

A Brief Defense of Premillennialism

Revelation 20:1-6

Arguments from Revelation	
Linear reading of Rev. 19—20	Chronological sequence established by chain of eight “then I saw” statements (19:11, 17, 19; 20:1, 4, 11, 12; 21:11) Unity of 19—20 in their defeat of all three members of unholy trinity: The beast and the false prophet at the second coming (19:20) and Satan’s binding at the millennium (20:1-3) and final defeat after the millennium (20:10). To separate the defeat of the beast and false prophet from the defeat of Satan (two verses later!) creates a disjointed reading. Additionally, upon Satan’s final defeat, he is thrown into the lake of fire “where the beast and the false prophet were” (20:10). The text clearly indicates that the beast and the false prophet were placed in the lake of fire first and that at some point later (1000 years) Satan joined them there. It is highly contrived to claim that the beast and the false prophet were thrown into the lake of fire sometime between 20:9 and 20:10
Binding of Satan	Satan is “seized,” then “bound,” then “thrown into the pit” which is then “shut” and “sealed over him” (20:2-3). And then, after the thousand years, Satan will be released from his “prison” (20:7). This is incredibly strong language speaking not just of the curtailing of one of Satan’s activities (deceiving the nations), but of his complete incarceration and imprisonment whereby he is capable of no influence on earth. However, the NT describes Satan as the “god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4) and the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2) who “prowls around like a roaring lion” (1 Pet. 5:8), for “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). If Satan is bound, then he must have an awfully long chain. (see also Acts 5:3; Eph. 6:12; Rev. 13:2 and for “deception,” Rev. 12:9) Satan is thrown into the “bottomless pit” [ἄβυσσος], or the “abyss” (Rev. 20:3). This is a technical term for a place of confinement for demonic spirits (Luke 8:31; cf. 2 Pet. 2:4) and can be locked and unlocked (Rev. 9:1-2).
Physical Resurrection	The verb “came to life” [ἐζήσαν] is used in 20:5 to describe physical resurrection. We are given no indication that this same verb in 20:4 should be understood as spiritual resurrection. This coming to life in 20:4 is labels as the “first resurrection” (20:5). The word “resurrection” <i>always</i> refers to physical resurrection in the NT, not once speaking of spiritual resurrection.

<i>Reign of Saints on Earth</i>	The Bible does not present believers in the intermediate state as reigning, but rather waiting (Rev. 6:9-10; cf. Heb. 10:12-13). And the church in the present age is called to “overcome” persecution (Rev. 2:11), hardly characteristic of ruling with a rod of iron. The anticipation of a kingdom reign for the saints in Revelation 5:10 is both physical (“on earth”) and future (“they shall reign”). See also 2:25-26; 19:15 and 1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:10. There is no indication in 20:4 that this reign of the saints with Christ is taking place in heaven, or, more specifically, in the throne room. Throughout Revelation, it is very clear when we are in the throne room. There are characteristic elements identified every time when this space is in view (the throne, twenty-four elders, four living creatures, the altar, etc.). None of these things are present in 20:4.
Arguments from Old Testament	
<i>Promises of God</i>	God made several promises to Israel in the OT which were never fulfilled. The eternal promise of the land to Abraham and his descendants never saw its anticipated large boundaries (Gen. 15:18). David’s son was supposed to sit on David’s throne on earth over Israel forever. This prophecy is affirmed in the NT (Matt. 19:28; Acts 1:6-7).
<i>Conditions Which Do Not Fit Present Age or Eternal State</i>	“Several Old Testament passages seem to fit neither in the present age nor in the eternal state. These passages indicate some future stage in the history of redemption which is far greater than the present church age but which still does not see the removal of all sin and rebellion and death from the earth.” (Wayne Grudem, <i>Systematic Theology</i>, 1127) • Sin (Isa. 60:12; Zech. 14:17) • Death (Isa. 65:20) • Aging (Zech. 8:4-5) • Marriage and childbirth (Isa. 65:23; cp. Matt. 22:30) • Temple worship (Ezek. 40—48; cp. Rev. 21:22) • Poor and needy (Psa. 72:8-14)
Arguments from Church History	
<i>Papius (c. 60 – c. 130)</i>	“In these (i.e. the writings of Papias) he says there would be a certain millennium after the resurrection, and that there would be a corporeal reign of Christ on this very earth; which things he appears to have imagined, as if they were authorized by the apostolic narrations, not understanding correctly those matters which they propounded mystically in their representations.” (Eusebius, <i>Eccl. Hist.</i>, 3.39)
<i>Justin Martyr (c. 100—165)</i>	“But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare.” (<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>)

<i>Irenaeus (v. 120—202)</i>	“it behooves the righteous first to receive the promise of the inheritance which God promised to the fathers, and to reign in it, when they rise again to behold God in this creation which is renovated, and that the judgment should take place afterwards. For it is just that in that very creation in which they toiled or were afflicted, being proved in every way by suffering, they should receive the reward of their suffering; and that in the creation in which they were slain because of their love to God, in that they should be revived again; and that in the creation in which they endured servitude, in that they should reign.” (V.32.1)
<i>All church fathers before A.D. 300 were premillennial</i>	Clement of Rome, Ignatius, <i>The Didache</i> , <i>The Epistle of Barnabas</i> , <i>The Shepherd of Hermas</i> , Melito of Sardis, Theophilus of Antioch, Apollinaris of Hierapolis, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Julius Africanus, Cyprian, Nepos, Coracion, Commodian, Victorinus of Pettau, Methodius, Lactantius
<i>Augustine’s (354—430) allegorical interpretation dominated the church for the next thousand years</i>	“This opinion [a future literal millennium after the resurrection] might be allowed, if it proposed only spiritual delight unto the saints during this space (and we were once of the same opinion ourselves); but seeing the avouchers hereof affirm that the saints after this resurrection shall do nothing but revel in fleshly banquets, where the cheer shall exceed both modesty and measure, this is gross and fit for none but carnal men to believe. But they that are really and truly spiritual do call those of this opinion Chiliasts.” (Augustine, <i>City of God</i> , X.X.7)
Philosophical Rationale¹	
There must be a successful reign of man from and over the earth where God tasked the first Adam to rule	
Jesus must have a sustained and visible reign in the realm where He was rejected	
There must be a vindication and reign of the saints in the realm where they were persecuted	
There needs to be a time in history when all aspects of the OT covenants and promises are fulfilled	

¹ Supplied by Michael Vlach