

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 392

Revelation 19, Part 2

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Episode Summary

Is the battle of Armageddon in Rev 19:11-21 unique in the book of Revelation—or is it alluded to elsewhere? Of what importance is that question to how we read Revelation 16-20? Armageddon, as John tells us, is “in the Hebrew tongue” Har-Magedon (Rev 16:16). We learned in Part 1 of Revelation 19 (and in Dr. Heiser’s book, *The Unseen Realm*) that this term refers not to Megiddo, but to a final apocalyptic conflict for and at Zion/Jerusalem. In this episode we look at how John uses Ezekiel 38-39 (Gog / Magog conflict) in particular for his description of this end times battle—for events both prior to, and following, the second coming of Christ. How does this make sense? Listen to the discussion!

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 392: Revelation 19, Part 2. I’m the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he’s the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How are you feeling?

MH: Well, the first chemo cycle was a challenge, to say the least. I would use words like “devastating,” and I’m not trying to be dramatic. It’s just horrific. You know, I’ve begun to refer to it basically as “a tour of duty in hell.” [laughs] You know? So the next “train to hell” leaves this coming Wednesday, and I will be on it. [laughter]

TS: Yeah.

MH: It’s just unbelievable, what it does to you. And it hit me... The nausea is the issue. It’s unrelenting, moment-by-moment, severe (like a 10) nausea, which of course means that you can’t eat. And if you did eat something you’d probably barf it up. But in my case, the cycle means that when I go in, I’m not going to be eating anything for three or four days. So there’s the weight-loss issue. And then you gradually emerge from the abyss. Things sort of stabilize. It never completely goes away. But it’s manageable if it’s a 2 or a 3. But if it’s just the high-level stuff, it’s just devastating. I can’t... I mean, the people who this is their life, like they just have to keep doing chemo to keep their cancer in check and they don’t really

have a path to a cure... You know, in my case this is all prep for surgery. But for those who don't have that, I just don't know how they do it. You know? I understand that people just quit. You know, they lose the will to live. Because who wants to do that? So the people who endure that, they are just heroic. I don't know any other way to describe it. Now that I've actually experienced just one cycle... I mean, I know people who are pushing 20 cycles. And they'll tell you that it gets a little better. As time goes on your body adapts to it. But my body did not know what hit it. [laughs] You know?

TS: Yeah.

MH: See, I'm one of these people, up until this year I had to be talked into taking ibuprofen. I don't take meds. I don't drink anything, and I never have. I never did drugs in high school, you know. And it's like I literally just did not know what hit me. [laughs] It was just unbelievable.

TS: Yeah. Sounds not fun.

MH: No. I told my pastor, "So on my next trip to hell, I'm going to wave to the Watchers and tell them they still suck." [laughter] You know? I'm going to have to visit them every two weeks. [laughs] But you know, "I'm out of here, and you guys are stuck." [laughs]

TS: Yeah. And I'm sure it's hard. We appreciate you preparing for the podcast and doing the little work that you're able to do during those bouts. I'm sure it takes your mind off of it.

MH: Yeah. Energy level is pretty much nil those four or five days when it's slamming you. But you know, you emerge out of it and you get busy and you do things you can do, and that's what it is.

TS: Yeah, well, were you able to at least on Sunday (I know you're sick) be able to watch some football?

MH: I watched a little bit. I didn't... I mean, I had to lay down. I take naps because I more or less have to. So I caught a little bit of the first layer of games. And then the Sunday night one I caught a good bit of. And then after that there was the Cowboys/Buccaneers game on Thursday. But I was really impressed with the Cowboys, to be honest with you.

TS: Yeah, they played good.

MH: You know, I know they lost the game, but they're not going to be like last year.

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TS: No. As long as Dak can stay healthy. We were poised for a good season, but injuries take it a different direction. But I don't know if you saw, but your Packers sure did not look good.

MH: Oh, man. The Packers played like I felt. We'll just leave it right there. [laughs]

TS: Yeah, yeah. That's funny. Did you win your Fantasy game?

MH: I did not win in the Naked Bible league. I'm not sure... I don't know if I have Rogers on that team or not, but basically he had an epically bad performance. But there was somebody who just really laid an egg for me there. But in my other leagues I did okay. Did fine.

TS: Well, those leagues don't count. I don't count those leagues.

MH: [laughs] I know.

TS: Those are fake leagues.

MH: I know. They're the inferior leagues, right? [laughs]

TS: I lost to your brother, so that's... I had a good game, and I still lost. So I didn't like that too much.

MH: Yeah, well he has a good team. He usually drafts pretty well.

