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Why the Single Millennium Model Fosters a Futurist Eschatology

by

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The imagery of Revelation twenty is probably the most difficult in the Bible. Central to its imagery is the enigmatic “millennium.” Whole schools of eschatology have grown up around the millennium, which attempt to explain its meaning and relation to the second coming of Christ. Pre-, Post-, and A- millennialism each hold that a single millennium is contemplated by the text. Not coincidentally, each is also a futurist school of eschatology. What is the connection between these? Is there something inherent in the single millennium model that makes it a logical corollary of futurist eschatology? The purpose of this article will be to demonstrate that, in fact, there is a connection between the single millennium model and futurist eschatology, and that Preterists *must* adopt a

Bimillennial interpretation of Revelation twenty to avoid internal inconsistency in their eschatological scheme.

Basic Interpretative Approaches

There are two basic approaches to Revelation twenty. These see the images as either 1) literal and chronologically progressive, or 2) symbolic and recapitulatory. Premillennialism is an example of the first sort in that it sees a literal thousand years in Revelation twenty’s imagery, which it places after the destruction of the beast, the kings of the earth, and false prophet in chapter nineteen. Thus, the events depicted in chapter twenty are *progressive* in that they follow those of chapter nineteen, *literal* in that they

foretell the actual duration of the events described; *viz.*, a thousand years. On the other hand, Preterism belongs to the symbolic and recapitulatory school. *Recapitulatory*, in that it views the images of chapter twenty, not as sequential to, but *synchronous* with those of chapter nineteen, describing under different symbols events variously portrayed elsewhere in the book; *symbolical*, in that the “thousand years” do not entail a literal duration of time. A third approach combines these, marrying symbolic with chronological progression. Certain schools of Amillennialism offer an example of this approach in that they interpret the millennium as a symbol for a period of indefinite length and duration concluding at the world’s end, but beginning after destruction of the beast, the kings of the earth, and false prophet in chapter nineteen. Foy E. Wallace Jr. is among this latter class, viewing the events of the Apocalypse through chapter nineteen as speaking to the persecution under Nero and the destruction of Jerusalem, but chapter twenty as surveying world history until the end, the battle of Gog and Magog as symbolic of the church’s struggle against various forms of world paganism throughout remaining time

“After the catastrophic fall of Judaism, and the victory of the saints over the imperial persecutors, there was a renewed struggle of the church with heathenism, a spiritual conflict symbolized by Satan being *loosed out of his prison*. With Judaism removed from the path of the church, and the cessation of persecution by the imperial rulers, the way was opened for the expansion of Christianity, as foretold by Jesus in Matt. 24:31, and envisioned by John in Rev. 11:15. But it was not without opposition – the remaining enemy was heathenism. Satan’s theatre of activity in this struggle was not persecution, but spiritual and doctrinal: *And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth – 20:8*...This part of the vision was descriptive of the battle with heathenism, hence the reference to *Gog and Magog*...the mythical ruler of heathendom...As the beast was symbolic of the Roman empire, personified in the persecuting emperors, so was the *Gog and Magog* personification symbolic of the spiritual forces of heathenism launched against the church in the “battle” of *verse eight*”¹

¹ Foy E. Wallace Jr, *The Book of Revelation* (Foy E. Wallace Publications, 1966), pp. 417, 418

We survey these schools to acquaint the reader with the basic issues facing interpretation of Revelation twenty and to help point out why a Bimillennial approach is necessary for Preterists to interpret the chapter consistent with a past-fulfillment perspective. For, as we shall see, the single millennium approach is the bed-fellow of futurist eschatology.

The Problem Stated

As suggested by Wallace’s comments above, futurism creeps into the text surrounding interpretation of the millennium and the battle of Gog and Magog. The single millennium model forces the reader to adopt a futurist eschatology because the reign of the martyrs who die under the beast is followed by yet *another* contest prior to the second coming of Christ. The fact that the martyrs die under the beast (Rev. 20:4), a symbol universally associated by Preterists with the persecution under Nero Caesar, establishes the historical referent of the martyrs’ deaths, tying them to the first century. This is also shown by the fact they are beheaded (*v.* 4), a Roman form of execution. The persecution under Nero was to be the final crisis before the eschaton. It was to prepare the saints against the coming storm of persecution under the beast that the book of Revelation was written. But by wedding the martyrs’ reign to the binding of the dragon, the battle of Gog and Magog is made to *follow* the reign of the saints, thus creating a “second” final contest the saints must endure before the end. Since there is *no* historical referent between the persecution under Nero Caesar and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 that this contest can conceivably point to, the reader is *logically* driven to the conclusion that the events depicted by the millennium and the battle of Gog and Magog are not yet fulfilled. The number of commentators who make this blunder is legion. Terry’s analysis is typical:

“At the end of the millennial period there is to be a loosing of Satan, a rising of hostile forces, symbolized by Gog and Magag (comp. Ezek. xxxviii, xxxix), and a fearful catastrophe, resulting in the final and everlasting overthrow of the devil – the culmination of the prophecy of Gen. iii, 15. This last conflict, belonging to a distant future, is rapidly passed over by the seer, and its details are not made know (verses 7-10).”²

² Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Hunt & Eason, 1890, reprinted Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1999), p. 376

Others falling into this “*trap-for-the-unwary*” include Chilton and Russell.³ Perceiving the necessity of a pre-A.D. 70 historical referent for Gog and Magog, Max King seeks to solve the dilemma by offering that Gog and Magog represents the revolt of the Jews from Rome, an unsatisfactory explanation if ever there was one:

“Thus, instead of Gog and Magog representing Gentile forces, they symbolize heathen Israel in her final opposition to the church...But in what way could it be said that national Israel compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city, or new Jerusalem? Since their power to persecute was destroyed, this final battle was evidently an effort on the part of Israel to establish her claims as the true Israel of God, and to show that she was the queen and no widow (18:7). She would now destroy the church by establishing herself in Palestine as a power of world renown. To accomplish this, she set out to throw off the Roman yoke.”⁴

The problem with King’s analysis is that it totally fails to answer the description of the battle of Gog and Magog in either Ezekiel or Revelation, both of which depict it as an attack upon the church, not a revolt from Rome (Cf. Ezek. 38, 39). Moreover, how the Jews could destroy the church by establishing themselves as

³ “The specific point of the binding of the Dragon, therefore, is to prevent him from inciting the eschatological “war to end all wars,” the final battle – until God is ready. When God’s Kingdom-City is fully matured, then He will once more release Satan and allow him to deceive the nations for the final conflagration.” (David Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, pp. 506.)

“We must consequently regard this prediction of the loosing of Satan, and the events which follow, as still future, and therefore unfulfilled. We know of nothing recorded in the history which can be adduced as in any way a probable fulfilment of this prophecy...The result of the whole is, that we must consider the passage which treats of the thousand years, from ver. 5 to ver. 10, as an intercalation or parenthesis. The Seer, having begun to relate the judgment of the dragon, passes in ver. 7 out of the apocalyptic limits to conclude what he had to say respecting the final punishment of the ‘old serpent,’ and the fate that awaited him at the close of a lengthened period called ‘a thousand years.’ This we believe to be the sole instance in the whole book of a excursion into distant futurity; and we are disposed to regard the whole parenthesis as relating to matters still future and unfulfilled.” (J. Stuart Russell, *The Parousia* (1887, T. Fisher Unwin, London; Republished 1983, 1999, Baker Books, Grand Rapids), pp. 522, 523.)

