A Pre Post Millennium — Delivery Transcript

Revelation 20:1–10 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, November 6, 2022 · *The Returning King*

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If you have your Bible, we're going to be in Revelation chapter 20. So you can turn there, where we are finally picking up our series, finishing— sprint to the finish on the book of Revelation. Some of you are like, finally, we're getting back. Some of you are like, man, I thought we could go one more week in the— probably nobody was thinking one more week in the family series, but it is. It's time to finish the book of the Revelation. We've been in this right at two years now; we started right before Easter of 2021.

And we've gotten to the best part of the book and so I'm hopeful that the remaining couple of messages that we preach are going to be helpful for you, relevant for you, and upbuilding and encouraging in your life. It is the week of election day. We have election day on Tuesday, is that correct? So I hope that you have gotten out. I did early voting at the Mall of Babylon. It was a breeze. I even had Briggs with me. He took a little detour and found the little horses that you can jump up and down on, and, you know, took off.

He neither paid for the horse nor stayed in the little pen. He took off running while I was in line for getting my vote. And the lady behind me said, it's okay, hun, I'll hold your spot. So I ran and got him. But besides that everything was easy peasy voting. I hope you will. I hope you'll play your part as a citizen of the United States and vote and vote Christian values. But all that to say, every time election season comes around things get a little bit tense. The polarization that exists in our world amplifies and debates get had, and I wonder what kind of person are you?

When it comes to secondary issues, second- and third-tier issues, we're not talking about the majors like did Jesus rise from the dead, is he the only way to heaven? Those are settled fact. You shouldn't kind of wiggle on any of those things. But when it comes to the secondary issues of life and particularly with secondary issues with regard to the Christian faith, do you disagree with people in an agreeable way? Or are you disagreeable in your disagreement? Are you charitable in your disagreement? Are you uncharitable? I think that's an important question to ask yourself because there's all kinds of issues that the Christian life speaks to, but it speaks to them in somewhat of an indirect way, or maybe gives a principle, and you can apply the principle, but there's not an explicit passage of Scripture that addresses every single thing under the sun, especially given the recent couple of years with 2020, you had the whole debate about masks and vaccines and critical race theory, the racial divisions that were existing in our world.

You had the whole political debate between voting for Donald Trump or voting for Joe Biden and I can guarantee you in this room there are going to be people who have different views on all of those matters. Oh, forgot about gun control. Throw gun control in there as well. People are going to come at those things from different points of view and those points of view are going to be strongly held. And they should be. My point in raising this matter is not to say that you should think all views are equally valid.

That's nonsense; not all views are equally valid. Even on secondary issues, there's only one right answer. There's a right and a wrong. Someone has it, someone doesn't, or maybe both don't. So I'm not saying, you know, don't have a view, but what's your approach in articulating your view? How do you carry yourself on those kinds of things? The reason I'm bringing it up is because we're going to look at a passage of Scripture today that has been hotly debated from the very beginning of the Christian faith, Revelation chapter 20 talks about what's called the millennial reign of Jesus.

So I titled the message "A Pre Post Millennium." Because those are three very distinct, very different views that are all sincerely held, that are richly debated in the Christian faith. And the reason that these issues are hotly debated— the reason every secondary issue is hotly debated is because there's a lack of clarity on how certain passages are to be understood. And when it comes to Revelation chapter 20 the millennial reign is a secondary issue because there's not a great deal of clarity for how it is to be understood. And I think one of the things that Satan loves to do is he loves to exploit that lack of clarity to deceive people, divide the church, and destroy the love that we have for one another.

It's kind of like— you guys watch the Avengers movie? The first big event, I think it's the first Avengers, where Loki, he's the Satan kind of character. He falls from Asgard, he rebels against his father, he comes to earth desiring to be worshipped by all the masses. He's like Satan in a lot of ways. But he knows he can't defeat the Avengers, right? So what does he do?

He like invades Hawkeye, makes him into a little demon dude. Then he uses deception and division and he exploits lack of clarity in certain ways to turn the Avengers in on themselves.