TS: Well, since we're in Revelation, these last few chapters might actually sound like heaven, to be able to...

MH: [laughs] Right. Yeah, we get our revenge here, talking about Armageddon. [laughs] But you're right, that's where we're at.

TS: Well, alright, Mike, I don't want to keep you talking if you want to jump into Part 2 here. I'm ready if you are.

MH: Yeah. So in Part 2 here in Revelation 19, we're going to cover Revelation 19:11-21, which is the rest of the chapter. So I'm going to start off by reading that and then telegraph where we're going to be going here. So Revelation 19:11, reading from the ESV, says:

¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped

in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, “Come, gather for the great supper of God, ¹⁸ to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.” ¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. ²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. ²¹ And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

So that is Revelation 19:11-21. It's the battle of Armageddon. And again, this is very familiar. The Old Testament references here are very easy to pick out by this point, because they're somewhat repetitious with where we've already been. So I'm not going to spend too much time on the obvious things. We have the reference to “eyes like a flame of fire.” Again, that was earlier in the book for the risen Christ, drawing on language from Daniel. And of course, he has “many crowns.” “The name written,” you know, he is marked with the name of Yahweh, just like the beast's followers are marked with the name of the beast—so on and so forth. So “the name by which he is called is the Word of God,” “I am that I am...” Most scholars opt for that particular word here. “Armies of heaven” is familiar angelic host imagery from the Old Testament. Again, very easy to pick out, especially for those who have read *Unseen Realm*. “Following him on the white horses...” We had the earlier reference to Zechariah 14, that “the Lord will come with all his holy ones,” earlier in the book.

So a lot of this stuff we've seen already. We've seen “he will rule them with a rod of iron,” which, interestingly enough, is applied to Jesus (the returning Christ) here. But back in Revelation 2:26-27, that was language spoken about *us* as believers. The one who overcomes (the believer who overcomes) “he will rule the nations with a rod of iron.” So it's this shared messianic rule. Revelation 3:21, Jesus shares his throne with the one who overcomes (believers). And so that

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language here of a group of holy ones arrayed in white linen, well that's us. These are the members of the Divine Council, the heavenly host. And we're going to get more of that in this episode and next, just specific phrases that tie into the notion (that reinforce the notion) that believers are... Even now when we die, we become members of the Council. And we just await what the Lord wants us to do, and this is part of it. We are the holy ones, along with the supernatural holy ones who return to earth to judge evil and destroy the gods.

So a lot of this is familiar territory. Where I want to focus today is really on verses 17-21. Believe it or not, these descriptions of the birds eating the flesh and the very brief note about the nations that are gathered against the Lord at Jerusalem (at Har Magedon—*har mō'ed*—the mount of assembly, Jerusalem, Zion)... That that has something to do with deception is going to become important. These little phrases that don't seem to mean so much, the birds, the deception, and of course, this ends with the lake of fire and so on and so forth. That's actually going to become really important because of what I want to do and what I'm going to interact with here in this episode. And it will overlap into our next episode when we focus more in chapter 20. We'll get a little bit of chapter 20 here because we have to, but in the next episode on chapter 20, there'll be more of it.

So what I want to do in this episode is interact with Meredith Kline's article. Now those of you who have read *Unseen Realm* and the chapter on Armageddon know that I footnote this article. And the article is entitled "Har Magedon: The End of the Millennium." And that was an article published in the *Journal for the Evangelical Theological Society* in 1996, specifically volume 39.

Now what I want to do here is, because Kline is (to my knowledge) the only evangelical Old Testament scholar (the only evangelical scholar period) who recognized very clearly the fact that *Har Magedon* (the mount—*har* is mount)... John tells us that *Har Magedon* (Armageddon) is in the Hebrew tongue. *Har Magedon* means "mount of" something. And it can't be Megiddo, because there is no mountain there. Anyone who's been to the site, the first question should be to your tour guide, "Where is the mountain?" Because there isn't any. It's a plain. So Kline thought, "Well..." (This is all in *Unseen Realm*. We've discussed it in earlier episodes too.) "What if we're not dealing with Hebrew M-G-D (the first three consonants of Megiddo)?" And why it ends with an N, you can read *Unseen Realm* and in the footnotes you'll find out why. "What if instead we have *har* and then *mem*, 'ayin (the other Hebrew consonant that has that G sound). Like Gomorrah is actually not spelled with Hebrew G (*gimel*); it's spelled with 'ayin (*'amorah*). It has that back of the throat G sound. So Kline's like, "Well, what if we have *mem 'ayin daleth*? And we have *har mō'ed*?" And as soon as he came to that observation, the whole thing opened up. Because *har mō'ed* is the mount of assembly from Isaiah 14. This is where God rules. It's Zion. It's Jerusalem. And this is why the other language associated with this battle is associated with

Jerusalem in the passages. Again, read *Unseen Realm*. You'll get all the data. Or go back and listen to some of the comments we've had here.

