

# The Millennium

by Pastor Paul F. Nolting

## One Thousand Years

This numerical expression occurs six times in the first seven verses of Revelation 20. It occurs in only two other places in the Bible: *“For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it is past, And like a watch in the night” (Psalm 90:4)*, and *“But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8)*. In the last two passages the thousand years are indeed a thousand years, but the holy writers inform us that our God does not experience the length of years as do we mortals. For our God a thousand years is but as a day, yea, as but a watch in the night. But what about those *“one thousand years”* in Revelation 20? Are they a literal thousand or are they a symbol of a fixed period of time?

A good place to start in answering this question is the very first verse of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. It reads thus: *“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants---things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John” (Revelation 1:1)*. Jesus had a message for His servants. The message was to deal with events that were shortly to come to pass. But that message was to be revealed through SYMBOLS: Jesus SIGNIFIED that message. This immediately alerts us to the fact that the *“thousand years”* in Revelation may well be a definite period of time whose length may be either an exact thousand years or a longer or shorter period of time.

## Numbers in Revelation

Numbers are very important in the reading and understanding of the Revelation. But they are not always numbers used literally as in a financial report. The numbers may be used symbolically. Seven is such a number. Bible students have found that the book of Revelation can be divided into seven parts. John wrote letters to seven existing churches in Asia Minor. He named these seven

churches. They then appeared before the eyes of John as seven golden lampstands, whose pastors were pictured as seven stars in the right hand of the Lord. There were seven churches, lampstands, stars – not six or eight, but seven!

Yet there is more to those “sevens” than just an establishment of quantity. Quality is also indicated, especially when you realize that the church year of the Old Testament believers followed the order of seven.

There are more sevens – *“seven spirits of God” (3:1)*, *“seven lamps of fire” (4:5)*, *“seven seals” (5:1)*, the Lamb having *“seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth” (5:6)*. The Lord Jesus is described in sevens, as is both His saving and punishing work – seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls.

There are other fascinating numbers – twenty-four elders sitting on twenty-four thrones. There are twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve tribes, twelve foundations, twelve apostles, twelve pearls in the New Jerusalem. The tree of life bears twelve fruits. The Mother of the Child wears a garland of twelve stars (12:1).

There are 144,000 sealed, twelve thousand from each tribe, (7:4; 14:1,3). There are four living creatures (4:6) as there are four angels, four corners of the earth, and four winds of the earth (7:1).

There is the fascinating three and a half - expressed as 42 months, or 1260 days or three and a half days, or a time, times and half a time.

Then there are the individual numbers: the number of man - 666 (13:18); the river of blood from the winepress of the Lord that was up to the horses’ bridles and extended for 1600 furlongs or 184 miles (14:20); the army of two hundred million horsemen coming from the Euphrates (9:16). Numbers and more numbers. Are they all to be taken literally? Or do some have symbolic significance?

Is, perhaps, seven the number of God at work, ten and its multiples the number of completion, twelve the number of the Church - twelve tribes, and twelve apostles, four the number of the earth?

What about the split seven, the three and a half? And once again, what about the thousand years in Revelation 20 - literal or symbolic?

### Events Occurring During the Thousand Years

Remember that the Lord Jesus SIGNIFIED events ***“that must shortly take place” (1:1)***. Millennialists believe in a future reign of our Lord here on earth either after His coming (Premillennialists) or immediately before His coming again (Post millennialists). That would place the Millennium some two thousand or more years after John wrote concerning ***“things which must shortly take place.”***

John reports that he saw an Angel coming down from heaven with the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. The Angel laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. Now what do you come up with if you take the words of this vision literally? You have a metal key for a pit that has no door. Next you have a chain to bind a spirit being. How do you picture in your mind the binding of a bodiless spirit with an iron chain? The message is clear! Satan is being restrained for a thousand years so that he cannot deceive the nations as he did in Old Testament times. The nations of antiquity such as the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians and the Greeks, as well as the smaller surrounding nations, as the Philistines were helpless prey for the Devil.

The KEY that shut Satan in the bottomless pit and the CHAIN that bound Him for a thousand years are the GOSPEL of our Lord's victory over Satan. The very first prophecy described the coming Savior as the Headcrusher (Genesis 3:14). John, who pictured the binding of Satan with a key and a chain had previously expressed this same truth in plain language, ***“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8)***. Shortly before our Lord began His final campaign against Satan He said, ***“Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out” (John 12:31)***. Previously Jesus had testified, ***“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18)***. The apostle Peter tells us that our Lord, before He left His tomb, ***“went and preached to the spirits in prison” (1 Peter 3:19)***. His message was a proclamation of victory. That victory manifested itself in the

binding of Satan so that he could no longer deceive the nations.

While Satan was bound, the martyrs reigned with Christ. John saw thrones occupied by souls unto whom the right and responsibility of judgment were committed. These souls are identified as martyrs who had been beheaded ***“for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands.”*** Beheaded, yet reigning! And that during the ***“thousand years!”***

Then comes the final chapter! Satan will be released. He will resume his work of deceiving the nations. That final alliance of anti-Kingdom of God kingdoms of this world is called ***“Gog and Magog.”*** They will be as numerous as the sand of the sea. They shall storm ***“the beloved city,”*** the congregation of believers, but shall fail utterly, for fire shall come down from heaven to devour them. ***“And the Devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”***

And then comes the final judgment which results in the final separation of those whose names are written in the Book of Life from those who insist on being judged according to their works. Their final destiny is the lake of fire.

That's it! During the ***“thousand years”*** Satan is bound. The martyrs, who appear to have lost everything, are reigning with Christ. Satan's last effort results in complete failure. He ends up in the lake of fire, as do all his followers. This is what is going on right now and has been going on since the Day of Pentecost. When are the “thousand years?” Future, past, or present? We're living in the “thousand years” day after day. So the “thousand years,” which is the cube of ten and so the symbol of fullness or completeness, is the present - the New Testament era. The entire chapter 20 of Revelation has not a word in it of an earthly reign of Christ or a thousand years of triumph for the Church. All this is religious fiction. The Kingdom of God is not of this world; the “millennium” is of this world - the product of human dreams.