

Revelation 20 and the Thousand Years

The Bible does not teach several different and varying views of the end times. If we employ a consistent hermeneutic and apply basic rules of grammar and interpretation, one view makes better use of the available information, does the least damage to the text, and coincides with the progressive nature of Biblical revelation better than the others ... at least, in my opinion.

The fact that it's taken thousands of years for Israel to be established fully and for all of the prophecies of the kingdom to come true, that's not evidence that God will not bring it to pass. After all, Christ has been expected for 2000 years, but we still expect Him.

The Great Tribulation – according to Daniel, Jeremiah, and Jesus

Daniel 12:1-4 / Jeremiah 30:5-8 / Matt. 24:15-22

The Great Tribulation is not the same as the tribulation that is common to Christians “in the world.” (John 16:33)

Christ's return

parousia - A Greek term that means “arrival” or “coming.” It is usually used to mean the Second Coming of Christ.

The triumphant hope woven throughout the New Testament rests on the facts that Christ rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and will certainly someday return. When he left, His apostles were present, watching Him rise bodily. Acts 1:9-11

This return of Christ was the firm and widespread belief of the early Christians.

1 Thessalonians 4:15 / Phillipians 4:5 / Heb. 9:28 / James 5:8 / 1John 3:2

In his great Olivet discourse, Christ announced -- in keeping with Daniel's vision of the Son of Man -- that he would most certainly return.

Matt. 24:29-30 / John 14:1-3 / Rev. 1:7

These passages describe a literal, physical return to Earth. To claim that these passages are referring to a spiritual return simply does not square with the details described by Jesus and the apostles.

He is coming in like manner as He left – physically, literally, on clouds of glory. Acts 1:11 is most certainly envisioning a personal, bodily return. The fact that “every eye will see him” is given its most natural meaning if Jesus' return is thought of as bodily (Matt 24:30). Paul said the Lord himself will return (1 Thess 4:16). There will be no mistaking his coming, for just as “lightening that flashes in the east is visible as far away as the

west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matt 24:27). Indeed, there will be signs of cosmic proportions associated with his coming (Matt 24:28).

And that brings us to the main passage: **Revelation 20**.

Revelation 20 / 1000 years

Considerations on the text itself.

- The text is not confusing.
- The words are common and understandable.
- The meaning of the individual words is clear.
- No one knows more about what John saw than John does. He was told to write down what he saw and that’s what he did.

Chapter 19 comes BEFORE Chapter 20 -- John’s use of the word “*kai*” (and) versus the notion of “Progressive Parallelism.”

Progressive revelation

Luke 4:16-21 compared to Isaiah 61:1-2

The principle of progressive revelation applies when reading Revelation 20. The earlier accounts of judgment read as if the saved and condemned are judged all together (re: John 5:25-29). But, in Revelation 20, Jesus gives John a prophecy with additional information that divides the two groups, just as He Himself divided the prophecy of Isaiah 61.

A Thousand Means A Thousand

The vast majority of times that the word “thousand” is used in the OT, it is used mathematically. For example: Numbers 31:28-46

This passage is full of accurate, precise math. Half of 32,000 is 16,000. 1/500th of which is 32. These people were skilled at counting and using numbers. Pay attention to the math concerning the number 1000. Twice, in dividing 1000, the outcome is 500. Half of 675,000 sheep equals 337,500. And half of 61,000 donkeys is 30,500. That’s mathematic certainty concerning the common meaning of 1000 in the Old Testament.

The disputed verses:

Psalm 84:10 / Ps. 50:10 / Deuteronomy 7:9

We can use a specific term in a non-specific way, but the definition of the word does not change. Re: Ps. 90:4 / 2Peter 3:8

Q: So, was John using the specific term “thousand years” in a non-specific way?

Is “thousand years” understandable, does it fit the context, and does the meaning lead to a logical outcome?

The Math of John’s Revelation

Revelation 11:2. 42 months = 1260 days = 3.5 years.

Does John use the word “thousand” symbolically or mathematically?

In Rev. 20, the Greek “*chillioi*” appears 6 times in the first 7 verses. And it only has one definition – it always means “thousand”. “*Etos*” means years, hence the phrase “thousand years”.

New Testament “Thousand”

A thousand years is a chiliad, and during the earliest 200-250 years of the church, the primary view was Chiliasm.

Chillioi – 11 times in NT (twice in 2Peter 3:8, the rest in Revelation)

“Chilliois” appears 43 times in NT with prefixes, always as a mathematic count.

In Septuagint (270 BC), 504 times, always as 1000

John’s Thousands

John uses the word “thousand” mathematically. It’s arithmetic – 144,000. Divided by 12 X 12,000 = 144,000

If John meant “large, uncountable number” he’d have used “*murios.*” Myriad. The same word he used in Revelation 5:11.

550 occurrences of “thousand” in the Bible and it is overwhelmingly mathematic. John uses it mathematically and had the option of using a non-specific word. If in John 20 “*chillioi*” means anything else, you have to prove it from the text. Conjecture and assertions in defense of a system are not good enough.

More Math in Rev. 21

- 12 gates – 3 gates on 4 sides
- 12 angels
- 12 tribes
- 12 foundations

- 12,000 X 12 = 144,000
- four-square, the length the same as the width.

It's all math-specific.

Common Argument: But, this is the only place 1000 years are mentioned!

The Bible need only affirm a doctrine in one place, so that when properly understood, it should be regarded as authoritative. The phrase “You must be born again” occurs only once – in John 3. But, it's still true.

Resurrection (*anastasis*) –

Paul's treatise and definition of resurrection is in 1 Corinthians 15:20-58.

Physical death is described in scripture as the separation of the soul or spirit from the body. James says that the body without the spirit is dead and the writer of Ecclesiastes, speaking of physical death in general, says that the body returns to the dust from which it came and the spirit to God who gave it (Eccl 12:7; cf. Gen 2:7; 3:19).

But the use of the term *death* in scripture is not confined simply to physical death. It is also used to describe the spiritual state of all people (except Christ) born into this world. The apostle Paul says that we are “spiritually dead in sin” until we are made alive with Christ (Eph 2:1-6). As a result of being spiritually dead, we produce works consistent with death, darkness, and profound ignorance of God (Eph. 4:17-19).

But those who die in this condition of spiritual death face yet another death. The second death. That one is permanent, without hope of change or deliverance, resulting in a permanent state of separation from the gracious presence of God. Revelation 21:8

But, others will rise physically – *anastasis* (stand up again) so that they live evermore.

The word “anastasis” only has one meaning. Throughout the NT, it is only used of physically dead people who stand up again and are alive. This particular Greek word is found 42 times in the NT. 41 times it is translated “resurrection.” One time as “rise”. But, it is never used to describe the process of moving from spiritual deadness to spiritual awakening – that's called regeneration or being “born again” or the new birth.

Dying and going to heaven has nothing to do with *anastasis*.

So, I cannot help but conclude that the only eschatological system that allows the words on the page to say what they say is the **premillennial system**. If someone says the words on the page mean something different than what they say, they have to prove it textually, exegetically, contextually, grammatically, historically, and consistently.

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