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THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Basic Questions About the Millennium

By Ekkehardt Mueller

The term “millennium” has become quite popular, as have other terms used in John’s Apocalypse. Maybe there is a kind of global sense that the end may come—and even may be near—and that a redeemer is needed to control that which seems to have become uncontrollable. A number of novels, movies, music albums, computer games, companies, and other organizations contain the term “millennium.” We may remember the hype about the millennium bug in computer software toward the end of the nineties. Events and places also relate to the millennium: for example, Millennium Parks in various cities. The millennium plays quite a role in Christianity as well. One of the Seventh-day Adventists’ 28 Fundamental Beliefs deals with this subject.¹

This raises some questions: What are some of the millennium issues being discussed? What difference does our view make? What is the doctrine’s relevance for Adventists today?

Interpretations of the Millennium and Issues Arising from Them

Different views on the Thousand Years² have developed during church history.³ While Christians agree that the Millennium has to do with the reign of Christ, they disagree regarding its nature and timing.

Some claim that the entire Christian age is the Millennium from the first coming of Christ to His second coming and that therefore, “one thousand” has to be understood figuratively. This is “amillennialism,” which has become widespread. Others hold that the

Millennium precedes Christ’s second coming. This view has been called “postmillennialism.” Finally, some suggest that the Millennium follows the Second Coming and precedes the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth (Rev 21:1). This position has been named “premillennialism.”⁴ In addition, there is “chiliasm.”

Chiliasm

The term “chiliasm” is derived from the Greek numeral *chilioi* (thousand), while the word “millennium” comes from Latin *mille* (thousand) and *annus* (year). Both terms describe the time period of one thousand years found in Revelation 20, whether understood literally or figuratively. Apparently derived from Revelation 20, the term “millennium” has influenced its modern usage in various contexts. In spite of a long theological discussion on this topic, Christianity is not unified on how to understand this period and locate it in time.

Chiliasm took on a life of its own. According to this view, Jesus will visibly come back to earth and establish His kingdom, which will last a thousand years. After the thousand-year period the end will come. This teaching had already developed in the first few centuries AD and was accepted by some church fathers and religious movements such as Montanism.⁵ It was quite materialistically oriented and appealed to the senses.⁶ The hope of an earthly Messianic kingdom reappeared in difficult times. It was expected that the evil one would be judged and Christians would place their feet on the necks of their enemies.

Papias talks about a time when vines will grow, each having 10,000 branches, and each branch 10,000 twigs, and each twig 10,000 shoots, and each shoot 10,000 clusters, and each cluster 10,000 grapes, and each grape will yield 25 amphoras when pressed. And when one of the saints lays hold of a cluster, another cluster will cry out, "I am better, take me, bless the Lord through me." Similarly a grain of wheat will produce 10,000 ears, and each ear will have 10,000 grains, and each grain will yield five double pounds of pure fine flour.⁷

Such ideas may sound harmless, but chiliasm had representatives, among them Lactantius, who dreamed of bloody vengeance on the impious, and Commodianus, whose ideas may have influenced people to take up weapons and get involved in warfare.⁸ Even the theology of Joachim of Floris in medieval times may have unintentionally furthered violent movements.

Typically, these movements had a strong lay leader who was considered to be a holy person and a kind of Messiah. Cohn suggests that these movements irrupted when there was a growth in population and industrialization, when social relations were weakened or destroyed and the gap between the rich and the poor widened. Then the collective feeling of helplessness, anxiety, and envy led to an urgent desire to eradicate the ungodly and bring about the final kingdom through inflicted and endured suffering. In this kingdom the saints would be gathered around their Messiah and would eternally enjoy happiness, riches, security, and power.⁹

The revolutionary form of chiliasm appeared throughout the centuries when the normal way of life was disrupted and damaged to such an extent that restoration seemed unlikely and impossible. But it may have also been triggered by a failure of Christianity—namely a lack of spiritual guidance and the perception that the church is silent and has nothing to say to evil and injustice, does not uphold biblical principles, and has ceased to be a moral compass in society.¹⁰

Amillennialism

In the the third century AD, chiliasm, with its sensuous ideas and its desire for vengeance, provoked a reaction that came in the form of amillennialism.¹¹ Origen taught that the kingdom of God would be anchored in the soul of the believer, suggesting an individualized eschatology. He condemned literalism as taught by chiliasm and replaced it with his allegorical interpretation. It seems that he spiritualized a literal, bodily resurrection, and to some extent the final judgment.¹²

In the fourth century, Augustine took a position against chiliasm. Christianity had become the state religion, and Augustine was so successful in battling chiliasm that it had become obsolete for centuries.¹³

The Council of Ephesus condemned the belief in a future Millennium as a superstitious error. Augustine suggested that the church would be the city of God on earth. According to him, the Millennium had already become a reality and had actually begun with Christ's first coming; the resurrection had happened when the believer died to sin and rose to a new life in the church; and Satan had been bound through Jesus. Therefore, conditions on earth would not deteriorate but improve. While Satan would once again actively fight the church for three and one half years, the church would successfully survive the onslaught. Those who would apostatize would not belong to those predestined to salvation anyway. The judgment would condemn the ungodly to eternal punishment, while believers would receive immortality.¹⁴

W. Cox suggests that Luther, Melancton, Zwingli, Know, and Calvin were amillennialists.¹⁵ This tradition continued in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Postmillennialism

Not only amillennialism has its roots in Augustine; postmillennialism does as well.¹⁶ Both views expect the Millennium to precede the Second Coming. A separation into two distinct positions happened quite late. The Augsburg Confession and the Westminster Confession may subscribe to an amillennial/postmillennial eschatology.¹⁷

The father of postmillennialism is Daniel Whitby. He synthesized views already in existence. It is only from 1725 or 1726 onward that one can talk about postmillennialism in the strict sense. Other important representatives were John Winthrop and Jonathan Edwards.¹⁸

Postmillennialism went through cycles of acceptance, sometimes being more prominent, sometimes being less. This is due to the fact that postmillennialism holds a positive view of the world and its societies, believing in a gradual growth of the kingdom of God, which is considered to be a present reality. This view was easier to maintain during times of the expansion of Christianity and more difficult to maintain during the two World Wars. B. Warfield is a prominent representative of postmillennialism. The idea is that the kingdom of Christ is being established through the worldwide proclamation of the gospel. Some representatives favor what has been called the social gospel. The period of one thousand years is typically understood as an extended period of time.¹⁹

Premillennialism

Premillennialism comes in two major forms: classical and dispensational premillennialism. It is also distinguished in terms of its relation toward the great tribulation.

Those who advocate pretribulationism believe that Christ will rapture the church

before the great tribulation on earth. Another view is the posttribulationist view, which maintains that Christ's coming will occur after the great tribulation.²⁰

Historic Premillennialism

Historic premillennialism has its origin in the early church. Obviously, it was the predominant understanding in apostolic times and in the first few centuries. Justin knows only two classes of believers: those who believe in Jesus's earthly kingdom and the heretics who reject the Millennium. At this time, premillennialism and chiliasm are almost identical. Chiliasm may be the fanatical form of premillennialism. It was rejected because of its crude materialistic views. As chiliasm was rejected so was premillennialism, being replaced by amillennialism in the mainstream church.

