

## ***Look! Listen! - And Overcome!***

### **The Revelation of Jesus Christ**

**"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."**

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### ***Look! Listen! – And Overcome!***

**"For the Time is Near – Invasion is Imminent"**

**Lord's Day Morning**

**January 25, 2009**

**Pastor Jeff Crippen**

**Sermon Text: Assorted**

#### **Introduction**

NKJ Daniel 11:32 "Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out *great exploits*. 33 "And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet *for many* days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering. 34 "Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue. 35 "And *some* of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify *them*, and make *them* white, *until* the time of the end; because *it is* still for the appointed time.

We concluded with this text last time to emphasize how vital it is for every Christian to “understand the times” – namely, this last age in which we live. It began at the cross and will extend until the final return of Christ when the new, final and eternal age will be consummated. In that era there will never again be crying or death or pain. But not so in this present age. The book of The Revelation is given to Christ’s Church to enable her to understand the times and, as a result, to be strong and “carry out great exploits,” rather than being deceived by the enemy and falling into despair.

We also spent time examining some of the evidence which supports the “recapitulation” model of The Revelation.

*"We misunderstand John's visions if we insist on seeing them as a chronologically arranged timeline of history." (D. Johnson)*

That evidence included the fact that throughout Revelation, the final judgment is repeated a number of times. We would maintain then that

the recurrence of the final judgment account indicates that in The Revelation we have a “vision tape” that keeps re-winding, playing back still another “camera angle” of the very same era – the church age in which we live.

NKJ Revelation 11:18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth."

Then, in the very *next* chapter, we are returned to the time of Christ’s birth -

NKJ Revelation 12:3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. 5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

This fact brings The Revelation *to us*, not merely to some far-distant future generation of Christians who happen to

be living immediately prior to the final return of Christ.

This morning, we want to continue to consider the proper lens through which to read and interpret The Revelation.

## I. Various Approaches

First, let’s refresh ourselves about what we learned in the past about different schools of interpretation in the study of The Revelation –

1. Dispensational Premillennialism  
- Based upon what we believe to be an unbiblical division of Israel and the church, this view considers chapters 4-22 to be events that have yet to happen (ie, “futurist”). It is premillennial in that this position looks for a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ on this present earth. This model is the one that is followed in the Left Behind series. Of all the views, it is our opinion that this one is most erroneous. It is of very late origin, unknown before the mid to late 1800’s.
2. Historic Premillennialism – This view is “historic” because it is the classic premillennialism that has been held by premillennialists who still hold to a reformed view of Israel and the Church. It is

pre-millennial because it maintains that Christ will return, then establish His literal 1000 year reign on this earth.

3. Amillennialism – This view of The Revelation maintains that the millennium mentioned in Rev 20 is symbolic for the entire church age – ie, from the cross to the second and last advent of Christ. In other words, the church age in which we live is the millennium. when Christ returns, the final judgment will occur, the resurrection, and the eternal new heavens and earth will be established. Amillennialism sees The Revelation “replaying” this present age from different aspects.
4. Postmillennialism – According to this view, as in amillennialism, the church age in which we live is the millennium. However, the church will ultimately triumph through the preaching of the gospel, effecting an unprecedented reign of peace, after which Christ will return and usher in the new age.
5. Preterism – Precisely opposite to the futurist school of thought, preterism holds that some (moderate preterism) or most (except for chs 21-2) of The

Revelation has already occurred, much being fulfilled in the first century, particularly in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Full-scale preterism becomes heresy when it denies the literal, future return of Christ.

The lens through which we will be seeing The Revelation is the Amillennial position, though we will also glean some insights from some of the other schools, particularly that of the moderate Preterist position.

## II. The Case for Amillennialism

### A. For the time is Near

We maintain that The Revelation is written to the Church – the entire Church – in all the present church age, from the cross to the return of Christ. And that, therefore, The Revelation is describing events which occur *in this present church age*. One of the strongest lines of evidence supporting this view concerns the “for the time is near” statements found in the book itself. For example –

NKJ Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants -- **things which must shortly take place.** And He sent and signified *it* by His angel to His servant John,

NKJ Revelation 1:3 Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; **for the time is near.**

NKJ Revelation 22:7 "Behold, **I am coming quickly!** Blessed *is* he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

NKJ Revelation 22:12 " **And behold, I am coming quickly,** and My reward *is* with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

NKJ Revelation 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "**Surely I am coming quickly.**" Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Such statements appear elsewhere in the New Testament – statements which describe the last days as beginning even in the days of that generation of people alive when Christ was on this earth -

NKJ Matthew 23:34 "Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: *some* of them you will kill and crucify, and *some* of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, 35 "that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of

Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 "Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

NKJ Matthew 24:33 "So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near -- at the doors! 34 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

And consider this statement in Daniel as compared with an almost parallel one in The Revelation –