Remember, they start to fight themselves, and then he unleashes the Hulk, who wrecks the ship that they're flying on. I can't remember the name of that thing. But I think that's how Satan operates in the church. He takes things that are exploitable and he exploits them. And one of those things is the certainty that people have on these views of eschatology. I know churches who, if you don't toe the line on their particular theological stance on the end times, you are a heretic, you are going to hell, they probably wouldn't go that far.

But you can't be a member of their church. You know, you can't participate in our fellowship unless you align very strictly with this doctrinal view and I just really think that ought not be because there's a lack of clarity on this particular issue. For sure, the millennial reign of Jesus. It's only mentioned in Revelation chapter 20. The word millennium or the thousand years is mentioned six different times, but it's not mentioned anywhere else explicitly in the entirety of the Bible, both Old Testament and New Testament. And so people run to this chapter, they debate this chapter, but this chapter is— so what I want us to do this morning is to read the text.

I want to show you these different views, why people arrive at them the way that they do, and then hopefully promote and encourage a kind of charity amongst ourselves in how we discuss these things because our church does not have a particular view that you have to subscribe to. At least not within a big broad tent of what most Christians have believed for most all of time. So starting in Revelation chapter 20, verse 1, this is John. Remember, he's got these visions. In his head he's seeing future things about the end of days and he writes these visions down and they're full of pictures and symbols.

And we try to make sense out of those things. It's very unique literature, apocalyptic literature. So John says, "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven holding the key to the abyss"—that's the home of the— the abode of the dead— not the abode of the dead, the abode of evil, where Satan and demons kind of hang out. And this angel, not only did he have a key, but he had a great chain in his hand. He seized "the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years."

That's our word, millennium. This angel "threw him into the abyss, closed it, and put a seal on it so that he would no longer deceive the nations until the thousand years were completed. After that, he must be released for a short time." So just real quick, what's going on here? You have an angel come down from heaven. He has what in his hand? A key and a chain, right? So the key often throughout Scripture represents authority. So this angel has authority to do something. What does he do? He unlocks the abyss, the abode of evil.

And he takes the chain and he restrains Satan. In this case it's the dragon, but we know from Revelation earlier. In Revelation the dragon is Satan; Satan is the dragon; it's the devil. It's all the same thing. So he binds the devil and he throws the devil into the abyss that he had just opened and he locks the door for how many years? 1,000 years. And then it says at the end of verse 3, what happens after that thousand years is completed? Satan is released from that abyss. And he's going to pick up what happens after Satan is released in verse 7.

But sandwiched between verse 3 and verse 7 is this other little section about the ruling and the reigning of the saints with Jesus in this millennium period. So he says, "Then I saw thrones, and people seated on them who were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and who had not accepted the mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for"—how many years?—"a thousand years.

The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection!" Why? "The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for"—how many years?—"a thousand years." So sandwiched between Satan being bound and thrown into the abyss is this thousand-year period where Jesus is ruling and reigning with his saints? And these saints are described as people who did not take the mark of the beast.

We saw that in Revelation 13, the whole bit about the Antichrist and his minion, the false prophet. He's forcing people to take the mark of the beast, and if they don't take the mark, then they're ostracized from the economy and the society, and they are put to death essentially. They have a death sentence put on their head. And so everyone who didn't take the mark was under the threat of death, and many of them lost their heads. They were beheaded. And John describes all of those people who were suffering in that great tribulation period.

They are the ones ruling and reigning with Jesus during this thousand-year period while Satan is bound on the earth. And then after that he goes to verse seven and we see what Satan does after he is released. "When the thousand years are completed"—verse 7—"Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle." Many people think of Gog and Magog as the prince and the prince's people. Satan is Gog, he's the prince.

Magog is the people of Satan, so it's as if Satan goes and makes this military campaign. He goes all throughout the earth while Christ is reigning and ruling with his saints. Satan's going all throughout the earth, gathering a collective of people who hate Christ and they're going to march against him. Here's what happens: "Their number is like the sand of the sea.

They came up across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the encampment of the saints, the beloved city. Then fire came down from heaven and consumed them. The devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet are, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

So while the saints are ruling and reigning for this thousand-year period, that period comes to an end. Satan gets released from his prison and he goes to the four corners of the earth. He deceives people into mounting an offensive against Christ and his people. They surround this holy city. Many think that's Jerusalem or maybe some new Jerusalem come down from heaven. And just as they're about to mount their offensive, fire comes down from heaven and consumes them. So that text pretty much speaks for itself. Let's have a word of prayer and go home, right?

