

God's Gracious Covenant With Israel: The Foundation For Worldwide National Covenanting #16 (Pt. 4)

Revelation 20:7-10
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As we have considered for the past three sermons the interpretive principles which like a key unlock the door to an accurate understanding of Revelation chapter 20, we have noted that there are three distinct parts or sections that we must wisely interpret (by God's grace) in Revelation 20:1-10. There are three separate sections here, but three sections very dependent upon one another because in each of these three sections are found references to "a thousand years", which refer to the same thousand or millennium of years.

(1) **In the first section of Revelation 20**, we find this prophesied event by way of vision to John: The binding or restraining of Satan upon earth so that he is not able to deceive the nations of the world for a figurative millennium of years (Revelation 20:1-3).

(2) **In the second section of Revelation 20**, the effect upon the whole earth is felt with this Divine restraint of Satan firmly in place: Those nations that were previously deceived and blinded by Satan will see the light of the Gospel and by the Spirit of God will be brought into the Visible Church. In the vision John received, this is stated in terms of "the first resurrection", which is a figurative resurrection of the martyred saints in future millennial generations of Christians in the nations of the world who will come forth in the spirit and power of the martyred Christians (just as John the Baptist came forth in the spirit and power of Elijah). These millennial Christians will live and reign victoriously with Christ over their enemies in promoting the Cause of Christ and the Reformation of Church and State in the nations of the world for the same

figurative millennium of years in which Satan is bound and restrained from deceiving the nations of the world (Revelation 20:4-6).

(3) **In the third section of Revelation 20**, we are told: After the figurative millennium of years has passed, Satan will then be released and will not be restrained by Christ for “a little season” of time (Revelation 20:3) so that Satan once again will (as he previously did prior to the millennium) go forth to deceive the nations of the world to follow him and to rebel against Christ and to persecute the faithful followers of Christ. At the conclusion of this “little season” of time, the Lord will destroy by fire from heaven the nations that have followed Satan and will cast Satan once and for all into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7-10).

It may seem that this “little season” that occurs after the thousand years is relatively insignificant to the accurate interpretation of the millennium itself, but I submit, to the contrary, the “little season” is absolutely necessary to a faithful interpretation of the millennium that immediately precedes it. Let us then look more closely at this “little season” in the sermon before us today by asking the following two questions: (1) Why is the “little season” necessary to a faithful interpretation of the millennium? (2) Who are “the rest of the dead” (in Revelation 20:5a) that lived not again until the thousand years were finished?

I. Why is the “little season” necessary to a faithful interpretation of the millennium?

A. The reason why the “little season” is necessary to a faithful and accurate interpretation of the millennium is because the “little season” clearly and unequivocally tells us that the thousand years will come to an end and when the thousand years will come to an end in which the saints live and reign with Christ over their enemies. Why is that important?

1. First, it is important because however you interpret the “first resurrection” and however you interpret the living and reigning of the saints with Christ (whether you are Amil, Premil, or Postmil), when the “little season” begins, the “first resurrection” (which is the living and reigning with Christ) ends according to the inspired text in Revelation 20. In other words, the introduction of this “little season” after the millennium is intended by the Holy Spirit to alert us to the time upon the earth in which Satan’s restraint will have expired and to the time upon the earth in which the “first resurrection” (i.e. the “living and reigning with Christ”) will also have expired. For the inspired text first clearly states the temporal limits of Satan’s restraint in Revelation 20:2 (“and bound him **a thousand years**”), and second the inspired text just as clearly states the same temporal limits (not longer and not shorter) of the “first resurrection” (i.e. the living and reigning with Christ) in Revelation 20:4 (“they lived and reigned with Christ **a thousand years**”) and in Revelation 20:6 (“but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him **a thousand years**”).

2. Second, the “little season” is important to a faithful and accurate interpretation of the millennial period because whereas the thousand years describes two unparalleled blessings that shall occur upon the earth (first, the restraint of Satan so that he cannot deceive the nations of the world; and second, the worldwide effect of that restraint is the “first resurrection” wherein the formerly deceived and blinded nations of the world will be figuratively raised up in the spirit and power of the martyrs to live and reign with Christ), the “little season” describes the opposite and contrary evil effects upon the earth when the thousand figurative years of the millennium have expired and when Satan is no longer bound upon the earth and when the nations are no longer living and reigning with Christ in the spirit and power of the martyrs. The first evil consequence that occurs in the “little season” after the thousand years have expired is that when Satan is no longer bound upon the earth,

