally arbitrary and without any textual warrant.
- Has great difficulty explaining the binding of Satan now. Many object that “Satan is so obviously active that it is nonsense to talk of him as bound during this present age.”²⁹

²⁶ For more about this view’s beliefs and problems, see: Noë, *Unraveling the End*, 63-70.

²⁷ Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1979, 1991), 34-35.

²⁸ Ibid., 121, 136.

²⁹ Morris, *Revelation*, 229.

- Has great difficulty explaining the loosing of Satan. When Christ's return, the "end of time," and the Last Judgment are placed at the end of the 1000-year period, what's left for Satan to deceive? Again, his loosing does not occur until after the thousand years are over. Or does this mean that Christ will suffer a second humiliation? Surely, this timing and concept cannot be right. But amillennialists pay little attention to this difficulty.
- Some amillennialists try to explain that as the "end of time" nears (non-biblical terminology³⁰), Satan will be loosed, evil will accelerate, great tribulation will follow, and Christ will return to end history (another non- and unscriptural concept).³¹ Then the eternal order (another non-biblical expression and concept) will be established.
- Has great difficulty differentiating and explaining a long but limited, 1,000-year reign from the unlimited reign mentioned in Isaiah 9:67 and Luke 1:32-33.
- Also retreats to 2 Peter 3:8: "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years" to appeal to the transcendence of God as a means of escape from Revelation's time statements and imminency words, which spoke of the nearness or closeness of fulfillment for the whole of the prophecy. This time-restricted context included not only the beginning but also the end of the 1,000 years, the loosing of Satan, and his being cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, the *terminus ad quem*, in that same 1st-century context.
- Spiritualizes the "first resurrection" that occurred at the beginning of the millennium and as being the raising of the elect from spiritual death to spiritual life. Of course, this continues throughout the church age. But then literalizes the resurrection of "the rest of the dead" that follows the thousand-year period. It's physical and bodily. But what's the hermeneutical justification for two different-natured resurrections in the same passage? None. It is simply arbitrary and inconsistent.

Postmillennial View: This view is even more varied and vague than the amillennial view, if that were possible. Postmillennial means that Christ's return comes after (*post*) the current millennial kingdom. Like the amillennial view, this reign is longer than a literal thousand years, is associated with the church age, and encompasses the present time. But unlike the amillennial view, postmillennialists maintain that Christ *cannot* return until this time period is over and the world (i.e. nations, culture, society at large) has become sufficiently Christianized to some degree far beyond what we currently are experiencing.

While postmillennialists partially honor Revelation's time statements and acknowledge that the 1,000 years were relevant to Revelation's original audience, they disagree over when this reign began. Some think it began during Jesus' earthly ministry. Others contend it began at his crucifixion, or ascension, or in association with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. But all agree that this millennial period is now in progress. During this time, Christ's followers are to reign and rule with Him both inwardly in their own hearts and outwardly upon society. Hence, the gospel of Christ's kingdom is to be spread, aggressively and optimistically. Someday, all the

³⁰ Some cite Revelation 10:6 – "that there should be time no longer" (KJV) or "There will be no more delay" (NIV). Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. in a footnote of his book, *Before Jerusalem Fell* (Atlanta, GA.: American Vision, 1998), 134, explains that this phrase is a "temporal expectation" and an "internal indicator of time in Revelation."

³¹ Biblically, there is no such as an "end of the world," "end of time," or "end of history." To the contrary, they are without end (Eph. 3:21 KJV; Eccl. 1:4; Psa. 78:69; 89:36-37; 93:1; 96:10; 104:5; 119:90; 148:4, 6). For more, see: Noë, *The Perfect Ending for the World*, 298-310 on "The Destruction of the World in 2 Peter 3" and "... Defining Its Character."

world will be brought under its influence and control. This will be a golden age of Christianity. But at some unknown point of betterment, the Lord will return at the “end of time” and the “end of history,” and the world will end, at least as we know it.

A Few Problems:³²

- The idea of the world getting better and better does not fit with how most people, including most Christians, perceive the world’s past, present, and future situation. They see it as getting worse and worse all the time.
- The idea that Christ’s return is subject to the evangelistic success of Christians is nowhere supported by Scripture. Plus, we Christians are doing a lousy job of evangelism.³³
- Likewise, the extent and degree of Christianization that must be achieved for Christ to return is never mentioned in Scripture, nor is it ever addressed by any postmillennialist.
- Revelation 20 does not picture a future golden age scenario.
- Explaining the “loosing” of Satan after this period is over is especially difficult if the world has become significantly Christianized.
- The Bible never speaks of an “end of time,” “end of the world,” or “end of history.” These expressions and concepts are foreign to Scripture.³⁴ Yet they form the paradigm through which both amillennialists and postmillennialists attempt to understand all end-time Bible prophecy. This false paradigm forces them to create more non-scriptural and even non-creedal terms and concepts, such as: “final resurrection,” “final coming,” “last judgment”—after which there will be no more.³⁵

Idealist View: Idealism is part of the amillennial view of the Book of Revelation. In its pure form, it means that all of Revelation’s signs and symbols, including the 1,000-years passage, do not represent specific historical/redemptive events. Instead, they symbolize the ongoing, timeless struggle between good and evil for all Christians of all ages on this earth.

A Few Problems: Since this view is the amillennial view, its problems are the same.

Historicist View: Little consensus exists among historicists. Yet, they all view the Book of Revelation as being progressively and chronologically fulfilled, chapter by chapter, throughout the church age. Some have claimed that the thousand years began with Constantine and ended sometime during the Middle Ages (A.D. 300 to 1300). The 16th-century Protestant Reformers subscribed to a version of historicism in order to demonize the papacy as being the Beast of Revelation 13 and the pope as the Antichrist. Modern-day proponents see our times as being in Revelation 20. Thus, we today are living in the millennial reign of Christ and/or in the loosing of Satan. But “the end” and Christ’s return are still yet to come.

A Few Problems: This view has many of the same problems as those for the amillennial and postmillennial views covered above. Therefore, we will not address this view further.

³² For more about this view’s beliefs and problems, see: Noë, *Unraveling the End*, 71-92.

³³ See Noë, *A Once Mighty Faith*, Chapter 12.

³⁴ See footnote 31, again.

³⁵ For more, see: Noë, *Unraveling the End*, “Discarding Four False Paradigms,” 141-169.

Preterist View: In my opinion, this millennial view is the most credible and yet the most neglected. Preterist (from the Latin *praeteritius* < *praeter* - beyond + *ire* - go) means past in fulfillment. The preterist view does not believe that God obscures his truth or his timing of fulfillment. As part of its basic hermeneutic, this view contends that the time statements in both the first and last chapters of Revelation must be taken literally and seriously. That means the whole of this prophecy concerned things that were “seen, what is now and will take place later” (Rev. 1:19). This “take place later” portion, however, was included within this book’s time-restricted context of: “shortly to take place,” “at hand,” “soon” [quickly] and “not to be sealed up” (Rev. 1:1, 3; 22:6, 7, 10). Hence, all the content of this prophecy, including the 1,000-year reign’s terminus, was totally relevant, related to, and fulfilled within the life span of this book’s original recipients. Delaying any portion of this fulfillment for nineteen centuries and counting would be a “sealing up.” Back in Babylon captivity, Daniel was told to “close up and seal the words of this [his] scroll until the time of the end” (Dan. 12:4). The time of its fulfillment was some six hundred years away. But John is told “do not seal up” (Rev. 22:10). Why the difference? It’s because the “time of the end” was “at hand” and “soon” and “shortly to take place.”