Said only the preacher. No, it's got a lot of questions, right? Lots of questions come up from a passage like this. And a lot of the things that we see in this text we've seen before earlier in the study of the book of the Revelation, we've seen the beast, we've seen the mark of the beast, we've seen the beheading of Christians, we've seen this great war. We saw in Revelation 16 that the false prophet and the Antichrist and the dragon, which is kind of this unholy trinity that's warring against the people of God during that last days period.

They go to the four winds of the earth and they deceive the kings of the earth and they try to mount an offensive against God, except it's not the battle of Gog and Magog. Does anybody remember what that battle was called? Starts with an A, rhymes with "geddon." Yes, the battle of Armageddon. And so a lot of people read this passage and go, wow, wow, wow, man, that sounds really familiar. That sounds just like what we read. And so the first interpretive question that comes up from a passage like this is the question of when.

When are these things? And there are people who take what's called a cyclical view, which basically sees the book of Revelation in terms of cycles, you see a cycle in Revelation chapter 6, you see another cycle in Revelation 8 and 9, you see another cycle in Revelation chapter 16, you see another cycle in Revelation chapter 19 and in Revelation chapter 20. It's the same events, but it's looked at from a different perspective. Okay. So in Revelation 19, you have the great battle. The Antichrist, the beast, and the false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire.

The natural question when you get to Revelation 20 is well, what's going to happen to the dragon? His two minions are gone. What's going to happen to him? Well, some see Revelation 20 as a reflection on that same battle but explaining the fate of Satan. In this whole thousand-year bit, it's not like a literal thousand years after Jesus returns, but it's the same period of time as that entire tribulation, which spans the entirety of the church age. And it's just that final collective battle before Jesus returns. That's the cyclical view.

So they would say that's when it happens. The other view would say no, no, no. If you read Revelation 19 chronologically, the way that it reads is there's the battle of Armageddon. Jesus comes back, he throws the false prophet and the beast into the lake of fire, and then Jesus on the white horse comes back to the earth, he establishes his kingdom. He binds Satan. Satan is thrown into the abyss for a thousand years. Jesus with his saints rule on the earth for a thousand year period while Satan's in the abyss, and at the end of that thousand-year period, Satan is released again, again he makes an offensive, again he goes to the four corners of the earth, again he gets this army of people to resist Christ.

And again, there's a great final battle where Jesus calls down fire from heaven, from his post there in Jerusalem or wherever he is, and then it's over, and the eternal state begins. So is it cyclical or is it chronological? That's a question that you need to answer when you read Revelation 20. The second interpretive question is the question of how long? How long? That word translated 1,000 years is the word millennium. I don't know if you counted this, but it is used six different times in the passage we just read, Revelation 20 verses 1 to 10.

And some people take it as a literal 1,000 years. Jesus returns. It's a literal 1,000 year reign on the earth. And at the end of that literal 1,000-year period, there's a great battle. Others say, no, the word 1,000 is symbolic. And they're not wrong to necessarily think this. We've seen numbers used symbolically throughout the book of Revelation. You remember the 144,000? Who were those people? We said it was the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve apostles of Jesus, 12 and 12 makes 24— the entirety of the covenant people of God, times 10 times 10 times 10, 144,000.

And that's not the only place the number ten is used to kind of amplify or complete a set or an idea. It's used elsewhere to communicate the idea of totality or completion. And so some people say the number thousand is just used to describe the completeness of a definite period of time. It's not a literal thousand years. It is a literal period of time, a definite period of time. But it's not literally a thousand. So do you interpret it literally or do you interpret it symbolically? Different people interpret it different ways.

There are reasons why they interpret it the way that they interpret it. Completely valid. I don't know that you can prove one right and prove one wrong, but it is a question you need to answer. The third and final question is the question of what is the millennial reign and where is the millennial reign? Notice in our passage these saints are resurrected. They are ruling and reigning with Jesus. But where are they ruling and reigning? Well, some will read Revelation 19 and say, well Jesus has come to the earth, Jesus is on the earth, ruling and reigning on the earth.