he is released and goes forth and deceives the nations of the world to follow him, to rebel against Christ, and to persecute the faithful Church of Christ (Revelation 20:3 and Revelation 20:7-8a). The second evil consequence that occurs in the “little season” after the thousand years have expired is that when the nations no longer live and reign upon the earth in the spirit and power of the martyrs, another worldwide confederation (identified as “the rest of the dead” in Revelation 20:5a and identified as “the nations” or “Gog and Magog” in Revelation 20:8) figuratively come to life and reign with Satan upon the earth. Thus, the “little season” demonstrates that the Divine blessings of the millennium upon the earth (the restraint of Satan and the living and reigning of the saints) have ended with the termination of the thousand years, and that the satanic evils of the “little season” upon the earth (the release of Satan and the victory of “the rest of the dead” or “Gog and Magog”) have begun with the termination of the thousand years. Just as you cannot say that Satan is any longer bound by Christ in the “little season” after he is released by Christ to deceive the nations, so you cannot say that the saints live and reign with Christ upon the earth in the spirit and power of the martyrs in the “little season” after “Gog and Magog” figuratively come to life and reign with Satan upon the earth. In other words, what made the millennium the millennium (namely, the restraint of Satan and the victorious reigning of the saints) is not present in the “little season” after the millennium has expired. Or to say it another way: The living and reigning of these two groups (namely, the saints and Gog and Magog) is not simultaneous (at the same time and in the same period of time), but is rather consecutive (one after the other—first the saints figuratively come to life in a worldwide reformation and a victorious reign with Christ for “a thousand years”, and then after the thousand years, Gog and Magog figuratively come to life in a worldwide apostasy and victorious reign with Satan for “a little season”).

3. Let's apply now these truths to the various interpretations of "the first resurrection" that we have considered in recent sermons.

a. Amillennialists believe that the "first resurrection" (Revelation 20:5b) and the living and reigning with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4) are enjoyed by all Christians who die and go to be with the Lord in heaven (during the intermediate state). But such a view cannot do justice to the words of Scripture in Revelation 20 that make it clear that the "first resurrection" and the living and reigning with Christ last for a thousand years and then come to an end after the thousand years have expired when Satan is released to deceive the nations and "the rest of the dead" (or Gog and Magog) figuratively come to life (during the "little season"). How can the glorified souls of the dead in Christ in heaven only enjoy the "first resurrection" and only live and reign with Christ for a thousand years just to have it come to an end during the "little season"? There can be no interruption to their living and reigning with Christ once Christians die and receive glorified souls. The Amil may assert that the "first resurrection" (Revelation 20:5b) and the living and reigning with Christ (Revelation 20:4) continue in heaven throughout the "little season" upon earth, but that is nowhere found in the text here in Revelation 20:1-10. To the contrary, the "first resurrection" and the living and reigning with Christ end when the thousand years end and when the "the little season" begins (Revelation 20:7).

b. Premillennialists believe that the "first resurrection" (Revelation 20:5b) and the living and reigning with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4) are enjoyed by all who die in Christ as they are raised bodily from the grave and in glorified bodies live and reign with Christ upon earth for a thousand years. But such a view cannot do justice to the words of Scripture in Revelation 20 that make it clear that the "first resurrection" and the living and reigning with Christ come to an end when Satan is released to deceive the nations after the thousand years have expired during the "little season". How can resurrected believers in

glorified bodies cease to partake in the “first resurrection” or cease to live and reign with Christ? There can be no interruption to their living and reigning with Christ once they are raised bodily from the dead. The Premil may assert that the “first resurrection” (Revelation 20:5b) and the living and reigning with Christ (Revelation 20:4) on the part of those who are raised bodily continue throughout the “little season” upon earth, but that is nowhere found in the text here in Revelation 20:1-10. To the contrary, the “first resurrection” and the living and reigning with Christ end when the thousand years end and when the “the little season” begins (Revelation 20:7).

c. Some Amillennialists and some Postmillennialists believe that the “first resurrection” (Revelation 20:5b) and the living and reigning with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4) are enjoyed by all the elect upon earth who are spiritually regenerated between the time of the resurrection of Christ to the time of the Second Coming of Christ. But such a view cannot do justice to the words of Scripture in Revelation 20 that make it clear that the “first resurrection” and the living and reigning with Christ come to an end when Satan is released to deceive the nations after the thousand years have expired during the “little season”. How can those who are spiritually regenerated cease to partake in the “first resurrection” (i.e. regeneration of their souls) or cease to live and reign with Christ spiritually? There can be no interruption to their living and reigning with Christ once they are spiritually made alive in their souls. The Amil or the Postmil who hold this position may assert that the “first resurrection” (Revelation 20:5b) and the living and reigning with Christ (Revelation 20:4) on the part of those who are raised spiritually continue throughout the “little season” upon earth, but that is nowhere found in the text here in Revelation 20:1-10. To the contrary, the “first resurrection” and the living and reigning with Christ end when the thousand years end and when the “the little season” begins (Revelation 20:2,7).