NKJ Daniel 12:1 "At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands *watch* over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, *Even* to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book. 2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame *and* everlasting contempt. 3 Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever. 4 "**But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end;** many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall

increase." 5 Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. 6 And *one* said to the man clothed in linen, who *was* above the waters of the river, "How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders *be*?" 7 Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who *was* above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that *it shall be* for a time, times, and half *a time*; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these *things* shall be finished. 8 Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, "My lord, what *shall be* the end of these *things*?" 9 **And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.** 10 "Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. 11 "And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, *there shall be* one thousand two hundred and ninety days. 12 "Blessed *is* he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. 13 **"But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days."**

John is given precisely the opposite instructions-

NKJ Revelation 22:7 "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed *is* he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." 8 Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. 9 Then he said to me, "See *that you do not do that*. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." 10 And he said to me, "**Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.**"

Why the difference? Because the "end of the days," – ie, the last days – had begun. We are living in the last days, not waiting for them to arrive. This conclusion is consistent with numbers of other NT passages. For instance -

NKJ 1 Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

NKJ 1 John 2:18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

See it? If indeed “the last hour” had begun in Paul and John’s own day, then obviously “the ends of the ages” is the entire church age. And if Daniel’s visions were to be sealed up because they applied to a day far distant from Daniels’ own day, yet the Apostle John was told not to seal them up “*for the time is at hand,*” then the visions of The Revelation concern the present age – that age which began in John’s own day and extends until the return of Christ.

Any interpretive school that assigns the majority of this book to an age still future from our own is necessarily forced to “force” a strained meaning upon all these “for the time is near” and “I am coming quickly” statements.

## 2. Only Two Ages

You might remember that when we studied eschatology in our Bible studies, we heard from a number of commentators (Sam Waldron, Kim Riddlebarger, etc) who pointed out the obvious fact that *the Bible knows of only two ages in human history.* Namely –

- This present age, and
- The age to come

NKJ Matthew 12:32 "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man,

it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come.

NKJ Mark 10:30 "who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time -- houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions -- and in the age to come, eternal life.

NKJ Luke 20:34 And Jesus answered and said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. 35 "But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; 36 "nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

Other such references include Luke 16:8; 18:30; Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 1:20; 2:6-8; 3:18; 2 Cor 4:4; Gal 1:4; Eph 1:21; 2:2; 1 Tim 6:17-19; Titus 2:12; Heb 6:5.

***All other eschatological passages must be interpreted in a manner that is consistent with this two-age scheme.***

This present age began at creation and it will end at the return of Christ (though the age to come has “broken

in” on this present age). The age to come is the eternal age which begins at Christ’s return and the final judgment. The two ages are qualitatively different –

**The Present Age                      Age to Come**

Marriage	No Marriage
Death	No death
Natural Bodies	Resurrection Bodies
Good & Evil Men	Only Good men

Therefore, according to the two-age model of all of human history from creation to eternity, there are only two ages. And their characteristics preclude the idea of a literal 1,000 year earthly reign of Christ in which there are good men and evil men, resurrected people and people who have natural bodies and who die, and so on. Thus, the 1000 years spoken of in Revelation 20 cannot be a period following Christ’s return which occurs on this present earth. The following Scripture very clearly demonstrates this –

NKJ 1 Corinthians 15:20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits,

afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming. 24 Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death. 27 For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under *Him*," *it is* evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. 28 Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

Notice carefully the major points of this passage –

- Christ comes and believers are raised
- At the same time then, resurrection is the conquering of the final and last enemy – death. Thus there are no enemies left.
- Therefore, the 1000 years of Rev 20 cannot follow the return of Christ because in the 1000 year period *enemies remain*. A premillennial interpretation of Rev 20 is impossible in light of 1 Cor 15.
- When Christ returns, the eternal age to come begins. There is no conquest of enemies in that age because there are no enemies left.

NOTE: The Scriptures present only *one* universal judgment (as opposed to the two judgments required by some eschatological schemes). For instance-

Matt 25:31-46; Rom 2:1-16; 2 Peter 3:1-18

Christ's final return and the final judgment coincide. All men are judged at that time.

[The two-age model also presents a serious difficulty to the post-millennial position, namely that – *this present age is and will always be an evil age*. Postmillennialism maintains that through the triumph of the preaching of the gospel, this present age will be transformed into a millennium of peace and prosperity and righteousness].

### The Last Days of the Present Age

We also see in the New Testament that *this present age is in its last days* –

NKJ 1 Corinthians 2:6 However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

NKJ Hebrews 9:26 He then would have had to suffer often since the

foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

**NOTE:** As we already mentioned, the age to come has intruded back into this age, though it will not be fully consummated until Christ's return. But right now – and this is vital for us to understand – *every Christian is a new creation, old things have passed away, all things are new!* We are no longer the old men we were. In Christ the dominion of Satan over us has been broken, even though he is still the god of this present age. We have already risen with Christ, though our bodily resurrection awaits that future day.

