

God's Gracious Covenant With Israel:

The Foundation For Worldwide National Covenanting #13 (Pt. 1)

Revelation 20:1-10
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In the last sermon in this series, we noted that in the following sermons we would be considering some different eschatological interpretive systems as it relates to the restoration of Israel, and the blessings Christ has promised to bring upon this world in the future. The surveys of these different systems are not intended to be exhaustive or minutely detailed, but rather brief overviews. In the last sermon, the system of Premillennialism was considered, and a Scriptural case (from Romans 11 and 1 Corinthians 15) was presented as to why Premillennialism is an erroneous system contrary to the doctrine of God's Word.

This Lord's Day, we move on to consider the eschatological system of Amillennialism. The word "Amillennial" literally means no-millennium. But that is not really an accurate description of this interpretive system because those who hold this view do believe in a millennium—however it is not a millennium upon earth, but a spiritual millennium in heaven. According to Amillennialism, on earth Satan is bound for a symbolic period of one thousand years so that he cannot prevent the Gospel of Christ going into the nations of this world or prevent the drawing of elect individuals from these nations unto Christ. During the same symbolic thousand year period of time in which Satan is bound upon earth, the dead in Christ live and reign with Christ in heaven as glorified souls. Some Amillennialists have preferred to call their interpretive system "realized millennialism" because after Christ ascended into heaven all who die in Christ immediately enter into the heavenly millennium as glorified souls to live and reign with Him. Thus, according to Amillennialism, the

Christian and the Christian Church do not anticipate millennial blessings upon earth wherein the nations of this world will come to Christ and Israel as a nation will turn to Christ. To the contrary, the millennial blessings are only spiritual in nature and are being realized in heaven when the souls of Christians are glorified at death and enter into their heavenly joy. After this symbolic thousand year period in which Satan is bound on earth and the saints live and reign with Christ in heaven, Christ will return bodily at His Second Coming wherein all of the dead shall be raised and judged with the eternal state to follow. Let me say that this **GENERALLY** represents the Amillennial interpretive system, although there may be variations among Amillennialists on some details.

I certainly believe the Scripture teaches that the glorified souls of Christians enjoy amazing blessings in heaven which Christ has prepared for all who die in Christ. The dead in Christ do live with Christ presently in heaven ("Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord" 2 Corinthians 5:6). And so we do not want to minimize or overlook the present heavenly glory that awaits all who die in the Lord. I also believe the Scripture teaches that Christ's bodily Second Coming will occur AFTER the millennium as do Amillennialists. In my judgment, and most importantly, in the judgment of Scripture, Revelation 20:1-10 does not teach that the millennium is realized in heaven, but rather that it is realized upon the earth (as I hope to demonstrate by God's grace in the following sermons). But let us first turn to Romans 11 and briefly review how Amillennialists (in general) interpret "and so all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26) with remarks demonstrating the errors of that interpretive system.

I. The Amillennial system briefly examined in light of the salvation of Israel as found in Romans 11. Amillennialists will interpret Romans 11:26a ("And so all Israel shall be saved") in one of two ways usually.

A. The first way that Amillennialists have interpreted “all Israel” is to refer to the salvation of all of God’s elect from both Gentiles and Jews, so that “all Israel” is not a distinct group of Israelites and is not the nation of Israel that is saved.

1. According to this first view, God continues His work of drawing out His elect from both Gentiles and Jews throughout history until “the fullness” (or full number—GLP) of the elect from the Gentiles has been saved (Romans 11:25) together with the “the fullness” (or full number—GLP) of the elect from the Jews has been saved (Romans 11:12), and by this means in God’s redemptive plan, “all Israel” (consisting of both Gentiles and Jews) will be saved. Now, theologically I agree that what is represented in this position is true (as taught in Galatians 6:16; Ephesians 2:11-22), but that is not what is meant by the salvation of “all Israel” in Romans 11:26.