This view also insists that God was faithful and “not slow in keeping his promise” (2 Pet. 3:9). Thus, this end came 3 to 5 years after Revelation’s writing.³⁶ That is why this book’s nearness language employed normally used and commonly understood words. Its first recipients, and us today, are to understand their meaning in a plain and literal sense. If these words cannot be so understood, this would give God’s Word the character of deception, rather than of revelation. Only the preterist view fully honors and accepts the time statements and contextual parameters that the Book of Revelation placed upon itself. Revelation 20 is part of that whole prophecy. Hence, all its content was relevant to its original audience and fulfilled in that same 1st-century time frame. Sproul succinctly sums up this preterist hermeneutic, thusly:

The great service preterism performs is to focus attention on two major issues. The first is the time-frame references of the New Testament regarding eschatological prophecy. The preterist is a sentinel standing guard against frivolous and superficial attempts to downplay or explain away the force of these references.³⁷

Regarding the 1,000-year symbol, preterists do not believe it represents either a long or indefinite period of time, nor a literal 1,000-year period. Instead, they believe it is symbolic and defined (past tense) a very important period of transition for the completion of God’s plan of redemption. Its limited time span denoted a completeness and triumph of the change of ages, from this present age to the age to come, and the transformation from the Old to the New Covenant. But it depicted a shorter time period than its literal value. Durations of 33, 34, 36, 37, 40, and 43 years have been proposed. Preterists also document that Christ did come on the clouds in age-ending judgment exactly *as* and *when* He said He would and was expected by every Holy-Spirit-guided New Testament writers (John 16:13). He came in the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in keeping with the nature and long precedent of a coming of “the day of the Lord” in Old Testament times.³⁸

³⁶ A strong case can and has been made that the Book of Revelation was written circa A.D. 65-66. See Noë, *Unraveling the End*, 347-349 and Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*.

³⁷ Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus*, 203.

³⁸ For more see: Noë, *The Perfect Ending for the World*, 90-96, 149-164 and Noë, *Unraveling the End*, 285-330.

Nevertheless, preterist opinions vary concerning the starting and ending points of Revelation 20's reign with Christ, as well as the time of Satan's loosing. Suggested starting points are: 4 B.C. – Jesus' birth, A.D. 26 – Jesus' baptism and anointing, A.D. 30 – at the cross or ascension. Possible ending points and the beginning of Satan's loosing are: A.D. 63 – the martyrdom of James and Peter, A.D. 64 – persecutions of Christians by Nero following the fire in Rome, A.D. 66 – the official beginning of Roman-Jewish War, or A.D. 70 – the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Some preterists favor a 40-year period from the cross to consummation (A.D. 30 to 70).³⁹ Others suggest a 36- to 37-year reign (A.D. 30 to 66 or A.D. 26 to 63). One advocate posits two millennia periods within the passage. And some cling to the amillennial view. But this latter position compromises their preterism because it extends the fulfillment of part of Revelation's content beyond its own time-restricted context.

One other key factor also must be emphasized. The preterist view adheres to the early date for the writing of the Book of Revelation, not because they have to, but because they agree with Kenneth L. Gentry, a postmillennialist, partial preterist, and other reputable scholars who have seriously studied the dating evidence. He concludes that “a date in either A.D. 65 or early 66 would seem most suitable.”⁴⁰ Thus, Gentry summarizes:

The multiple statements as to the imminent expectation of radical upheaval in Revelation are more understandable in the 60s than in the 90s. These expectations were of the persecution of the Church, the destruction of the Temple and Israel, and of upheaval at Rome – chaos unparalleled in the events of the A.D. 90s.⁴¹

A Few Problems:⁴²

- Condensing the 1,000 figure to actually mean 36, 37, or 40 years seems to be taking the symbolism in the wrong direction—i.e., reducing it to less than its literal value.
- This reduction conflicts with other uses of this biblical language where a “thousand” clearly indicates a greater number or longer period of time. After all, it wasn't said or implied that God owns the cattle on “40 hills” (see Psa. 50:10) or keeps his promises to only “40 generations” (see Deut. 7:9).
- If this reign began at the cross or his ascension in A.D. 30 and extends forty years to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, that means the loosing of Satan occurred after A.D. 70, perhaps from then through Masada in A.D. 73. But that time and those events don't fit nearly as well as time of the Roman-Jewish War in A.D. 66 to 70.

With all the differences and problems associated with the above six millennial views, Spykman rightly concludes about the chronology and nature of this millennium period: “clearly the church lacks a unified voice. Its trumpet issues an uncertain sound.”⁴³

³⁹ Timothy P. Martin & Jeffrey L. Vaughn, *Beyond Creation Science* (Whitehall, MT.: Apocalyptic Vision Press, 2007), 409-415

⁴⁰ Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*), 336. For his list of other scholars supporting a pre-A.D.-70 dating, see pp. 30-38.

⁴¹ Ibid., 335.

⁴² For more about this view's beliefs and problems, see: Noë, *Unraveling the End*, 93-112.

⁴³ Spykman, *Reformational Theology*, 532.

My Proposed Fulfillment

Given the hotbed of disagreements among Christians on the timing and nature of the so-called “millennial rule of Christ,” it would be improper to give too much theological weight to a concept only mentioned once in Scripture. Moreover, given the problems cited above for each view and the utilization of such arbitrary devices imposed upon the text to accommodate a desired and/or predetermined interpretation should, likewise, give us cause for pause. While some say Christ is ruling now, others say He will rule someday. While some say this millennial reign is in heaven, others say it is/will be on earth. While some say it’s spiritual, others say it will be physical. While some say it will be a golden age, others say it’s a time of suffering.

On and on, it has gone and will continue until we are ready to honor and take seriously the time statements and time-restricted parameters the Book of Revelation places upon itself. Only then can there be a basis for agreement. Once properly contextualized, the meaning of all Revelation’s signs and symbols can be more reliably determined.

Part of that imagery is the 1,000-year reign spoken of in Revelation chapter 20. As we have seen, the three central and disputed issues are its timing, duration, and nature. For several years, I sided with the amillennial view. But now I believe there are five excellent and biblical justifications supporting a special 40-year period of reigning with Christ from A.D. 26 through A.D. 66, that will provide a more reliable, viable, and sound resolution to this contested matter.

