

The Chronology of Revelation 19 – 20

The Expositors Seminary
Super Seminar – April 8-9, 2016

I. Introduction

- **Key Question:** Do the events of Rev 20:1-6 *follow* the events of Rev 19:11-21?

OR

Does Rev 20 take the reader back to the beginning of the NT era so that verses 1-6 describe the present age?

Comparison of Views

➤ The Sequential View of Premillennialism

The Millennium of Rev 20 _____ the Second Coming of Rev 19

➤ The Recapitulation View of Amillennialism

The Millennium of Rev 20 _____ the Second Coming of Rev 19

II. The Sequential View of Premillennialism

A. The Introductory “And I Saw” (Rev 20:1)

- Used _____ in Book of Revelation
- Almost always introduces _____
- Argument is _____ but places burden of proof on amillennial view

B. The Content of the Visions (Rev 20:1-6)

- The binding of Satan is _____ (not present)
- The first resurrection is _____ (not spiritual)
- The thousand years is _____ (not symbolic)
- **Therefore:** The chronology of Rev 19-20 must be _____!

C. The Use of “Any Longer” (Rev 20:3)

- Rev 12–19 repeatedly highlights the satanic deception of the nations in the second half of the Tribulation (12:9; 13:14; 16:14; 18:23; 19:19–20).
- Satan is then locked in the abyss “so that he would not deceive the nations *any longer*” (Rev 20:3), which indicates the interruption of a deception that was already taking place.
- This connection indicates a historical progression in which the binding of Rev 20 is designed to halt the deception described in Rev 12–19.

D. The Judgment of the “Unholy Trinity” (Rev 12–20)

E. The Description of the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:10)

- At the Second Coming, the beast and false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 19:20).
- At the end of the thousand years, Satan is “thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, *where the beast and the false prophet are also*” (Rev 20:10).
- In light of this, the most natural way to read Revelation 19–20 is to see a chronological sequence in which:
 - The beast and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire (19:20).
 - Satan is bound and sealed in the abyss for a thousand years (20:1–6).
 - Satan is released from the abyss after the thousand years (20:7).
 - Satan attacks Jerusalem and is defeated by fire from heaven (20:8–9).
 - Satan is cast into the lake of fire *where the beast and false prophet already are* (20:10).

Key Observation: There is simply no compelling exegetical reason to depart from a sequential reading of Rev 19–20.

III. The Amillennial Argument for Recapitulation

The three most common amillennial arguments for the non-sequential, recapitulation view of Revelation 19-20 concern the following:

A. The Alleged Discrepancy Between Revelation 19:11-21 and 20:1-3

- If all of Christ's enemies are destroyed in Rev 19:11-21 – and if Rev 20:1-3 describes events *subsequent* to that destruction – there won't be any unbelieving nations left for Satan to deceive.
- According to the sequential view, where do these unbelieving nations come from when Satan deceives the nations after his release in Rev 20:8?

TWO PREMILLENNIAL RESPONSES:

1. Not all unbelievers will be destroyed at the Second Coming, and therefore the nations will consist of (or arise from) unbelieving, non-glorified survivors of the battle in Revelation 19:17-19.
 - However:
2. The nations will arise from Tribulation converts who will enter the millennium in their natural bodies and give birth to subsequent generations of non-glorified people.

B. The Similarities between the Battles in 16:12-16, 19:11-21, and 20:7-10

Revelation 16:12-16, 19:11-21, and 20:7-10 are all said to describe the same final battle when Jesus will return to earth to destroy His enemies. As evidence for this, amillennialists often highlight three similarities between the three passages:

1. The Identity of the Enemies is the Same

- Rev: 16:14: “the kings of the whole world”
- Rev 19:18: “kings...commanders and...mighty men”
“all men, both free and slave, both small and great”
- Rev 20:8: “the nations that are at the four corners of the earth”

PREMILLENNIAL RESPONSE:

2. The Gathering of the Enemies is the Same

Not only are the enemies deceived into participating in all three passages, but their gathering is described in nearly identical terminology:

- Rev 16:14: “to gather them together for the war”
- Rev 19:19: “assembled to make war”
- Rev 20:8: “to gather them together for the war”

PREMILLENNIAL RESPONSE:

3. The Destruction of the Enemies is the Same

In two of the three passages, the enemies of God experience the final and eternal wrath of God through the means of burning sulfur:

- Rev 19:20: beast and false prophet “thrown alive into the lake of fire”
- Rev 20:9: “fire came down from heaven and devoured them”
- Rev 20:10: “the devil...was thrown into the lake of fire”

PREMILLENNIAL RESPONSE:

C. The Fulfillment of Ezekiel 38-39 in Revelation 19-20

- The prophecy of Ezekiel 38-39 is fulfilled in the events of Rev 19:11-21 and 20:7-10.
- This is said to prove that Rev 19:11-21 and 20:7-10 provide two different camera angles of the same battle at the end of present age.

PREMILLENNIAL RESPONSE:

IV. Conclusion

Session #5

The Chronology of Revelation 19-20

TES Super Seminar

April 8-9, 2016

Matt Waymeyer

The Millennial Debate in Revelation 20

FOUR KEY ISSUES:

- The Duration of the Thousand Years
- The Timing of Satan's Binding
- The Nature of the First Resurrection
- The Chronology of John's Visions

Comparison of Views:

The Sequential View of Premillennialism

- The Millennium of Rev 20 *follows* the Second Coming of Rev 19

The Recapitulation View of Amillennialism

- The Millennium of Rev 20 *precedes* the Second Coming of Rev 19

Anthony Hoekema (AM):

“If ... one thinks of Revelation 20 as setting forth what follows chronologically after what has been described in chapter 19, one would indeed conclude that the millennium of Revelation 20:1–6 will follow the return of Christ.”