d. Dear ones, I submit that only the position of Historic Postmillennialism can do justice to the actual language employed by the Holy Spirit in Revelation 20. For according to this view, the “first resurrection” (Revelation 20:5b) and the living and reigning with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4) is enjoyed by a figurative coming to life of the martyrs in a worldwide confederation and reformation of Christian nations who are brought by the Gospel and by the Spirit into the Visible Church during the same period of time in which Satan is Divinely restrained by Christ from deceiving these very nations. But after the thousand years have expired (in that period of time which John calls the “little season”), Christ removes that restraint from Satan, Satan then goes forth to deceive the nations (who over this figurative millennium of years have apparently grown in a feigned obedience and pretended outward submission to Christ), and the enemies of the Church figuratively come to life in a worldwide confederation and apostasy in seeking to destroy the Visible Church upon earth at which time the Lord intervenes by fire at His Second Coming and destroys all His enemies (including Satan and death) once and for all (cf. Revelation 20:9-12 with 2 Thessalonians 2:7-10; 1 Corinthians 15:22-26,50-54). The Historic Postmil position alone does justice to the inspired text and keeps the blessings of the thousand years (namely, the restraint of Satan and the reign of the saints over the enemies of the Church) separate from the evils of the “little season” (namely, the release of Satan and the reign of Gog and Magog over the Church).

II. Who are “the rest of the dead” (in Revelation 20:5) that lived not again until the thousand years were finished?

A. As we briefly turn to Revelation 20:5, we note the following inspired words, “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the

thousand years were finished.” Who are the “rest of the dead” and when do they come to life?

1. When we read that the reign of the saints in a worldwide confederation and reformation of nations is called the “first resurrection”, we are led to suppose there must likewise be a “second resurrection” that follows the “first resurrection.” The ordinal number “first” implies that there will be at least a “second” that follows it. So where is this second resurrection in Revelation 20?

2. We see the coming to life of a second group in the words of Revelation 20:5, “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.” The inference to be drawn is that this group (identified as “the rest of the dead”) did not live during the thousand years, but when the thousand years are expired, they will live or come to life. The verb “lived not again” as found in the Authorized Version and in the Greek text of the *Textus Receptus* implies that they had previously lived, died, and shall live again. When had this group (identified as “the rest of the dead”) previously lived? I would submit that we find this group specifically mentioned in Revelation 19:21 where it is written, “And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.” Note the connection between “the rest of the dead” in Revelation 20:5a and “the remnant that were slain” in Revelation 19:21.

a. First, the same Greek words are used to identify “the remnant” in Revelation 19:21 as are used to identify “the rest” in Revelation 20:5: οἱ λοιποὶ. In other words, although different English words are used by the translators of the Authorized Version, they are the same identical words in the Greek text. Thus, this is a very important clue to identifying this group. This group (identified as “the rest of the dead”) lived before the millennium began.

b. Furthermore, this group not only lived before the millennium began, but were the enemies of Christ and of His faithful Church, for they are destroyed by Christ when he figuratively comes in judgment upon them and destroys them (Revelation 19:21). Earlier in Revelation 19 we read that this group that is slain and destroyed by Christ is identified as the wicked and rebellious nations of the world that are in league with Satan's emissaries, the Beast and the False Prophet, in warring against Christ and His persecuted Church (Revelation 19:15,19-21). Thus, I submit we have identified who are "the rest of the dead" in Revelation 20:5 as we look back to Revelation 19:21. They are those deceived nations that followed Satan, the Beast and the False Prophet.

c. The Beast and the False Prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire never to come to life again (Revelation 19:20). However, Satan and "the rest of the dead" were not at that time cast into the lake of fire, for as we come to Revelation 20, we see that Satan is bound and restrained by Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3) and his followers, "the rest of the dead" (i.e. the wicked nations that were deceived by Satan) lived not during the thousand years (Revelation 20:5). For during the thousand years the saints live and reign victoriously over the enemies of Christ in the power and spirit of the martyrs who had died for Christ and His truth. But when the thousand years are expired and during the "little season" that follows the thousand years, note what happens. Satan is released and once again deceives the nations, and the effect of that deception is that "the rest of the dead" (the nations of the world that had previously followed Satan but were slain in Revelation 19:21) figuratively come to life again (as Gog and Magog) in the spirit and power of their wicked predecessors in the "little season" to reign with Satan upon earth in greatly outnumbering the Visible Church and besieging her in seeking to destroy her until Christ intervenes on her behalf by destroying Satan and all enemies (including death) at His Second Coming (Revelation 20:7-10).

