Millennium Transition Period

By Ed Stevens – Blue Point Conference 2017

INTRODUCTION:
• Read Revelation 20:1-6
• Notice that John does not stop to explain his concept of millennium. He just throws it out there without any definition or explanation.
• What does that assume? It means that John knew his readers were already familiar with it.
• So the first century Jewish Christians must have known what this concept was.
• And if we are going to understand it like they did, we have to go back to their writings of the first century to see what they said about it. And sure enough, when we look at the Talmud, Midrash, and Zohar, we find hundreds of references to this idea of the Messiah’s Millennium. It was also referred to as the Days of the Messiah.

What the Rabbis Taught about the Millennium:
• According to the rabbis in the Talmud, Midrash, and Zohar, the Millennium of the Messiah, or the Days of the Messiah was to be a transitional stage between the two worlds or ages.
• They debated whether this Messianic period would be at the End of This Age, or at the beginning of the Age to Come. But most of them agreed that the Messiah would appear near the end or at the end of This World (Age) to close out the old and usher in the new.
• And sure enough, that is exactly how the writers of the New Testament understood it. They saw themselves living in the last days of This World (Age) with the Messiah already in the process of closing out the old age and preparing to usher in the age to come.
• The Jews in general conceived of redemptive history as having two worlds (or ages):
  • This World (Age) and the World (Age) to Come (chart)
  • Olam Ha-zeh -- Olam Ha-bah
  • Days of the Messiah (Messiah’s millennium)
• See the article entitled: “What the Rabbis Taught About Millennium”
• See the Fulfilled magazine article: Heavens and Earth Cosmology
• See the chart and lesson on: This Age and the Age to Come

Binding of Satan

Rev. 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.

Rev. 20:2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

Rev. 20:3 and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

The Millennium begins with the Binding of Satan. What was this all about? Do we have any information in our New Testament which might help us pinpoint when this binding took place? We surely do. Look at Matt 12:22-29 (and its parallels in Mk 3:27 and Lk 11:21). This binding of Satan evidently took place at the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry in AD 26.
Matt. 12:22 Then a demon-possessed man *who was* blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw.

Matt. 12:23 All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, “This man cannot be the *Son of David* [the Messiah], can he?”

Matt. 12:24 But when the Pharisees heard *this*, they said, “This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.”

Matt. 12:25 ¶ And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand.

Matt. 12:26 “If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?

Matt. 12:27 “If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? For this reason they will be your judges.

Matt. 12:28 “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Matt. 12:29 “Or how can anyone enter the strong man’s house and carry off his property, unless he first BINDS THE STRONG MAN? Then he will plunder his house.

The First Resurrection

What Was the First Resurrection which also occurred at the Beginning of the Millennium?

Rev. 20:4 ¶ Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the *souls of those who had been beheaded* because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and *those who had not worshiped the beast* or his image, and *had not received the mark* on their forehead and on their hand; and they *came to life and reigned with Christ* for a thousand years.

Rev. 20:5 The REST OF THE DEAD did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.

Rev. 20:6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the FIRST RESURRECTION; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Notice that all of the folks who participated in the FIRST RESURRECTION seem to be martyrs. That was the Jewish understanding of resurrection (harvest typology). The firstfruits were to be raised first, then the rest of the dead later. That is exactly what we see here. This means we should expect to find a resurrection of martyrs sometime during Jesus’ earthly ministry before He ascended. And we have something like that mentioned in Matthew 27:52-53 –

**Matt. 27:52-53** The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the *saints who had fallen asleep were raised*; and coming out of the tombs *after His resurrection* they entered the holy city and *appeared to many*.

The binding of Satan and the resurrection of martyrs during the earthly ministry of Christ appear to be two very clear signals that the Millennium was already underway.
Millennial Reign of Christ

But there is a third thing that occurred during the millennium which we also need to keep in mind. It was the reign of Christ with His martyrs in heaven during the millennium (Rev 20:6):

**Rev. 20:5** The REST OF THE DEAD did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.

**Rev. 20:6** Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the FIRST RESURRECTION; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will REIGN WITH HIM FOR A THOUSAND YEARS.

**Rev. 20:7** When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison,

**Rev. 20:11** Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

**Rev. 20:12** And I saw THE DEAD, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and THE DEAD were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

**Rev. 20:13** And the sea gave up THE DEAD which were in it, and DEATH AND HADES gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.

