

IS THE MILLENNIAL PERIOD A LITERAL 1000 YEARS?

A Bible Perspective

The Bible is very literal and should, as most other texts, be read literally unless the context tells us otherwise. The book of Revelation is no different. The various images and pictures found in Revelation, if required to be taken non-literally, are explained in the passage where they occur or elsewhere in the Bible. In the case of numbers, and in particular periods of time in Revelation, these are not ever shown to be non-literal¹. Those that do not believe in the literal 1000 year millennial period either have a false doctrine on Israel (they falsely believe the Church inherits the blessings of Israel, and therefore have substituted Israel – oddly, rarely do they believe they also inherit the cursing – see Deuteronomy 28:14-68), or they decide that numbers have some other meaning than their literal meaning without any indication that this is so. These two ideas are simply not true. Nowhere does the Bible allegorise periods of time unless clearly stated. Daniel found this when reading Jeremiah's prophecy – 70 years meant 70 years the exact time of the exile due to the wickedness of the Children of Israel! In Revelation we have periods of time mentioned at least four times; 1260 days in 11:3, 3½ days in 11:9 & 11, 1260 days in 12:6, and 1000 years in 20:2, 4, 5, 6 & 7. These all relate to a defined numeric period of time, and cannot be allegorised to mean anything else.

The main issue is that Revelation Chapter 20 is not the only, or indeed the main, passage that provides details of the 1000 year millennial period. Indeed most of the events in Revelation have been explained in the Old Testament; we see nearly 800 times the Old Testament is eluded in this prophecy. What was unknown in neither the Old Testament nor the gospels was the order of the events of the Last Days or the timing of these events. Revelation sets out the timing of the events precisely. And Revelation chapter 20 gives the length of time of the millennial reign, the time it will occur along with one other piece of information not found in the Old Testament – the occasion of the ending of the millennial reign.

¹ Non-literal examples can be found in poetry "For a thousand **years** in Your sight *Are* like yesterday when it is past, And *like* a watch in the night." (Psalms 90:4). Some antagonists to plain reading of the Bible point to the notion of 70 weeks in Daniel 9:24 as not being literal. The confusion in an English speakers mind is around the word 'weeks' which merely means 7 but does not specify a time period in Hebrew. The question is then, seven of what? Andrew Woods (Dallas) points out Daniel was clearly looking for a period of time; thus it could be days of year. Days just does make sense – and it is clear Daniel understood the 70 to be 70 weeks of years; a literal 490 years. This aligns with the mind of the Hebrew who were very familiar with weeks of years – the period of certain sabbatical observances (Leviticus 25, Deuteronomy 15). Indeed, the Hebrews entire life was arranged around literal period of time all of which were prescribed by Scripture.

Some would have it that the number 1000 was only mentioned once in the Bible, when the period of the reign is actually mentioned six times – all in one chapter, so it's not a mere slip of the pen.

Evidence of the literal millennial reign is found in the covenants God made with Israel. Most of these are unfulfilled to this point in time, but will be fulfilled in a messianic kingdom of the millennial period. Complementing the covenants of God are the prophecies made to Judah and Israel that speak of a Messianic Kingdom that will occur in the millennial period. The covenants are:

- **Abrahamic Covenant:** promises a great blessing to him, and through him a blessing to the nations, a land (with defined borders) and people (both the chosen people – the children of Israel, and gentiles – the decedents of Ishmael – Arabs) to Abraham and his decedents (Genesis 12:1-3, 12:7, 13:14-17, 15:1-21, 17:1-21, 22:15-18). Thus there will be a land and a people.
- **Land Covenant:** promises the regathering of all Judah and Israel into their land. The dispersion as prophesied by various prophets has occurred, but the regathering is still to take place. The remnant believing Jewish people will regather in the millennial period.
- **Davidic Covenant:** promises an eternal dynasty, an eternal throne, an eternal kingdom and an eternal person – only the Lord Jesus Christ can fulfil this covenant. As yet Jesus, who is the Messiah, has not ascended a throne – this will occur during the millennial period where the Kingdom will be a Messianic Kingdom and the Son of God will rule.

We believe that a Messianic Kingdom must be established because, as mentioned above, there are unfulfilled prophecies that require such a kingdom and further the Davidic covenant (promises an eternal dynasty, eternal throne, eternal kingdom and eternal person who is Yeshua), is this Messianic Kingdom which has yet to be established. What many miss is the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants in particular – requiring God alone to fulfil them. Since God cannot break His promises (Titus 1:2, Hebrews 6:18), these unfulfilled covenants will be accomplished, in God's timing.

Therefore, there will be a Messianic Kingdom established with Jesus (Yeshua) the Messiah the King of the Jews and the Gentiles. What Revelation tells us, is this Kingdom will be 1000 years, after which the Eternal Order – the New Heaven and New Earth will be established (Rev 21, 22).