Others would say no, he's not ruling and reigning on the earth. He's ruling and reigning in heaven with his saints. His saints were beheaded. His saints were killed. They were martyred. They're in heaven, ruling and reigning with Jesus. Until the end, when the final

onslaught happens, the final battle happens, Jesus comes, and then his people hit the earth, but not before then. So is the resurrection physical or is it spiritual? Are these people ruling and reigning with Jesus on the earth or are they up in heaven? And how you answer that question will determine how you interpret Revelation chapter 20, and that's just the beginning.

You have all sorts of other questions like what is the binding of Satan, to what degree is he bound? How is he released? What does he do when he's released? What is the first resurrection? Who all participates? Who's the rest of the dead? When do they come to life? Do these things happen after Jesus comes to the earth physically, or before. And again, different people answer these questions different ways. There's not a lot of clarity because the only passage that talks about it is Revelation chapter 20. It's not mentioned much elsewhere outside of Revelation chapter 20, at least not explicitly, maybe indirectly.

And the reason these questions are important is because they don't just shape your view of the future, they're also going to shape your view of the present. Those who believe that this ruling and reigning with Jesus is right now in heaven, the saints, after they die, they rule and reign with Jesus from heaven until he finally comes again. That has present-day implications on the way that you think about your life and the way that you think about the kingdom of God. Those who think that this is going to be a future battle at the end of days and that there's a literal thousand-year period that's going to impact not just the way you think about the future, but it's also going to impact the way you think about the present and the role that you're supposed to play in the present as it relates to the kingdom of God.

So since you now see the tension, I want to show you the views. Has everybody got the tension? Everybody tracking with me? A couple people yawning, but not many. Okay, we're doing okay. Here's the three views. There's a view called premillennialism. Premillennialism says that Jesus comes pre his millennial reign. So that says basically Jesus will come to the earth, then establish his millennial reign on the earth. Post-millennialism says that Jesus returns post or after his millennial reign. So basically, Jesus is up in heaven, but the saints of Jesus, the people of God, are on the earth.

And we are ushering in the kingdom of God. And so we are going to Christianize the government. We're going to Christianize culture. We're going to Christianize Hollywood. We're going to Christianize the world, and we are going to so Christianize the world that Jesus at the end of that Christianization, at the end of that thousand-year period, Jesus is going to come down, sit on his throne, and establish the eternal state. So Jesus comes after the millennium. And then there's the third view; it's called amillennialism, from the Greek prefix a, which means no.

So they say no millennium— not to say that there is no millennial reign of Jesus, but to say that the millennial reign of Jesus is right now. We're in the millennium right now. Right

now, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. Right now, Satan has been bound. He was bound at the cross and he remains bound until the end of days. Right now, we are ruling and reigning with Jesus on earth in an already-not-yet tension; the kingdom has come, but it's not fulfilled. And in heaven, in a sense, Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, and we are seated with him, with Christ in the heavenlies.

And here's what you need to know about these three views. Every single one of these three views has solid, smart, conservative, faithful proponents. I was going to say men, but both men and women hold theological views. Both men and women scholarly commentate on these passages. Every single one of these views has good arguments. It's not like there's the good view and then the weak views. All three views have solid, good arguments for why they take the position that they take. And if you think they don't have solid arguments, you just haven't been listening.

Okay. Number three, there is no one single view that has a unified voice in church history. So it's not like you can go back and look at church history and say, well, what have most people believed for most of the time? It's a mess. You got all kinds of different people believing all kinds of different things. And so it's important you know those things going into this discussion. As you can imagine, whether you place the millennial reign of Jesus before his return to the earth or after his return to the earth totally changes the way you understand the entire book of Revelation.

Whether you think we're in the millennium now or whether you think it's going to be in the future totally changes the way you think about everything we've read in the book of Revelation. For example, the premillennial approach, throw you some charts up on the screen. Some of you love the charts. Some of you are like, oh boy. All right. But premillennial, the binding of Satan, yet future. It will take place when Christ returns. Premillennialism says that the thousand years is a literal period of time. Some say it's literally a thousand; others say, you know, maybe it is, maybe it isn't, but it's a literal period of time.