When premillennialism reoccurred in church history, for instance in the Medieval Ages, it frequently manifested chiliastic-fanatical features. Since premillennialists determined time periods and set dates for Christ's second coming, it was easy to discredit it. Therefore, Reformers preferred to follow Augustine's amillennialism. Some Anabaptists were premillennialists. Unfortunately, radical groups among the Anabaptists caused damage to the repudiation of their movement as well as to premillennialism. Nevertheless, in spite of these unfortunate developments, premillennialism is vibrant today in various Christian communities of faith, especially in evangelical and charismatic churches as well as the Seventh-day Adventist Church.²¹

However, historic premillennialism is not a completely unified system, although there are some tenets that are generally agreed upon. There is agreement that a cataclysmic event, namely Christ's second coming, is necessary to bring about His kingdom of glory and usher in the Millennium. Premillennialist representatives believe that there are two different resurrections and that Jesus will be literally— not just spiritually—present during the Millennium. But some claim that Jesus will reign on earth for a thousand years, while others insist that He is in heaven with His redeemed people. Some speak about a special importance of the Jews during the Millennium, while others focus on a group of redeemed people consisting of both Jewish and non-Jewish followers of Christ. Some understand the Millennium to last one thousand literal years while others would take it as a symbolic time span.²²

Dispensational Premillennialism

Dispensational premillennialism is a latecomer. It was established around 1830, with John Nelson Darby and the Plymouth Brethren exerting an important influence.²³ It spread widely in a short time through the Scofield Reference Bible and Bible institutes such as the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Today, dispensational premillennialism is quite popular in evan-

gelical circles. It is so prominent that for some people premillennialism is equated with dispensational premillennialism, as if there were no other premillennialist position.²⁴ Other well-known representatives of dispensational premillennialism are L. S. Chafer, J. Walvoord, H. Lindsey, and C. Feinberg. However, Grenz points to recent developments in dispensational premillennialism which need to be noticed:

Beginning in the 1980s, certain dispensational scholars launched an even more radical rethinking of the system. As a result, there now exists alongside classical dispensationalism a growing circle of "moderate," "modified" or "progressive" dispensationalists who no longer accept many of the features of the older view. It would be a mistake, therefore, to view dispensationalism as a static, monolithic viewpoint.²⁵

Below are the major positions of classical dispensational premillennialism.

(1) Classical dispensationalists understand Scripture as the Word of God and take a conservative approach to its interpretation. However, they allow for an allegorical interpretation of the Bible's historical books that Adventists would consider questionable. A true typological approach, although found in both the Old Testament and New Testament where typology points from a type to the fulfillment by a greater antitype, is typically not pursued. Dispensationalists insist that there is no difference between classical and apocalyptic prophecy and that all prophecy must be understood literally and in detail and will be fulfilled as stated in the Old Testament.²⁶ This is a denial of the principle of conditionality in classical prophecy and also of the fact that unfulfilled prophecies addressed to Israel in the Old Testament have a larger scale or universal fulfillment than in the New Testament.

(2) This approach leads to a special understanding of Israel and the Christian church. Since God's covenants are supposedly unconditional, God will fulfill them in the future, independent of the original audience's response and obedience. Consequently, Israel must play an important role again.²⁷ The church was not foreseen in the Old Testament. It is only a divine afterthought after Israel rejected salvation. So there is sharp discontinuity between Israel and the church. National Israel will receive the kingdom again, and the climax of Israel's story will be the time of the Millennium. The church is an insertion between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week of the seventy weeks prophecy in Daniel 9. It is also claimed that the "kingdom of God" and the "kingdom of heaven" are different things. One is universal, while the other one applies to the Jews only. Consequently, there are different dispensations. While Israel has to keep the ceremonial law and will reinstall the old cultic system with animal sacrifices, Christianity does not need to keep this law.²⁸

(3) At the end of time there will be a seven-year period of great tribulation, caused by the antichrist, a person. At the beginning of this period, Jesus will return invisibly for His church and will snatch away from this earth His elect people, whether living or dead.²⁹ This event concludes the time of the Gentiles. Israel, which will still be on earth, will return to God and accept Jesus as Messiah. The Jews will be involved in a great work of evangelizing the world. Many people will be won. After the seven years, Jesus will come visibly, this time not for His church but with His church, and the Millennium will be ushered in. Satan will be bound. The Jews will be reinstated in their original Old Testament position. They will live in Palestine. Jesus will sit on the literal throne of David and will rule the world from Jerusalem, His headquarters. The unfulfilled prophecies pertaining to Israel in the Old Testament will be fulfilled.³⁰ The righteous will rule with Christ in a golden age of peace and security. At the end of the Millennium, Satan will be released, the general resurrection will happen, and after a short period of rebellion, which will be the overthrow, the final judgment will take place and the new heaven and earth will be established.³¹

A major difference between dispensational premillennialism and historical premillennialism is hermetics. The latter allows for biblical typology to function as a hermeneutical approach to understand the biblical message without subscribing to an unjustified literalism.³² Also the approach to Israel is different.³³

T. P. Weber compares historic premillennialists with dispensationalist premillennialists and concludes:

Perhaps, in the end, what separates the two versions of futurist premillennialism is that dispensationalists simply have a better story to tell. Laying all matters of truth aside, in a popularity context the pretribulation rapture is always going to easily beat the posttribulation rapture. No matter what they do, historic premillennialists have a hard sell: going through the tribulation is not nearly as appealing as escaping from it.³⁴

Arising Questions

These different views trigger the question of which approach should be favored. What is the timing and nature of the Millennium according to Scripture? While it is commonly assumed that a number of biblical texts refer to the Millennium, Revelation 20 is the the least ambiguous to speak about a thousand-year period. So we will focus on Revelation 20 in the rest of this article. But how should Revelation 20 be understood? What do we do with the two resurrections mentioned in this chapter? Why is it at all necessary or even helpful to study questions regarding the Millennium?

Timing of the Millennium

The timing of the Millennium at least partially

determines its nature. Those who have suggested that the entire Christian age is the Millennium have also understood it as a period of improvement, in which people can repent, turn to God, and thus experience their personal “resurrection.” Some of those who understand the Millennium as following Christ’s return would see it as a period of evangelism under the reign of Christ.

While being premillennialists, Adventists do not easily fall into this camp because they differ in a number of aspects from the major premillennial consensus. They understand the Millennium as a time of desolation of the earth. During this time, when nobody lives on earth, the heavenly judgment on Satan and the wicked dead will determine what final justice will look like. After the Millennium the lost will be resurrected. Satan will be able to deceive them again (Rev 20:5a, 7–8, 13a). After their attempted attack of the New Jerusalem (Rev 20:9a) that in the meantime has come from heaven (Rev 21:2), they will find themselves in front of God’s throne to be judged (Rev 20:11–13), while God will be vindicated before the universe. Finally, the verdict against the wicked will be executed (Rev 20:9b, 10, 14–15), the new Paradise ushered in, and the plan of salvation completed.

While a number of Christians would see the Millennium as something like a second chance for conversion, based on Scripture Adventists do not support such a teaching, which—if they are right—would actually be detrimental to those who do not make a decision for Jesus in this life but postpone it until they can no longer make that decision.

Timing and the Larger Context (Rev 15–19)

To determine the timing of the Millennium we have to consider the context of Revelation 20. The second part of Revelation, beginning with chapter 15, largely follows a chronological sequence with only a few blocks of material—but not entire visions—being parallel.³⁵ This is important for interpretation. In Revelation 11:18, the remainder of the Apocalypse is already summarized as the wrath of the nations (Rev 12–14), the wrath of God and the destruction of the destroyers (Rev 15–19), the time of judgment of the dead (Rev 20), and the reward of God’s servants (Rev 21–22).

While it is true that in the first part of the book recapitulation occurs on a large scale—entire visions being parallel—recapitulation is much more limited in the second part of Revelation.³⁶ The Apocalypse operates with a perspective reaching from the time of John to the final consummation. This can clearly be seen in its central vision (Rev 12–14), which begins with the birth of the Messiah, His ascension to God, Satan’s attack on the Messianic community throughout the centuries, and his war against the remnant at the end of time. The last message to be proclaimed as well as a symbolic description of Christ’s second coming are found in chapter 14. The same time span applies to the other visions—the septenaries—in the historical

part of Revelation.³⁷

However, this basic perspective changes with Revelation 15. This chapter forms an introduction to the seven plagues (Rev 15:1, 7), which represent the fullness and completion of the wrath of God. They are described in Revelation 16. With the sixth plague, the dragon (Satan), the sea beast, and the false prophet are mentioned (Rev 16:13). These three entities form end-time Babylon, also called satanic or “unholy trinity,”³⁸ and prepare for the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:14, 16), while the kings from the East, Jesus, and His army are about to come (Rev 16:12).³⁹ With the seventh plague, Babylon is being judged and disintegrates into its three constituent parts (Rev 16:19).

