

Revelation 6: 1 - "The 4 Major Views of the Book of Revelation" - Part 3-
"Amillennialism continued", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on January 21st, 2007, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

I am trying to give you an overview of the 4 major views of the Book of Revelation, beginning with the Amillennial view of this book. Last week I delivered to you the view of William Hendriksen on this Book, and I spoke to you about the things that I believe that we should all, as Christians, be able to receive from this teaching. There are many good truths in the system of Amillennialism, which are principles of interpretation, that will stand, and they need to be preached and understood by all Christians. The truth that Christ has bound Satan and defeated him by His death at the cross, and that as a result of this that all of God's Elect will most certainly be called and saved. The truth that Christ is presently reigning at the right hand of the majesty on high over His kingdom on the earth and that we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. The truth that because of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross that the barrier between Jew and Gentile has been torn down and now they are one new entity in the sight of God. There is not two programs that God has; one for the Church, and one for Israel. The Church is the Israel of God in this sense; that Gentiles were brought into it to be together with the believing Jews in the times of the Apostles, and all during this Church age from beginning to the end of it, it is so. This is described in Acts 15: 11. Peter says there, "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they." That is; those who had been circumcised, the Jews. And James in that same Chapter, verse 13, says, "Men and Brethren, listen to me: 'Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.'" "And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up.'" "So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who does all these things." So whatever future degree of conversion work that will take place among the Jews, and I believe that it will be very great in the future; they will be brought into the Church of Jesus Christ. These are all truths that should be believed and embraced warmly by all orthodox Christians. But they are not, as we shall see when we come to speak of Pre-Millennial Dispensationalism.

But this afternoon I want to conclude our overview of Amillennialism by examining its view of the Millennium itself, which is where I think that the greatest deficiency of this system lies. I am trying to show you that in order to make progress in understanding the book of Revelation that we must gather up all the truth that we possibly can from any of these four major systems of interpretation and hold to it; while we drop ideas which do not appear to line up with the Bible. This does not mean that we should be Pan-Millennial in the end. It means that we should just keep studying. Let me ask several questions this afternoon which I hope will lead to a greater understanding of both Amillennialism and Post-Millennialism.

The Question of this Afternoon is this- Is the Millennium of Revelation 20 to be strictly equated with the binding of Satan which is mentioned in the gospels?

This question could be phrased in another way. Does the use of the word "binding" as it is used by our Lord in Matthew 12: 29 refer directly, and in the same sense of application, to the way that the word "binding" is used by the Apostle John in the book of Revelation? Amillennialists believe that it is. But let's turn over to Matthew 12: 29 first, and look at that

verse and its context, and then we will turn over to Revelation 20: 2 and we will look at that verse and its context. And then we will try to decide if it is so. Let's try to set the context.

First Matthew 12.

Jesus in verse 22 has healed a man, one who was brought to Him who was demon-possessed; he was both blind and mute. Jesus healed him so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. And the conclusion of the multitudes was a just one. They said, "Could this be the Son of David?" That is the proper deduction. But the Pharisees when they heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." They are trying to attribute Jesus' power to cast out demons to a demonic source and not the true source which was the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the unforgivable sin, as is mentioned in verse 32. "But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.'" "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself." "How then will his kingdom stand?" And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out?" "Therefore they shall be your judges." "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you." Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his good, unless he first binds the strong man."

We have here in the first place Jesus literally performing a spiritual cure. He very truly and really cast out the demon from this man. His ability to do this was based upon Who He is; the Son of God. He had been given direction and authority from His Father to do these miraculous works to attest to Who He was and what He came to do. Jesus came into the world to destroy the works of the devil, as it says in 1 John 3: 8. Here He is doing that very thing. In explaining to the Pharisees the fact that Satan does not work against his own kingdom, Jesus uses an illustration, He pictures an example. "How can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man?" The answer is, "No one can." He is saying that Satan holds on to, and guards his own "house". This house is all those who make up his spiritual kingdom and are under his rule and dominion. They belong to him. He is not going to let them be taken from his clutches except by force. Those who are in this "house" of his are all the people who have ever lived who have not believed in the promise of God concerning salvation in Jesus Christ. When we are saved from our sins and converted to Jesus Christ, "He delivers us from the power of darkness and conveys us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1: 13 and 14) "He opens our eyes, in order to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that we may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Him." (Acts 26: 18) So the Lord Jesus, in order to rescue this man and others who are the Elect children of God, must first "bind" the strong man, that is Satan, and then he can plunder him and rescue those who are "held captive by him to his will." (2 Timothy 2: 26) He then "spoils" or "plunders" him.