They say that the loosing of Satan will bring the millennium to its climax. They say that the final revolt will be crushed by Christ and culminate with the final judgment at the great white throne where the rest of the dead will be raised and everyone judged. And so they separate the battle of Armageddon from the battle of Gog and Magog. And then they believe that the new heavens and the new earth will be created after the millennium of the thousand years and result in the eternal state. I think when a lot of people, when most people think about heaven.

They think eternal state. That means sweet by and by, forever and ever and ever. Most people don't think of heaven as the millennial reign of Jesus on the earth. Some of you do, some of you are maybe, you know, study theology and stuff like that, but most people think

heaven is heaven, not some earthly reign. Well, that is true. The Bible talks about the eternal state. It talks about heaven. But the premillennial view says that's after an earthly reign of Jesus on the earth. Where Jesus is making everything great again.

There's two versions of premillennialism. I've kind of taken the approach of what's called historic premillennialism, which is called historic because throughout history the majority of people who held premillennialism held this particular version. However, probably about 60 years ago,[1] there was a new approach to premillennialism called dispensationalism. Many of you may be familiar with the Scofield Bible, the Scofield Study Bible notes. You maybe are familiar with the Left Behind series. Anybody read the Left Behind series? Watch the movie with what's his face? Nicolas Cage. This view basically says Jesus dies on the cross.

He offers the kingdom to Israel. They reject it. So the church age begins. That's the age we're in today. We are the church. You have signs of the times, kind of like what we're seeing in the world now, and Jesus comes, but he doesn't come to establish his kingdom. He comes for his church. They call this the rapture. We've talked about the rapture in Revelation chapter 6. Some say that rapture is pre-tribulation, which means before the tribulation, Jesus takes his church out of here. And that's what everybody wants to be true.

But there are other people who say, well, the Bible doesn't say we're raptured before. It says that we're raptured after or when Jesus comes. We're caught up when he comes. So there's not two comings of Jesus. There's one coming of Jesus, but the dispensationalists say, no, there's two. And there's a seven-year tribulation, then Jesus comes back bodily, and then you have the millennium. Now the difference between historic pre-mill and dispensational pre-mill—say that seven times fast—is how they distinguish between the old covenant people of God, Israel, and the new covenant people of God, the church.

They say there's a hard line separating the two, and God deals with Israel one way, he deals with the church the second way, so he takes the church out of the world so he can deal with Israel, national Israel. And so all the stuff you see in the tribulation is predominantly Jews in Jerusalem. Jesus comes back to Jerusalem. The saints— some say even the saints who reign with Christ in Revelation 20, those are Jewish saints and tribulation saints, and the church is not necessarily participating. That's more of a radical view, but it is out there.

But you see the difference between the two. The approach I've taken has said, well there is probably a place for national Israel, there's a place for ethnic Israel. I think the battles probably take place in Jerusalem and surrounding Jerusalem. I think there's an intense persecution of Jews, the 144,000. But God doesn't have to take the church out to deal with Israel. He can deal with both at the same time without any problem whatsoever. And of course you know my view on the rapture. I don't take a pre-trib view to the rapture.

So that's pre-mill, two different versions. The amill approach, if you look at this chart, is much, much different and much, much simpler. They say that the binding of Satan happened at the cross. Since Satan has been bound, he can no longer resist the advance of the gospel. So the gates of hell will not prevail against the church, and so the church is advancing even as there's points of resistance along the way. That resistance is from Satan, but Satan can't really resist because he's bound. The thousand years is symbolic of a long, indeterminate period corresponding to the age of the church, which is right now.

Satan will be released briefly to wreak havoc, to persecute the church in the end of the present age. And so they would say, maybe it's seven years, maybe it's not seven years, who knows? But at some point in the end, Satan will be released and he'll do all the things that we saw him do in Revelation chapter 6 and onward. All the stuff about the persecution, the mark of the beast, all that stuff, that they agree Satan is doing those things on the earth, but they say that he's bound up until that point.