NKJ 2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

The Spirit of Christ is in us now. Christ reigns in us now. Though our physical bodies are dying –



NKJ 2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

All that was cursed under the old order is passing away into nothing for all who are in Christ. There is no condemnation. No death. No curse. When Christ was on this earth, His miracles largely demonstrated the reality of the age to come – healing the sick, raising the dead, forgiving sins, calming the destructive forces of a creation under the curse, and so on.

***So, Christian – live like who you are!  
You are no longer a citizen of this  
present age under the rule of  
darkness.***

### 3. Satan Was Bound at the Cross

Still another important line of evidence for the amillennial approach to eschatology concerns the binding of Satan which is described in Revelation 20 –

NKJ Revelation 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. 7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog,

to gather them together to battle, whose number *is* as the sand of the sea. 9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. 10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Notice first of all that this binding *does not mean that Satan is bound from all activity in this present age, but only that he can no longer deceive the nations.* Thus, the darkness which kept men from hearing the light of the gospel has been limited by Christ at the cross. The Great Commission is now possible.

Elsewhere, the New Testament speaks of Satan being bound/limited by Christ at His first advent –

NKJ Matthew 12:28 "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 "Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

NKJ Luke 10:17 Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even

the demons are subject to us in Your name." 18 And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

NKJ John 12:31 "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself."

NKJ Colossians 2:15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

NKJ Hebrews 2:14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

NKJ 1 John 3:8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

The evidence is rather overwhelming, is it not? Christian, ask yourself this question – *is it important that the Church understand that Christ has*

*bound Satan already?* And that therefore the gospel can indeed go out into all the world and men, by the Spirit of God, can hear it?

Revelation 20 & Parallel Scriptures

Additional support for the amillennial view of Rev 20 is the parallels between it and other Scriptures. For instance –

NKJ Revelation 12:5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. 7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

This pretty clearly is describing the church age, the present age – and in it, we see Satan cast out of heaven, his previous power limited now. And as we shall see, that 1260 days is the church age, and the woman who fled into the wilderness is the church.

Yet another parallel is seen in comparing Rev 20 with 2 Thessalonians 2 –

<b>Revelation 20</b>	<b>2 Thes 2</b>
Satan bound by an angel vss 1-3	Satan restrained, vss 6-7
A short time of loosing, vss 3,7-9	Restraint is taken out of the way, vss 2,3,8
The nations deceived vss 7-10	The lie is believed, vss 9-11
Satan and the nations destroyed, vss 9-10	Man of sin and the lie-believers judged at 2 <sup>nd</sup> coming, vss 8,12

Now, even a brief reading of 2 Thessalonians 2 will make it evident that Paul is speaking there of the present age – of the church age. And therefore, because of these parallels, we conclude that Revelation 20 is speaking of the very same events – the binding of Satan. And that therefore, Satan is bound now and that the 1,000 years are figurative language for an extended period of time, namely, this present age.

NOTE: There is yet another interesting parallel between Rev 20:7-10 and Rev 16:13-16. In chapter 16, Satan is depicted as deceiving the nations to Armageddon. Thus the events of chapter 16 – at least of Satan deceiving the nations – has to take place at the end of the 1000 year period of Rev 20.

With this, we have almost concluded our initial review of The Revelation and will plan, next time, to quickly walk through the first 6 chapters, highlighting the main points that we learned from them in our prior studies. We will also want to demonstrate that The Revelation cannot be approached with a wooden literalness that would have us looking for Christ, for example, coming in the skies with a sword protruding from His mouth. In fact, as we shall see, the Apostle John *interprets the images of The Revelation as symbolic*. This is not to deny the reality of the things they symbolize, but it is vital that we understand the nature of apocalyptic literature such as the Apocalypse of John.

## **Conclusion**

Can you begin to see clearly now why all these issues – premil, postmil, amil, preterist, futurist.....are not so unimportant after all? A right approach to this book of Revelation

*will be revealing to every Christian in every age in every nation.* Here we are in this fallen, evil world. And it is evil. The days we live in are evil. The god of this world is Satan. We are the church militant – we are at war. Many Christians have and will die in this war. The life truly lived for Christ is no easy walk. How many more trials and griefs await us?

The Revelation, we say again, is Christ's gift to His embattled Church, telling us that He is ruling, that He is coming, that He will never leave us nor forsake us, and that there is nothing the enemy can do to us to separate us from Him. Death only sends us to his side to rule with Him. Neither is there anything in heaven or earth that can stop the consummation of His kingdom. The devil is indeed going into the lake of fire. The wicked will be cast away with him. There IS a righteous King, there IS a new Land, there IS a day coming when business as usual will no longer be. The final invasion, you might say, is imminent. As I heard Lloyd-Jones say once, *we know it to be so. The King has told us on the wireless. He is coming. He is coming.*