2. For the Israel Paul has in view is clearly distinguished from the Gentiles in the previous verse (Romans 11:25). There Paul argues that a blindness or hardness has fallen judicially upon Israel as a nation for their rejection of Christ and the Gospel (the reason this is only “in part” is because God has an elect remnant from out of the nation that He is saving by grace during the time in which the nation of Israel has been hardened by God). But Paul states that the judicial hardness upon Israel as a nation will only last until the fullness of the Gentiles (or nations) is come into the Visible Church. And so in this way (by first bringing the Gentile nations of the world to Himself and then removing the veil of Israel’s hardness of heart as taught in 2 Corinthians 3:14-16), “all Israel” (i.e. Israel as a nation, the same Israel that was blinded or hardened) shall be brought to Christ and grafted back into the Visible Church of Christ. To maintain that Paul switches from the meaning of Israel as a nation (in Romans 10:21; Romans 11:2,7,25) to Israel as the Israel of God consisting of both Jews and Gentiles (in Romans 11:26) is simply obscuring the very

point that Paul is seeking to make in Romans 11, namely, that God is not finished with Israel as a nation, for though Israel as a nation is God's enemy presently (*de facto*) due to her rejection of Christ and the Gospel, she is nevertheless God's beloved (*de jure*, covenantally) due to the everlasting promises made to the fathers, for Israel's calling as an elect nation is without repentance (Romans 11:28-29).

B. The second interpretation that Amillennialists have used is that "all Israel" refers to the salvation of a remnant of God's elect from the nation of Israel.

1. It is argued that this distinction of an elect remnant within the nation of Israel is cited by Paul in Romans 9:6 and Romans 11:1,4-7. And that God is bringing that remnant of Israel according to the election of His grace to Himself individually and gradually throughout this present New Testament age until finally God will have saved "all" the elect individuals of this remnant of Israel. Again I have no problem with this position as a theological truth and a truth that is indeed taught in the very passages just cited. However, it is not the elect remnant from the Israel as a nation that Paul has in view in Romans 11:26 when he says, "And so all Israel shall be saved."

2. For the "all Israel" that Paul has in view is the same Israel that he has just argued in the previous verse (Romans 11:25) has been judicially blinded or hardened by God for her rejection of Christ and the Gospel. In fact, the "all Israel" that shall be saved previously did not obtain that which it sought, but the elect remnant did obtain it, while the nation as a whole was blinded or hardened (Romans 11:7). But Paul clearly states in Romans 11:25 that the judicial blindness or hardness upon the nation of Israel will only continue "until the fullness of the Gentiles (or nations) be come in". "And so in this way (by first bringing the Gentile nations of the world to Himself and then removing the veil of Israel's hardness of heart as taught in 2 Corinthians 3:14-16), "all Israel"

(i.e. Israel as a nation, the same Israel that was blinded or hardened) shall be brought to Christ and grafted back into the Visible Church of Christ. Whether it is Israel as a nation that was cast out, fell, stumbled, was broken off, or was hardened (according to the words of Paul in Romans 11), it is that very same Israel as a nation that Paul states shall be saved, for this judicial hardening shall be removed from Israel as a nation, and so all Israel as a nation shall be saved. Finally, the “all Israel” that shall be saved is presently the enemy of God due to her rejection of Christ and the Gospel of Christ (Romans 11:28). I submit that this makes it abundantly clear that Paul does not have in view the elect remnant that are being saved (like Paul himself) when he speaks of the future salvation of “all Israel”, for the elect remnant who are now being saved “at the present time” (Romans 11:5) are no longer the enemies of God, but the “all Israel” that shall be saved in the future are presently the enemies of God. If you want a fuller discussion of these points, you may want to review the first couple sermons in this series. Thus, I submit that the Amillennial interpretive system is not faithful to the inspired words and intent of the Apostle Paul (or more importantly the intent of the Holy Spirit) in Romans 11.

II. Amillennialism as an interpretive system briefly examined in light of Revelation 20:1-10. I realize I will not have time in one sermon to go into great detail or to elaborate extensively on chapters preceding and following Revelation 20. However, I hope even this brief survey may demonstrate the problems Amillennialists face from this portion of God’s inspired Word.