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So Kline took this textual reality and he went to the book of Revelation and said, "Okay, if this is a final battle for Jerusalem, where in the Old Testament do we see such a battle depicted and fought? And the obvious answer emerged pretty quickly, and that is the Gog/Magog incident of Ezekiel 38-39. Now Gog and Magog are actually mentioned explicitly in Revelation 20. But we're not there yet; we're in Revelation 19. And so what Kline does in his article is he basically looks for all of the places where John in Revelation 16 up through Revelation 20 repurposes and utilizes the Gog/Magog elements in those chapters. And not just Gog/Magog, but other Old Testament passages that have a final climactic battle for Zion—for Jerusalem. So where does John use those passages, especially Ezekiel 38-39? And it turns out that John uses them in several places in all of these chapters. And so Kline says, "Look, there's only one way to parse this." And I agree with him, as far as what's happening in the text, and that is, John is describing the same conflict three or four times in these chapters. It's recapitulation. John is recycling this material to describe the climactic conflict and defeat of the beast. And he doesn't just do it in Revelation 20, when he mentions Gog and Magog. He does it in chapter 19. He does it in chapter 18. He does it in chapter 17.

So if you recall as a listener to this series, I have said a few times before that most people approach the book of Revelation and they assume (there's no instruction manual at the front of the book or at the end) that we're supposed to read Revelation as a linear, sequential chronology. And I've said before, there are places where that just is not the case. You can't read it that way and understand what's going on. And this is ground zero for that assertion.

So Kline's article, I think, does a great job of showing how, from Revelation 16 through 20, we have recapitulation. We have a repeated cycling of descriptions of the same events. We have followers of the beast getting the mark. We have the beast chaos system persecuting Christians. We have them eventually massing against Zion (and the Lord) for one final battle to essentially stop the plan of God from happening. We have the return of Christ, the destruction of the beast and his system, and then we go off into the final resurrection and judgments and the kingdom return to earth. John recycles those series of events three or four, maybe five times in these chapters. They are not to be read as a linear chronology of separate events. The subtitle of Kline's article is "The End of the Millennium." When you do this, you are forced to the conclusion that the thousand-year references in the beginning of Revelation 20 are not a future millennial rule. They are the Church Age. They are the present Church Age. And I agree with that, too, with one exception that we'll hit at the end of this episode and on into Revelation 20.

There's something Kline has missed that I'm going to point out to you. But Kline was an amillennialist. And so he uses this information to destroy the premillennial eschatological system. And that's what I want to track on today. And again, I'm telegraphing this all up front. I hope that by the end of this episode and the next, you will see the importance of not attaching your theology... Or let me put it this way: not equating biblical theology with a theological system. Because if you do that, you have no literal kingdom to look forward to. Kline successfully destroys the standard premillennial understanding of Revelation 16-20. He does it. By virtue of how the Old Testament is used by John over and over and over and over again in cycles, you cannot read it as a linear chronology. It doesn't work. So that's going to leave us with a question at the end of this episode that Kline has to answer and all systems have to answer. I'm going to propose my own answer in the following episode. But I'm just telling you where we're going. It's going to sound confusing. "Well, if I'm just reading the book of Revelation, Mike, the chapters follow each other. And this is a series of events. One just happens after the other." No. It doesn't. And I'm going to show you why, using Kline's work here—how John is repurposing the same passages different times in these Revelation chapters.

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Now to sort of understand where Kline's going with this, we need to summarize a little bit of some Revelation content to this point. And I'm going to go all the way back to chapter 6. Revelation 6-18.

So let's just take the Seal Judgments. The first four of the seven seal judgments are in Revelation 6. And they're very general. They follow the description of Jesus that he gave his disciples, that his followers would be persecuted. If you read Mark 13:3-13 it's going to sound remarkably like the first four seal judgments of Revelation 6. That's not an accident. Okay? John and Mark are tracking together. In fact, I will read you this one passage. Let's go to Mark 13 just to make the point of how this really sounds. So we've got Mark 13, beginning in verse 3. This is Jesus on the Mount of Olives—the Signs of the End of the Age. Now just listen to this:

³ And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?" ⁵ And Jesus began to say to them, "See that no one leads you astray. ⁶ Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. ⁷ And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁸ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.