d. I submit that when we read concerning Satan in Revelation 20:3, “And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, **till the thousand years should be fulfilled**”, we expect and do in fact find Satan released and deceiving the nations after the thousand years end in the “little season” as indicated in Revelation 20:7-8: “**And when the thousand years are expired**, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations.” So likewise when we read in Revelation 20:5a concerning “the rest of the dead” who had previously been deceived by Satan before the thousand years began (“But the rest of the dead lived not again **until the thousand years were finished**”), we expect and do find the second resurrection of “the rest of the dead” in the “little season” as indicated in Revelation 20:7-9: “**And when the thousand years are expired**, Satan . . . shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog [figurative for the a worldwide confederation of enemies brought against the Visible Church of Christ], to gather them to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city [both are references to the Visible Church of Christ upon earth].” But the end of Christ’s enemies is manifest for all to see—just as Satan and these wicked enemies of Christ sought to destroy the Church of Christ and were once destroyed by Christ before the figurative thousand years, though they shall be raised again to join with Satan in seeking to destroy the Church of Christ once again in the “little season”, they shall once and for all be destroyed and cast into the lake of fire at the end of the “little season.”

In conclusion, let us draw out from these truths some application and use to our own lives presently.

1. Remember that it is only a “little season” of a relatively few years in which Satan and his followers live and reign over the Church upon the earth in comparison to the figurative “thousand years” in which the Church lives and reigns over her enemies. Even if this “little season” in which Satan and his followers oppress and persecute the Church of Christ should last one hundred years, it is still a “little season” (relatively speaking) when compared with the glorious thousand years in which the Christian nations of the world will come to Christ through the Gospel, will rule over their enemies, and will enter into national covenants to kiss the Son of God and to reform both Church and State according to Word of God (beginning with the fullness of the Gentiles as Christian nations and leading to the fullness of Israel as a Christian nation, Romans 11:25-26).

2. We might be tempted to become discouraged that the thousand years of unparalleled worldwide reformation ends up in a “little season” of worldwide apostasy. Dear ones, this is given to us by way of warning. Past, present or future reformation does not guarantee continued reformation as we see throughout history. Satan was at one time the perfection of God’s creation, but rebelled in pride against the goodness and authority of God. Adam and Eve were at one time the crown of God’s creation, but fell into sin (with all their posterity by ordinary generation) when they doubted the Word of God and believed the lie of Satan, “Has God really said.” Israel had a wondrous covenanted reformation of Biblical religion under King Hezekiah, but fell away into apostasy under his son, Manasseh. The kingdoms of England, Ireland and Scotland covenanted for themselves and for all their posterity in the Solemn League and Covenant to be God’s faithful people and fell away in apostasy from that Biblical covenant within a few short years. So we are warned likewise that the same pattern of reformation will reign in the millennium, but apostasy will reign in the “little season”. Beloved, we can never set back upon our laurels when we are in a period of personal

reformation, familial reformation, ecclesiastical reformation, or national reformation thinking that we do not need to guard ourselves against the temptations that will most certainly arise to leave Christ, our first love, and to become ensnared by the lusts of the flesh or to take it easy in our comfortable state forgetting and neglecting the God who has so blessed us. No doubt, due to the prosperity and worldwide blessings that the nations shall enjoy in the millennium, they shall become ripe for the seducer, Satan, who will deceive them when he is released. Oh, let us take heed when we think we stand, lest we fall. Remember, it was Peter's pride and the temptation of Satan that set him up for such a huge fall in denying Christ. The answer is given by Christ, "Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation"; "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil".

3. But, dear ones, never forget who it is that both sovereignly restrains and looses Satan at His appointed times. Although Christ looses Satan to deceive and mislead in His appointed time, and although it may appear according to the mere earthly wisdom of man that Satan is invincible, never forget that Satan is like a dog on a leash and that the Lord sovereignly loosens that leash or tightens that leash as it will glorify Him the most and as it will profit His Church the most. And ultimately and finally, even though there is a "little season" of apostasy led by Satan after a thousand years of reformation, Satan will be destroyed and forever cast into the lake of fire where he will be tormented day and night without any rest while those who trust in Christ, stand for His truth, and love not their lives even to death shall enjoy everlasting communion and uninterrupted fellowship with the living God, with His angels, and with all the saints in heaven.

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