Finally, from the amill perspective, fire coming from heaven is God consuming the wicked. It's symbolic of Christ's second coming to the earth. He comes with fire, he purifies the earth. And so Jesus is not on the earth during the thousand years. He's in heaven. We're on the earth, but he comes at the end of the thousand years with fire to judge the world. There's a general resurrection and judgment of evil and good that follows that at the great white throne, which Taylor will talk about next week. That's amill. Finally you've got post-mill.

Post-mill is very similar to amill. Some say that postmillennialists are optimistic amillennialists because post-millennialists say we're in an already not yet tension now, but there's coming a day when we're going to win. We're going to triumph. The gospel is going to win people to Christ. We are going to get in the halls of government, we're going to get in the halls of culture, we're going to get in the halls of all the institutions of society, we are going to Christianize the world. The gates of hell will not prevail against the church, and not just in a spiritual metaphorical sense, but in a literal political sense and there's whole theologies of like dominionism and Christianization, Christian nationalism, these kinds of things.

Not every Christian nationalist is a postmillennialist, but that whole idea that we're going to Christianize the world comes from this view of the Scripture. They say that the binding of Satan happened at the cross. That's why the church can advance in the world. They say the thousand years may or may not be literal. Maybe it is, maybe it isn't, but it's a definite period of time. There will be a final attempt on the part of a loosed Satan to try to get the saints crushed. They're going to try to crush the advance, but it will get nowhere.

Christ will come, he will consume the world, and a general resurrection and judgment will happen at the second coming of Jesus. So any questions? You tracking with me? Can you see, can you at least see how they're all extremely different? And they all have good arguments. And how you understand the millennium will determine how you understand

the rest of the book of Revelation, like the whole bit about the mark of the beast and when is it happening and what's going on during the great tribulation? And will the world get better and better and better before that day, or will it get worse and worse and worse before that day?

Well, if you're a pre-mill, it gets worse and worse and worse. If you're a post-mill it gets better and better and better. It really comes down to how you answer those four questions. How do you answer when is Satan bound? How do you answer what kind of resurrection is it in Revelation 20? What kind of rule and reign is going on? And then what is the final rebellion of Satan looking like? Is it the same rebellion that takes place in chapter 16 and chapter 19, or is it a secondary different rebellion?

Different views answer those questions different ways. Let me show you this. The reason that the amillennialist and the postmillennialist believe that Satan has already been bound, and you don't need some angel coming at the end to bind him is because of what Scripture says in Colossians chapter 2, verse 15. Of course, he's talking about Jesus Christ in this passage— it's Jesus, not an angel— but he says in Colossians 2:15 that Jesus "disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly." How did he do it? He "triumphed over them in him."

So he's talking about the cross of Jesus Christ, and he's saying through the cross, through the death of Jesus on the cross, Jesus[2] destroyed the works of the devil. A different author basically says the same thing in Hebrews chapter 2, where he says that Jesus through death destroyed the one holding the power over death. So it was the death of Jesus on the cross that destroyed the devil. Jesus in the Gospels, in Luke chapter 11, talks about the strong man going into the house. He talks about going into the house of the strong man binding the strong man, and that he takes away the strong man's offensive weapons so that he can no longer mount an offensive against the people of God.

Jesus is saying, I'm that strong man. I'm doing that work through my ministry here on the earth and through the death and resurrection of Jesus. So there are reasons to suggest that Satan has been bound. We all believe to some degree that Satan doesn't have power the same way that he used to have power. The power of sin, the power of evil, when you become a Christian, that power is broken in your life. You are free from the bondage of sin and spiritual warfare to a certain degree. So how do you understand it?

You can take it either way. When it comes to the resurrection of the saints, I think we all agree that when a person dies, they don't just cease to exist. They are alive in heaven. They're with the Lord. They're cognizant of what's going on. There are some people who say you go to sleep— soul sleep and stuff like that. We look at Revelation chapter 6; you see the souls of the ones who've been beheaded. They're aware of what's going on. How long, O Lord, until you judge the people who are coming?

So is that the resurrection? Is it kind of like a spiritual resurrection? They don't have their bodies yet, but they have something— some kind of personal agency to be aware of what's going on, or is this a physical resurrection in Revelation 20 where Jesus comes and we're raised with incorruptible bodies and we rule and reign with Jesus for that thousand years and our bodies don't die because they are new bodies that can live for a thousand years. What kind of resurrection is it? I think everybody agrees there will eventually be a physical resurrection, but disagreement on whether Revelation 20 is spiritual or physical.