Critical Objection: “It’s silly and unreasonable nonsense to suggest that the ‘1,000 years’ was only a 40-year period from A.D. 26-66. It’s laughable and won’t stand up to exegetical scrutiny.”⁴⁴

My Response: Indeed, this shorter time period is a conceptual, if not counterintuitive hurdle. It was for me. So let’s see if we can present a compelling and scriptural rationale for claiming that the sign and symbol of a thousand years may only equal 40 literal years. As we shall see, this 40-year period is not difficult to reconcile, scripturally and historically.

My Caveat: I’m not suggesting that I have all the answers. But I am suggesting that this “reign with Christ,” not “reign of Christ,” is defined by its nature and not by its number.

My Presupposition: All of Revelation’s prophecy was fulfilled and its events occurred within the time parameters that book places upon itself in both its first and last chapter concerning the whole of its prophecy. This includes the 1,000-year reign, its two resurrections marking its beginning and end, the loosing of Satan to deceive the nations, the surrounding of the camp of God’s people, the city he loves, and the terminus event of fire coming down from heaven, devouring them, and the devil being cast into the lake of (fire) burning sulfur.

I further suggest that the timeframe for these events, which we shall explore below, contains fewer problems (if any) as compared with the numerous problems associated with popular futurist views we’ve covered above. But unlike the rest of Revelation’s prophecy, the first ten verses in Revelation 20 do not contain an idealist component because they have a *terminus ad quem* (the end to which).⁴⁵ Therefore, here is my attempt to put the prophecy of the 1,000-year reign *with* Christ, and not *of* Christ, into a more sound biblical and historical context.

⁴⁴ A composite from a personal email, 12/10/15 and Facebook posts 4/1/14.

⁴⁵ For more on the exegetical basis for a preterist-idealist understanding of the Book of Revelation, see: Noë, *The Greater Jesus*, 81-118 and Noë, *Unraveling the End*, 331-362.

My Proposed Timeframe

A.D. 26-27 – The 40-year reign *commenced* with Christ’s baptism and anointing.

A.D. 30 – The “first resurrection” *heralded* its beginning with his bodily resurrection and the bodily resurrection of many, but not all, Old Testament saints (Matt. 27:51-53).

A.D. 30 on – *Progressed* as Christ’s 1st-century followers “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6 *KJV*) and took “this gospel of the kingdom” into “the whole world” (Matt. 24:14; Col. 1:6, 23; Rom. 1:8; 10:18; 16:26; Acts 1:8; 2:5; Luke 2:1).

A.D. 63-70 – The devil was *loosed* to more intensely persecute the saints (via Nero) and “deceive the nations” (Jews, Romans, and others) into prosecuting the Roman-Jewish War of A.D. 66-70.

A.D. 66 – The 40-year reign *ended*.

AD. 70-73 – Jerusalem and the Temple were **destroyed by fire**, the devil was **cast** into the lake of (fire) burning sulfur, and the “second resurrection” *heralded* this reign’s *terminus ad quem* when the rest of the dead (ones) were raised out of the hades realm and taken directly to heaven to receive their judgment (Heb. 9:27) and spiritual bodies (1 Cor. 15:38, 44) on the “last day” (singular – John 6:39, 40, 44, 54, 11:24) of those “last days” (plural – Heb. 1:2).

If this proposed timeframe is correct, then everything commenced, was perfectly fulfilled, and precisely completed within the time parameters the Book of Revelation placed upon itself.

Five Biblical and Historical Justifications for a 40-year Reign *with* Christ

1. Messianic Expectations of the Rabbis –

While not inspired, the B.C. and A.D. writings of the rabbis contained in their Jewish Talmud⁴⁶ are worthy of attention since their expectations were scripturally based. Several rabbis believed that this “Messianic era,” “Golden Age,” or the “days of the Messiah” would be of short duration—i.e. forty years long. This was based on their association of the Messiah with David. And David, who was identified as an ideal king and type of Christ, was 30 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for forty years (2 Sam. 5:4), as did Saul and Solomon. Likewise, Jesus began his ministry when He was baptized at 30 years of age (Luke 3:23).

Hence, rabbinical literature commonly referred to the Messiah as “the son of David”⁴⁷ (also see Matt. 9:27; 15:22). Both the Old and the New Testaments confirmed a Davidic monarchy expectation: “. . . He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever” (Isa. 9:7; also 2 Sam. 7:11-16). “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David (Luke 1:32; also see Acts 2:29-25).

Additionally, much Jewish discussion centered around how long the Messianic age, or “the days of the Messiah,” would be. Abraham Cohen conveyed the way many rabbis thought of this time period. All of them viewed this time as a time of change when “this age” would be over. But speculation as to its duration ranged from forty years to 7,000 years:

⁴⁶ The Talmud is a collection of Jewish oral traditions dating back to the time of Moses and other rabbinical writings that were finally compiled by later rabbis from about A.D. 70 to 200, and later writings. It was completed around A.D. 500 –*The World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: World Book, 1982), Vol. 2, 20b.

⁴⁷ Abraham Cohen, *Everyman’s Talmud* (New York: Schocken Books, 1949), 347.

Many Rabbis believed that the period of the Messiah was to be only a transitional stage between this world and the World to Come, and opinions differed on the time of its duration. ‘How long will the days of the Messiah last? R. Akiba said, **Forty years**, as long as the Israelites were in the wilderness. R. Eliezer (b. José) said, A hundred years. R. Berechya said in the name of R. Dosa, Six hundred years. R. Judah the Prince said, Four hundred years, as long as the Israelites were in Egypt. R. Eliezer (b. Hyrcanus) said, A thousand years. R. Abbahu said, Seven thousand years; and the Rabbis generally declared, Two thousand years’ (Tanchuma Ekeb §7). Other versions read: ‘R. Eliezer said, The days of the Messiah will be **forty years**. R. Eleazar b. Azariah said, Seventy years. R. Judah the Prince said, Three generations’ (Sanh. 99a). ‘R. Eliezer said, The days of the Messiah will be **forty years**. R. Dosa said, Four hundred years. R. Judah the Prince said, Three hundred and sixty-five years. R. Abimi b. Abbahu said, Seven thousand years. R. Judah said in the name of Rab, As long as the world has already lasted. R. Nachman b. Isaac said, As long as from the days of Noah up to the present.’⁴⁸ (Emphasis mine.)

Randall E. Otto noted a forty-year expectation is contained in several Qumran materials:

Similarly, the Qumran materials indicate such a period, as, for instance, the Damascus Document: “from the day of the gathering in of the unique teacher, until the destruction of all the men of war who turned back with the man of lies, there shall be about **forty years** (CD xx, 14-15), and a Commentary on Ps. 37:10: “I will stare at his place and he will no longer be there. Its interpretation concerns all the evil at the end of the **forty years**, for they shall be devoured and upon the earth no wicked person will be found” (4Qpslams Pesher [4Q17, ii, 6-8])⁴⁹ (Emphasis mine.)