Surely Jesus does this in regard to every one of God's Elect. Surely the basis of His having the right to do this was His death on the cross, which had not taken place yet when this incident occurred in Matthew 12. Hebrews 2: 14 says, "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, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." So the basis of the destruction of all of Satan's works and the destruction of his power to hold people in bondage, having been subject to fear and what would happen to them in the day of

judgment when their sins would be brought up. Jesus frees the one believing in Him from this fear, this bondage, this tyranny of Satan. The binding of verse 29 of chapter 12 most certainly refers to what Jesus came to do when He came in the Incarnation, when He went about doing good by freeing people who were bound by Satan with diseases or demon-possession, and this binding was established for the salvation of all of God's Elect at the cross where Jesus died. There He paid the penalty for our sins, and there was the basis of our being rescued. So the binding of Satan that is spoken of in Matthew 12, and in other places under different figures, pictures, and illustrations used in the speech of our Lord are most definitely related to our salvation from sin, our deliverance from the oppression and possession of Satan, and some of the diseases which men have been subject to. I am thinking of Luke 13: 10-16 after Jesus healed a woman who "had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up." "But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, 'woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.'" "He laid hands on her, and immediately she was made straight." This was done on the Sabbath day and the ruler of the synagogue protested it. But our Lord gives this very revealing answer. He said, "Hypocrite!" "Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it?" "So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" Satan had her bound; Jesus in compassion released her and delivered her from that bondage. So He does with all of those who believe in Him for deliverance from their bondage to Satan. It is directly tied to His death on the cross which purchase was made of believers to be redeemed from sin and death. Satan had the power of them before conversion in terms of temptation, oppression and

Now let's turn over to Revelation 20.

"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand." "He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.; 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 a little while." "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 worshipped 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." "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." Amillennialists believe that the thousand years or the Millennium has an earthly aspect, which is found in verses 1-3. And it has a heavenly aspect which is referred to in verses 4-6. The "thousand years on earth refers to the devil being bound with reference to the conversion of the Elect in every generation in the Church age. Satan is bound in one particular respect which is named for us in the text; "so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years are ended." The devil is not bound absolutely. He is on a long chain. He cannot destroy the Church or the gathering of the Elect into it by all of his most crafty efforts during the whole time from the time of Christ's birth to almost the end of the age. He will be released "for a little season" at the end of the age to deceive many; if possible, "the very Elect." But this is not possible. But then verses 4-6 speak of a heavenly reign during the thousand years, that is during the whole of the Church age. This aspect of the Millennium is pictured well in verse 4 when John saw "thrones and to those sitting on them was committed judgment." Then it says

that John saw "the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness, etc." Thrones refer to the place, which in heaven, say those who are Amillennial, and "souls" refers to the spirits of those just men made perfect. It especially has reference to the souls of the martyred dead. "The souls reign during this entire dispensation until Christ's second coming."(Hendriksen) "Afterward it is no longer the souls that reign." "No, then body and soul are together again." They live and reign where Jesus is; in heaven. "Therefore the thousand year reign takes place in heaven."(Hendriksen again) This reign consists of judging with Christ. They "sit down with Him on His throne", and as He judges from that throne, they judge with Him. Their souls live with Him in heaven in a perfect sin-free environment enjoying the immediate presence of God and Christ and the holy angels. They share the royal glory along with Christ. And Amillennialists believe that this is the first resurrection. "The first resurrection is the translation of the soul from this sinful earth to God's holy heaven." "It is followed at Christ's second coming by the second resurrection when the body, too, will be glorified."

This then is an overview of Amillennialism. It is indeed, I believe a good eschatology of principles which are true. I believe that we ought to receive almost all of these principles as true. I still must say, from my own study of the Bible and the writings of many men, that I believe that the thousand years during which Satan is bound do not refer to a time period which encompasses the entire Church age. The thousand years is restricted to a future time period which will take place after the Anti-Christian forces are destroyed in their ability to "deceive the nations" in their organized united form. This is what I believe is being pictured in chapter 19. Amillennialists and Premillennialists believe that chapter 19 pictures Christ's second coming. But the spiritual coming of Christ to judgment of false Babylon is what is pictured there, not His bodily 2nd coming. I believe that we are still "the Church in the Wilderness" of Revelation 12: 14. The 1260 days, the 42 months, the 3 1/2 year's time period is not finished yet. When we think of Christ's kingdom upon the earth, the Church's witness is still being overwhelmed by Antichristian doctrine even though God's elect are still being gathered. Yes, there have been times of great revival in the history of the Church. But, if we are presently in the Millennium I believe that the Lord would have had John write the 20th chapter where He chose to put chapter 6, verse 1; right here where we are in our study. That would have been the correct place for it in accordance with Amillennial thought, if we are presently in the Millennium. It should have been placed at the beginning of the prophetic section instead of near the end. But rather, Revelation 20 comes after all the battles and all the organized oppositions of Satan are destroyed in Revelation 19. The first word of chapter 20 which is the word "then", denotes a sequence in events. And they appear to be; that before the Millennium the Church must first endure great persecution and suppression of the truth of the gospel from her greatest enemies; false Babylon, a harlot riding a beast. She must the do battle with Christ's help to overcome those united Anti-Christian forces. (Chapter19) And then the Millennium will come. And Christ's Second Coming will come after that, and the day and the hour "no man will know." That appears to be the sequence to me, which is laid out for us in the book of Revelation. Next week we will take a look at the Preterist and Partial Preterist view.