⁴ Max R. King, *The Spirit of Prophecy* (Warren, OH, 1971), p. 353

a power merely *in Palestine* is not explained. For that matter, can anyone really believe that the men who prosecuted the war against Rome - Eleazar, who was over the Zealots, John of Gischala, who was over the Galileans, and Simon, who was over the Idumeans – men who were the worst sort of criminals and tyrants, had any religious scruples about the church? Clearly, it was not to destroy the church that the Jews revolted from Rome, but to secure national liberation. In offering this explanation, King is simply grasping at straws. Still, King’s analysis serves to underscore the dilemma created by the single millennium approach to Rev. 20:1-10 and the battle of Gog and Magog.

Recapitulation and the Battle of Gog and Magog

One part of the solution to the battle of Gog and Magog lies in recognizing the fact that numerous times Revelation retraces its steps to cover different aspects of previous passages and events under new symbols. Thus, the four horsemen of the Apocalypse in chapter six are depicted as the four winds of heaven restrained in Rev. 7:1, but loosed in chapters eight and nine. The plagues in chapters eight and sixteen are not new plagues, but expansions upon the plagues under the horsemen in chapter six. And the great day of the Lord in Rev. 6:17 is the same as the great day of God Almighty in Rev. 16:14. In the same way, Gog and Magog are not a second final battle the saints were to face before the end, it was *the* final battle. One writer puts it this way:

“In 16:14 kings are called forth to *the battle*. In 19:19 the beast and kings of the earth come forth to *the battle*. In 20:8 Satan leads his host up to *the battle*. It seems clear that these three texts describe not three battles but one. The new point revealed in 20:8 (because Revelation never repeats itself merely for the sake of repetition; something new is revealed each time) is what happens to Satan as a result of this battle. Chapt 19 records what will happen to the beast and the false prophet as a result of their defeat in this battle. Here in 20:10 we learn what will happen to Satan.”⁵

In other words, the images of Rev. 20:1-10 are not progressive, but a recapitulation. There were not three end-time battles, but one; the battle of Gog and Magog is the *same* battle described elsewhere in Revelation under different symbols. In Rev. 16:14-16, the dragon, beast, and false prophet marshal their forces to the battle of Armageddon. In Rev. 19:17-21, the battle ends with the destruction of the beast and false prophet. (vv. 19, 20) The imagery of the battle is

⁵ Robert B. Strimple, *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond* (Zondervan, 1999), p. 125.

drawn from the battle of Gog and Magog. (Ezek. 39:17 *et seq.*) This establishes the identity of Armageddon and Gog and Magog; it also establishes the identity of Gog and Magog with the beast and false prophet. The beast is universally recognized in Preterist circles with the persecution under Nero Caesar. Nero's name adds up to six hundred, three score and six in Hebrew and he was the sixth emperor reigning when Revelation was penned. (Rev. 13:18; 17:10) Since the beast and false prophet perish in the battle of Gog and Magog (Rev. 19:19-21), it is clear that this battle is a symbol for the spiritual contest of Nero and the Jews against Christ and the church. Thus, rather than falling into the trap of futurism by seeing the battle of Gog and Magog as a *yet-to-be-fulfilled* contest, we find instead the Neronean persecution clothed in other garments. (Actually, the symbolism is not new; reference to Gog and Magog in Rev. 20:8 only *appears* new. Most commentators fail to notice that the imagery of Rev. 19:17 *et seq.*, is taken from Ezekiel's description of Gog and Magog and, therefore, fail to notice the identity of these battles. It is this fact leads them to see Gog and Magog as progressive, rather than recapitulatory.)

Thus far, identifying the battle of Gog and Magog with the persecution under Nero is pretty simple and straight forward. However, when the millennium is thrown into the mix difficulties arise. Under the single millennium approach, Gog and Magog *follow* the martyr's reign. However, since the martyrs died under the beast, a problem immediately arises. How can Gog and Magog be the persecution under Nero if it follows martyrdom of the saints? Clearly, in order to be the Neronean persecution, Gog and Magog must *precede*, not follow, the deaths of the saints. However, by marrying the reign of the martyrs to the binding of the dragon, Gog and Magog is wrested from its historical position and made to follow the deaths it actually caused! This is why many commentators, who otherwise see a first century context to Revelation, find themselves forced into the futurist model: Since the historical referent of the martyrs' death under the beast is fixed and certain, there is no other way to account for Gog and Magog except to see it as another, future contest of the church. Thus, by wedding the reign of the saints to the internment of the dragon the door to recapitulation is *closed*. However, rather than throw out the recapitulatory model, the answer is to unwed the binding of the dragon and the reign of the saints and adopt a bi-millennial approach.

Two Millennia Necessary for Recapitulation

If the single millennium model closes the door to recapitulation, the two millennia model opens it. In fact, *without two millennia there can be no recapitulation* – Gog and Magog must forever remain a second final battle the saints were to face before the end – a battle about which scripture and history are both perfectly silent. When the binding of the dragon and the reign of the saints are chronologically wed, the battle of Gog and Magog *follows* the martyrdom and reign of the saints. (Rev. 20:4-8) This is because the battle follows the loosing of the dragon after its thousand-year imprisonment. (vv. 7, 8) But when the reign of the saints and binding of the dragon are treated as separate events, then the martyrdom and reign of the saints are allowed to assume whatever place the application of exegetical principles assigns - *viz.*, they will follow the battle of Gog and Magog rather than precede it. This is also true of Gog and Magog. When wed to the reign of the saints, Gog and Magog is forced into a futurist position as a second final contest before the eschaton. However, by divorcing the reign of the saints from the binding of the dragon, the battle of Gog and Magog may assume its proper place in the scripture's eschatological scheme - *viz.*, it will precede the reign of the martyrs rather than follow it.

Why does John insert the reign of the saints in the midst of his narration about the binding and loosing of the dragon? For that matter, assuming that the battle of Gog and Magog is the persecution under the beast, why is the reign of the martyrs seemingly portrayed before the battle in which they die? The recapitulatory nature of the passage again must be borne in mind. The internment of the dragon has previously been alluded to by John under other symbols; *viz.*, the beast from the bottomless pit (Rev. 11:7); the mortal wound to the beast's head (Rev. 13:3); the beast that "was and is not and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit" (Rev. 17:8); and the earth swallowing the dragon's flood. (Rev. 12:16) The binding of the dragon is a parenthetical description of the events following the deadly wound to the beast's head, when it went down into the bottomless pit upon the collapse of the persecution that arose over Stephen. (Acts 7, 8; Rev. 12) In presenting the imagery of the dragon being bound, John is retracing his steps to present familiar themes under new symbols. What is new in chapter twenty is not the dragon's binding, but his *defeat*. The binding of the dragon is merely a brief recap of what has gone

before to refresh our recollection and to set the stage for the dragon's ultimate destruction.