A. Let us first consider **Revelation 20:1-3** (in this sermon) as it relates to the binding of Satan for a thousand years.

1. Generally, Amils interpret these verses as referring to a figurative binding or restraint placed upon Satan by Christ during this

symbolic thousand year period (“millennium” from the Latin word for thousand) so that he cannot prevent the spread (or taking) of the Gospel to the nations of the world. Thus, this symbolic thousand year period as it relates to Satan’s binding has reference to the earth. This symbolic thousand year period during which Satan is bound (according to Amils) began with the First Coming of Christ and stretches to the time when Satan is released after the millennium. For in the Gospels we see that Satan’s power was surely restrained by Christ (Matthew 12:29; Luke 10:18; John 12:31).

2. In response to the interpretation of Revelation 20:1-3 by Amils (and even some Postmils), let me note the following problems I see.

a. Although I agree that this passage figuratively pictures Satan being bound or restrained by Jesus Christ, and although I also agree that this restraint of Satan occurs for a symbolic thousand year period upon earth, I do not agree that Revelation 20:1-3 takes us back historically to begin this symbolic period of time at Christ’s First Coming.

b. For although it is true that Christ did restrain the power of Satan in delivering INDIVIDUALS from demons and setting them free to embrace the Gospel, and although Satan was judged and defeated (legally, *de jure*) by Christ in His death, resurrection and ascension, Christ did not restrain Satan (*de facto*) from deceiving the NATIONS of this world at His First Coming or until the end of the millennium. I believe Amils cannot reconcile their position with the stated end and purpose of Satan’s restraint: namely, “that he [i.e. Satan—GLP] should deceive the nations no more.”

c. To deceive (πλανᾶω) in a religious sense means to go astray or to be mislead into error and away from the Triune God and His truth as revealed in Scripture (throughout the Book of Revelation and elsewhere this is its meaning, e.g. Revelation 2:20; 12:9; 13:14; 18:23; 19:20; 20:3,8,10; Matthew 24:4,5,11,24). Thus, the restraint specifically

placed upon Satan during this symbolic thousand year period of time is that he will no longer be able to lead the nations astray from the Triune God and His revealed truth in Scripture. When Amils state that Satan is simply restrained from being able to prevent the spread of the Gospel to the nations of the world that only means that the Gospel cannot be prevented from being preached in the nations of the world, but that is not what the text states is the restraint placed on Satan.

d. Let me illustrate it this way. If Satan is restrained so that he cannot prevent the spreading or the preaching of the Gospel to an individual, that person may hear the Gospel but may reject it because he/she is yet deceived and blinded by Satan. But when Satan is restrained from deceiving and blinding an individual to whom the Gospel is preached, he/she will profess faith in Christ, because he/she is no longer deceived or misled; but to the contrary he/she now sees clearly and receives the Gospel by faith (as is taught in 2 Corinthians 4:3-6). Likewise, if Satan is only restrained so that he cannot prevent the spreading or preaching of the Gospel to the nations, those nations (as moral persons) may yet reject the Gospel because they are still deceived and blinded by Satan. But when Satan is restrained from deceiving and blinding the nations of the world to whom the Gospel is preached, they will profess faith in Christ, because they are no longer deceived or misled; but to the contrary they now see clearly and receive the Gospel by faith (as is taught with regard to what will happen when Israel as a nation turns to Christ, 2 Corinthians 3:14-16, cf. Romans 11:25-26). I submit that such an interpretation of the Holy Scripture (as promoted by the amil interpretive system) does not accurately or honestly expound the stated end and purpose of Satan's restraint.

e. Thus, if Satan is restrained so that he is no longer able to deceive the nations of this world, it must mean that the nations of this world (as moral persons through their national representatives by way of national covenants) will during this symbolic thousand year period of

time receive the Gospel of Christ and will all come into the Visible Church of Christ. If that is what the restraint placed upon Satan means, then we should surely expect to find some evidence of such an amazing period of time in the Scripture. And, of course, we find exactly such a glorious period of time prophesied to come (Revelation 11:15; Revelation 15:4; Romans 11:25,26; Matthew 28:18-20; Genesis 22:18; Psalm 72:11,17; Isaiah 2:2-4 etc.).