⁹ “But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them.

Okay, all that, every one of those elements you’ll find in Revelation 6, going forward. Every one of them. And then we hit verse 10 in Mark 13:

¹⁰ And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.

Here we go again, linking the return of the Lord to the fullness of the Gentiles.

¹¹ And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. ¹² And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. ¹³ And you will be hated by all for my name's sake.

Ooh, doesn’t that sound like the book of Revelation? “He that overcomes to the end will be saved.” And then you hit the abomination and so on and so forth. So the point is that you could go back to these discourses in the Gospels and look at what Jesus said would happen before his coming, and you’ll find all of it in the book of Revelation.

So the seal judgments are very general in sort of beginning the first of these three cycles of judgments. The fifth seal unleashes a response to the martyrdom of the followers of the Lamb. So God starts taking revenge against the persecution of his followers. The sixth seal is the end of the cosmos as humanity knows it. It’s classic Old Testament language for the dissolution of the heavens. And the seventh seal... Remember that? That was in Revelation 8. That was silence in heaven. And there was a lot of Sinai imagery. And commentators pretty much land on the idea that this silence is there because those who see what’s about to come are aghast—they’re shocked—at what’s going to happen when God unleashes his revenge at the Day of the Lord, right before Jesus’ return. They’re shocked. So we’ve got this general judgment. And then we’ve got this silence about what’s going to happen.

And then we get the Trumpet Judgments. So this is the next cycle. There are numerous parallels to the Egyptian plagues, as we’ve already noticed. In trumpets 1-4, the first four echo the first four seal judgments. So right there, if you compare the first four trumpets to the first four seal judgments, there’s repetition. There’s repetition. And again, it’s going to be general judgment on the earth. There’s your Exodus elements. But the judgments (the seals and the trumpets)

narrow to God's punishment of those who are persecuting his followers (those who believe in him). It's a response to their martyrdom. So the followers of the beast start to get "marked." [laughs] They're in the crosshairs for judgment. And eventually everything leads up to a final climactic battle, which is Armageddon.

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So in the case of the trumpets, you've got general plagues (the first four). The fifth trumpet is the release of the Watchers in Revelation 9. And this gives us the spiritual chaos element of the end of days, as opposed to just human destruction—human persecution of Christians. Now we see there's a supernatural element behind it. In later chapters, this fifth slot (or this spiritual, supernatural chaos slot) will be filled by the beast himself, the harlot of Babylon, the whole Babylon system. The sixth trumpet is the drying up of the Euphrates. Again, it's not about China. It's a massive army from "Babylon." They are the world chaos enemy, as we've talked in the preceding two or three episodes here. Everything points to Babylon, which is expected, because Babylon... The rebellion back at the Tower of Babel is where we *get* the nations who align themselves with other gods against the true God. This is just axiomatic. The Deuteronomy 32 worldview just provides the perfect framework for this.

So the sixth trumpet is the drying up of the Euphrates. The massive army from "Babylon" gathers against the people of God, preparing to confront Zion. And this is Armageddon (*har-magedon*)—the battle that occurs at the Mount of Assembly, Yahweh's mountain, which is Zion.

The seventh trumpet heralds the kingdom of God. Well, that's logical, because after Armageddon, that's what happens next. We're going to have the general resurrection—the righteous to life, the unrighteous to death. And then we get the kingdom returned to earth in full consummation. Revelation 11:15 says about the seventh trumpet, "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." Again, the trumpets repeat a cycle that we saw with the seals. There's a same general flow of events. And they borrow imagery from Egyptian plague stuff, from Sinai stuff, from Babylon stuff in the Old Testament. John is cycling through the same set of ideas.

Now if you remember back in our discussion of the 144,000 in Revelation 7, that was, the 144,000, and we sort of landed on, these are Jewish followers of Jesus. But that's not to exclude a great multitude of Gentiles. Because in Revelation 7:9, we get a reference to those who would not be numbered among the Jews. It's a more generic reference to nations. Then collectively, that multitude are believers who endure to the end. They don't give up the faith, and they have a home in the new Eden. Their description is distinct (the Gentile element) from the 144,000. So the idea that this is only Jews is not correct. I mean, you get both sides going on in this saved remnant. It's not only the 144,000. There are multitudes from the nations that also refuse to follow the beast and wind up on the Lord's side. So the 144,000 could be either Jewish followers of Jesus or Old Testament language of

Israel applied to the Church, which includes Jewish believers. But again, I kind of like giving the Jewish element its due and then looping in the Gentiles through verse 9.