And then finally you've got the reign of the saints. Is the reign of the saints in heaven? Because if it's just a spiritual resurrection, they're ruling and reigning in heaven. Or if it's a physical resurrection, then they're ruling and reigning on the earth. And the new heavens and the new earth has kind of come down and made something new during the millennial reign of Jesus. How you answer that question determines what view you hold. What view you hold determines how you answer those kinds of questions. And then of course finally the final rebellion of Satan, if it is just the same battle from a different perspective, then there's no need for a thousand-year gap.

There's no need for Jesus to come to the earth, basically save the earth. But while he's ruling and reigning from Jerusalem, there's all these non-Christian people who survived the battle of Armageddon, who are kind of licking their wounds, waiting for the day when Jesus stops ruling and reigning, and that Satan, after a thousand years, comes and talks these people into another final great offensive to take Jesus out in the end. That's a pre-mill perspective. If you take Revelation 20 at face value, that is what it seems to suggest. Others say no, it's just the same battle from a different perspective.

One calls it Gog and Magog, one calls it the battle of Armageddon. It's the same final battle. Listen, what view you hold determines how you answer those questions and there are good, solid reasons for each of the three views. You say, "Well, Wes, what's your view?" And I'm not telling you what my view is. At least not today. Because the point of my sermon today is not to say here's the best view, hold this view, because I don't know that there is a best view. It really depends on a whole host of factors.

Each view has its strengths. Each view has its weaknesses. The pre-mills are going to say to the amills, you guys just spiritualize everything. There's not a passage you can't spiritualize or symbolize or just make it say the opposite of what it's actually saying. The amills will point to the pre-mills and say, well, you think there's two comings of Jesus. Every other passage in the New Testament says there's one coming of Jesus, but you say there's a secret coming for the church and a second coming for the world. Where do you see that?

And the pre-mills have to have an answer for that question. Or historic pre-mills just say, you know, there is one coming, and I still believe in a pre-mill view. There are those post-mills who will look at the pre-mills and say, you guys think the world is going to get worse

and worse and worse when Jesus said the gates of hell will not prevail against the church. Where's your belief in the gospel? Where's your belief in the power of the gospel? And then the pre-mills will say to the post-mills, you guys are silly.

You know, you're being optimistic when Jesus said in Matthew 24, the world's going to get worse and worse and worse. That it will be such a great tribulation, it will be so great that the world has never seen tribulation that great before or ever will see great tribulation again. How can you say that the world's going to get better and better and better when Jesus says it's going to get worse and worse and worse? And the post-mills have to have an answer for that question. You see, there are strengths to each view, and there are weaknesses to each view, and you've got to pick a view, defend your weaknesses, press into your strengths, but know that good people are going to hold a different view for good reasons.

So what really matters? I think what really matters is that we approach this discussion with humility. Approach this discussion with humility. To have humility doesn't mean you don't have convictions. Of course you have your convictions. Humility is not saying every view is equally right. Okay, I don't believe that. There's a right answer, there's a wrong answer. Secondary issues don't mean there's no good answer. There is a good answer. It's just not easy to get there. So what humility is, is that the way you engage in this discussion is not domineering, dogmatic, mean spirited, judgmental, holier than thou, but that you can see why other people come to the views that they hold.

And you treat them with gentleness and respect in how you approach it. And by the way, it's not just on this question, it's on a lot of questions in the Christian life that are second- and third-tier issues. I love this quote. I don't know who said it. "In the essentials we have unity, in the non-essentials we have liberty, in all things we have charity." The second thing I'd like to leave you with is that when it comes to this discussion, really what we should do to discuss it well is to focus on areas of agreement before we focus on areas of disagreement.

This is true on a lot of topics, but when it comes to the millennial reign of Jesus, every view shares certain things in common. Namely, they all believe that Jesus is king right now. So if you're pre-mill, you don't think Jesus will become king. He is king. He's ruling and reigning in heaven right now. All authority in heaven on earth has been given to him. Everybody agrees on that fact. So let's major on the majors. Jesus is king right now. Secondly, Satan is going to lose. They'll disagree on how he loses, his methodologies for losing, when, and all that.

