

• *Other possibilities*

I have rejected the idea of a millennium **after** the second coming. Let us consider some other possibilities. The question to which we need an answer is: how is Revelation 19:11–21:8 meant to be taken?

## 2. Amillennialism 'Gospel Age Millennialism'

• *The binding of Satan the same as the binding that took place in Jesus' death and resurrection*

• *The binding of Revelation 20 goes beyond the defeat of Revelation 12*

• *Heaven – earth – abyss*

• *Revelation 12 – heaven to earth*

*Revelation 20 – earth to abyss*

2. **Some believe that the binding of Satan is the same as the binding that took place in Jesus' death and resurrection.** They are called 'amillennialists' because they believe there is no ('a-' means 'no') special 'golden age' either before or after the second coming of Jesus. These people ought to be called 'gospel-age millennialists'. They believe the gospel-age, the time between the first and second comings of Jesus, **is** the millennium. This means that they understand Revelation 12 and Revelation 20 to be exactly parallel. Satan is bound **now** (not in every respect but in his ability to deceive the nations). This 'gospel-age millennialism' believes that the age for the preaching of the gospel **is** the millennium of Revelation 20:1–3.

What do we have to say to such 'gospel-age millennialism'? It is certainly true that a binding of Satan took place at the cross. That should be agreed by everyone. But there is one thing that must be kept in mind. The binding of Revelation 20 goes beyond the defeat of Satan in Revelation 12. The Bible – including the book of Revelation – has a three-level view of the universe. There is heaven, the earth and the abyss. According to the book of Revelation Satan once had authority in heaven, but he lost it. In the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ Satan was thrown out of heaven to the earth. But in Revelation 20 Satan's defeat is yet greater, and he is thrown down from the earth into the abyss. The removal from heaven to earth is a very definite event. The removal from earth to the abyss is another definite event – but they are not exactly the same idea. If Revelation 12 refers to what happens to Satan through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, Revelation 20 must certainly and indisputably refer to something additional to the defeat of Satan that took place at the cross. The 'gospel-age millennialists' are absolutely right to say that Satan was defeated at the cross<sup>□1</sup>; I am agreeing with them. But Revelation 20 is indisputably something greater than Revelation 12. Revelation 20 is a restricting of Satan that goes **further** than the binding that took place at the cross.

□1 John 12:31;  
Luke 11:22;  
Colossians 2:15

## 3. 'Heaven millennialism'

• *Requires first physical resurrection*

3. In connection with Revelation 20:4–6 there is also an interpretation (which is often combined with 'gospel-age millennialism'<sup>□1</sup>) that I could call '**heaven-millennialism**'. The millennium (it is said) is heaven. The Christian who dies for his faith is 'resurrected' to glory. His soul is raised to heaven and Satan cannot touch him. My only comment at the moment is this: this view of the matter is somewhat easier to hold if one believes that there is a preliminary resurrection at death.<sup>a</sup> It is easier to believe that 'the first resurrection' refers to a **physical** resurrection than to some kind of resurrection of the soul!

□1 20:1-3

## 4. 'Post- millennialism'

4. **Some interpreters believe that the casting of Satan into the abyss is to take place at some stage in church history but before the second coming of Jesus.** They are called 'post-millennialists' because they believe that the second coming is to be after ('post') the event of Revelation 20:1–3. On this view Revelation 20 refers to a period of eventual success in the preaching of the gospel in this gospel-age.

## 5. Millennium and judgement day identical

5. Is there any other possibility? If one looks only at Revelation 20:1–6 **one might be tempted to think that the millennium and the judgement day are identical.** Judgement day is itself a long epoch of time. Could it be that judgement day and the thousand years are two ways of looking at the same thing? Revelation 20:1–6 would make good sense if interpreted along these lines as being a description of judgement day. But there is difficulty when one reaches Revelation 20:7–10. . Is Satan to be temporarily released on judgement day? Surely not.

• *Binding takes place before the end of the world*

• *Follow carefully on from Revelation 1-19*

• *First view – that Satan’s descent into the abyss takes place during church history (before the second coming)*

• *Revelation 20:1–3 refers to a latter-day intensification of the devil’s already-accomplished defeat*

• *We may expect a ‘golden age’ within the gospel-age.*

• *Binding – at the cross*

• *Abyss – when the power of the blood of Christ is pressed against Him*

So far we have looked mainly at Revelation 20:1–3. At this point the end of the world has not been fully accomplished and Satan is not in the lake of fire. So this ‘binding’ certainly takes place before the end of the world.

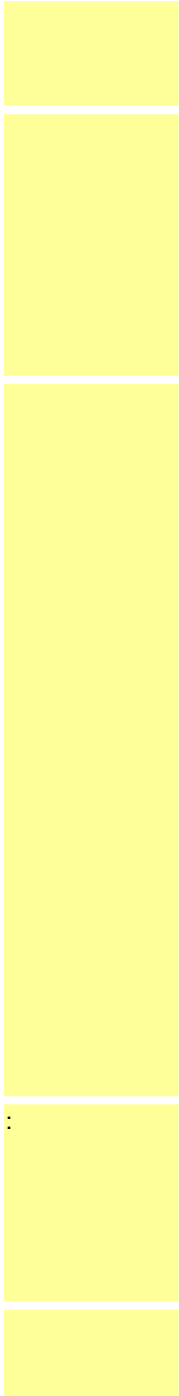
I believe that the best way to approach Revelation 20 is to follow carefully what we have been seeing in Revelation 1–19. This is always a good approach to any passage in the Bible. Any passage of Scripture normally fits in with what has been said before. When one works through a book of the Bible in detail, one is sometimes a bit fearful about being unable to understand a difficult passage that one knows is coming up later in the book. But then it often happens that by the time you get to the difficult passage it is not so difficult after all! Let us try this approach to Revelation 20.



I have mentioned several ways in which Revelation 20:1–3 has been taken. Basically there are three that deserve consideration. Let us come back to the view that **the throwing of Satan into the abyss is to take place at some stage in church history before the second coming of Jesus. It could be called ‘victory-of-the-gospel millennialism’ or ‘latter-day-glory millennialism’.** This is the view that at some stage in the gospel-age, before the coming of Jesus, Satan is defeated more than he has ever been defeated before, and that the gospel triumphs among the nations. There seems to me to be very good reason for interpreting Revelation 20 along these lines, because it fits with much that has already been said in the book. In the light of the whole book I believe that **Revelation 20:1–3 refers to a latter-day intensification of the devil’s already-accomplished defeat.** It is true that the devil was defeated at the cross. Revelation 12 has made that plain. Yet Revelation 20 obviously goes beyond Revelation 12. On the other hand, an after-the-second-coming millennium is highly unlikely. There is nowhere else in Scripture where it is taught clearly and indisputably, and there are places where the coming of Christ and the end-of-the-world are one and the same occasion. There are good reasons in Revelation 1–19 for thinking that Revelation 20:1–3 refers to an intensification within the gospel-age of the defeat of the devil that has already taken place. It is a **further** reduction in Satan’s power that comes about by the preaching of the gospel. We may expect a ‘golden age’ within the gospel-age.

If you ask me when the binding takes place I answer: at the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you ask me when the throwing into the abyss takes place I answer: when the cross is preached and applied to Satan throughout the world. Satan is ‘thrown to the abyss’ when the power of the blood of Christ is pressed against him. ‘They overcame him – threw him to the abyss, one might say – by the blood of the Lamb . . .’

**Note**

a. See my comments on 2 Corinthians 5:1 in M.A. Eaton, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, Preaching Through the Bible (IBTB, 2011), ch. 95.



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