But anyway, my point here is that the assembling of the army of the beast against this group is a precursor to Armageddon and the kingdom, and both Jewish and Gentile believers are in the picture somewhere. They're both being targeted. John does this because he elsewhere frequently applies Old Testament Israel language to the Church. The most obvious, of course, is Exodus 19:6. It's "kingdom of priests." He refers to the Church as the kingdom of priests, the Church including Gentiles, in Revelation 1:6, Revelation 5:10, and Revelation 20:6. So to view Revelation 7 as some sort of only Jewish thing is a mistake. And I mention it because you'll see this in dispensational systems. Again, you cannot exclude the Gentile element from the saved and sanctified—those who chose to follow the Lord before the end of the days. Now that fits wonderfully if a lot of this is about the present age, because in the present age, we have the Church, and the Church is circumcision-neutral. So again, there's a consistency here. But I wanted to just throw that out because some of you are going to be thinking that right away. You need to go back and listen to the Revelation 7 episodes.

So what about some of the patterning to this point? A) Again, there's judgment on the earth. Very general. And it's going to funnel specifically to those who align themselves with the beast. B) Believers are "sealed" and protected, if we follow the Exodus imagery to its consistent point. Whether this means protection from any physical harm is debated. And the Egyptian parallels suggest that, but not all the judgments have Egyptian plague parallels. Some of them don't, so we can't be really hard and fast about that, either. But at the least, it seems to denote more consistently protection from evil spirits. In other words, the protection and sealing that goes on at the end of days is really about keeping believers loyal to the gospel—preventing them, assisting them, helping them to not surrender the faith, helping them to overcome. It shouldn't be viewed as a guarantee against physical harm. Rather, it's supernatural assistance to overcome, to stay with the faith, to keep believing.

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Beale and Campbell, this is Beale's... They have a shorter version of Beale's commentary that these two guys (Beale and then he had editorial help from Campbell) put together. They write this in that particular volume:

The demonic powers are forbidden to harm those with the seal of God on their forehead. Uppermost in John's mind is not physical security, but protection of the believers' faith and salvation from the various sufferings and persecutions that are inflicted upon them, whether by Satan or his demonic and earthly agents. The sealing enables God's people to respond in faith to the trials through which they pass so that these trials become the very instruments by which they are strengthened in their faith.

Again, I think that's well said, and I think it's important. This is all preparation for Armageddon. It's all preparation for the final conflict—the final judgment of human and cosmic evil, the final reversal of chaos. “He that endures to the end will be saved. He that endures to the end will judge the nations—he'll rule the nations with a rod of iron. He that endures to the end I will share my throne with him.” Okay? This is all meant to encourage loyalty—believing loyalty to the gospel.

Then you get to the bowl judgments. The bowl judgments are the fodder for Revelation 16. The first three bowls draw on the language of the Egyptian plagues again, just like the trumpets did. They recycle the first four trumpet judgments. There we go. *It's not a linear chronology*. It's recycling. The fourth and fifth bowl judgments seems to be a reverse of the plague of darkness we talked about earlier, because it has people scorched by the sun, and in keeping with the Egyptian plague of darkness (which is bowl #5). It is with this judgment that the connections from Egypt as chaos agent in the Old Testament transferred to Babylon. Because Babylon becomes the archrival and archenemy as biblical history moves on. It's in this judgment that that transition is most apparent. Babylon, of course, becomes a code name for Rome, because Rome in John's day... When he's writing the book of Revelation, they (not literal Babylon) are the primary chaos agent. They have inherited that status from Babylon. But when John writes, when he talks about Babylon, everybody knows what he's talking about: God's archenemy. “Now we're going to use this to portray the Roman empire.” And we talked about how that *has* to be, because the inauguration of the kingdom of God in Daniel 2 (and Daniel 7 of course), but in Daniel 2, the stone made without hands happens in the day of the last kingdom, which is Rome. Okay? So again, all of this fits. Now Beale and Campbell draw attention to one particular thing they write:

This punishment of the fourth bowl, occurring prior to the return of Christ, anticipates the final judgment of Babylon, which also will be burned by fire (cf. v. 8, “scorch with fire,” with [MH: Revelation] 17:16 and 18:8, [MH: there it's] “burn up with fire”).

So that's an important link that links these judgments together—these three different groups of judgments. There are threads that link them together. The sixth bowl explicitly references the drying of the Euphrates to make way for the kings of the East, which is a clear reference to Babylon and its hordes, both human and demonic. Specifically, Revelation 16:12-15 describes the demonic element of the Babylon chaos system. And in verse 16, as we get to the end of chapter 16, John learns the hordes are being gathered at *har-magedon*.