The reign of the martyrs has also previously been alluded to. In Rev. 14:9-13, the blessed state of the martyrs is mentioned, saying, "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture...Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandment of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." (Cf. Rev. 6:9-11) Those mentioned here are the *same* individuals portrayed in Rev. 20:4-6 as having won the martyr's crown. Their deaths under the dragon, beast, and false prophet are not a defeat, but a victory. They have overcome and are sit down with Christ in his throne. (Rev. 2:26, 27; 3:20, 21) Their appearance in Rev. 20 is merely parenthetical and shows that, while God is preparing the destruction of the dragon, the martyrs are safely and tenderly gathered to rest. The purpose of the passage is to instill courage in those that will suffer torture and death for Christ. It is similar to Paul's words to the Thessalonians: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." (I Thess. 4:13) Hence, Rev. 20:4-6 is a window into the blessed estate of the martyrs in hades alluded to in Rev. 14:9-13, and nothing more. What is new in chapter twenty is not the reign of the martyrs, so much as the *general resurrection* that follows the battle of Gog and Magog and the dragon's demise. The salient features of Rev. 20 may be stated thus:

Dragon's Internment	Reign of the Saints
Persecution that arose over Stephen - Internment in Tartarus (Temporary Cessation of Persecution) - Gog and Magog (Neronean Persecution) - Destruction and Defeat at Christ's Coming	Neronean Persecution - Reign in Paradise - General Resurrection at Christ's Coming

Thus, the recapitulatory nature of Rev. 20: 1-10 and the fact of two millennia are easily seen. Hence, it is a question of either a single millennium, progression, and futurism, or two millennia, recapitulation, and Preterism. There is no third alternative.

Other Indicia of Two Millennia

Of course, allowing Gog and Magog to assume its proper historical place is *not* the only reason for opting for a Bimillennial approach. Other factors point to two millennia. The "thousand years" speaks to the timelessness of the hadean realm, the place of departed spirits. The dragon is interred a "thousand years" in tartarus (the bottomless pit), and the martyrs reign a "thousand years" in paradise with Christ. This reign is called the "first resurrection." The first resurrection is *real*; the souls of the saved were tenderly received by God into paradise. Paradise is also called "Abraham's bosom" and the "third heaven." (Lk. 16:22; 24:43; II Cor. 12:2-4) However, whereas the reign of the saints is actual, the binding of the dragon is merely symbolic. We would submit that it portrays God's providential binding of the world civil power during the period between the persecution that arose over Stephen and the persecution under Nero, when Claudius Caesar restrained the Jews and Romans from persecuting the church. After Claudius' death, Nero came to the throne and the "man of sin" and "son of perdition" was revealed (II Thess. 2: 3, 8) and the first imperial persecution begun. Because the binding of the dragon is merely symbolic, whereas the first resurrection was real, it is clear that they cannot be same "thousand years."

That there are two separate thousand-year periods contemplated by the text is also seen in the fact that there are two resurrections. The dragon's thousand-year internment ends when it is released to persecute the saints (v. 7; cf. Rev. 11:7; 17:8), but the thousand-year reign of the martyrs yields only to its *eternal* reign with Christ at the general resurrection when death and hades are destroyed. (Rev. 20:14) The resurrection of the dragon occurs *before* the general resurrection, *viz.*, in A.D. 64 when the Neronean persecution began. The resurrection of the saints and martyrs did not occur until as late as A.D. 70. Christ consumed Nero with the brightness of his coming and breath of his mouth (II Thess. 2:8), but the way into the holiest was not opened until the plagues of the seven angels were

fulfilled. (Rev. 15:8) Hence, there was a short period between the persecution and the resurrection when the souls of the martyrs rested in hades. (Cf. Rev. 6:9-11) Since the different actors each received a different “resurrection” at different times there cannot be a single thousand-year period between them.

Third, there is the grammatical structure of the passage. The definite article (“the”) is referential and assumes a prior familiarity with its subject. The Greek has no indefinite article (“a”); where the noun has no article the English language supplies it. Unlike the definite article, which is referential, the indefinite article introduces a *new* subject. Thus, when John first introduces the symbol of the dragon’s binding he uses the indefinite article: “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.” (Rev. 20:1, 2) Notice that the indefinite article “a” introduces for the first time the symbol of a thousand years. Subsequent reference to this thousand years is always prefaced by the definite article “the.” “And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till *the* thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.” (v. 3; *emphasis added.*) Here, the definite article assumes a prior familiarity with the thousand years. Its function is referential, it points back to the thousand years introduced in verse two. However, when John reaches verse four, we do not find the definite article, but the *indefinite* article. “And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the word of God...and they lived and reigned *a* thousand years.” (*Emphasis added.*) The indefinite article here indicates that a *new* subject is under discussion, another thousand years. Had this been the same thousand years of the dragon’s binding, John would have said “And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the word of God...and they lived and reigned *the* thousand years.” However, by use of the indefinite article we may be certain another thousand-year period is introduced. Other examples of this pattern occur throughout Revelation. (Cf. Rev. 12:3, 4 with Rev. 13:11 – *the* great red dragon with “*a* dragon”; Rev. 8:10, 11 with Rev. 9:1 – *the* star nominated “wormwood” with *a* star nominated “Abaddon.”)

Finally, another factor pointing to two millennia is John's use of the phrase "and I saw" (Gk. *kai eidon*) in Rev. 20:1, 4. Use of this phrase, or its literary equivalent "and I heard," typically points to a *new* vision and subject. Review of a few instances where these phrases occur will demonstrate the truth of this statement. (Cf. Rev. 14:1; 15:1; 16:1; 17:3; 18:1, 19:11; 20:1, 4, 11) Thus, when in verse four John states "And I saw thrones and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus," *etc.*, he *leaves* the binding of the dragon and introduces a new subject. This new subject includes *another* thousand years. As already noted, this is also shown by the indefinite article ("a") - "and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." "And I saw" points to a new vision and subject, the indefinite article points to another thousand years. Together, they show that the historical circumstances symbolized by the binding of the dragon are no longer in view. (For further argument why there are two millennia, see our book, *The Consummation of the Ages.*)

Thus, quite apart from the exegetical necessity of allowing the persecution under Nero to assume its place as the final contest the saints had to endure before the eschaton, there are other indicia pointing to two millennia, both grammatical and exegetical. Together, they present an insurmountable case that two millennia are contemplated by the text.

Conclusion

The single millennium model forces a futurist eschatology by creating a *second* final contest the saints were required to face before the eschaton. By wedding the reign of the martyrs to the binding of the dragon, Gog and Magog is forced from its historical place as the persecution under Nero and the beast and made to follow it instead. Only by divorcing the binding of the dragon from the reign of the saints and martyrs can the trap of futurism be avoided and Gog and Magog allowed to assume its proper place as the last conflict before the end. It is a question of either a single millennium, progression, and futurism, or two millennia, recapitulation, and Preterism. For Preterists the choice should be easy.