f. Finally, if what has been said is not sufficient testimony to overturn the Amil view that the binding of Satan and the symbolic thousand year period of time (as found in Revelation 20:1-3) began with the First Coming of Christ, then we should not expect to find any word in Scripture (let alone in the Book of Revelation itself) about the nations being deceived between the First Coming of Christ and the end of the symbolic thousand year period of time. Why? Because Satan is explicitly bound and restrained by Jesus Christ so that he should deceive the nations no more until the thousand years are fulfilled (Revelation 20:3). However, consider that the Book of Revelation prophesies that the nations of the world are in fact deceived (πλανᾶω) by Satan or by Satan's agents to whom Satan gives authority and power to deceive the nations of the world, and that this deception of the nations of the world is prophesied to occur during the very period of time in which (according to Amils) Satan is not suppose to be able to deceive the nations (i.e. from the First Coming of Christ to the end of the symbolic thousand year period of time): Revelation 13:14 [the beast from the earth or the false prophet "deceiveth them that dwell on the earth"]; Revelation 18:23 [concerning Mystery Babylon it is said, "for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived"]. Even though the word "deceive" is not explicitly used in the following passages, note that deception of the nations is certainly implied: Revelation 13:3c-4,7-8; Revelation 16:13-14; Revelation 17:12-15; Revelation 18:3.

(1) The deception of the nations cited (either explicitly or implicitly) in these various places in the Book of Revelation certainly did not occur before the First Coming of Christ (for Satan and his agents are said to war against the Lamb, Christ, Revelation 17:14; 19:19-20; Revelation 20:8). Thus, this deception of the nations referred to in these passages in Revelation must have occurred after the First Coming of Christ when according to the Amil system Satan was bound and restrained from being able to do so.

(2) Nor did the deception of the nations cited in these various passages in the Book of Revelation occur after the symbolic thousand year period of time (for it is these agents of Satan that Satan uses to deceive the nations of the world and yet these same agents are cast in the lake of fire before the symbolic thousand year period of time begins, Revelation 19:20. And these agents of Satan are nowhere to be found in the deception that Satan once again works upon the nations of the world when he is no longer restrained but once again goes about to deceive the nations of the world, Revelation 20:7-10). Thus, it must be concluded that this deception of the nations (cited in these many places in the Book of Revelation) occurs exactly during the period of time (between the First Coming of Christ and the end of the millennium) during which time (according to Amils) Satan is restrained so that he can no longer deceive the nations. Dear ones, Satan cannot be restrained by the Lord Jesus Christ from deceiving the nations and yet at the very same time deceive those very nations he is restrained from deceiving. This is a conspicuous problem (if not an outright contradiction) in the Amil interpretive system.

How thankful I am that Christ has already LEGALLY defeated (*de jure*) Satan, sin, and death by His death, resurrection and ascension. All things have already legally been put under His feet even if we do not see the practical outworking of that truth presently (*de facto*) according to

Hebrews 1:8. Christ has already LEGALLY triumphed over all His and your enemies and has led them captive (Colossians 2:15). Christ has already LEGALLY abolished death for you (2 Timothy 1:10). Christ has already LEGALLY destroyed the devil for you (Hebrews 2:14). Christ has already LEGALLY rendered sin powerless for you (Romans 6:6). LEGALLY, you are already raised from the dead because your covenant head has been raised (1 Corinthians 15:22-23). LEGALLY, you are already seated in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 2:6). LEGALLY, all spiritual blessings are yours (Ephesians 1:3). LEGALLY, all things present or things to come are yours in Christ, your covenant Head, because you are the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. It is all yours already LEGALLY because your covenant Head secured it for you. And the Lord calls you to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7) so that when you have needs in this life you might pray not according to that which is not yours, but rather according to that which is already LEGALLY yours—not deservedly yours, but graciously yours through the wonders of the Covenant of Grace.

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