So that brings us to Armageddon. These judgments—these three sets of judgments—are recycling each other. They tell the same basic storyline of who the enemy is, the persecution of believers, God pouring out his wrath on the

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earth generally, and then more particularly on those who take the mark. The reaction from those is anger. “We’re going to confront Yahweh at Zion. We’re going to put an end to this. We’re not going to let Yahweh have his way—his plan. We’re going to gather together against Zion—against him and Zion. And we are going to stop him. That’s what we’re going to do.” And again, that’s Armageddon. And then as we get into chapter 19, of course, they are defeated dramatically by the returning Jesus, with us (with believers). And then the rest leads off into the final judgments and the new Eden/return to earth. Again, it’s a familiar storyline repeated through chapters 16 through 20.

And that brings us to Kline. So I’m going to be pulling some points from his article. But most of the detail remains there. And his article is in the protected folder if you want to read it. So we’ve seen in this summary that the seal judgments set up the trumpets, which are largely recycled in the bowl judgments. And it’s this recycling that draws the attention of many interpreters of Revelation. Scholars have noticed this (many of them) because it continues into Revelation 17, 18, 19, and 20. So we’re going to focus on the *har mō‘ed* (*har-magedon*, the Mount of Assembly) and how that specifically gets repeated, not just because Gog and Magog are referenced in Revelation 20:8. That doesn’t mean that’s the first time we see the battle. We see elements of Ezekiel 38 and 39 before we ever get to Revelation 20. And that’s what Kline noticed. So after we get it in our heads that *har-magedon* is Zion and Jerusalem (and Kline follows the same bunny trail that I do in *Unseen Realm*; if you need a review of that material, you can go back and read it)... But I’m just going to give you what Kline says here. It’s kind of a short form summary. Now he writes this:

Following the trail of *har magedōn* back to *har mō‘ed* has led us to examine a set of OT passages containing the phrase *yarkētê šāpôn* [MH: in English that’s “the heights of the north”]. From the first two [MH: of those occurrences] (Isaiah 14; Psalm 48 [MH: verses 1 and 2]) it has appeared that *har mō‘ed*/*magedōn* is identifiable with Mount Zaphon/Zion.

Right away we know we’re dealing with cosmic geography because Jerusalem/Zion is not located in the north of the land, is it? Jerusalem is in Judah. It’s in the south. But nevertheless, it’s called “the heights of the north” in Psalm 48:1-2. “Heights of the north” (the *yarkētê šāpôn*, the *har mō‘ed* in Canaanite literature) was Baal’s mountain. This is the reference back in Isaiah 14, where you have the rebel (and Baal becomes the Satan figure) say, “I will be like the Most High. I will be above the stars of God. I will sit as ruler at the mount of assembly, the heights of the north.” So this notion that in the cosmic north (and in Canaanite it was linked geographically to a specific mountain that’s far distant from Jerusalem), this is... It’s either Hermon or Jebel-al-Aqra’. And it’s probably both, depending on what passage you’re in. But this is the seat of the power of the gods. And so the Psalmist, in Psalm 48 says, “I’m sorry, but the real cosmic center is not this place.” Psalm 68, Yahweh says, “I’m going to take it captive. It

belongs to me.” And of course, Paul quotes Psalm 68 in Ephesians 4 about the “leading captivity captive.” All that stuff that’s in *Unseen Realm*.

So we have a spiritual competition between the cosmic mountain in Canaanite and all the way back to Sumerian theology and the place where Yahweh has chosen to put his name, which is Zion. Psalm 48 refers to Zion with all the terminology that his supernatural enemies—Yahweh’s supernatural enemies—use for their dominion. If it were *The Lord of the Rings*, it’d be like Aragorn, who’s the Christ figure, saying, “No, Mordor is nothing. Gondor is really the cosmic center here.” And he would start using Mordor epithets of Gondor, just to stick it in the eye of Sauron. [laughs] This is what you have going on here in biblical setting. So Psalm 48 refers to Zion, which is in the south, as the “heights of the north.” So back to Kline. Again, this is all part of his argument. He says:

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Ezekiel 38–39 is a third such passage [MH: in addition to Isaiah 14 and Psalm 48], and here we discover a fundamental correspondence between the Zaphon/Magedon and Gog-Magog concepts [MH: he says these concepts get married in Ezekiel 38–39]. That means that the Har Magedon crisis of Rev 16:14–16 (and the series of parallel passages in Revelation) is to be identified with the millennium-ending Gog-Magog event of [MH: Revelation] 20:7–10.