Old Earth Creationism: Creationists Who Accept an Old Earth

The web-site “About.com” lists Old Earth Creationism (“OEC”) under the heading of Agnosticism/Atheism, reflecting the judgment that it belongs to a branch of skepticism, which is unwilling to accept the Biblical account of creation. Indeed, no one ever became an Old Earth Creationist (“OEC”) from reading Genesis. The sole impetus of OEC is to reconcile the Bible to the theoretical claims of atheistic science by reinterpreting it in a way that is consistent with naturalistic and evolutionary models. Atheistic evolution posits that the earth is approximately 4.5 billion years old, and that life developed slowly from simple to more complex forms over the last 100 million years. An old earth is therefore essential to naturalistic and evolutionary models. Although rejecting purely naturalistic theories of origin, OEC nevertheless accepts the claims of atheistic science regarding the age of the earth and cosmos. Confronted with the inconsistent claims of atheistic theoretical science and the Bible, OEC re-writes the Bible.

Traditional Interpretation of Genesis

OEC denies the creation account of Genesis as understood for four thousand years, first by the Jews, and then by the church. The Biblical account of creation is simple and straightforward: The cosmos and all that is in it were created in the space of six days: *In six days, the Lord God created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that in them is.* (Ex. 20:11) Numerous chronologies have been done over the centuries by men of faith: Eusebius, Julius Africanus, Ussher, *et alia*, and all date the creation to within about seven thousand years of our time. **Demetrius** and **Eupolemus** place the creation at 5507 B.C.⁶ **Julius Africanus** places the birth of

Christ 5499 years from creation.⁷ **Hyppolytus of Rome** places the birth of Christ 5502 from creation. **Hyppolytus of Thebes** place it at 5500 years from creation.⁸ **Eusebius** reckons from creation to Christ 5199 years.⁹ **Archbishop Ussher** places the birth of Christ 4000 years from creation.¹⁰ We know of no chronologies before the modern era that date Biblical creation into the millions or billions of years.

Jewish authors and the Church fathers uniformly interpreted the creation account literally, as consisting of six, twenty-four hour days.

Philo Judaeus – “And he say that the world was made in six days, not because the creator stood in need of a length of time (for it is natural that God should do everything at once, not merely by uttering a command, but by even thinking of it); but because the things created required arrangement...And he allotted each of the six days to one of the portions of the whole.”¹¹

⁷ Ibid, 158; cf. Munsel, *Every Day Book of History and Chronology from Creation to the Present Time* (Appleton & Co. NY, 1858), p. 344.

⁸ Ibid, 159.

⁹ Ibid, 190; *Dictionary of Christian Biography* (London, 1880), Vol. II, pp.348-350, William Smith DCL, LLD and Henry Wace DD, editors

¹⁰ James Ussher, *Annals of the World*, § 6059.

¹¹ Philo, *De Opificio Mundi*, III. Philo is sometimes cited by OEC’s as proof that the days of creation may be understood other than literally, but this is wrong. Philo was from Alexandrian school of interpretation, which treated the scriptures allegorically. In the allegorical part of his work, he gives the creation a mystical sense. For example, the mind he says is referred to under the image of heaven, and the senses under the image of the earth, and so forth. When he says, therefore that it is “a sign of great simplicity to think that the world was created in six days, or indeed in time at all,” he is not denying the literal days, anymore than time or the literal heavens and earth. Rather, he is to be understood as attempting to make a clever point that time exists only in relation to the

⁶ Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Hendrickson, 1998), p. 145.

Flavius Josephus – “Accordingly Moses says that in just six days the world and all that is therein was made; and that the seventh day was a rest, and a release from the labour of such operations; - whence it is that we celebrate a rest from our labours on that day, and call it the Sabbath; which word denotes *rest* in the Hebrew tongue.”¹²

Epistle of Barnabas – “The Sabbath is mentioned at the beginning of the creation: ‘And God made in six days the works of His hands, and made an end on the seventh day, and rested on it, and sanctified it.’”¹³

Justin Martyr – “The first day which was created along with the heavens constituted the beginning of all time (for thus Moses wrote, ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.’”¹⁴

Theophilus – “Of this six days' work no man can give a worthy explanation and description of all its parts, not though he had ten thousand tongues and ten thousand mouths; nay, though he were to live ten thousand years, sojourning in this life, not even so could he utter anything worthy of these things, on account of the exceeding greatness and riches of the wisdom of God which there is in the six days' work above narrated.”¹⁵

Clement of Alexandria – “For the creation of the world was concluded in six days. For the motion of the sun from solstice to solstice is completed in six months--in the course of which, at one time the leaves fall, and at another plants bud and seeds come to maturity.”¹⁶

world, hence the world could not be made in time, but it is the world that in a sense made time: “Time is a thing posterior to the world...the world was not created in time, but that time had its existence in consequence of the world.” *Legum Allegoriae*, II. In no event can Philo be cite on the side of OEC.

¹² Josephus, *Antiquities*, I, i, 1; Whiston ed.

¹³ Epistle of Barnabas, XV

¹⁴ Justin Martyr, *Horatory Address to the Greeks*, XXXIII

¹⁵ Theophilus, *To Autolyclus*, II, xii.

¹⁶ Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, Bk. VI, *The Fourth Commandment*.

Origen – “Such is the objection which they are accustomed to make to our statement that this world had its beginning at a certain time, and that, agreeably to our belief in Scripture, we can calculate the years of its past duration. To these propositions I consider that none of the heretics can easily return an answer that will be in conformity with the nature of their opinions.”¹⁷

“After these statements, Celsus, from a secret desire to cast discredit upon the Mosaic account of the creation, which teaches that the world is **not yet ten thousand years** old, but very much under that, while concealing his wish, intimates his agreement with those who hold that the world is uncreated. For, maintaining that there have been, from all eternity, many conflagrations and many deluges, and that the flood which lately took place in the time of Deucalion is comparatively modern, he clearly demonstrates to those who are able to understand him that, in his opinion, the world was uncreated.”¹⁸

Julius Africanus – “For the Jews, deriving their origin from them as descendants of Abraham, having been taught a modest mind, and one such as becomes men, together with the truth by the spirit of Moses, have handed down to us, by their extant Hebrew histories, the number of **5500 years** as the period up to the advent of the Word of salvation, that was announced to the world in the time of the sway of the Caesars.”¹⁹

To this short list may be added many dozens of others,²⁰ all testifying to the traditional (historical) teaching from the time of Moses until now, that the chronology of Genesis is to be read literally, and that the idea of an “old earth” is of purely modern origination. This does not prove the traditional interpretation is correct, but it does demonstrate circumstantially that the motive for reinterpreting Genesis stems from the

¹⁷ Origen, *De Principiis*, III, v, 3.

¹⁸ Origen, *Against Celsus*, I, xix.

¹⁹ Julius Africanus, *Fragments of the Chronography*, I.

²⁰ For a more complete compilation on-line, see <http://www.creationism.org/articles/EarlyChurchLit6Days.htm>

claims of modern science, and not the scriptures themselves; for if the idea that billions of years had elapsed from the beginning was truly in the text, men would not have waited six thousand years to find discover it, but the idea would have been present with men from the start.

