

ESCHATOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

PART 9

AMILLENIALISM, PART 3

An amillennialist named Cox also claims the resurrection is found in John 4:25 and he too believes it is a spiritual resurrection. He goes on to claim that the new birth is a resurrection because those who are spiritually dead receive eternal life and that constitutes a resurrection. When referring to being raised to life in the sense of ἀναστασις, mortal bodies being given new, glorified bodily life is in view and not spiritual regeneration.

“Two types of resurrection are dealt with in the New Testament, and both are stressed. There are both a spiritual resurrection and a bodily resurrection. The first of these is the new birth, while the second is to take place at the *parousia* [the Second Coming]. Every Christian has already experienced the first resurrection; this took place the moment he surrendered his heart completely to Christ as Savior and Lord. Until that time the person was dead. ... Paul, the theologian *par excellence*, teaches in the same verse [Eph. 2:1, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins.”] that those who once were dead have been made alive (resurrected, brought from the dead) through Christ. ... This apostolic teaching was concurred in by such outstanding church fathers as Origen and Augustine, and was the teaching of most if not all the Reformers. John Calvin and Martin Luther preached it strongly. In chapter 5 of John’s Gospel our Lord speaks of two resurrections. These are the only two types of resurrection ever mentioned by Jesus. We believe he covered the entire subject in these verses. If this be so, then every mention of resurrection in the Bible must harmonize with one of these two. He spoke clearly and to the point. Here, as in all Bible study the obscure passages must be interpreted by the clear ones. Upon examining these two resurrections (John 5:24-29), one sees their different characteristics. 1. One is present, the other future. 2. One is spiritual, the other is physical. 3. One is restricted to believers, the other includes everyone. ... All these blessings [for believers] will reach fruition at the second resurrection ...” [William E. Cox, *Amillennialism Today*, pp. 99-100].

It is interesting to note that Cox places a false gospel in the middle of all this when he says the first resurrection is for those who have surrendered their hearts completely to Christ as Savior and Lord. He is making the claim that the new birth is a resurrection because we pass from spiritual death into eternal life. The problem for this is the resurrection pertains only to the body; resurrection is not a spiritual issue in terms of regeneration. There are two resurrections identified in the Scriptures but not two types of resurrections. Every person, saved and unsaved, will eventually be resurrected but unbelievers are certainly never born again. The resurrection and its relation to all people, saved and unsaved, cannot be fully understood if resurrection is said to be regeneration to eternal life from spiritual death for believers. Resurrection never carries that meaning. Then, in another place acknowledging that bodily resurrection is for both believers and unbe-

lievers is confusing. Notice the reliance he places on Origen and Augustine and on the tradition established by Calvin, Luther, and most of the Reformers. This is not exegesis. We've discussed at length the errors introduced into Christianity by Origen and Augustine by virtue of their Greek philosophical mindset. These errors continued on in the Protestant churches through these Augustinian Reformers and they are still very much evident today.

Concerning the presence of evil in the Kingdom, we will examine a plausible explanation for this revolt at the end of the Tribulation and it is based on Isaiah 65:20 which is a Millennial Kingdom Scripture.

Isaiah 65:20 ²⁰“No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, Or an old man who does not live out his days; For the youth will die at the age of one hundred And the one who does not reach [אָזְנָה] the age of one hundred Will be thought accursed. [NASB]

Isaiah 65:20 ²⁰There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed. [ASV]

Isaiah 65:20 ²⁰In her, a nursing infant will no longer live only a few days, or an old man not live out his days. Indeed, the youth will die at a hundred years, and the one who misses a hundred years will be cursed. [HCSB]

The NASB isn't as clear as it could be in the translation of this verse; actually, they really changed the meaning which made it unclear. It is specifically the sinner who will die at one hundred years of age. The Hebrew word אָזְנָה (*hā·ṭā'*) is the primary word used to mean sin. The basic meaning of the root is to miss a mark, miss the way, or fail. That's why the HCSB used the word “misses” to translate it. The ASV has the better translation for the context, “... the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed.” We often define sin as missing the mark. Fruchtenbaum explains this verse very well. This will further our understanding of how so many people will be alive and rebel at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. Amillennialists cannot comprehend this because once Christ returns, they believe eternity begins and no people with a sin nature will be alive to sin. Because they have redefined the Kingdom and denied its literal existence, they cannot accommodate sin being present in a literal Millennial Kingdom.