**Rev. 20:14** Then DEATH AND HADES were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

Notice what Apostle Paul says about this millennial reign in his great discourse on the resurrection of the dead in 1Cor 15:23-26. This was the scripture which sealed the deal for me. When I saw what Paul says here, it dispelled all of my remaining doubts about the 40-year millennium concept. Notice what he says in verse 25 in particular:

**1Cor. 15:23** But each in his own order: Christ the FIRST FRUITS, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming,

**1Cor. 15:24** then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

**1Cor. 15:25** For HE MUST REIGN UNTIL He has put all His enemies under His feet.

**1Cor. 15:26** The last enemy that will be abolished is DEATH.

When we compare Rev 20:6-14 with 1Cor 15:23-26, we see the exact same ideas in both texts:

1. Christ and his firstfruits were raised first (first resurrection)
2. He reigns with those saints until the End (of the millennium)
3. All of his enemies, including DEATH, were crushed by the End of his reign
Purpose of the Binding of Satan

What was the purpose of this binding of Satan? John tells us that it was to prevent Satan from deceiving the Gentile nations into going to war against the Church:

- Rev 20:3 – “so that he would not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were completed”
- Rev 20:8 – “to deceive the nations . . . to gather them together for the war”
- Satan would not be allowed to influence the Gentile nations to persecute the Church until the end of the millennium. This sounds exactly like what happened in the book of Acts where we see the Jews persecuting the Church, but the Gentiles being very ambivalent and even protective toward the Christians. We see this same situation throughout the missionary work of Apostle Paul, where it was the Jews who stirred up persecution against him, and he used his Roman citizenship to protect him.

When Was Satan Released?

Near the end of the millennium John says that Satan would be released to deceive the nations to go to war against “the camp of the saints and the beloved city” (i.e., the Church).

- Rev. 20:7 When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison,
- Rev. 20:8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.
- Rev. 20:9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

Do we have any information to indicate when this loosing of Satan and his war against the Church might have occurred? We surely do, and it comes from Apostle Peter right near the end of that generation when he wrote his first epistle (AD 63-64):

- 1Pet. 5:8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, THE DEVIL, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
- 1Pet. 5:9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.
- 1Pet. 5:10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, establish you.

Sure enough within months after this statement was written by Peter we see the great fire in Rome and the Neronic persecution (great tribulation) unleashed upon the Church.
The War Against the Saints (Ad 64-66)

We noticed in Rev 20:8-9 above that when Satan was released, he deceived the Gentile nations into gathering together to make their final war upon the saints (the Beloved City). Most futurists think this war was the Roman war against the unbelieving Jews in AD 66-70. However, in view of the fact that the unbelieving Jews are never referred to as being “saints” in the book of Revelation (e.g., Rev 16:6; 17:6; 18:20, 24), it seems more appropriate to see this war as the Neronic persecution upon the Church (the real “saints”). Jesus called the Jews “sons of your father the Devil” and “brood of vipers”. Satan used the Jews to deceive Nero into blaming the fire of Rome upon the Christians, and Nero implemented that suggestion immediately. This very effectively launched the final war upon the Church (AD 64-66). When that great tribulation had pretty well run its course and eliminated most of the “saints”, Christ came in judgment upon the Jews. That war (the great tribulation) was cut short when the Jews rebelled against the Romans. Christ came to rescue his remaining living “saints” immediately after that tribulation (Matt 24:29-31), and to pour out his wrath upon the Jews. Thus ended the Messiah’s millennial reign when all of His enemies were completely shattered, including the final enemy Death itself, and the rest of the dead were raised out of Hades and judged.

**Rev. 20:10** And THE DEVIL who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

**Rev. 20:11** Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

**Rev. 20:12** And I saw THE DEAD, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and THE DEAD WERE JUDGED from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

**Rev. 20:13** And the sea gave up THE DEAD which were in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.

**Rev. 20:14** Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

**Rev. 20:15** And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Conclusion

The next chapter of Revelation (21) opens with the statement that the first heaven and earth had passed away, and that the new heaven and earth had arrived, with the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. This appears to mean that the end of the millennium had just occurred after the final war was over and all the dead were judged.

That perfectly corresponds with the Jewish rabbinical idea of the Messiah’s millennium being a transitionary period in the Last Days of “This World (Age)” in order to close out the old world order and usher in “The World (Age) to Come”, which was the New Heavens and Earth.
See all the charts and articles that came with this lesson outline for more info:

Millen_Rabbis.pdf
Last Days-ATC lesson.pdf
Last Days-ATC chart.pdf
Heavens and Earth Cosmology.pdf
Cosmology_Chart_new.pdf
Millen_Chart(new).pdf