Add to these Jewish expectations the three forty-year periods in the life of Moses, the special significance of many other 40-day or year spans,⁵⁰ and the corollary statement of the prophet Micah, “According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvelous things” (Mic. 7:15). The words “according to the days” very likely are stressing the time element. How long was that previous covenantal-transition period? It was exactly 40 years.

All the Rabbis also expected “that the coming of the Messiah would be distinguished by the resurrection of the dead”⁵¹ As we shall see, this resurrection is a key marker. Incidentally, even Muslim expectations, which are partially based on the Bible, look for a future, 40-year reign of Jesus:

In tradition, *Hadith*, the basic body of religious sources second to the Qur’an, Islam lives in the vivid expectation of Jesus’ second coming, ushering in the realm of peace and justice at the end of time, in which Muhammad plays no part. At the end of time, Jesus will descend on the white arcade of the eastern gate at Damascus, in shining clothes, with his head anointed, and a spear in his hand to slay the Antichrist. He will go to Jerusalem, perform the prayer at dawn in Muslim fashion and rid the world of all unbelievers and their symbols. All peoples of the book will believe in him, forming only one community, Islam, and the reign of justice and complete peace

⁴⁸ Ibid., 356.

⁴⁹ Randall E. Otto, *Case Dismissed* (Bradford, PA: International Preterist Association, 2000), 63. Citations are from Florentino G. Martinex, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994) 46, 203, respectively.

⁵⁰ Gen. 7:4; 7:17; 8:6; 25:20; 26:34; 50:3; Exod. 16:35; 24:18; 34:28; Num. 13:25; 14:33-34; 32:13; Deut. 2:7; 8:2-4; 9:9-25; 10:10; 29:5; Jos. 5:6; 14:7; Judg. 5:31; 8:28; 13:1; 1 Sam. 4:18; 17:16; 2 Sam. 2:10; 5:4; 15:7; 1 Kgs. 2:11; 11:42; 19:8; 2 Kgs. 12:1; 2 Chron. 29:27; 2 Chr. 9:30; 24:1; Neh. 9:21; Ps. 95:10; Ezek. 4:6; 29:11-13; Amos 2:10; 5:25; Jonah 3:4; Matt. 4:2; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2; Acts 1:3; 7:23-42; 13:18; 13:21; Heb. 3:9; 3:17.

⁵¹ Cohen, *Everyman’s Talmud*, 355-356.

will set in. The reign of Jesus, God's glorified servant, will last *forty years*, followed by the 'Hour', the end of the world on the day when God alone will sit in judgment at the universal resurrection.⁵² (Emphasis mine.)

But in this author's opinion, the duration of this "a thousand years" symbol should not be based on the actual years it encompassed. Instead, it should be viewed by looking at what was accomplished during this time. It's to this task we next turn.

2. Marked by Two Resurrections

The defining and distinguishing events that mark the time, duration, and nature of this 1,000-year period are two, same-natured resurrections. "The first resurrection" event was to take place *toward* the beginning of the millennial period. But the text of Revelation 20 does not require that this resurrection occur before the beginning or at the very beginning, just around the beginning. The second resurrection event was for "the rest of the dead." It was to occur *after* the end of this period. But, again, the text does not require this occurrence at the precise end, only after it had ended: "They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection" (Rev. 20:4-5).

Below is the historical sequence of fulfillment of these two, related, and same-natured resurrections.⁵³

"The First Resurrection"

"And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook; and the rocks split, and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs, and after His [Jesus'] resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many" (Matt. 27:51-53).

Many interpreters have tried to sidestep or downplay this biblically recorded, collective, but only once mentioned event. Obviously, some kind of a literal/bodily *resurrection* took place just *after* Jesus' death and resurrection in A.D. 30.⁵⁴

⁵² Hans Kung and Jurgen Moltmann, eds., *Islam: A Challenge for Christianity* (Maryknoll, NY.: Orbis Books, c1994), 108.

⁵³ For a fuller discussion see: Noe, *Unraveling the End*, 379-414.

⁵⁴ The exact chronology and resurrection process for these Matthew 27:51-53 happenings is not totally clear from the text or from the original Greek. But we do know that these "bodies" did not appear until AFTER Jesus' resurrection. Some suggest that these Old Testament saints were raised like Lazarus. But this type of resurrection had happened before. There's nothing new in that. Consequently, a Lazarus-like resurrection could not be considered as attesting to the "better resurrection" manifested by Christ Jesus. Moreover, that would not be in keeping with but actually would conflict with the applied firstfruits imagery. If this group was raised like Lazarus, it seems more appropriate that they should have appeared BEFORE Jesus' resurrection and enabled us to avoid this confusion. Others split this Matthew 27 group in two suggesting that part were raised Lazarus-like—to die again. They probably were ones who recently had died and would be readily recognized by family and friends as they appeared around Jerusalem. The rest were raised Jesus-like and did not appear. This second bunch remained in the unseen realm and were taken into the outer courts of the Heavenly Temple at Christ's ascension. There they awaited the consummation of atonement (Rev 6 and 7). Unfortunately, this split-group idea solves nothing, and is pure speculation with no scriptural warrant or historical evidence to support it. We'll stick with the whole firstfruits concept, imagery, and pattern of same-naturedness. It's clean and straightforward.

The Greek word translated as “bodies” is *soma*. It means a human body as a whole and not a soul or a disembodied spirit. But not all Old Testament saints were bodily raised at this time. Still, this eschatological event was in partial but literal fulfillment of Jesus’ prophetic words: “Do not be amazed at this, for a time [the hour] is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out – those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. (John 5:28, 29; also see Dan. 12:2).

It is feasible, but not provable, that this company was the “firstfruits” of the resurrection now underway. And that they had received their resurrection bodies, for these three reasons:

- 1) They had to have been embodied in order to enter the city, appear, and be seen.
- 2) Chronologically, they followed Jesus’ resurrection. He had to be the “firstborn” (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5) and “the first to rise from the dead” (Acts 26:23) in this “better resurrection” (Heb. 11:35). But they were next in the order (1 Cor. 15:23). Consequently, there is no scriptural reason they couldn’t have been in their resurrection bodies.
- 3) They were a portion of the “firstfruits” (1 Cor. 15:20, 23), with Christ actually being the “first of the firstfruits” (Exod. 23:19; 34:26; Ezek. 44:30 KJV). In keeping with this Jewish typology, the first portion of grain cut from a standing harvest was not just one stalk, but many, and all same-natured. Nor would the nature of “firstfruits” be different from the rest of the resurrection-of-the-dead harvest that was ripe, ready, and soon to follow. This essential unity must exist throughout. Thus, if we’re consistent, their resurrection bodies would have to be like Jesus’ and would exhibit similar characteristics.

While there is no *per se* mention of this “firstfruits” group or this resurrection elsewhere in Scripture, some scholars believe the Scriptures speak of this group as the “general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven” (Heb. 12:23), or as the souls of the martyrs “under the altar” (Rev. 6:9-11), and as the “first resurrection” (Rev. 20:4-5). What is safe to assume is that their resurrection was based upon Christ’s resurrection. As such, it likely was not partial, temporary, figurative, or only spiritual. It was bodily. They would not die again, go back to the grave, or need to be resurrected a second time. Those who claim this group’s resurrection was a “spiritual-only resurrection,” or a resurrection of some part of man such as the spirit or the soul, are grasping at straws in an effort to preserve their postponement tradition.