Adam – The Biological Parent of all Mankind

I Corinthians 15:45 states, "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." This verse plainly names Adam as the "first man." Gen. 3:20 calls Eve "the mother of all living." There is no room for postulating the creation of other men based upon the Biblical record. The obvious and irrefutable teaching of scripture is that *all men* derive their ancestry from the common parentage of Adam and Eve. This is the basis of Paul's argument in Romans that the whole race of mankind is descended from Adam, and made heir of his fallen nature. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." (Rom. 5:19) If all men do not trace their ancestry to the common parentage of Adam and Eve, there is no way to account for the inherent fallenness of the race, and Paul is guilty of teaching error, for he has said that through *one man's* disobedience all men were brought to ruin, not by the transgression of unnamed others. Indeed, the notion that God created other men than Adam and that Adam was merely the first man with whom God entered a covenant of works would mean that other asserted men were exempt from the possibility of the fall; for the fall applied only where there was law, but if other men were not under law and covenant, then they could not be chargeable with transgression. This would seem to open the door to Universalism via antinomianism. However, these considerations aside, the historical position of the church has always taught that Adam and Eve were the common parents of all mankind.

St. Irenaeus - Having become disobedient, [Eve] was made the cause of death for herself and for the whole human race; so also Mary, betrothed to a man but nevertheless still a virgin, being obedient, was made the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race....Thus, the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. What the virgin Eve had

bound in unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosed through faith. ...But this man [of whom I have been speaking] is Adam, if truth be told, the first-formed man....WE, however, are all FROM him.²¹

Tertullian - "Because by a man came death, by a man also comes resurrection" [1 Cor 15:21]. Here, by the word MAN, who consists of a body, as we have often shown already, I understand that it is a fact that Christ had a body. And if we are all made to live in Christ as WE were made to DIE IN ADAM, then, as in the flesh we were made to DIE IN ADAM, so also in the flesh are we made to live in Christ. Otherwise, if the coming to life in Christ were not to take place in that same substance in which WE DIE IN ADAM, the parallel were imperfect.²²

Origen - EVERYONE in the world FALLS PROSTRATE under SIN. And it is the Lord who sets up those who are cast down and who sustains all who are falling [Psalm 145:14]. IN ADAM ALL DIE, and THUS the world FALLS PROSTRATE and requires to be SET UP AGAIN, so that in Christ all may be made to live [1 Cor 15:22].²³

St. Athanasius - Adam, the first man, altered his course, and through sin death came into the world....When Adam transgressed, SIN reached out TO ALL MEN.²⁴

Augustine - But why does St Matthew reckon in a descending, and Luke in an ascending order?...Matthew descends through his generations, to signify our Lord Jesus Christ descending to bear our sins, that in the seed of Abraham all nations might be blessed. Wherefore, he does not begin with Adam, **for from him is the whole race of mankind**. Nor with Noe, because from his family again, after the flood, descended the whole human race. Nor could the man Christ Jesus, as descended from Adam, **from whom all men are descended**, bear upon the fulfillment of prophecy; nor, again,

²¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3:22:4; 3:23:2; 5:16:3.

²² Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 5:9:5.

²³ Origen, *Homilies on Jeremias*, 8:1

²⁴ St. Athanasius, *Discourses Against the Arians*, 1:51

as descended from Noe, from whom also all men are descended; but only as descended from Abraham, who at that time was chosen, that all nations should be blessed in his seed, when the earth was now full of nations.²⁵

These are but a few of the many citations that could be produced demonstrating that the church has historically upheld the common parentage of Adam and Eve to all men, and that this really is an *essential tenant* of the Christian faith inasmuch Paul teaches it to be the source of mankind's inherent fallenness.

Re-writing Genesis

The Gap Theory

OCE has two ways by which it seeks to avoid the simple language of Genesis: the "gap" theory and the "day-age" theory. For hundreds of years, science had operated on the premise of a six thousand year old earth, based upon the chronology of Genesis. However, beginning in the early nineteenth century, naturalistic theories about the origin and age of the earth began to grow in popularity. Theologians, pressured by the alleged "scientific" evidence of an old earth, re-interpreted the scriptures to accommodate scientific theory. Thus was born the "gap" theory. Originally formulated in the early 19th century by Scottish theologian, Thomas Chalmers, the theory was conceived as a way to reconcile the Bible to naturalistic theories about the geologic age of the earth. The gap or "ruin-reconstruction" theory asserts that there is a time-gap between the first two verses of Genesis. It is based on the supposition that earth was already here (but in a ruined state) before the creative process of the seven days began. According to the gap-theory, II Pet. 3:5-7²⁶ refers

²⁵Augustine, *Sermon 1 on the New Testament, Of the agreement of the evangelists Matthew and Luke in the generations of the Lord*, **Benedictine Edition**.

²⁶ "For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby

not to Noah's flood, asserting instead that it refers to the world before the beginning of creation:

*"If 2 Peter 3:5-7 is a cross-reference to Genesis 1:2, then the Holy Spirit is calling your attention to something very significant that millions of 'Young Earth' Creationists are blindly overlooking. Specifically, that a glorious ancient world that God created in the distant past (Genesis 1:1), had long since been utterly destroyed, plunged into deep darkness, and overflowed by a raging flood of great waters on a universal scale at the time of Genesis 1:2."*²⁷

By removing these verses from Noah's flood (which they admit was universal) and applying them instead to an imaginary world of which the Bible is silent, they hope to extend indefinitely earth's existence to conform with atheistic notions about its geologic age:

*The geologic and fossil records are the surviving evidence that God preserved for us to testify to the truth that the Earth is very old and was inhabited for a long period before the seven days of Genesis chapter one. Those records, written in stone, also provide evidence of a long reign of Death upon the old Earth and the sudden end of the old world order by a universal destructive event.*²⁸

Proponents of the gap theory admit that the Genesis creation occurred about six thousand years ago:

"The Earth is "without form and void" at Genesis 1:2 and in darkness. There is no

the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." (2 Pet 3:5-7)

²⁷ Gaines R. Johnson, *The Gap Theory and Beyond, A comprehensive study of Creationism for Bible Believers: Rightly-Dividing Genesis and Geology*: http://www.kjvbible.org/gap_theory.html

²⁸ Ibid.

indication of anything being alive on the surface of the Earth, at this time, and that time is roughly about 6,000 years ago...Clearly, if we believe the literal wording of the Bible, there was indeed a universal creative event during the seven days of Genesis, about 6,000 literal years ago."

This admission notwithstanding, they argue there is a gap preceding the instant creation consisting in hundreds of millions of years:

The Bible gives no specific time when God first created the heaven and the Earth (Genesis 1:1), but it does give the time when the Earth is found in this desolate condition and for the start of the seven, literal, 24 hour days. That time was, indeed, geologically very recently [sic]. In this respect, only, is the Young Earth Creationist fully correct. This is the context for the "gap" on which Ruin-Reconstruction doctrine is based. Exactly how long that time gap represents nobody can say for sure, but it most certainly could accommodate hundreds of millions of years, or less, but a gap is most certainly there.²⁹

Advocates of this view attempt to strengthen their position by arguing that the Hebrew word "tohu" is mistranslated, and should read, not that the heavens and earth "were without form and void", but "became" void. They also point to the use of the plural in Gen. 2:4, "These are the generations [plural] of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens," inferring from this evidence of two creations:

"The Creation account contains the story of two creative events. Only the latter event, the seven days, is outlined in great detail."