“Verse 20 is especially significant, for it discusses life and death in the Kingdom. This verse teaches several things. *First*: there will no longer be any infant mortality in the Millennium; everyone who is born in the Kingdom will reach a certain age. *Second*: the specific age at which one may die is the age of one hundred. With infant mortality removed, everyone born in the Millennium will live at least until his hundredth year of life. Because of the prolongation of life in the Millennium, those who die at the age of one hundred will be considered as having died young. *Third*: this verse limits the people dy-

ing at the age of one hundred to those who are sinners; namely, unbelievers, as only they would be considered *accursed*. So, then, death in the Kingdom will be for unbelievers only.

Comparing this passage with what is stated about salvation in other passages, the entire concept of life and death in the Kingdom can be summarized as follows. When the Kingdom begins, all natural men, both Jews and Gentiles, will be believers. The Jews in their entirety will be saved just prior to the Second Coming of the Messiah. All unbelieving Gentiles (goats) will be killed during the seventy-five day interval between the Tribulation and the Millennium, and only believing Gentiles (sheep) will be able to enter the Kingdom. However, in the process of time, there will be birth in the Kingdom of both Jews and Gentiles. These newly born, natural people will continue to inherit the sin nature from their natural parents and will also be in need of regeneration. Although Satan is confined, thus reducing temptation, the sin nature is quite capable of rebelling against God apart from satanic activity. In time, there will be unsaved people living in the Kingdom in need of regeneration. As in the past, the means of salvation will be by grace through faith and the content of faith will be the death of Messiah for sin and His subsequent resurrection. Those born in the Kingdom will have until their hundredth year to believe. If they do not, they will die in their hundredth year. The unbeliever will not be able to live past his first century of life. However, if they do believe, they will live throughout the Millennium and never die. Thus, death in the Millennium will be for unbelievers only. This is why the Bible nowhere speaks of a resurrection of millennial saints. This is why the resurrection of the Tribulation saints is said to complete the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6). It is also clear from the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 that there will be no Jewish unbelievers in the Kingdom; all Jews born during the Kingdom will accept the Messiah by their hundredth year. Unbelief will be among the Gentiles only and, therefore, death will exist only among the Gentiles." [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, pp. 382-383.

There will be people born in the Kingdom with sin natures who will have to come to faith. If they refuse to believe, they will die at 100 years of age. Since, apart from this, there will be no death in the Kingdom every baby will survive and no woman will die in childbirth. Every family will probably have numerous children who will live to have children of their own. You can imagine the geometric growth in the earth's population during this time. Only a relatively few people will survive to enter the Kingdom but the combination of a high birth rate and no deaths due to anything other than rebellion, the population will dramatically and rapidly increase. In the final century of the Millennium, an amazingly large number of people will be born; therefore, those children will not yet be 100 years old when the 1,000 year mark is reached. Apparently, many of them will still be unbelievers and they will join Satan in the final rebellion against God. Not only does this model explain the presence of evil in the Kingdom, but it explains how there will be so many people who will be able to rebel against the King at the end of the Millennial Kingdom.

Revelation 20:7–8 ⁷When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, ⁸and 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.

In order to get an idea of how the population growth pattern might work in the Millennial Kingdom, we can examine the history of earth's population in comparison. "Until modern times the growth of our numbers was slow and variable. A pronounced expansion began with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, about two centuries ago. Whereas tens of thousands of years passed before our species reached the one billion mark [we would say about 6,000 years], around 1800 AD, it took only 123, 33, 14, 13, 12 and 13 years to add each succeeding billion [to reach a current population of 7.2 billion in 2013]." [www.eoearth.org/view/article/153596 accessed 21 April 2016].

The earth's population began to exponentially increase when living conditions improved. Better health care, economic improvement, good housing, and educational improvements have all served to give an assist to boosting the human population. But we have to remember there is still a one to one ratio in terms of birth to death in the sense that every person born will one day die in less than 100 years. Child bearing years are limited to a relatively short period of time. The only way for the population to grow is for more people to survive to adulthood and produce their own children in sufficient numbers to not only be replaced but to increase the population.