The Sequential View:

A. The Introductory “And I Saw” (Rev 20:1)

- Used 32x in Book of Revelation
- Almost always introduces historical progression
- Argument is *inconclusive*
but it places burden of proof on amillennial view

B. The Content of the Visions (Rev 20:1-6)

- The binding of Satan is *future* (not present)
- The first resurrection is *physical* (not spiritual)
- The thousand years is *literal* (not symbolic)

The Use of “Any Longer” (v. 3):

- Rev 12–19 repeatedly highlights the satanic deception of the nations in the second half of the Tribulation (12:9; 13:14; 16:14; 18:23; 19:19–20).
- Satan is then locked in the abyss “so that he would not deceive the nations any longer” (Rev 20:3), which indicates the interruption of a deception that was already taking place.
- This connection indicates a historical progression in which the binding of Rev 20 is designed to halt the very deception just described in Rev 12–19.

To Illustrate:

This would be similar to a narrative which contained several chapters describing how a dog barked at a cat, followed by a chapter which then described how a man locked the dog in the garage “so that it would bark at the cat no longer.” The most natural way to read such a narrative would be to see this latest chapter as describing an event that took place subsequent to the events described in the previous chapters.

Harold Hoehner (PR):

“Revelation 20:1–10 serves as the final piece of the puzzle in the defeat and ultimate punishment of the utmost enemy of Christ and His saints. Therefore, in order to make sense of the culminating victory of Christ and conclusive defeat of Satan, Revelation 20:1–10 is a logical and chronological necessity to chapters 12–19.”

Sequence of Events in 19:20–20:10:

- The beast and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire (19:20).
- Satan is bound and sealed in the abyss for a thousand years (20:1–6).
- Satan is released from the abyss after the thousand years (20:7).
- Satan attacks Jerusalem and is defeated by fire from heaven (20:8–9).
- Satan is cast into the lake of fire *where the beast and false prophet already are* (20:10).

The Recapitulation View:

“The order of the visions in Revelation need not reflect the historical relationship of the events in those visions; it need only reflect the sequence in which John has presented the visions he received.”

— R. Fowler White

R. Fowler White (AM):

“It makes no sense to speak of protecting the nations from deception by Satan in 20:1-3 after they have just been destroyed by Christ at his return in 19:11-21.”

Kim Riddlebarger (AM):

“Who are these people who revolt against Christ? Who are these who are consumed by fire? Are these people in unresurrected bodies? If so, where did they come from?”

The Key Question:

Where do these unbelievers
come from?

Paul Feinberg (PR):

“The complete elimination of the wicked from entrance into the [millennial] kingdom rests not just on the destruction of the wicked at the descent of Christ at the Second Advent, but also on the separation of the sheep from the goats in the judgment that follows (Matt. 25:31–46). While many unbelievers will be slain at Christ’s return, two judgments follow to root out all who remain.”

Similarities Between the Three Battles

IDENTITY OF THE ENEMIES:

- Rev: 16:14: “the kings of the whole world”
- Rev 19:18: “kings...commanders and...mighty men”
“all men, both free and slave, both small and great”
- Rev 20:8: “the nations that are at the four corners of the earth”

Similarities Between the Three Battles

GATHERING OF THE ENEMIES:

- Rev 16:14: “to gather them together for the war”
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Similarities Between the Three Battles

DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMIES:

- Rev 19:20: beast and false prophet “thrown alive into the lake of fire”
- Rev 20:9: “fire came down from heaven and devoured them”
- Rev 20:10: “the devil...was thrown into the lake of fire”

Grant Osborne (PR):

“The battle of 16 and 19 was led by the beast, this one [in 20] by Satan. The army of the first [in 16 and 19] was destroyed by the sword from the mouth of the Lord, this army [in 20] by fire coming down from heaven. At the end of that battle [in 16 and 19], the beast and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire; after this one [in 20], Satan himself is cast into the lake of fire. In other words, the details are sufficiently different to warrant the view of a second battle rather than a recapitulation of the first.”

R. Fowler White (PR):

“If John expected us to interpret the revolts in Revelation 19 and 20 as *different episodes* in history, we could hardly expect him to describe them in language and imagery derived from the *same episode* in Ezekiel’s prophecy.”

“Gog and Magog”

Ezekiel 38–39:

- Gog = the prince of Rosh, Meschech, and Tubal (38:2–3)
- Magog = the land where Gog is from (38:2; 39:6)

Revelation 20:

- Gog & Magog = the nations of the world (8–9)

Craig Blomberg (PR):

“No matter how many flashbacks or disruptions of chronological sequence one might want to argue for elsewhere in Revelation, it makes absolutely no sense to put one in between Revelation 19 and 20 as [amillennialists] must do.”

Four Key Issues in Revelation 20

EXGETICAL ISSUE

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| ▪ Thousand Years | Literal |
| ▪ Satan's Binding | Future |
| ▪ First Resurrection | Physical |
| ▪ Chronology of 19-20 | Sequential |