Revelation 17 and 18 describe the seventh plague in more detail.⁴⁰ In chapter 17 the judgment on Babylon, a worldwide religious alliance, is depicted as judgment of the great harlot. In chapter 18 it is depicted as judgment on the great city.

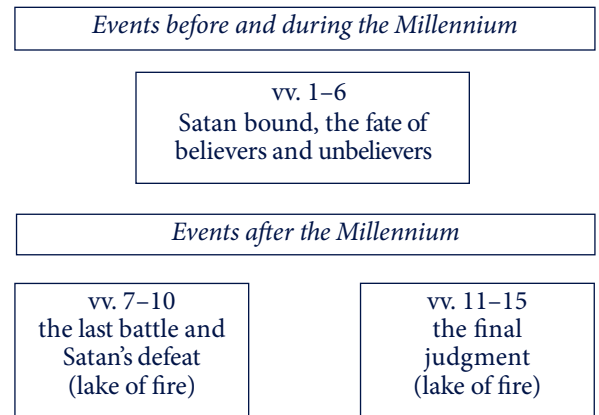
Revelation 19 briefly mentions this judgment again (Rev 19:2–4) to move on to the marriage supper of the Lamb, Jesus (Rev 19:7–8). Then follows a description of Armageddon.⁴¹ Jesus, the rider on the white horse, with His army defeats Babylon. This is a symbolic description of Christ’s second coming.⁴² While the dragon still lives on, the beast and the false prophet end up in the fiery pool (Rev 19:20). Thus two parts of Babylon are being destroyed at the end of Revelation 19. The dragon that is still alive will be confined to the abyss at the beginning of the Millennium (Rev 20:1–3). He can no longer be active on earth.

Timing and Revelation 20

What about Revelation 20? It also describes a chronological development. Following Christ’s second advent, Revelation 20:1–3 depicts the time at the beginning of the Millennium. Verses 4–6 mention the reign of Christ with the redeemed of all ages in heaven during the Millennium.

The rest of the chapter deals with events after the heavenly court session (Rev 20:7–15)—that is, after the Millennium. But it comes in two passages. The first deals with the attack of satanic forces on the New Jerusalem and the defeat of the wicked including Satan (Rev 20:7–10). The second passage describes the heavenly judgment as execution of the verdict (Rev 20:11–15). Both passages end in a similar way—namely by pointing to the lake of fire. Thus they are parallel, and their events must be understood in an interlocking way. Such a phenomenon is not unique in Revelation but is also found in other places of the Apocalypse.⁴³ Although Revelation 20:7–10 and 20:11–15 run parallel, overall the chapter follows a chronological approach.⁴⁴ This observation may also suggest that this is true for the preceding context of our passage, and this is what we have argued above.

Here is a simple graphic depiction of the structure of Revelation 20:



Timing and Revelation 21–22

However, the mostly chronological approach in the second part of Revelation does not stop with Revelation 20. This becomes very clear when the audience reaches Revelation 21. The Millennium is past; the lake of fire is gone. A new divine creation is described—the new heaven and earth—clearly following the events described under the Millennium. Revelation 21 and 22 portray a completely new situation with death being gone and an intimate face-to-face relationship established between God and His people. Sanctuary terminology permeates Revelation 21 and 22, indicating that God now directly dwells among His children (Exod 25:8) and that the long-desired consummation and fulfillment of the plan of salvation has been reached.

Further Observations Relating to the Timing of the Millennium

The outline of the second part of Revelation makes it abundantly clear that the Millennium should be understood as following Christ’s Second coming, not preceding it. Structural observations have already been mentioned. We must add a few other observations that support our conclusion.

Chronological Progression: The Angels with the Plagues

The angels with the seven last plagues, which are also described as bowls filled with the wrath of God, occur for the first time in Revelation 15:1. After a short aside describing the redeemed beside the sea of glass in heaven (Rev 15:2–4), the focus is again on the angels with the plagues (Rev 15:6–8). Revelation 15 introduces the description of these last plagues in chapter 16.

In Revelation 16 the angels with their plagues are mentioned in verses 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12, and 17. That means that throughout the entirety of chapter 16 the angels with the plagues are present and active.

As soon as we proceed to chapter 17, we are informed that “one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke” with John to inform him about the judgment on harlot Babylon, expanding on the last two plagues of Revelation 16. Verse 3 refers to the same angel. The angel appears again in verse 7, but

his activity is not limited in this chapter to these verses only. Revelation 17 contains three angelic speeches (vv. 1–2, 7–14, 15–18). They cover the major part of Revelation 17.⁴⁵

One—if not the same—angel with a bowl appears again in Revelation 21:9, 17—also being involved in verses 10 and 15–17—and in Revelation 22:1, 6. This means that the entire eschatological part of Revelation is connected through the agency of the angels with the bowls who in Revelation 15–17 are involved with the judgment of Babylon and in Revelation 21 and 22 with final salvation for the children of God. It is not possible to understand this part of Revelation as continuous recapitulation but there is clear progression from judgment to salvation, which would support a chronological approach of the second part of Revelation with enlargements of certain aspects here and there.

Conceptual Link: The Undoing of the Satanic Trinity

While Babylon appears with name first in Revelation 14:8, it is clear that it forms an alliance of the three evil powers of Revelation 12–13.⁴⁶ Separately seen, the first of these powers last longer while the others exist for a short time. Satan/the devil/the serpent was already heavily involved in causing problems for the churches of the first century.⁴⁷ The dragon appears again in Revelation 12 where he fights a battle against Michael in heaven (Rev 12:7–12), a battle against the woman, who represents the church on earth (Rev 12:13–15), and a battle against the remnant (Rev 12:17). The sea beast enters the stage of human history in the first part of Revelation 13, while the beast out of the earth becomes active when the deadly wound of the sea beast is healing (Rev 13:12). But these three powers work together in Revelation 16:13. They are opposed to God and His people.

Starting with Revelation 16, the demise of the dragon, the sea beast, and the false prophet (beast out of the earth) is shown. Their alliance falls apart (Rev 16–18). Christ's second coming puts an end to the sea beast and the false prophet (Rev 19:19–20), the two entities that entered the stage of history later than the dragon. They are thrown into the lake of fire. Satan, the dragon, survives the Second Coming, only to be bound in the abyss for a thousand years (Rev 20:2), finding his end also in the lake of fire after his release from his prison, the deception of the resurrected human opponent of God, and their attack of the “beloved city” (Rev 20:7–10).

This successive undoing of the satanic trinity, which is Babylon, indicates that the second part is chronologically successive.

Conceptual Link: The Judgment-Salvation Theme

Another conceptual link is the topic of judgment-salvation. Revelation 15 and 16 imply that the true believers were persecuted (Rev 15:2; 16:16). Revelation 17:6 speaks about Christian martyrs killed

by Babylon. This is repeated in Revelation 18:24; 19:2; and 20:4. This is one of the major reasons that Babylon is being judged. The extensive judgment in its stages is described in Revelation 15–20.

However, in this long portrayal of the final judgment the idea of salvation for God's people surfaces. For example, in Revelation 19:1–2, “Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because his judgments are true and righteous; for he has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and he has avenged the blood of his bond-servants on her,” and in Revelation 20:4 which speaks about the resurrection of the persecuted saints. Salvation will finally be realized in Revelation 21–22. The redeemed live in the presence of God and see His face, death no longer exists, and the children of God serve Him and reign with Him (Rev 21:3–4, 6–7, 27; 22:2–5). This conceptual link suggests again progression instead of strict recapitulation for the second part of the Apocalypse.