This special class of God’s faithful was clearly differentiated from other saints. Perhaps, Paul spoke of them when he quoted the Psalms declaring, “When He ascended on high, he led captives in his train” [“he led captivity captive” -- KJV] (Eph. 4:8; Psalms 68:18; also Eph. 4:9-10; Luke 4:18-19; Isa. 61:1-2). And Jesus took them to heaven with Him (see Rev. 6:9-11).

What better explanation is there for the reason some in Bible times were falsely “saying that the resurrection is past already” (2 Tim. 2:18; also see 2 Thess. 1-2)? Some scholars theorize this idea was because a non-visible type of “spiritual resurrection” was expected—that is, bodiless and not subject to confirmation by any physical, empirical evidence. A more likely reason, in this author’s opinion, is because many in Jerusalem had personally seen or heard about this parade of physically dead saints who had been raised to life, came out of their tombs, and physically appeared in bodies (*soma*). Notably, Paul never challenged their concept of the nature of resurrection, he only corrected their *timing* (2 Thess. 2:1-12). And at that time, the resurrection of the rest of the dead was *not* “past already.” But what a sight and what a news-making event that parade of resurrected saints through the streets of Jerusalem must have been!

No doubt, this was why Paul, during his defense before King Agrippa, remarked, “Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?” (Acts 26:8; also see 2 Cor.

1:9; Acts 4:2, 20). But in the Greek, Paul used a collective term, “raises the dead ones” (plural). At the time, multiple bodily resurrections had become a visible and irrefutable reality.

Yet in spite of this positive proof, many 1st-century Jews continued to deny belief in the general concept of resurrection (the Sadducees). Many more denied that Jesus was resurrected. But how were they to deal with the evidence of this group of “dead ones” appearing around Jerusalem? By their very presence they were declaring to the world of that day that the death grip was broken, the age to come was in-breaking, and Jesus’ statement: “Because I live, you shall live [eternally] also” (John 14:19) was being dramatically fulfilled. What, undoubtedly, grieved many unbelieving Jews was not the preaching of “through Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:2), but the abundance of proof that had been paraded right before their eyes.

Hence, Jesus’ resurrection could not have been perceived as an isolated event. Still, many other faithful saints remained to be raised. That’s why Paul does not contradict himself when he states in the aorist active tense that Christ “has destroyed death” (2 Tim. 1:10), and then in the future tense, “the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:26). These statements are simply reflective of the transitional period in which he wrote. The victory over death still awaited completion on Resurrection Day. That’s why the full attainment of resurrection reality for the rest of the dead and alive “in Christ” was still being anticipated as the New Testament was being penned (see Rom. 8:23-35, 29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 John 3:1-3). This time-frame realization accounts for the use of future-tense language and explains why Paul so strongly opposed any doctrine teaching a completed resurrection prior to Christ’s *parousia* coming at the end of the age.

Therefore, and almost thirty years after the “firstfruits” resurrection event, Paul stated: “I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there WILL BE a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked” (Acts 24:15) (Caps added). Two of Paul’s key words in this passage, *mellein esesthai*, are traditionally translated as “will be” or “shall be.” But the literal Greek is “to be about to be” (also used in Acts 11:28 and 27:10). This double-intensified force of imminency is missed in nearly all major English translations. Not only was Paul’s future resurrection hope grounded in the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets—i.e. the Old Testament promises—and in a “firstfruits” typology, it was a very imminent event. Thus, the die was cast and the nature set. The resurrection harvest had begun. All that awaited was the proper time. That time came!

Resurrection Day for the Rest of the Dead

So when would, or rather when were, the rest of the dead raised? According to both Jesus and Jewish understanding, that day of resurrection would happen on the long-anticipated “last day” (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54). Martha understood this “last day” focus when she answered Jesus saying, “I know he [Lazarus] will rise on the last day” (John 11:24). In response, Jesus did not correct her understanding of the time of Lazarus’ final and “better” resurrection. He only added “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25).

Amazingly, most Bible scholars agree with this timing for the eschatological resurrection event on “the last day.” But on the last day of what? Traditionalists assume it means the last day of the world, of human history, of the church age, of a future millennium, or at the end of time. But as we have seen, these are unscriptural and false-paradigms. Unfortunately, they are deeply entrenched. Most think this time terminology literally means that after this “last day” there will be no more days. But for starters, the world, the universe, the kingdom, and the church age have

no end (see Eph. 3:21; Eccl. 1:4; Psa. 78:69; 89:36-37; 119:90; 148:4, 6; Isa. 9:7; Dan. 2:44; 7:14; 18, 27). Therefore, they have no last day, last hour, last minute, last second, or last anything in which to place a resurrection. But Jesus prophetically spoke of a precise time when his resurrection statements would fully come to pass: “Do not be amazed at this, for a time [the hour] is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out” (John 5:28-29a).

Then, in A.D. 67-68, the Apostle John twice prophetically proclaimed in the same verse and in no uncertain terms: “Dear Children, this is the last hour . . . this is how we know it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18; also see Rom.13:11; 16:20; John 5:25 KJV). Who can deny it? The “last hour” was upon them, then and there. Peter concurred: “For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God” (1 Pet. 4:17).

The explicitness of the time phrase “the last day” and its use in pinpointing the time of resurrection consummation must be understood within the historical context of that 1st century. Again, it’s not to be understood from the popular misapplication of that term to an alleged end of the planet, the cosmos, human history, the Church, Christian age, or time. Nor can we divorce the biblical “last day” (singular) from the biblical “last days” (plural) without doing great violence to the inspired scriptural texts. Especially note that the Hebrew writer places both Jesus’ earthly ministry and the time in which he was writing within the biblical time frame termed the “last days:” “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but IN THESE LAST DAYS He has spoken to us by his Son” (Heb. 1:1-2a [Caps added]).

Every reference in the New Testament to the “last days,” or equivalents “last times, last hour,” refers to that same time period in which its writers were living, then and there, in that 1st century. There are no exceptions. Check them out (Heb. 1:2; Acts. 2:17; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim 3:1; Jas. 5:3; 2 Pet. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:5, 20; Jude 18; 1 John 2:18). Beyond any doubt, these writers saw themselves as living in those “last days.” The Apostle Paul, writing during and about this time period warned, “time is short . . . for this world in its present form is passing away” (1 Cor. 7:29, 31). But whose time was “short” and what “world” was “passing away?” Paul’s time wasn’t the “last days” of planet Earth, of human existence, of time itself, or the end of the Church age. The Church was in its beginning days. Both it, as well as the physical creation and humanity, have continued right along ever since. Nevertheless, these were the “last days” of something. They were the “last days” of the biggest thing that was ending and in the process of “passing away,” back then and there.