He’s saying, “Look, all these cycles need to be seen for what they are. They’re cycles. And the final cycle is Revelation 20. We can’t read this as a linear sequence of different events. It’s a repetition of the same events. Kline says:

For the Revelation 20 passage is replete with allusions to Ezekiel 38–39, including, along with the explicit mention [MH: by name] of Gog and Magog, the distinctive central theme of Ezekiel 38–39, [MH: which is] the universal gathering of the world forces to destroy God’s people and their catastrophic overthrow by the descent of fiery judgment from heaven. Accordingly, it is generally acknowledged that Ezekiel’s prophecy and the vision of the loosing of Satan after the thousand years in Revelation 20 describe the same eschatological event.

Lots of scholars land here because honestly, it’s obvious. You don’t have John in Revelation 20 coming up with a different Gog and Magog other than the one in Ezekiel 38-39. That’s ridiculous. And everybody knows it. But again, there are people who would try to evade this because they want to read Revelation as a linear sequence of events here. And it doesn’t work. You have to literally make up a second Gog-Magog event or ignore all of the Ezekiel 38-39 language in Revelation 16-19. Just pretend it’s not there.

So this is my comment now, just getting away from Kline a little bit. I just want to press the point. We have to get away from this in this section of the book of Revelation, this notion of “we have a neat linear chronology.” Basically we don’t.

And we have to look at the recycling. The recapitulation is clear in many places. So what Kline does is he starts with a clear connection between Revelation 16 (that's sort of the beginning of the section) and then Revelation 20. That's how he does it in his article. So let's take a look at that. Kline writes:

A main consideration in establishing the identity of the Revelation 16 Har Magedon crisis [MH: remember Revelation 16 is where you specifically get the term *Har Magedon* used] and the Ezekiel 38–39 Gog crisis...

So he says if we can do that, if we can link Revelation 16 to Ezekiel 38-39, then it's much easier to link all of that to Revelation 20, because Gog and Magog are mentioned by name. So this is his goal. He says:

[T]he antichrist element common to both [MH: Revelation 16 and Ezekiel 38-39]. The antichrist identity of the dragon-like beast in the Har Magedon episode would be acknowledged by most, irrespective of their millennial preferences. For the continuity of this beast of Revelation 16 with the fourth beast of Daniel 7 (in the final phase of its little-horn expression) is obvious [MH: and it is], and in Daniel an alternative representation of this bestial eschatological foe is the self-deifying king of Dan 11:36 [MH: again, all the systems know this too—everybody agrees on this], the figure interpreted by Paul as the antichrist (2 Thess 2:4). It remains now to show that the antichrist element is also conspicuously present in Ezekiel 38–39...

45:00 So Kline says, "Let's go." And here what I'm going to do is I'm going to summarize his lines of evidence for this. So just so you know where he's going and where we're going, we're taking the obvious... We'll start with the obvious things that all of the eschatological systems agree on. When we read Revelation 16, we get all this antichrist stuff, we know it relates to Daniel 2. We know it relates to Daniel 7. We know it relates to the little horn. We know it relates to Daniel 11:36, the figure that makes himself God. And we know that Paul picks up on that very idea in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 to describe the antichrist. Everybody knows all those elements. Everybody agrees. So Kline says, "What remains, what people just don't do (including scholars) is they don't look back at Ezekiel 38-39 and see how that passage is used by John in Revelation 16 to reinforce—to articulate—his antichrist Armageddon story (his prophecy). That's what they don't see. And so Kline says, "Come along with me. Let's look where Ezekiel 38-39 (and maybe Psalm 48 a little bit, some of these other passages), where they're used in Revelation 16." So this is where he starts.

So here's his first line of evidence: where does Gog hail from? Where does he come from? Well, Kline says, let's first of all think about the "heights of the north." Psalm 49 relates the marshalling of enemy forces against Zion in that passage. So let me read you Psalm 48. And if you've read Unseen Realm this should be familiar.

**Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised
 in the city of our God! [MH: obviously Jerusalem]
 His holy mountain, ² beautiful in elevation,
 is the joy of all the earth,
 Mount Zion, in the far north [MH: in the yarkētê šāpôn],
 the city of the great King.**

Even though Jerusalem/Zion is in the south, we're going to say it's in the far north, because we're doing theology. The psalmist is doing theology and cosmic geography. He's not doing literal geography; he's doing cosmic geography to do theology. Here's verse 3:

**³ Within [Jerusalem's] citadels God
 has made himself known as a fortress.
⁴ For behold, the kings assembled;
 they came on together.
⁵ As soon as they saw it, they were astounded;
 they were in panic; they took to flight.
⁶ Trembling took hold of them there,
 anguish as of a woman in labor.
⁷ By the east wind you shattered
 the ships of Tarshish.**

[laughs] I love the reference to Tarshish there. Basically, everybody's gathered against Zion. We're not going to forget about little Tarshish (Spain). They get in on the act too.