Terminological Links

There are a number of other terminological links that support our conclusion.

First, the lake of fire with sulfur must be mentioned. In Revelation 19:20 it is the place where the sea beast and the false prophet end up. In Revelation 20:10 the very same place where the sea beast and false prophet *were* (ESV)⁴⁸ is now the place where Satan finds himself. However, in Revelation 20:14–15 Death and Hades⁴⁹ are thrown into the lake of fire which is the second death.⁵⁰ There is a clear progression.

Second, there is the issue of war. While the historical part of Revelation reports about a war in heaven between Satan and Michael (Rev 12:7), Satan's *making* of war (*poieō polemon*) against the remnant (Rev 12:17), and the sea beast's *making* of war against the saints (Rev 13:7), the eschatological part of Revelation uses the phrase “gathering for war/to make war” (*synagō eis ton polemon/synagō poiēsai ton polemon*). The satanic trinity gathers to make war, which will be Armageddon (Rev 16:14). The sea beast, the kings, and most likely the false prophet gather to make war against Jesus, the rider on the white horse (Rev 19:19). Finally, Satan gathers the resurrected unbelievers for war against the saints and the “beloved city” (Rev 20:8–9). The verb *polemeō* is used in Revelation 17:14 and 19:11. While the scarlet beast and the horns make war against the Lamb, Jesus makes war against the enemies (Rev 19:11).

Third, the term “death” points also to a progression in the final chapters of Revelation. Rev 18:8 indicates that Babylon will be taken over in one day by a plague that includes death. Believers have no part in second death (Rev 20:6). There will, however, be a resurrection from death to judgment (Rev 20:13) and the end of death in the lake of fire (Rev 20:14). Then death will be no more (Rev 21:4) while unbelievers are still affected by the second death (Rev 21:8).

Summary

By way of summary, we must state that the final wrath of God is poured out in the form of the seven plagues (Rev 15–16). These plagues seem to follow each other subsequently, even if they may overlap. Revelation 17 points to the formation of a super-alliance directed against God and His people, consisting of the religious alliance called Babylon and the political alliance spearheaded by the scarlet beast and supported by the kings of the earth. However, the super-alliance will break apart, causing the political alliance to go after the spiritual alliance and destroy it. Revelation 18 describes from another perspective the collapse of the economic system Babylon (the great city). The impending judgments trigger the message for believers to come out of Babylon (Rev 18:4) before the judgment is executed.

The second coming of Christ follows chronologically the preceding chapters (Rev 19). It causes part of the satanic trinity to be destroyed in the lake of fire. A thousand-year period follows, which allows for the heavenly court to meet and determine the verdict on sinners after the Millennium (Rev 20). Then a new heaven and earth is created in which Jesus and the redeemed live in an intimate relationship (Rev 21–22).

These observations suggest that Revelation does not support amillennialism or postmillennialism. The data suggest that the best option to interpret the Millennium is premillennialism.

To be continued.

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¹ For further material on this topic, see Eric Claude Webster, “The Millennium,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 927–946; *The Seventh-Day Adventist Encyclopedia*, vol. 11, 2nd rev. ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1996), 378–380; Ekkehardt Mueller, “Analyse und Kritik der verschiedenen Interpretationen des Millennium,” *Aller Diener* 1/88, 19–32; Ekkehardt Mueller, “Micro-structural Analysis of Revelation 20,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Autumn 1999, vol. 37, no. 2, 227–255; Ekkehardt Mueller, “The Final Judgment (Rev 20),” <https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Final%20Judgment%20%28Rev%20%29.pdf>, accessed March 29, 2016.

² The Millennium is clearly found in Revelation 20. All biblical quotations are from the NASB unless otherwise indicated.

³ Various views on the Millennium have been compiled in Don F. Neufeld and Julia Neuffer, eds., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Student's Source Book* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1962), 636–657. See also J. Massynbaerde Ford, “Millennium” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:832–834.

⁴ For a wider discussion of these three positions, see Darrell L. Bock and Stanley N. Gundry, eds., *Three Views On the Millennium and Beyond* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999); Robert G. Clouse, *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977). Premillennialism can be divided into historic premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism. This is what is done in the second work.

⁵ See R. G. Clouse, “Millennium, Views of the” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 716; J. Massynbaerde Ford, “Chiliasm,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. Daniel Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:908.

⁶ See Hans Bietenhard, *Das tausendjährige Reich: Eine biblisch-theologische Studie* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1955), 39; Millard J. Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology: A Study of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1977), 95–96.

⁷ Iren. *Haer.* 5.33.3f, quoted in *Early Christianity in the Lycus Valley*, by Ulrich Huttner (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 227.

⁸ See Norman Rufus Colin Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (Fair Lawn, NJ: Essential Books, 1957), 12.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁰ See Cohn, 310; Abraham Kuyper, *Chiliasm or the Doctrine of Premillennialism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1934), 8.

¹¹ Webster, “The Millennium,” 935–942, provides a short description of amillennialism, premillennialism, and postmillennialism and shows how throughout history the concept of the Millennium was understood.

¹² See Case, 174; Cohn, 13. On Origen, see also Daniel L. Akin, *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), 877–878.

¹³ It was, e.g., partially recovered among some of the Anabaptists. See Akin, 881.

¹⁴ See Cohn, 14; Bietenhard, 8; Webster, 937–938; Akin, 878–879.

¹⁵ William E. Cox, *Amillennialism Today* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972), 8. See also Akin, 880–881.

¹⁶ See Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*, 76.

¹⁷ Cf. Akin, 882.

¹⁸ Akin, 883, also points out that some Puritans held a post-millennial view, while others preferred amillennialism.

¹⁹ See Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 1214–1215.

²⁰ Erikson, *Christian Theology*, 1211.

²¹ See Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*, 94–106. Bietenhard, 9, also mentions the Bogomils and Cathars of the Medieval Ages and the Pietists in later times.

²² On premillennialism, see Craig L. Blomberg and Sung Wook Chung, eds., *A Case for Historic Premillennialism: An Alternative to “Left Behind” Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009).

²³ See Akin, 886–888; Bietenhard, 10; and Clouse, 717–718.

²⁴ See Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*, 96–97.

²⁵ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Millennial Maze: Sorting Out Evangelical Options* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 93.

²⁶ See Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*, 115–117.

²⁷ See Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1218.

²⁸ See Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*, 110–111, 117–122. This question is also discussed in Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983).

²⁹ Grenz, 98–99, points out that some dispensationalists

adhere to a pretribulational rapture, while others maintain a midtribulational rapture, i.e., a rapture after three and one half years into the final tribulation.

³⁰ See Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1218.

³¹ Grenz, 98, notes that “classical dispensationalists are interested in offering a detailed eschatological chronology,” and presents one on pp. 98–100. See also George Lewis Murray, *Millennial Studies; A Search for Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1948), 87; Cox, 63; Robert D. Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days* (Westwood, NJ: F. H. Revell, 1954), 24–27, 46–47, 77–80, 91–97, 102–108.

³² See George Eldon Ladd, “Historic Premillennialism,” in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 26–27. He shows through biblical examples that “the OT is reinterpreted in light of the Christ event” (21), “the ‘literal hermeneutic’ does not work” (23), and “the OT is interpreted by the NT” (27).

³³ Ladd, “Historic Premillennialism,” 25 states: “Paul avoids calling the church Israel, unless it be in Gal. 6:16, but this is a much disputed verse. It is true however, that he applies prophecies to the church which in their OT setting belong to literal Israel; he calls the church the sons, the seeds of Abraham. He calls believers the true circumcision. It is difficult therefore to avoid the conclusion that Paul sees the church as spiritual Israel.”