By now, what that something was should be obvious. And the relationship between “the last day” (singular) to “the last days” (plural) should be more obvious. “These last days” perfectly coincided with the days and work of the Messiah in ending the Old Covenant Jewish age. Its entire, type-and-shadow, and animal-sacrifice system was destroyed and left “desolate” (Heb. 8:5; 9:19; Matt. 23:38). Its Temple complex and entire city were burned and torn down stone-by-stone (Matt. 24:2). Precisely, Jesus had prophesied that all this and much more would happen in the “this generation” of his hearers (Matt. 24:3-34). It did. The prophet Daniel foretold both the defining characteristic and historical setting of this end: “At that time . . . the time of the end . . . when the power of the holy people [the Jews] has been finally broken, all these things will be completed” (Dan. 12:1-4, 7b). Daniel was promised that this would also be the time of his own personal resurrection “at the end of the days you will rise” (Dan. 12:13). At the end of what days? Again, the most important days of human and redemptive history, “the last days.”

Then, on “the last day” (singular) of the “last days” (plural), Resurrection Day happened. At some point in the late summer or early fall of A.D. 70, or 2 to 3 years later when the last stone was removed from the Temple complex (see Matt. 24:2), the field plowed over, and Judaism left “desolate” (Matt. 23:38), the remaining righteous dead were raised.⁵⁵ Of course, no one in Jesus’ day (not Jesus, the angels, or any man) could know “that day or hour” (Matt. 24:36, 44; 25:13). Still today, we cannot go back and reconstruct the exact time. But John knew it was the hour. Twice, by inspiration and guided by the Holy Spirit into all truth (see John 16:13), he loudly proclaimed: “this is the last hour . . . it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18).

But unlike before, no resurrection bodies were seen rising out of graves or parading around Jerusalem. That physical evidence had been given. And in keeping with the applied metaphor, only the firstfruits of harvested grain each year were distinctly dedicated to God as they were physically and visibly brought into the Temple and waved in the air as a wave offering. The rest of the harvest never received this treatment. Likewise, the rest of the dead did not receive the same visual treatment as the firstfruit group. Instead, their resurrection took place in coming out of the invisible hadean realm (the temporary holding place of the souls/spirits of the dead awaiting the resurrection) and being taken directly to heaven. But there was visible tangible evidence for this “last day” event. The destruction of the Old Covenant Jewish system was the physical “sign” (Matt. 24:3, 30), the historical setting, and the defining characteristic for the one and only end the Bible consistently proclaims (see Dan. 12:7b). This end is history. It’s behind us, not ahead. And, it was covenantal, not cosmic.⁵⁶

The “time of the end” of the Jewish age was also prophetically connected to Christ’s *parousia* coming on the clouds (Matt. 24:3, 27, 30, 34). And Christ’s *parousia* was divinely connected with the resurrection of the dead (1 Thess. 4:15; 1 Cor. 15:23). These verses, and many more, refer to that same 1st-century time period in human and redemptive history. On that “last day,” within the time span of Jesus’ “this generation”—the one that had rejected Him—Christ came again in a “day of the Lord” judgment similar to those recorded in the Old Testament. All these eschatological events, took place “at that time” (Dan. 12:1) at the close of the Jewish age in A.D. 66 – 70.

This 1st-century time factor for Resurrection Day is reinforced by a consistency and convergence of all prophetic time indicators in the Bible. It is in perfect harmony with the literal, exact, sequential, chronological fulfillment of Daniel’s four time prophecies (no gaps, no interruptions),⁵⁷ and with the imminency expectations of every New Testament writer and the early Christian community.⁵⁸ Their Holy Spirit-led expectations were not mistaken and did not prove false. Again, these were the expectations God was authenticating with signs, wonders, and miracles following (see Chapter 7 in *A Once Mighty Faith*). Let’s also recall that Jesus affirmed that not “one jot or one tittle” (the smallest letter or pen stroke) would pass away from the Law “till all be fulfilled” (Matt. 5:18). Resurrection was an eschatological promise rooted in the Law and the Prophets (Acts 24:14-15). And more than a “jot or tittle” of the Law was fulfilled and passed away back then. Hence, I maintain that these two, same-natured resurrection events distinctly marked off the beginning and ending of the saints special 1,000-year reign with Christ.

⁵⁵ Some preterists have suggested the possibility that the “last day” and the coming of the “day of the Lord” in judgment (1 Pet. 4:7, 17) comprised the entire time span of the Roman-Jewish War, A.D. 66-70.

⁵⁶ For a fuller discussion see Noe, *The Perfect Ending for the World*, chapters 9 and 13.

⁵⁷ Ibid., chapters 5, 6, and 7.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 229-235.

3. A.D. 63 – 70 Loosing of Satan

Satan's loosing corresponds with his binding. Throughout biblical history Satan has always been bound. But during these times he also has been active. As far back as Job, Satan was bound by God (Job 2:6). Jesus and his disciples demonstrated that Satan was additionally bound by casting out demons from A.D. 26 into the mid 60s (Matt. 12:28-29; John 12:31; Rev. 12:10-12). Jesus further bound him at the cross (Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14). Binding, therefore, does not necessitate elimination of his power or activity. Rather, it was a limitation, a reduction, or a lessening. Thus, Hendrikson rightly referred to Satan being bound as "his influence on earth is partly paralysed [sic]."⁵⁹ Chilton agrees "that Satan has been bound does not mean that all his activity has ceased. The New Testament tells us specifically that the demons have been disarmed and bound (Col. 2:15; 2 Pet. 24: Jude 6) – yet they are still active. It is just that their activity is restricted."⁶⁰

Consequently, loosing does not necessitate an unbound releasing or the giving of complete and absolute freedom. Neither does it demand a prior, non-operative status or no-involvement period. Loosing simply means the giving of more leash, more chain, or greater freedom. In regards to the 1,000-year period in Revelation 20, Satan was loosed for a specific purpose—to "deceive the nations" and "to gather them for battle" (Rev. 20:3, 8).

Two fulfillment scenarios are possible here. If the "short time" (Rev. 20:3 NIV) or "little season" (KJV) of his loosing began chronologically *after* a 40-year period (A.D. 26 – 66), the scenario of the Roman-Jewish War of A.D. 66 – 70 with its deceptions, four sieges, destruction of the Temple and the city, and divine judgment (1 Pet. 4:17) would logically fit. On the other hand, the deceiving to go to war, the gathering for battle, along with other spectacular deceptions, persecutions, and prodigies historically started in A.D. 63.

According to Josephus, James, the brother of Jesus, was arrested and put to death in A.D. 63.⁶¹ Peter and Paul were killed some time after that but not before Peter penned his two epistles in A.D. 63. It was at that very time that Peter declared by inspiration: "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour . . . your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of suffering" (1 Pet. 5:8-9). Also at this time the severe rise of persecution of Christians by the Roman Emperor Nero followed the burning of Rome in A.D. 64.