According to gap-theorists, this pre-Adamic world was filled with "Mammoths, Mastodons, giant ground sloth, woolly rhinos, and even a "pre-Adamic race of hominoids" whose remains are found in the fossil record.

Most gap-theorists believe that the physical universe was committed to the charge of a

cherub named Lucifer, who was the heavenly choir master:

"Lucifer was second only to the throne of God and was the choir leader of the universe in the day when the Lord God first made all things...The whole of the physical universe was under the direction of Lucifer: Physical matter and spirit were one under the stewardship of Lucifer, this anointed cherub. He was second only to the Lord God in power and authority over the realm of the whole Kingdom."

Proponents of the gap-theory assert that, about 750 million years ago, Lucifer rebelled and transgressed against God, thus becoming the first created being to sin. Lucifer's sin caused death to pass upon all things, bringing the "pre-Adamic" world to destruction:

"With his initial act of sin and rebellion, Death and corruption, like leaven, began to permeate the physical cosmos that was under Lucifer's stewardship to rule. It started in Eden, the Garden of God on the Earth, and spread like a cancer. Because Lucifer was the steward of the whole creation under heaven when he fell, all things under his rule were also subjected to corruption."

One can only comment at this point how much gap-theorists presume upon the silence of the scripture, finding lost worlds, species of animals, and races of men all in the silent space between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2! If all this is possible from silence, then truly "nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." (Gen. 11:6) The whole theory is loosely strung together upon fantastic and highly improbable interpretation of scripture. Suffice it to say, that no one ever found the gap in scripture before the false assertions of science required they find one. The assertion that II Pet. 3:5, 6 refer to a pre-Adamic world cannot be proved. Peter refers twice before to Noah's flood specifically. (I Pet. 3:20; II Pet. 2:5) It is therefore natural that we understand him as speaking to this well known event, and not as alluding to a pre-Adamic flood about which the Bible is silent. Men could not be "willingly ignorant" about this flood, for it is nowhere so much as once described. Hence, the

²⁹ Ibid.

only Biblically defensible view is that it is Noah's flood Peter's has in mind.

The Day-Age Theory

As already seen, the Biblical account of creation indicates that God called the universe into existence and arranged it into orderly parts over the space of six days. Lest these be misconstrued as something other than twenty-four hour days, they are expressly defined as consisting of "an evening and a morning," or one revolution of the earth upon its axis. "And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called night. And the evening and the morning were the first day." (Gen. 1:4, 5) According to Genesis, God rested the seventh day from his work of creation. In testimony of the creation week, God established the seventh day as a ceremonial rest for the Jewish nation in token of their redemption from slavery. They were to remember that they were once servants and looked for weekly rest from their labors, but were given none by the Egyptian masters. Therefore, they were to give their servants and handmaids rest one day each week throughout their generations. (Ex. 20:10, 11) The literalness of the creation week is affirmed by the writer of Hebrews, who saw in the weekly Sabbath the promise of heavenly rest: As God rested in heaven from his work of creation upon earth, so he has promised a heavenly rest to those that believe and obey him. (Heb. 4:3-9) The creation week thus became the basic standard of measure underlying the calendar year. Fifty-two cycles of seven fulfill one solar year.

Notwithstanding the obvious intention of Genesis to communicate the idea of six literal days, "day-age" advocates argue that the days of creation should be interpreted as long eons of geologic time, reaching into the millions of years. Arguments in favor of the day-age theory include:

1 – Use of the term "generations" in Gen. 2:4 implies long ages in earth's history and creation. However, this is wrong. There are two Hebrew words rendered generations: *Dowr* (Strong's 1755) and *toldah* (Strong's #8435). Only the former carries the sense of time, the latter carries

the sense of source. *Dowr*: A revolution of time, i.e., and age or generation. *Toldah*: Descent, i.e., family; (fig.) history: - birth. It is this latter word that occurs in Gen. 2:4. It is used to show the *origins or sources* of the heavens and earth, not the time in which they were made.

2 - The Hebrew word *yowm* (day) can mean long period of time.

The Hebrew word *yowm* (Strong's #3517) is defined as derived from an unused root meaning "to be hot; a day (as the warm hours), whether literal (from sunrise to sunset, or from one sunset to the next), or figurative (a space of time defined by an associated term)." As with all words, which meaning is intended must be taken from the context. As we have already shown, the context of Genesis one clearly contemplates a literal day, and even defines it as consisting of a period of time marked by the presence of light between morning and evening.

3 – There are explicit statements of the Earth's antiquity found in scripture.

Habakkuk 3:6 (NIV) - "He stood, and shook the earth; he looked, and made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed. His ways are eternal."

However, this verse bears its own refutation, for the shaking of the earth, and the "everlasting mountains" (AV) are poetic expressions for God's shaking of the world's kingdoms and nations by his providential presence, as the context plainly shows. The passage says nothing about the age of the earth. It is God whose ways are everlasting, not the earth.

The exegetical hurdles one must clear in order to maintain the view that the days of creation are actually geologic ages are, perhaps, its own best repudiation. The word "day" occurs through Genesis chapter one. In Gen. 1:3-5, God called into existence the light of the sun to shine upon the face of the unformed earth. The light he called "day" and the darkness he called "night." And the evening and an morning was "one day." Here we have two occurrences of the word

“day.” Are both figurative? If not, what is to distinguish them? In Gen. 1:14-18, God arranged the lights of the firmament so as to provide for the orderly arrangement of days, weeks, months, and years, saying, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.” (v. 14) OEC’s like to argue that since God made the sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day, the evenings and mornings of the first three days can be taken literally. However, this is mistaken. The fourth day did not bring these lights into existence, but merely established their relationship to the earth and each other so as to provide for the revolution of the seasons, and enable man to mark the regular passage of time, etc. But the point remains, if “day” means geologic age in other places, what does it mean here? What is there in the context here that signifies a literal day that is not present elsewhere, which allows us to make one literal and other figurative? The sort of exegetical gymnastics necessary to obviate these objections has caused many day-age advocates to abandon their theories and return to the simple Bible. Dr Davis Young a former day-ager commented to a science symposium at Wheaton College:

Genius as all these schemes may be, one is struck by the forced nature of them all. While the exegetical gymnastic maneuvers have displayed remarkable flexibility, I suspect that they have resulted in temporary damage to the theological musculature.³⁰

Hermeneutically Unsound

The exegetical difficulties facing OEC lead to another, more basic problem: OEC violates the most fundamental rule of hermeneutics, which requires that a writing be interpreted according to the intent of its author. No interpretation is valid

³⁰ Young, D., *The harmonization of Scripture and science*, science symposium at Wheaton College, 23 March 1990.