³⁴ Timothy P. Weber, “Dispensational and Historic Premillennialism as Popular Millennialist Movements,” in *A Case for Historic Premillennialism: An Alternative to “Left Behind” Eschatology*, eds. Craig L. Blomberg and Sung Wook Chung (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 21.

³⁵ According to Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1219, amillennialists “see the Book of Revelation as consisting of several sections, seven being the number most frequently mentioned. These several sections do not deal with successive periods of time; rather, they are recapitulations of the same period, the period between Christ’s first and second comings.” While this observation is true for the first part of Revelation, it does not work for the second part.

³⁶ See Ekkehardt Mueller, “When Prophecy Repeats Itself: Recapitulation in Revelation,” in *Biblical Research Institute Releases-14* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2015).

³⁷ Jon Paulien, “Eschatology and Adventist Self-Understanding,” in *Lutherans & Adventists in Conversation: Report and Papers Presented 1994–1998* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000), 237–253. This article deals, among others, with the historicist approach to apocalyptic literature.

³⁸ Paige Patterson, *Revelation, The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2012), 310. J. Webb Mealy, *After the Thousand Years: Resurrection and Judgment in Revelation 20* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 97, calls it “devilish troika.”

³⁹ A preterist view of this part of Revelation which is clearly eschatological in nature does not make much sense. George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 213, is on target when stating, “Many commentators assert—as though it were a self-evident fact in the text—that the ‘kings from the east’ represent the Parthians who now invade the civilized world under the leadership of *Nero redivivus*. This, however, is sheer speculation.” While some commentators notice the typological connection between the kings of the east and Cyrus with his armies as well as the topic of drying out or parting of the waters as it relates to judgment of God’s enemies and salvation of his people—G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, New International Greek Testament Commem-

tary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 828–829; Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 151–152—they still do not take advantage of their insight into the Old Testament background but divert to majority views. Craig R. Koester, *Revelation, The Anchor Yale Bible* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 665, notes: “From this perspective, the invasion of the eastern kings foreshadow the destruction of Babylon in Rev 17–18.” This is an important insight that should be exploited. Indeed, the last two plagues are further described in Revelation 17, 18, and even 19, where the actual battle of Armageddon takes place. In Revelation 19 the opponents are the satanic trinity with its supporters and Jesus as King of Kings. For a discussion of the kings of the east as Jesus and his army, see Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 494–495, 498–499. See also Milligan’s arguments as noted in Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 408.

⁴⁰ See the introduction by one of the angels with a bowl in Revelation 17:1. Another angel with a bowl is found in Revelation 21:9, tying together the eschatological part of Revelation.

⁴¹ Although the term “Armageddon” is not mentioned in Revelation 19, this chapter is a clear fulfillment of Revelation 16:16. See Ladd, *Revelation of John*, 216; also Koester, *Revelation*, 668.

⁴² See, e.g., Brian K. Blount, *Revelation, The New Testament Library* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 349; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 679. Mealy, 89, summarizes the second part of Revelation 19 under the following aspects: “Christ as Judge, the Parousia as judgment on Babylon, the Parousia as judgment on humanity as a whole, and the Parousia as an event of eschatological salvation.”

⁴³ E.g., Revelation 13:1–4 and 13:5–8 are parallel paragraphs, as are Revelation 17 and 18.

⁴⁴ Mealy, 180–181, suggests verses 4–10 and verses 11–15 to be parallel.

⁴⁵ For an outline of Revelation 17, see Ekkehardt Mueller, *The Beast of Revelation 17: A Suggestion (Part 1)*, *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 10.1 (2007): 34.

⁴⁶ The sea beast (Rev 13a) is linked to the dragon (serpent, devil, Satan) in 13:2, 4 and 16:13, while the land beast is linked to the dragon in 13:11 and to the sea beast in 13:12, 14, 15, 17. All three entities appear together in 16:13 and are most likely referred to in 16:21.

⁴⁷ See Revelation 2:9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 24, 3:9.

⁴⁸ The Greek text does not contain a copula (the auxiliary verb “to be”). Therefore some translation render verse 10 “where the beast and the false prophet are” (e.g., NKJV). This may make sense in light of the following verb appearing in a plural form—“they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” However, verse 9 indicates that the torment should be understood in terms of the fire “consuming” or “devouring” them. This may imply that the sea beast and the false prophet are not burning for a thousand years. From this perspective the ESV translation “were” would be preferable. On the phrase “forever and ever,” see Stefanovic, 580; against Kistemaker, *Revelation, New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 544.

⁴⁹ Death and Hades come as pairs in Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14. According to Revelation 1:18 Jesus, who was dead

and is alive, has the keys to Death and Hades. In Revelation 6:8 Death and Hades are personified, following the rider on the pale horse. According to Revelation 20:13 Death and Hades release the unbelieving dead at the end of the Millennium to face the divine verdict. While some understand Death and Hades as demonic forces—Stefanovic, 108—they

could also be understood as first death from which people are resurrected, Hades typically referring to the grave. This death will also end in second death and be no more. Cf. Beale, 723.

⁵⁰ Revelation 21:8, by way of contrasts, refers back to the lake of fire with sulfur which is the second death.

Divine Rest and the Environmental Imperative

By Lincoln E. Steed

If any people should have an understanding of the connection between end-time prophecies and the environmental catastrophe engulfing the world today, it would have to be Seventh-day Adventists. After all, the first of the three angels of Revelation calls for all to “fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come, and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Rev 14:7). We have here the theme of imminent judgment. We have the wide gamut of creation included and, with the invocation of creation authority, an easy connection to the memorial of that act—the Sabbath.

We should not see the Sabbath in doctrinal isolation. We may be tempted to portray it as a singular issue, and a false Sabbath imposed with a narrow perversity. The Sabbath is indeed more than a day—it is the signature of the Creator God, and its significance must by definition reach throughout creation. Amazon.com currently describes *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness*, a publication on the Sabbath, this way:

a theological reflection on the relevance of the biblical Sabbath for today. The study shows the values of the Sabbath provide a divine remedy to such contemporary problems as stress, restlessness, ecological crisis, marital tension, human rights and competitive pressures.¹

This thinking on the Sabbath permeates three recent papal documents: *Dies Domini* (1998), *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), and *Laudato si* (2015), and provides the theological underpinning for much of what Pope Francis shared with the joint session of the United States Congress in September 2015.

In *Dies Domini*, Pope John Paul II resoundingly affirms the seventh-day biblical Sabbath. He then introduces the authority of the early Christian church to change the day observed to Sunday. That done, the document resumes its exaltation of the Sabbath. Proof texting the seventh-day Sabbath misses the point of

the document. Sabbath is unquestioned and still valid. The issue is one of authority and tradition.

In *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict assumes the authority of his office to address all the political and social ills of the larger world. He does not mention the Sabbath, but rather the need for divine spiritual rest to solve issues of national sovereignty, economic crisis, capital and labor issues, poverty, and so on. He concludes by calling for a global authority with “the power to act and to enforce.” In reviewing this document, the secular *New Republic* magazine gives it high marks, but observes that in accepting the document, the pope comes with it!

With the release in 2015 of the Encyclical *Laudato si*, Pope Francis brings a wholistic solution to the world’s ills (sometimes with some pantheistic overtones), most particularly to the environmental crisis, with the imperative of Sabbath rest. It is so self-evident that we will follow this with a sequential string of quotations from the document. They bear heavily on the theological rationale for the document.

1. “LAUDATO SI, mi’ Signore” – “Praise be to you, my Lord”. In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs”.

2. This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air

and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.

[3] Now, faced as we are with global environmental deterioration, I wish to address every person living on this planet. In my Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, I wrote to all the members of the Church with the aim of encouraging ongoing missionary renewal. In this Encyclical, I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home.