In A.D. 66, Josephus tells of false prophets deluding the people in Jerusalem and several strange, if not bizarre, oracles that appeared in the sky and in the city before the first siege and foretelling its impending devastation: a star in the shape of a sword that stood over the city; a comet that continued for a year; a brilliant light around the altar at night; a cow that gave birth to a lamb; the sighting of chariots and armed soldiers (angelic armies) in the sky; and the hearing of voices in the inner court of the Temple, saying, "We are departing hence."⁶² These portends were also reported by the Roman historian Tacitus (A.D. 56 – c.120). Josephus' eyewitness account also documented the Jewish apostasy, abominations, atrocities, and madness leading up to and through the Roman-Jewish War of A.D. 66 – 70.⁶³

⁵⁹ William Hendrikson, *More Than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Book House, 1940, reprinted 1982), 190.

⁶⁰ David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance* (Ft. Worth, TX.: Dominion Press, 1987), 503.

⁶¹ Josephus, *The Works of Josephus* (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 1987), 20. 9.1, 538.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Wars, 6.5.2-3, 285-300, 741-2.

⁶³ For a fuller discussion see, Noe, *The Perfect Ending for the World*, 171-202.

Of the approximately 54,000 soldiers in Titus' army that came against Jerusalem in A.D. 70, only 25,000 were Roman soldiers. The rest were from other nations. Historical accounts reveal that Rome commonly conscripted soldiers from other nations into their fighting ranks. Similarly, we know that Jews had already been scattered to "every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5). Satan not only deceived many Jews in those nations and in Israel, he induced the Roman armies comprised of soldiers from many nations to gather for numerous battles and prosecute the Roman-Jewish War of A.D. 66 to 70. Then, on August 30 of A.D. 70, the Romans set fire to the Temple and began to burn down the entire holy city of Jerusalem (see Rev. 20:10).

For these historical reasons, I submit that the 7-year period from A.D. 63 to 70 makes the most sense as the time of Satan's loosing. It was also the time of "great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21) that came upon Jesus' "this generation"—plainly, literally, and exactly as and when Jesus said it would (Matt. 24:34). But this proposed 7-year period is not without difficulty. Given a 40-year "millennial" period that began in A.D. 26 and concluded in A.D. 66, that leaves a 3 ½-year overlap (A.D. 63 – 66) with Satan's time of loosing. However, Revelation 20's verses 3 and 7 both state that Satan's loosing would occur *after* the thousand years were ended. How then can we justify this overlap?

Scripturally, it is reasonably possible that Satan's loosing could have begun *at* or *toward* the end of this 40-year millennium period, as opposed to following literally *after*, and for this reason. The Greek verb *telesthe*, which is employed in both of these verses and translated as "were ended" (NIV) or "should be fulfilled" (KJV) in vs. 3 and "are over" (NIV) or "are expired" (KJV) in vs. 7, is derived from the root verb *teleo* and used in the aorist passive subjunctive. A more intense form of this same root verb was previously used by both Jesus and Paul. But they used it, proleptically.⁶⁴ For example, just prior to his death on the cross, Jesus said in the perfect passive indicative, "It is finished" (John 19:30). But He had not yet died. Yet his death was so close it was stated as finished.⁶⁵ Paul proleptically exclaimed in the perfect active indicative: "I have finished the race" (2 Tim. 4:7). This, too, was stated just prior to his actual death.

Likewise, a proleptic interpretation of this same root verb *teleo* may be justified and appropriate in Revelation 20. Here, it is used in the subjunctive. The subjunctive is a less intense form of the verb than Jesus' and Paul's indicative uses. Consequently, suggesting another proleptical application and understanding is even more reasonable. This then enables us to place the beginning of the loosing of Satan in A.D. 63 prior to the end of the reign in A.D. 66 and extend it after that time until A.D. 70.

4. *Terminus ad Quem* – Lake of Fire Consummation

At the end of his "little season" of loosing, Satan "was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone" (Rev. 20:10 KJV). This does not, however, necessitate Satan's demise, or his being all "burned up," annihilated, terminated, or rendered inoperative and removed from any influence on the earth, as some preterists have assumed.

Let's remember, Satan has always been bound. Yet all this time God allowed him to operate in this world. Even during the 3½ years of Jesus' earthly ministry and the subsequent ministries of the Apostles and the early Church, and while Satan resided in "the bottomless pit" and was bound with "a great chain" (Rev. 20:1-3), he was still active. But being thrown into the "lake of

⁶⁴ Proleptic means something is so close to being fulfilled that it is spoken of as being fulfilled.

⁶⁵ Jesus also spoke proleptically in John 17:4 – "I have brought you glory on earth by completing [have finished – KJV] the work you gave me to do." But Jesus had not yet died on the cross.

fire” at the end of the 40-year period, perhaps, was and is his permanent binding. How extensive or how much further this binding is in comparison with his previous bindings, we are not told. Nevertheless, the question next becomes, what is the “lake of fire?”

The “lake of fire” is another major sign and symbol in a book filled with signs and symbols. So it should not be surprising that the “lake of fire” symbolically points to something else literally real. Unfortunately, the Book of Revelation does not decipher this imagery for us, as it does other signs and symbols (for example see: Rev. 1:20; 17:15; 19:8). But by using the analogy of Scripture—letting Scripture interpret Scripture—we can gain some valuable insight.

As I have more extensively written in another book,⁶⁶ the Book of Revelation contains both this lake and a river (Rev. 22:1). Generally, a lake is a large body of water, perhaps larger than a river. Hence, a lake of fire would be a lot of fire. From other scriptures we know that Jesus is spoken of as the “living water” (John 4:10-12) and the Holy Spirit as “streams (or rivers – KJV) of living water” (John 7:38-39). In a similar manner, the writer of Hebrews wrote, “for our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29; also see Deut. 4:24). In the New Testament, “fire” is commonly used as a reference to God or his messengers (see Rev. 1:14; 2:18; 10:1; 15:2; 19:12; Matt. 3:11; Luke 12:49; Acts. 2:3; 7:30; 1 Cor. 3:13, 15; Heb. 1:7; also many such uses in the Old Testament). Therefore, a strong case can be made that the “lake of fire” is a symbol for God. Satan was thus thrown into God. That shouldn’t surprising us, because Satan has always been bound by God and God alone.

5. Delivering Up the Kingdom

Six centuries before Christ, the prophet Daniel wrote that there would be two phases to the Messianic reign (see Dan. 7:13-14 and 22-28). As we have contended above, phase one was the saints 40-year reign with Christ. It began with his anointing in the Jordan River in A.D. 26. This anointing event also signaled the beginning of his earthly ministry and the beginning of the 70th week of Daniel’s 70 weeks of years (490 years) time prophecy. A total of 483 years (69 weeks) had passed since the starting point of Daniel’s time prophecy in 457 B.C. with the decree of Artaxerxes and his subsequent letters of passage in 444 B.C. Thus, the Messiah had arrived “at just the right time” (Rom. 5:6). He announced his kingdom was at hand (Mark 1:15 KJV) and began his reign over the bound powers of darkness (Matt. 12:29). 3½ years later, in the middle of Daniel’s 70th week, He was “cut off,” (i.e. crucified), arose, and ascended to heaven to sit on the throne at the right hand of the Father (Heb. 1:3; 8:1).