Knowing that, imagine a Millennial Kingdom where almost no one will die, all children will grow to adulthood and produce their own children, women will not die in childbirth, and every family will bear numerous children. There will be no accidental deaths and no deaths due to disease. If the earth's population can exponentially increase as it is today in a world with disease, war, starvation, and other manners of death, and many nations of the world not bearing enough children to even replace themselves, how much more then will the earth's population increase under these perfect conditions? The point is the last century of the Millennium will see billions of people born and not reach their one hundredth birthday before Satan is released. Many of them will rebel against the King and join forces with Satan. This scenario accounts for the huge number of people who rebel at the end of the 1,000 years.

This is my explanation and it may or may not be correct, but it seems to be the most plausible way to explain the final rebellion and the large number of people who will participate in it. The Bible clearly says this rebellion will happen with a huge number of people participating in it. The presence of evil is easy to explain. Mortal humans with sin natures will populate the Kingdom from the beginning.

Amillennial theologians, who do not believe there will be a literal 1,000 year Messianic Kingdom after the Second Coming of Christ that will be populated by born again people living out the second tense of salvation, which we call sanctification, cannot possi-

bly understand how there can be evil and a final rebellion in that Kingdom. They deny the literal Kingdom and place it in this age and use that to explain evil in this age and a rebellion at the end of this age after which the third tense of salvation, glorification, is implemented for all people.

It was previously mentioned that amillennial theologians claim that Satan is bound at this time and is therefore not exercising all the authority God allowed him to exercise before the First Advent but yet he is still able to deceive people to the extent they are prevented from believing the gospel. Christ's return to earth is documented in Revelation 19:11-16. It is only after that event that Satan is bound and incarcerated in the abyss. Amillennial doctrine in this area does not comport with Scripture.

Revelation 20:1–3 ¹Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ²And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³and 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; [ἵνα μὴ πλανήσῃ ἔτι τὰ ἔθνη ἄχρι τελεσθῆ τὰ χίλια ἔτη] after these things he must be released for a short time.

Amillennialists deal with the issue of Satan's binding by claiming that he is bound now in the figurative sense which they define as his power is limited but not abrogated as it would be if he were completely cut off from the world by being locked in the abyss. Cox says that Satan was bound at the first advent but he still goes around like a roaring lion seeking to destroy people. At the First Advent, Christ bound Satan (Matt. 12:28-29). Cox claims that Christ could not have performed His miracles unless Satan was first bound. [William E. Cox, *Amillennialism Today*, p. 59]. Amillennialists believe binding Satan has to do with the Kingdom being here now, but, of course, it is not. "It should be borne in mind that the Bible often uses the word 'bind' to designate the limitation of power. This is the sense in which John uses the term here as the context bears out. John definitely is speaking in figurative language since a spiritual being (Satan) certainly could not be bound with physical keys, chains, and the like. John says that Satan is bound in a particular respect, i.e., 'that he should deceive the nations no more.' This is the only sense in which this passage says that Satan is bound. In other words, it merely says that one portion of his power has been limited for a period of time. ... Satan's power to deceive the nations has been limited, because *all authority had been given unto Christ.*" [Cox. pp. 62-63].

What a low view of God and Scripture to suggest that it is silly to suppose that Satan could be literally, physically bound and confined. Is it not possible that the Creator God of the universe, Satan's Creator, can actually, physically confine a created spirit being to a place where he can no longer deceive the nations and render him ineffective for as long as He, God, desires to do so? The abyss is certainly a literal place. Why can't keys and chains be literal as well? Even if they are figurative, which I am not granting, they are used to mean God can actually, literally confine Satan and eliminate, not just

limit or curtail, his activity from planet earth for 1,000 years. Chain, ἄλυσις, means a chain with metal links used for binding. It is used 11 times in the New Testament and every use carries this meaning. There is no exegetical basis for interpreting it in any other way in Revelation 20:1. One commentator defended the literal understanding of chains this way: "It has been argued that spirit beings cannot be bound with literal chains. On this objection, let it be noted that spirit beings are real beings; therefore, real chains can bind real beings. Certainly the spirit world is not symbolic! Why is it not logical and reasonable to consider the chain of Revelation 20 as literal a chain as necessary to bind a literal spirit being—the old serpent?" [J. B. Smith, *A Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, p. 268].