[5] The destruction of the human environment is extremely serious, not only because God has entrusted the world to us men and women, but because human life is itself a gift which must be defended from various forms of debasement. Every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in “lifestyles, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies”.[...] Authentic human development has a moral character. It presumes full respect for the human person, but it must also be concerned for the world around us and “take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system.” [...] Accordingly, our human ability to transform reality must proceed in line with God’s original gift of all that is.

53. These situations have caused sister earth, along with all the abandoned of our world, to cry out, pleading that we take another course. Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years. Yet we are called to be instruments of God our Father, so that our planet might be what he desired when he created it and correspond with his plan for peace, beauty and fullness.

68. This responsibility for God’s earth means that human beings, endowed with intelligence, must respect the laws of nature and the delicate equilibria existing between the creatures of this world, for “he commanded and they were created; and he established them for ever and ever; he fixed their bounds and he set a law which cannot pass away” (Ps 148:5b–6). The laws found in the

Bible dwell on relationships, not only among individuals but also with other living beings. “You shall not see your brother’s donkey or his ox fallen down by the way and withhold your help... If you chance to come upon a bird’s nest in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs and the mother sitting upon the young or upon the eggs; you shall not take the mother with the young” (Dt 22:4, 6). Along these same lines, rest on the seventh day is meant not only for human beings, but also so “that your ox and your donkey may have rest” (Ex 23:12). Clearly, the Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures.

71. Although “the wickedness of man was great in the earth” (Gen 6:5) and the Lord “was sorry that he had made man on the earth” (Gen 6:6), nonetheless, through Noah, who remained innocent and just, God decided to open a path of salvation. In this way he gave humanity the chance of a new beginning. All it takes is one good person to restore hope! The biblical tradition clearly shows that this renewal entails recovering and respecting the rhythms inscribed in nature by the hand of the Creator. We see this, for example, in the law of the Sabbath. On the seventh day, God rested from all his work. He commanded Israel to set aside each seventh day as a day of rest, a Sabbath, (cf. Gen 2:2–3; Ex 16:23; 20:10). Similarly, every seven years, a sabbatical year was set aside for Israel, a complete rest for the land (cf. Lev 25:1–4), when sowing was forbidden and one reaped only what was necessary to live on and to feed one’s household (cf. Lev 25:4–6). Finally, after seven weeks of years, which is to say forty-nine years, the Jubilee was celebrated as a year of general forgiveness and “liberty throughout the land for all its inhabitants” (cf. Lev 25:10). This law came about as an attempt to ensure balance and fairness in their relationships with others and with the land on which they lived and worked. At the same time, it was an acknowledgment that the gift of the earth with its fruits belongs to everyone.

202. Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and

educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal.

214. Political institutions and various other social groups are also entrusted with helping to raise people's awareness. So too is the Church. All Christian communities have an important role to play in ecological education. It is my hope that our seminaries and houses of formation will provide an education in responsible simplicity of life, in grateful contemplation of God's world, and in concern for the needs of the poor and the protection of the environment. **Because the stakes are so high, we need institutions empowered to impose penalties for damage inflicted on the environment.** [Emphasis supplied] But we also need the personal

“Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and so that the slave born in your household and the foreigner living among you may be refreshed.” (Ex 23:12).

qualities of self-control and willingness to learn from one another.

237. On Sunday, our participation in the Eucharist has special importance. Sunday, like the Jewish Sabbath, is meant to be a day which heals our relationships with God, with ourselves, with others and with the world. Sunday is the day of the Resurrection, the “first day” of the new creation, whose first fruits are the Lord's risen humanity, the pledge of the final transfiguration of all created reality. It also proclaims “man's eternal rest in God”.[168] In this way, Christian spirituality incorporates the value of relaxation and festivity. We tend to demean contemplative rest as something unproductive and unnecessary, but this is to do away with the very thing which is most important about work: its meaning. We are called to include in our work a dimension of receptivity and gratuity, which is quite different from mere inactivity. Rather, it is another way of working, which forms part of our very essence. It protects human action from becoming empty activism; it also prevents that unfettered greed and sense of isolation which make us seek personal gain to the detriment of all else. The law of weekly rest forbade work on the seventh day, “so that your ox and your donkey may have rest,

and the son of your maidservant, and the stranger, may be refreshed” (Ex 23:12). Rest opens our eyes to the larger picture and gives us renewed sensitivity to the rights of others. And so the day of rest, centred on the Eucharist, sheds its light on the whole week, and motivates us to greater concern for nature and the poor.

243. At the end, we will find ourselves face to face with the infinite beauty of God (cf. 1 Cor 13:12), and be able to read with admiration and happiness the mystery of the universe, which with us will share in unending plenitude. **Even now we are journeying towards the sabbath of eternity, the new Jerusalem, towards our common home in heaven** [emphasis supplied]. Jesus says: “I make all things new” (Rev 21:5). Eternal life will be a shared experience of awe, in which each creature, resplendently transfigured, will take its rightful place and have something to give those poor men and women who will have been liberated once and for all.²

So close to the truth, this appropriation of all that is good in Sabbath is applied to the “Eucharistic” Sunday! The stakes

presented are very high—nothing less than the survival of our planet. The Sabbath imperative is all-embracing, as it should be. But how will our insistence that Sabbath can only be on the seventh day be received by those who accept the Pope's challenge? Why, he gave the answer in his speech to Congress. “We must reject,” he said, “all forms of fundamentalism and extremism.” And if you think he meant Islamic fundamentalism you haven't been listening.

The pope's speech to Congress only makes sense when you read the last two documents cited. He was indeed lecturing the capitalists here in the United States and he was calling for a Sabbatical solution to our selfish ways. And he was speaking as one with authority. The challenge is for us to show that no man has the authority to change God's law.

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¹ <http://www.amazon.com/Divine-Rest-Human-Restlessness-Theological/dp/1930987013>.

² http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

Lessons from Daniel 7

By Ekkehardt Mueller

Nations use images of animals as their representatives, conveying a message about how they see themselves. Some have chosen an eagle, others a lion, and still others a bear or an antelope.

Sometimes humans are given animal names. This can be negative or positive. To be called “dog,” “fox,” “wolf,” or “ass” is typically negative. Animal names are sometimes also used as nicknames for loved ones.

In Daniel 7 we also encounter various animals. However, these animals are either indefinable or strange mixtures of beasts. All of them are ferocious. This chapter takes us to the prophetic part of the book, although the narrative section of Daniel, chapters 1–6, also contains some prophecies.

I. Structure of the Chapter

Daniel 7 closely resembles Daniel 2. Both chapters report a vision that is followed by an interpretation. In both of them, four elements appear, which obviously follow each other chronologically, reaching the eschatological climax—the final establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.

1. Outline of Daniel 7

Daniel 7 consists of two large parts—the vision and the interpretation plus prologue and epilogue:

- *Prologue* (vv. 1–2a)
- *The vision* (vv. 2b–14)
 - Four empires and the little horn (earthly scene, vv. 4–8)
 - Heavenly judgment and the eternal kingdom of God (heavenly scene, vv. 9–14)
- *The interpretation* (vv. 15–27)
 - Daniel’s first reaction (vv. 15–16)
 - First short interpretation (vv. 17–18)
 - Daniel’s second reaction (vv. 19–22)
 - Second and more extensive interpretation (vv. 23–27)
- *Epilogue* (v. 28)

2. Emphases

In the vision proper, each of the animals, as well as the little horn, is characterized by one verse each. However, in the interpretational part, the first three animals appear very briefly and in one single verse only. Extensively described are:

- The little horn (vv. 20–22, 24–26)
- The judgment, including the saints receiving the kingdom (vv. 18, 22, 26–27)
- The saints (vv. 18, 21–22, 25, 27).

This is of great importance, revealing the major message of the chapter: (1) the little horn attacks the saints, the people of God, (2) the judgment of God

takes place in favor of His saints, and (3) the kingdom is given to the saints.