Then exactly forty years after his anointing, the phase one, 40-year “millennial” reign was over. Christ came, precisely *as* and *when* He said He would, “on the clouds” in a “day of the Lord” destruction of the apostate Judaic system. All this occurred within the time-restricted span that Jesus Himself had placed upon it—“this generation” (Matt. 24:34) and within the time expectations of every New Testament writer (see John 16:13). It all fits together perfectly—no gaps, no gimmicks, no interruptions, no delays, no postponements.⁶⁷

As part of the final events of this “time of the end” (Dan. 12:4, 7), the old kingdom was taken away and given to “a people who will produce its fruit” (Matt. 21:43). Thus began phase two of Christ’s fully established, everlasting, and ever-increasing kingdom and reign as the kingdom was “handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High” (Dan. 7:27). His last

⁶⁶ See Noë, *Hell Yes / Hell No*, 90-92.

⁶⁷ For a fuller discussion see: Noe, *The Perfect Ending for the World*, 109-252 and Noë, *Unraveling the End*, 213-260, 285-330.

redemptive act was when Christ delivered up this fully established and delivered kingdom (Jude 3) to the Father in heaven (1 Cor. 15:24). Thereby, God became “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). How then do we explain the fulfillment of this expression, “all in all”?

1) “All enemies” have been “put under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:25; Heb. 10:12-13). The destruction and removal of the Old Covenant temple system vindicated Jesus and his Church, and documented his victory and judgment. Paul had perfectly predicted that this was soon to happen: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your [their] feet” (Rom. 16:20). This crushing occurred twelve years after Paul penned the Book of Romans. Paul also had perfectly prophesied: “And do this, understand the present time [i.e. A.D. 58] . . . because our salvation is nearer now [within 12 years] than when we first believed [20 to 28 years earlier]

2) The “last enemy” of “death” was also destroyed, then and there (1 Cor. 15:26). That is the hades realm—the temporary holding place of the souls of the dead—was cleared out and locked up by Jesus Who holds “the keys of death and Hades” (Rev. 1:18b). This redemptive event completed the transition between covenants. Thus, Christ’s complete victory over death was not achieved by eliminating death. Hebrews 9:27 will always be in effect. It was won by resurrection. This is exactly how He conquered death and how all post-A.D.-70 believers appropriate this victory.⁶⁸

3) After Jesus removed the Old Covenant kingdom and gave it over in a new, transcendent form “to a people who will produce its fruit” (Matt. 21:43b), He was made subject to the Father and handed over (NIV), or delivered up (KJV), this kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24, 28). This transference of the kingdom should not be interpreted to mean that Jesus quit reigning, thereafter. To the contrary, Jesus still sits enthroned at the right hand of the Father and they co-reign, together, forever (Rev. 22:3-5). Don’t forget, Revelation 22 is also part of the whole of the prophecy of the Book of Revelation that was “soon [to] take place.” It did, within 3 to 5 years of when this book was written.⁶⁹

4) Christologically, delivering up the kingdom was part of the restoration of all things (Acts 3:20-21). But “all things” had previously been placed under Jesus’ feet by the Father (see Eph. 1:22; Rev. 11:15). Therefore, after this transference of the kingdom to the Father, Jesus continues to reign, not only with the Father but also through his followers here on earth who are willing to follow, serve, and obey Him (see Rev. 5:9-10; 1:6; John 14:12; Matt. 23:13-14). Unfortunately, many Christians today are so distracted by the concept of ruling with Christ in a so-called, future, thousand-year, millennial reign that they do not see themselves as reigning with Him, here and now.

5) The saying that God is now “all in all” is not pantheism. It’s a Greek idiom that biblically means the realization of all things of and in God. His person, presence, accessibility, resources, provisions, will, rule, everything is available to all who are “in Christ” (1 John 2:5-6 defines what being “in Christ” means).⁷⁰ Thus, the completion of God’s divine plan and purpose of restoring believers unto Himself was achieved and finished circa A.D. 70. After Jesus delivered up the kingdom, “All” is “in All” (see Col. 1:16-20; 2:10; 3:11; also see: Eph. 1:10, 22; 4:10; Acts 10:36; Rom. 10:12; Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; Rev. 19:16; 22:13).

6) Sad to say and once again, the kingdom that had arrived fully established, been made everlastingly available, and was delivered up to the Father in heaven is greatly under-appreciated and under-realized here on earth today. But it is part of our “once-for-all-delivered faith” (Jude

⁶⁸ For a fuller discussion see: Noe, *Shattering the ‘Left Behind’ Delusion*, 33-57, 93-101.

⁶⁹ See footnotes 36 and 40, again.

⁷⁰ For more, see: Noe, *The Greater Jesus*, 320-322; 359-373.

3). I submit that this glaring deficiency in our current preaching and practices of the Christian faith is due to two primary factors: 1) flawed, postponement, and futuristic eschatologies. 2) We lack motivation, knowledge, and vision as the kingdom has not been properly grounded, taught, practiced, or modeled in most churches (see Rom. 10:17). Thus, uncertainty prevails, along with an underlying unbelief about the redeemability of society. But Lord willing, this Christ-offending, kingdom-devaluating, Scripture-degrading, and faith-diluting situation may be about to change.

In Summary

The purpose of this article has been to mitigate the millennial maze by putting the 1,000-year symbol of the saints special and transitional reign “with Christ” into a sound biblical context and historical scenario. During this process, we have exposed some of the problems associated with popular, postponement, and futuristic views, along with the preterist view.

For me, the most impressive attribute of this 40-year, special and transitional reign of the 1st-century believers with Christ is that it did not have to last over a long period of time in order to accomplish all that the thousand years symbolized. Therefore, I believe the proposed fulfillment scenario presented above is the most Christ-honoring, Scripture-authenticating, and faith-validating of all the millennial positions discussed in this appendix.

In this regard, Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Jr., further elaborate in their textbook on hermeneutics by asking and then answering these most relevant questions:

What do we do when interpreters disagree? How do we proceed when well-intentioned Christians come to different interpretations about the meaning of a text or passage? First, we should set out precisely the nature of the difference Second, . . . did either interpreter misconstrue some evidence or engage in shoddy reasoning, or were there other flaws in the process that indicate one of the positions must be relinquished? Third Where one view more readily emerges from the historical sense of the text, it must stand. ***The historically defensible interpretation has greatest authority.*** That is, interpreters can have maximum confidence in their understanding of a text when they base that understanding on historically defensible arguments.⁷¹

So where am I wrong on this aspect of our “once mighty faith” and “once-for-all-delivered faith” (Jude 3)?

⁷¹ William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas, TX.: Word Publishing, 1993), 149. Bold emphasis mine.