merely because it is made to sound plausible; to be valid it must be the meaning the author *intends*. Imagine the horror of a last will and testament that was interpreted according to the court’s desires, rather than honoring the intent of the decedent. That is precisely the case with OEC; it completely disregards the obvious and intended meaning of the text in an attempt to accommodate the assertions of naturalistic science. This causes OEC not to be taken seriously by world class scholars. The April 23, 1984, letter of then Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford University makes the point:

*I have thought about your question, and would say that probably, so far as I know, there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that **the writer(s) of Genesis 1-11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that (a) creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience (b) the figures contained in the Genesis genealogies provided by simple addition a chronology from the beginning of the world up to later stages in the biblical story (c) Noah's flood was understood to be world-wide and extinguish all human and animal life except for those in the ark. Or, to put it negatively, the apologetic arguments which suppose the 'days' of creation to be long eras of time, the figures of years not to be chronological, and the flood to be a merely local Mesopotamian flood, are not taken seriously by any such professors, as far as I know.***

Professor Barr states that OEC is not taken seriously. Why? Because the writer of Genesis intended to convey to the reader the idea of six literal, twenty-four hour days. This is the more telling in that Professor Barr reportedly does not himself accept the Genesis account of creation, yet does not attempt to wrest the text to accommodate his belief in naturalistic models. OEC should follow his example in honoring the intent of the author and stop pretending that the gap or day-age theories are hermeneutically acceptable and sound. They should either openly reject the Bible in favor of an old earth, or accept the Bible as it was intended to be read.

The Unsubstantiated and Discredited Scientific Basis of an Old Earth

We now come to the scientific claims for an old earth. It is indeed unfortunate that OEC's feel the need to reinterpret the Bible to accommodate science, for even naturalistic scientists affirm that the dating methods are unsound. There is an abundance of material available demonstrating the unscientific basis for claims of an old earth, but these few will make the point.

Evolutionist William Stansfield, Ph.D., California Polytech State, has stated:

It is obvious that radiometric techniques may not be the absolute dating methods that they are claimed to be. Age estimates on a given geological stratum by different radiometric methods are often quite different (sometimes by hundreds of millions of years). There is no absolutely reliable long-term radiological 'clock'.³¹

Evolutionist Frederick B. Jueneman candidly summarizes the situation:

*The age of our globe is presently thought to be some 4.5 billion years, based on radio-decay rates of uranium and thorium. Such 'confirmation' may be shortlived, as nature is not to be discovered quite so easily. **There has been in recent years the horrible realization that radio-decay rates are not as constant as previously thought, nor are they immune to environmental influences. And this could mean that the atomic clocks are reset during some global disaster, and events which brought the Mesozoic to a close may not be 65 million years ago, but rather, within the age and memory of man.**³²*

With these sorts of statements coming out of the atheistic scientific community, one wonders what motivates Christians to jettison their Bibles

³¹ William D. Stansfield, *The Science of Evolution* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1977), p. 84.

³² Frederic B. Jueneman, "Secular Catastrophism," *Industrial Research and Development*, Vol. 24 (June 1982), p. 21.

in favor of and old earth. Geologist Andrew Snelling thus states:

"It is special pleading on the part of geochronologists and physicists to say that the radioactive decay rates have been carefully measured in laboratories for the past 80 or 90 years and that no significant variation of these rates has been measured. The 'bottom line' is really that 80 or 90 years of measurements are being extrapolated backwards in time to the origin of the earth, believed by evolutionists to be 4.5 billion years ago. That is an enormous extrapolation. In any other field of scientific research, if scientists or mathematicians were to extrapolate results over that many orders of magnitude, thereby assuming continuity of results over such enormous spans of unobserved time, they would be literally 'laughed out of court' by fellow scientists and mathematicians. Yet geochronologists are allowed to do this with impunity, primarily because it gives the desired millions and billions of years that evolutionists require, and because it makes these radioactive 'clocks' work!"³³

Conclusion

OEC is an unhappy attempt to reconcile the Bible to the discredited claims of naturalistic and evolutionary science. Let Christians stand courageously by their Bibles; all else is sinking sand.

³³ Andrew A. Snelling, "Radioactive Dating Method 'Under Fire'!", " *Creation: Ex Nihilo*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Answers in Genesis, March-May 1992), p. 44 (emphasis added).

Why Two Millennia?

By

Kurt Simmons

A caller recently asked about why we hold that Revelation twenty contemplates two millennia; we answer that question briefly here.

The Models of Other Writers Also Produce Two Millennia

Initially, it should be noted that we are not alone among Preterist authors in holding to a two (bi-) millennial model. The models set forth by King, and I believe Preston (“Don”), Stevens (“Ed”), and others also produce two millennia. They operate on the assumption of a single millennium, but analysis of their models will show that, in fact, two come forth. King was the first to commit his model to writing and it has served as the model followed by Don, Ed, and others. So, let us begin by demonstrating that King’s system produces two millennia, before explaining our own.

The basic framework of King’s model has it that the millennium refers to the period from Christ’s ministry to the Jewish war with Rome. King equates the binding of the dragon in Rev. 20:1-3 with the binding of the strong man in Matt. 12:29. King appears to borrow this interpretation from Postmillennialism. In fact, his system essentially mirrors Postmillennialism, except that where Postmillennialism traditionally extends the “thousand years” into the indefinite future, King foreshortens it to accommodate Christ’s AD 70 return. According to King then, (together with Don and Ed,) the beginning of the millennium is Christ’s ministry, which began in A.D. 30.³⁴ They next have it that the millennium ends approximately A.D. 67 when the war with Rome begins. In Rev. 20:7-10, the dragon is loosed for the battle of Gog and Magog, which King equates with the Jewish war with Rome.

The millennial binding of the dragon therefore looks like this:

Thousand Year Binding of the Dragon

(Rev. 20:1-3 = Matt. 12:29)

AD 30 _____ AD 67
Ministry of Christ _____ War with Rome

So much for the binding of the dragon. According to King, the millennial reign of the saints in Rev. 20:4-6 refers to the participation of the church in Christ’s resurrection by baptism. This begins on Pentecost A.D. 33 and ends at the resurrection in A.D. 70. I believe this is the position of Ed and Don, too. (If not, I welcome their correction.) Thus the millennial reign of the saints looks like this:

Thousand Year Reign of the Saints

(Rev. 20:4-6)

AD 33 _____ AD 70
Pentecost _____ General Resurrection

A cursory look at these two timelines shows that they do not match. The one begins and ends earlier than the other. If they do not begin and end at the same time, it is obvious that they cannot represent the same events, and that a single millennium cannot embrace them both. The discrepancy noted in King’s system is inherent to the single millennial model. It results from the fact that *two millennia* are contemplated by the text, though men often confound them for one. This discrepancy was noted long ago by Augustine, the father of Postmillennialism:

“This last persecution by Antichrist will last for three years and six months, as we have already said, and as is stated both in the Apocalypse and by the prophet Daniel. Though this time is brief, it is rightly debated whether it belongs to the thousand years during which it is said that the devil is bound and the saints reign with Christ, or whether this short span is to be added to those years and is over and above them. For if we say