II. The Discussion of the Chapter

1. The Prologue

vv. 1–2a Daniel’s vision occurs during the first empire of the book, the Babylonian Empire, but under its last king. The visions of Daniel 8–9 follow the vision of Daniel 7. Daniel will receive them later.

2. The Four Animals and the Little Horn

vv. 2–3 The four animals represent four world empires that begin with the first in the time of Daniel (v. 17). The sea represents the peoples on earth (Rev 17:15) from which the empires arise. The winds may stand for political events that bring about revolutions, wars, and other problems (Rev 7:1). In number and character these empires remind us of those in Daniel 2.

v. 4 The lion with eagle wings as king of land animals and king of birds is the same as the golden head in Daniel 2—Nebuchadnezzar and the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The imagery is found in Babylonian art. However, under Nebuchadnezzar’s successors the empire began to lose some of its lion-like characteristics such as boldness and strength.

v. 5 The bear raised up on one side represents the empire of the Medes and Persians (see Daniel 8:3, 20). The three ribs could stand for Lydia, Babylon, and Egypt, which were devoured by the new empire.

v. 6 The leopard with four wings and four heads is a very fast animal. The Greeks under Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire with unprecedented speed. But Alexander’s kingdom was divided in four, and later three, parts after his premature death (see Dan 8:8, 21–22).

vv. 7, 19, 23 The fourth animal is indefinable. It corresponds to the fourth empire of Daniel 2 (see Dan 2:40). In both cases iron is mentioned. It is the Roman Empire.

vv. 7, 24 The ten horns are smaller kingdoms, which conquered Rome and came forth from it. Historically, Rome was captured by the Germanic tribes of Western Europe. Some have identified them as the Alemanni, the Anglo-Saxons, the Burgundians, the Franks, the Herulians, the Lombards, the Ostrogoths, the Sueves,

the Vandals, and the Visigoths.

3. **The Little Horn and the Saints**
- a. Characteristics of the Little Horn**
- vv. 8, 11, 20–21, 24–26
- (1) It comes forth from the fourth beast
 - (2) In the beginning it is small.
 - (3) It grows and surpasses the other horns.
 - (4) Three horns are plucked out before it.
 - (5) It is different from the other horns.
 - (6) It has human-like eyes.
 - (7) With its mouth it speaks great things and blasphemes God.
 - (8) It changes times and the law of God
 - (9) The saints are attacked by it and defeated.
 - (10) They are in its hand for three and one half times.
 - (11) The little horn will be judged by God.
 - (12) It will be destroyed.
- b. Interpretation**
- (1) Out of the pagan Roman empire arose papal Rome.
 - (2) In the beginning this church was small and persecuted.
 - (3) Today it is by far the largest denomination. In the Medieval Ages the pope was not only the religious ruler but also quite often the top political ruler in Europe. The power of the Roman Catholic Church was also extended to other continents.
 - (4) Herulians, Vandals, and Ostrogoths were tribes that supported Arian Christianity—that is, they denied the doctrine of the Trinity. As such they were rivals of the bishop of Rome who was about to become the pope. In 493 AD, the Herulians were defeated by the Ostrogoths who then ruled in Rome. The Vandals were defeated by general Belisarius in 534 AD, and the Ostrogoths had to withdraw from Rome 538 AD due to Belisarius and were eradicated later.
 - (5) The papacy is a religious-political power, not just a political entity.
 - (6) The eyes point to insight, intelligence, and foresight.
 - (7) Blasphemy of God happens, for example, through doctrines that limit the work of Christ, such as the veneration of Mary as the mother of God, the veneration of saints, the ministry of earthly priests, etc. Some papal claims sound like blasphemy:

The Pope is crowned with a threefold crown as the king of heaven, earth, and the underworld. . . . The Pope is like God on earth. . . . The Pope has such great authority and power that he even can change, explain or interpret divine laws. (L. Ferraris, “Papa II” in *Prompta Bibliotheca*, vol. VI, p. 25–29)

- (8) The context requires understanding the law as the law of God. The second of the Ten Commandments was eliminated (prohibition of venerating images) and the fourth commandment, the Sabbath commandment, was changed into Sunday observance.
- (9) The saints are the people of God in general, not special pious people who should be venerated and can intervene for those living on earth (Exod 19:6; Phil 1:1). The persecution of the saints happened, for instance, through having them tried and executed as witches and heretics (see the Waldenses and Huguenots).
- (10) The three and one half times refers to three and one half years or 1,260 days. According to the year-day principle (e.g., Ezek 4:6; Num 14:34) these periods amount to 1,260 years (cf. Rev 12:6, 14; 11:2–3; 13:5—in symbolic prophecy the time element should also be symbolic, especially if the prophecy covers hundreds or thousands of years). They start in AD 538, when the decree of emperor Justinian of Eastern Rome (AD 533), which demanded to exalt the bishop of Rome as head of all holy churches and head of all holy priests of God, could slowly become a reality. They ended in 1798 BC, when through the French general Berthier the Pope was taken prisoner and was brought to France where he died in exile. This brought to an end the political power of the Papacy.
- (11) The heavenly judgment began some time after AD 1798. It is a judgment in favor of the saints.
- (12) The destruction of the little horn is still future.

4. **The Judgment Scene**
- a. Information about the Judgment in Daniel 7**

- vv. 8–14, 22, 26
- The Ancient of Days is God the Father who functions as judge. The symbols describing Him point to His purity, experience, wisdom, and omnipotence.
 - This judgment is not a secret judgment. Heavenly beings take part in it.
 - Records are being consulted.
 - The judgment affects the little horn and the other animals.
 - At the same time, God vindicates the persecuted saints.
 - This judgment happens after AD 1798 and before the Second Coming. Then the saints will finally receive the kingdom.
 - In this judgment the Son of Man appears—Jesus Christ. Believers are not directly involved.

b. The End Time

It is in this time of judgment prior to the coming of God’s kingdom of glory that we live now. It is the end time!

5. The Kingdoms of God

a. Information about God’s Kingdom to Come in Daniel 7

- vv.14–27
- It is ruled by the Son of Man, Jesus Christ.
 - On His side are the saints.
 - This kingdom lasts forever and will not be replaced by another kingdom.

- All opponents and enemies will be gone.
 - In this kingdom all people will love God and obey and serve Him. Rebellion will be no more.
- We are looking forward to the time of the final establishment of God’s glorious kingdom on earth.

III. Application

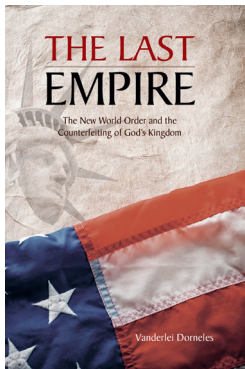
- God’s people are not protected against all suffering, hardship, and persecution. To be a Christian does not mean being freed from all that is negative. Christians encounter pain and sorrow too. We should not live with unsubstantiated illusions. Otherwise we may throw away faith in God when distress and grief reach us.
- However, there is one person who notices everything, who is present with us and carries us: Jesus Christ (Heb 4:14–16). So Christians are not alone when they suffer. The one who supports them has Himself experienced most bitter pain and unprecedented suffering.
- In spite of all evil, Christians know about victory. They expect the kingdom of God, which is free from everything negative, disturbing, and distressing. Therefore, they live goal-oriented lives. Christians are people with a realistic hope and deep joy. While they live here and now and see problems with the environment, the economy, warfare, and many other things, they step in and try to make a difference, knowing that the glory of God’s kingdom is just around the corner.

“And, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away.” Daniel 7:13, 14. The coming of Christ here described is not His second coming to the earth. He comes to the Ancient of Days in heaven to receive dominion and glory and a kingdom, which will be given Him at the close of His work as a mediator. It is this coming, and not His second advent to the earth, that was foretold in prophecy to take place at the termination of the 2300 days in 1844. Attended by heavenly angels, our great High Priest enters the holy of holies and there appears in the presence of God to engage in the last acts of His ministration in behalf of man—to perform the work of investigative judgment and to make an atonement for all who are shown to be entitled to its benefits.” Ellen Gould White, *The Great Controversy*, 479–480.