Deception is the standard operating procedure for the father of lies (John 8:44); therefore, to shut down his deception operation is to render him inactive. If Satan can literally be cast out of heaven and kept from reentering, why can't he literally be cast into and confined within the abyss and prevented from exercising any deceptive influence on the world? That's not a problem for God. This verse does not say Satan's power is limited; it says he would have no power to deceive any more the nations until the thousand years are completed.

One amillennialist claims the entire book of Revelation is symbolic based on Revelation 1:1, but is this accurate? He claims, "Starting with its very first verse, Revelation conveys information in symbolic form (see 1:1, where the whole book is said to be a predominantly symbolic communication). 'I looked,' 'I saw,' or similar expressions, used repeatedly by John to introduce symbolic visions appear in 20:1 and 20:4, likely indicating that these visions be interpreted symbolically. What John sees and hears constitute the vision he has seen, which must then be interpreted *first* symbolically. This vision, with words like dragon, chain, abyss, serpent, locked, sealed, and beast is no exception to the rule." [G. K. Beale, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary*, p. 421].

Revelation 1:1 ¹The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,

Is there anything in this verse to suggest it should be understood only symbolically? It says this is a Revelation of Christ Jesus which God has given to His bond-servant John via the agency of an angel. There is nothing symbolic about God providing Revelation through an angel unless one denies the literal truth of all the prior revelation in Scripture communicated by an angel and there is no reason to do so here. Certainly, this commentator does not believe the words communicated to Mary by Gabriel in Luke 1:26-38 announcing her pregnancy are only symbolic does he? John's visions are not simply symbolic; whatever they are they have a real, literal meaning. In Revelation 12:9, the dragon and the serpent are identified as Satan. These names are descriptors of Satan's character and they were used in the Bible to refer to Satan. The fact that they are figurative has no meaning in and of itself; the figurative language represents a literal

meaning. I wonder if this commentator thinks he was literally sealed by the Holy Spirit when he came to faith or if his seal was only symbolic. The seal we have has real meaning. It is a down payment that promises us and assures us our salvation will be completed. It is a real seal carrying a real promise. The meaning of seals in ancient times to seal documents and various other things such as the Lord's tomb were real seals representing a literal truth. The seal placed over the abyss by God to keep Satan imprisoned is just as real and no being can open it because no being is greater than God. The only reason to use a symbolic interpretation is to avoid the obvious contradictions to his theology if a literal hermeneutic is employed. We must always keep in mind that any symbolism used in the Bible, and Revelation does have a lot of it, always has a literal meaning. Literal meanings are never to be determined by our theology but by an exegetical examination of the text.

What a blasphemous view of Jesus Christ to suggest that the Lord can't perform a miracle if Satan is not bound as Cox suggested. Where in the Bible can that doctrine be found [they claim Matthew 12:28-29 as their proof text]? The point of Satan being bound is to remove his influence completely from the world during the Millennial reign of Christ. The Greek is pretty clear in Revelation 20:3: [my literal word for word Greek to English translation] "in order that not he would deceive any more the nations until were completed the thousand years." That's pretty clear even in a very clumsy English word for word translation. It says nothing about limiting Satan's power; it says he cannot exercise any power to deceive at all.

Matthew 12:29 ²⁹"Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

Matthew 12:29 does not say what amillennialists claim it says, but they all use this verse to justify their doctrine that Satan is now bound. The Lord is simply saying that "in order for the kingdom conditions to exist on earth, Satan must first be bound. By this statement He previews John the Apostle's discussion in Revelation 20. Jesus does not say He has bound Satan or is even in the process of doing so. He simply sets the principle before the Pharisees. His works testify to His ability to bind Satan, and therefore they attest His power to establish the kingdom." [Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew*, p. 164]. Satan must be bound during the Kingdom and that is a future event. Satan is not bound now and the Messianic, Millennial Kingdom is not here now in any way.

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