³⁴ Christ was born in 2 B.C.; he was baptized in the 15th of Tiberius when he was not yet thirty, which translates to the fall of A.D. 29. (Lk. 3:1, 23)

that it belongs to the thousand years, then it will be found that *the reign of the saints with Christ extends not for the same length of time as the binding of the devil, but for a longer time*...How, then does Scripture include in *the same limit of a thousand years* both the binding of the devil and the reign of the saints, if the binding of the devil is to cease three years and six months *before* the reign of a thousand years of the saints with Christ?"³⁵

Although Augustine recognized the discrepancy inherent in the single millennium model, he did not see his way clear how to reconcile it. Returning now to King's scheme, it is plain that two millennia are produced by his model. In fact, King all but admits there are two millennia when he states

"The time of the scene in verse four of our text is after the Neronian [sic] persecution...It corresponds to the time when Satan was bound a thousand years. Satan is bound *a thousand years* and the saints lived and reigned with Christ *a thousand years*...*These two one thousand year terms* are like the North and South Poles."³⁶

There you have it. King actually articulated the fact of two millennia! "*These two one thousand year terms*" he said! Unfortunately, King did not grasp the full implications of what he said or the meaning of the text, and continued to operate on the mistaken assumption of a single millennium. If he had only stopped to put his dates down on paper, the fact that his system produces two millennia would have become immediately apparent. But, as it is, it was left for us to point this out.

Other Commentators

At his point, let us pause and notice that there have been others who noticed two millennia in the text before either King or myself (though King did not fully realize what he was seeing).

³⁵ Augustine, *The City of God*, XX, xiii; Loeb ed.

³⁶ Max R. King, *The Spirit of Prophecy* (Warren OH, 1971), p.347.

John Albert Bengel - *A thousand years* - Two millennial periods are mentioned in this whole passage... The confounding of the two millennial periods has long ago produced many errors, and has made the name of Chiliasm hateful and suspected.³⁷

John Wesley - "*A thousand years* — It must be observed, that two distinct thousand years are mentioned throughout this whole passage. Each is mentioned thrice; the thousand wherein Satan is bound, verses 2, 3, 7; the thousand wherein the saints shall reign, verses 4-6. The former end before the end of the world; the latter reach to the general resurrection. So that the beginning and end of the former thousand is before the beginning and end of the latter. Therefore as in the second verse, at the first mention of the former; so in the fourth verse, at the first mention of the latter, it is only said, a thousand years; in the other places, "the thousand," verses 3, 5, 7, that is, the thousand mentioned before. During the former, the promises concerning the flourishing state of the church, shall be fulfilled; during the latter, while the saints."³⁸

Others seeing two millennia include Daniel Steele and John Owen.³⁹ The idea of two millennia, therefore, does not originate with us, but boasts prominent scholars from earlier days.

Bimillennial Preterism

Having, I think, established the presence of two millennia in the text, let us briefly give our view of the matter. We hold that the binding of the dragon points to the period from the collapse of

³⁷ Jno. Bengel, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*, in loc.

³⁸ John Wesley, *Commentary on Revelation*, in loc.

³⁹ Dandiel Steele, S.T.D., A Substitute for Holiness or, Antinomianism Revisited, Chapter XIV, Difficulties in the Thousand Years. http://www.gospeltruth.net/Antinomianism/antinom_toc.htm

the persecution that arose over Stephen until the persecution under Nero. It is symbolic of the restraint upon the world civil power during much of the reign of Claudius when the Jews were prohibited to get up a persecution in Palestine and the world. The dragon acts through the beast to make war against the saints and persecute the church. Both symbolically went down to the bottomless pit when the persecution over Stephen collapsed. This is portrayed by the wound to the beast's head (Rev. 13:3, 14) and referred to in saying *it was, is not, and was about to ascend out of the bottomless pit.* (Rev. 17:8) That is, the persecuting power of the world civil power (the dragon) was symbolically slain in the collapse of the persecution, but was about to revive and persecute the church anew (viz., the wound to its head would heal). The beast is loosed when the dragon is loosed, for the beast acts only by the authority of the dragon. (Rev. 13:2) Both would ascend from the bottomless pit for the final eschatological battle under Nero (the battle of Gog and Magog/Armageddon).

The reign of the saints points to the victory of the martyrs and their reign in paradise with Christ pending the general resurrection. Technically, their reign begins where the binding of the dragon ends. This is opposite of most commentators, who assume that the reign of the saints is defined by the binding of the dragon. But a close reading gives the lie to this scheme. The saints do not reign until they suffer martyrdom under the beast and dragon. Hence, it is not until the dragon and beast are loosed for the battle of Gog and Magog (Armageddon) that they suffer martyrdom and obtain the martyr's crown. In Rev. 14:9-13, a blessing is pronounced upon those that are faithful unto death and martyrdom under the beast. "Blessed are the dead that die from henceforth." Those referred to here are the same portrayed victorious in Rev. 20:4-6; that is, the blessing pronounced in Rev. 14:13 is received by the martyrs in Rev. 20:4-6. What is that blessing? They are participants of the first resurrection; they live and reign with Christ in Hades Paradise pending the general resurrection. Technically, all the saints share in this reign. I do not believe that the martyrs received a special resurrection. The

point of the passage seems to be to fortify their faith against the coming crisis by showing that they will receive a thorough reward from God.

The common symbol of a thousand years points to the fact both are in Hades – the dragon symbolically in Tartarus (the bottomless pit), the saints actually in Paradise. The point of the symbol is to show that both are among the dead, beyond the realm of earthly time and space. The binding of the dragon finds its parallel in II Pet. 2:4 where the "angels that sinned" were bound with chains in Tartarus until the judgment of the great day. Hence, Matt. 12:29 is not the source of the imagery. It is also Peter who tells that the realm of the spirit does not measure time as we do on earth, and that one day is as a thousand years, and so forth. (II Pet. 3:8; cf. Ps. 90:4) Also, it is more than a little interesting that according to Greco-Roman notions of Hades, the dead inhabited Hades (Elysium for the good, Purgatory/Tartarus for the evil) for a thousand years before they returned to earthly life.⁴⁰ Revelation was addressed to the Greek and Roman speak peoples of Asia Minor who would suffer martyrdom under Nero and the Jews. The symbol of a thousand years would like be easily recognized by them as a reference to their blessed state in Paradise so they could bravely face death for the name of Christ.

⁴⁰ Virgil, *Aeneid*, Bk. VI, 734-769; C. Day Lewis ed (1952, Hogarth Press, London. Cf. Plato, *Republic*, Bk. X, 315-320; Ben. Jowett ed; Justin Martyr, confusing Virgil's account with Plato's, equates Purgatory with Tartarus. See Justin Martyr, *1st Apology*, VIII, Ante-Nicene Fathers, p. 165, where he attributes Virgil's description of Rhadamanthus punishing the wicked to Plato. For a fuller account, see our article "Revelation's Millennia and Greco-Roman Notions of Hades."