BOOK NOTES

Vanderlei Dorneles The Last Empire: The New World Order and the Counterfeiting of God's Kingdom

(Tatuí, SP, Brazil:
Casa Publicadora Brasileira,
2015), 192 pp.
US\$7.99 (Kindle)



This book is a must-read for anyone interested in biblical prophecy and end-time events. Its topic is Revelation 13:11, the lamblike beast, and the role of the United States in prophecy.

Many people have written on the topic, but they have generally been from the United States or, to a lesser extent, Europe. Those two areas of the world have much in common, especially a colonizing past. On the other hand, this volume is written by a scholar from the Southern Hemisphere—from a continent that has been on the receiving end of the “civilizing” and colonizing efforts of the North. Being from the Southern Hemisphere allows Vanderlei Dorneles to treat many aspects of American imperialism from a fresh perspective.

Dr. Dorneles, Associate Editor-in-Chief of the Brazilian Publishing House has also served as pastor, writer, and a teacher of both theology and communication. Aspects of the book were first investigated as part of his doctoral dissertation at the University of São Paulo.

The title of the book builds upon the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation and their presentations of the four kingdoms of Daniel 2, the sea beast of Revelation 13:1, and the beast of Revelation 13:11–17 that arises from the earth, has two horns like a lamb but speaks like a dragon, and is instrumental in making all the earth worship the sea beast which has dominated so much of Christian history. As such, the lamblike beast is the last of those empires that feature largely in the conflict between good and evil in Bible prophecy. It is this last empire, Dorneles points out, that will lead out in the worldwide campaign against those who will be preaching the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6–12 to all the earth right before the eschaton of Revelation 14:14. It is the lamblike beast that will eventually enforce the mark of the beast. As such, it is not only a central feature in end-time prophecy, but is also a symbol whose identity needs to be unpacked.

Dorneles accepts the traditional Adventist understanding of the lamblike beast as the United States. But his book seeks to put that interpretation on solid historical ground. As he notes, “the aim of this book is to show how the birth and foundation of the American nation are important elements in understanding the Seventh-day

Adventist interpretation of Revelation 13:11, as well as how these elements help to deepen awareness of the solidity and logic of this interpretation” (p. 11). In the process the book revisits “this prophetic interpretation” to “analyze the stability of its basis” or foundation (p. 8). Beyond those purposes, *The Last Empire* moves to demonstrate how the United States is positioned in the early twenty-first century to truly speak like a dragon in the handling of those who stand against its principles.

The book is divided into three parts, which, unfortunately, are not indicated in the flow of the chapters by divider pages in the text. The first part consists of two chapters that consider the biblical aspects of the topic. Chapter one deals with the North American empire in prophecy and places Revelation 13:11 in the context of the flow of biblical prophecy, highlighting not only the identity of the two-horned beast but also that it is the preaching of the three angels’ messages that “serves as the catalyst for the climax of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, which is focused on God’s law” (p. 21). That preaching will eventually lead “Satan’s side” to “undertake a last great effort” through the agency of the lamblike beast (p. 24).

Chapter two focuses on the Adventist interpretation of Revelation 13:11–18, which viewed the lamblike, two-horned beast as the United States from the early 1850s onward. The chapter not only looks at the progression of Adventist interpreters, but also looks at Protestant interpretations before the rise of Adventism that pointed in the same direction but were not as specific in identification. The chapter ends by highlighting that the “new earth” model of the good life exhibited by the American nation actually serves as a counterfeit of the real thing that will come at the eschaton.

The two chapters of part one cover a great deal of familiar ground, but they often do so in an insightful way that adds interpretive power to the discussion. Beyond that, they provide some insights that are new and helpful.

Part two of *The Last Empire* leaves the somewhat familiar grounds of the first part and enters the realm of the semiotics of culture—that is, a “specific area of semiotics which proposes that cultures are formed and structured by the production and accumulation of texts that reflect the worldview of those cultures” (p. 54). Here

the concept of “texts” extends beyond written material to such things as music, painting, religious rites, symbolic images, and many other forms of cultural expression. Through semiotics the three chapters of part two provide a profile of the United States that demonstrates an ongoing collective identity across more than five hundred years.

The chapters present an overview of the development of the American nation with its messianic mission in three stages: discovery, colonization, and founding. Chapter three outlines the rather surprising perspective of Christopher Columbus, who tied his discoveries to the biblical promise of a “new earth” and the renewal of the cosmos. His messianic beliefs had been informed by those of Joachim de Fiore (1132–1202), who wrote on the prophecies of Revelation. Thus even before the discovery of America, Columbus had held a messianic understanding that provided “texts” leading to a collective identity for the “new earth” that would be expanded upon in later eras.

Chapter four furthers the image-building track through the ideas set forth by British colonists, including the New England concept that this new earth would be like a city on a hill that the eyes of the old world would focus on. The chapter demonstrates that, like Columbus, the colonizers of the American nation used biblical symbols and gave them messianic meanings even as they detached them from their literal meaning in the Bible. Thus the Puritans came to see themselves as God’s New Israel with a messianic mission to the world. In the process, the chapter highlights the function of the Sabbath (Sunday) as a sign that they were truly God’s covenant people, a “chosen nation.”

Chapter five continues the development of American identity in the founding of the United States through the examination of such texts as the Declaration of Independence, presidential speeches, and the Great Seal of the United States. Not surprisingly, Dorneles finds a great deal of information that continues to reflect the messianic mission of the “new earth” to the rest of the world. One tidbit that I found interesting was the image of the American eagle on the Great Seal that pictures it with the laurels of peace grasped in one talon and the arrows of war in the other, thereby visually reflecting on the lamb-like and dragon-like characteristics of the United

States and symbolizing that the power of the nation “can be used to bless or to dominate” (p. 121). The chapter also exhibits the development of a civil religion in the United States that informs its messianic mission to the world.

Part three contains three chapters that highlight “how American imperial power is identified with the ‘voice of the dragon’ through its warlike actions and eventual persecution of God’s people” (p. 11). Chapter six discusses the “voice of the dragon” in American history all the way from its dispossessing of the Indians and Mexicans, up through its mission to “civilize” the Philippines even though they fought back for years, and up into its imperialist wars of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The dragon aspect comes out quite nicely in a quote from the commanding American general who in 1900 claimed that he was firmly “convinced that Filipinos need bayonet treatment for at least a decade.” Such was one small outcome of the nation’s messianic mission to the world.

Chapter seven is a rather complex treatment of the American nation’s treatment, or potential treatment, of dissenters of the American culture’s mainline perspectives. Needless to say, the chapter closes by finding that the American empire will eventually face off with Adventism over issues related to the Sabbath and creation.

The final chapter indicates how the war on terror and the monopolistic moves of the information industry are setting up a framework for end-time events. One helpful insight is that America’s drive to preserve freedom is actually more and more restrictive of it. That argument is especially clear in the book’s concluding section. Thus it is through its counterfeiting of the “new earth” that the last empire will become the agent that becomes the focal point of power to fight against those who will be preaching the coming of the genuine “new earth.” The book concludes with the thought that “the empires revealed in the Bible prophecies clearly and unequivocally fulfilled the trajectories set for them in the divine plan” (p. 182). So it will be with *The Last Empire*.

Did Dorneles succeed in his task? My suggestion is that you read and find out.

George R. Knight
is a retired professor of church history at the
theological seminary at Andrews University

Index to Reflections

The first issue of Reflections was published in January 2003. Since then, we've published many articles.

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Reflections seeks to share information concerning doctrinal and theological developments among Adventists and to foster doctrinal and theological unity in the world church. Its intended audience is church administrators, church leaders, pastors and teachers.

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