But everybody agrees. The power of Satan has been stripped. The eventual success of Satan has been taken off the table. The end has been written. The story is already written. Satan is going to lose. We can lead with that. We can focus on that before we focus on our disagreements of when he was bound and how he was bound and when he will be released and what will happen after he's released. That's a secondary issue. Major on the majors.

Thirdly, every saint will rise. Whether you believe there's a spiritual resurrection in Revelation 20 is irrelevant to whether you believe there's a physical resurrection in the end.

All Christians believe every saint will rise. There will be no more death. There will be every tear wiped from our eye. All things will be made new. How you interpret Revelation 20 is secondary to that shared conviction. Every saint will rise. And finally, there's a shared conviction that every saint will participate in the millennial reign of Jesus. Amills think that we're participating in heaven, pre-mills think we're going to participate on earth, post-mills think we participate on earth while Jesus in heaven. But every view acknowledges We will reign. We will rule with Jesus.

That this world that we're living in, where we're on the losing side of the table, it feels like sometimes the culture's persecuting us, the government's persecuting us, the friends and family are persecuting us. It feels as though we don't have any power, we don't have any resources, we don't have any way forward. But the reality is all authority in heaven on earth has been given to Jesus. He is king right now and he has promised a day where he will come and we will reign with him. Paul says, "Don't you know that we will judge angels?"

Why are you getting caught up in these petty human debates when your future is that of a king, that of a queen in the kingdom of God when Jesus comes again? That's what we all agree on. So let's share in that agreement that every saint will rise and every saint will rule. And if we'll major on those majors, even as we discuss our secondary matters. I think that there will be created a oneness and a unity within our church that enables us to encourage one another, stir one another up to love and good works, to walk humbly with one another and to maintain the unity that the Holy Spirit creates in the bond of peace.

And so I don't know what that means for you. I don't know if you had a view coming in or if I talked you into a view going out. But I would encourage all of us in this church to be humble in our approach and to promote areas of agreement over disagreement. Now if you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, you'll have an opportunity this morning to submit to Jesus as king of your life right now. He is king now and you have a decision to make in your life.

Are you going to submit to King Jesus or are you going to continue to rebel against him? If you continue to rebel against him, you're putting yourself with the enemy. You're just like the devil who has been a rebel from the beginning. The future of that squad is in jeopardy. There will come a day where you will lose and you will stand before God in judgment and you will give an account. Jesus says, blessed are the ones who share in the first resurrection. Blessed are the ones who escape that second death, because there's no coming back from that day of judgment.

So if you're here today and the Spirit of God is calling you to repent. And to trust in Jesus for salvation, then let today be the day where you repent of your sin and you trust in Jesus as Lord. Taylor's going to lead us through a time of response. The altar will be open if you want to make any kind of public decision. There'll be a QR code if you want to scan that with your camera and make a decision through text or through email and just check the box that you need to check.

But let's use this time to respond to the Lord. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time and your word and we do pray as we seek to discern and understand what the future holds, that it would dramatically impact the way we live in the present, and that it wouldn't impact it in that we have super hot debates that belittle and discourage, but that we would share a common hope and a common conviction that we will rise. Jesus is king. That we will reign with him forever, even as our enemy is utterly destroyed.

Give us a vision to see that blessed hope and to live in light of it in the way that we approach our relationships and our marriages, our finances, and everything that we do, that we would live as citizens who are citizens of the kingdom of heaven before we're citizens of the kingdom of this world. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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1. Transcript note: dispensationalism is older than "about 60 years"; it was systematized by John Nelson Darby in the 1830s and popularized in America by the Scofield Reference Bible (1909). Left as spoken. Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica, "John Nelson Darby"; C. Gribben, "John N. Darby, dispensational eschatology, and the formation of trans-Atlantic evangelicalism" (Scofield Reference Bible, 1909). ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "Satan destroyed the works of the devil"; the subject is Jesus (compare 1 John 3:8, "The Son of God was revealed for this purpose: to destroy the devil's works"). Source: Colossians 2:15; 1 John 3:8 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