**⁸ As we have heard, so have we seen
 in the city of the LORD of hosts,
 in the city of our God,
 which God will establish forever.**

So they're preparing for battle. It's all the nations against Zion in the "heights of the north." *Cosmic* geography. Okay? So Kline says, "You know, okay, let's notice that. You get the heights of the north. Zion's in the far north." And then he says Gog... Lo and behold, who would've thought? Gog is also from the *yarkētê šāpôn*. The phrase is used in Ezekiel 38:6, Ezekiel 38:15, Ezekiel 39:2. Kline writes:

It is from the heights of Zaphon that God brings Gog with all his armies to overthrow them on the mountains of Israel.

And specifically at Zion. So there's one connection. So the first line of evidence is, "Where does Gog come from?" Lo and behold it sounds a lot like what's going on: the gathering of the nations from the north.

Secondly, we have Gog's characterization as a usurper of the *har mō'ed*, the place of council. Now we know this from Isaiah 14. The cosmic rebel seeks to ascend to the heights of *šaphon* and be the Most High. Thus the great eschatological enemy in Revelation 16:16 marches on "the heights of the north"—Zion. Again, we're seeing Isaiah 14 repeated at Armageddon. Interestingly enough, Isaiah 14 is directed against (drumroll please), not the Chinese, not the Russians, but the king of Babylon, whereby the prophet uses the cosmic rebellion story to portray this king. In Revelation the enemy is Babylon and the Beast. Kline writes:

Gog is characterized by the antichrist syndrome [MH: I love that phrase]: He is a pretender to the throne of heaven. The correspondence of his experience to the king of Babylon typology in Isaiah 14 is seen in the ironic motif of the polar contrast between his pretensions and his actual fate [MH: we've got 180° difference]. Challenging Yahweh's sovereignty on Zion, Gog would take possession of the mountain heights of Israel. But he ends up with his vast military array in the depths of a valley. He lunged for a heavenly throne but plunged into a netherworld grave...

50:00

Remember Isaiah 14? "I'll be like the Most High." But he's brought into Sheol. Now on this point about, "Can we really call the valley where Gog and Magog... And we read Ezekiel 38-39 where Gog's armies end up in this valley. Is that really a netherworld grave? Is that really the underworld? Is that really cosmic?" Oh, yeah. Kline writes:

The valley where his armies were buried is called the valley of the *'ōbērîm* (Ezek 39:11), "those passing through or across," a term used for the dead, those who cross over from this world to the next (Job 34:20; Psa 144:4)... Another name given to the burial valley [MH: in Ezekiel 39:11] is *gê' hāmôn gôg* (Ezek 39:11), "valley of the multitude of Gog".

Now this netherworld grave description is legit, if only from Ezekiel 39:11. But the word translated "travelers" in that passage in ESV ("those who pass through or pass across")... The word *'ōbērîm* is significant. I'm going to read from DDD—*The Dictionary of Deities and Demons*. Here's what their entry on this term the "travelers" (the *'ōbērîm*) says, in part:

The participle *Qal* plural ‘*ōbērîm* of the verb ‘*br*, ‘to pass from one side to the other’ seems to have a special meaning in the context of the cult of the dead, denoting the spirits of the dead crossing the border between the land of the living and the world of the dead. It can be interpreted as a divine name in Ezek 39:11, 14, which may have also been preserved in the geographical name Abarim (Num 21:10–11; 27:12; 33:44, 47–48; Deut 32:49; and Jer 22:20)... [In Ezek 39:14 the word] indicates the dead [MH: just dead bodies]. A possible solution to this *crux interpretum* is to relate ‘*ōbērîm*, here and in v 11, to the ‘*brm* mentioned in the Ugaritic text denoting the spirits of the dead...

So it's not just dead bodies; it's also a term that's used in wider Canaanite literature for the spirits of the dead.

The valley of the ‘*ōbērîm* is located ‘east of the sea’ [MH: Ezekiel 39] (v 11), which is probably the Dead Sea. So it was part of Transjordan. This is a region which shows many traces of ancient cults of the dead, such as the megalithic monuments called dolmens and placenames referring to the dead and the netherworld, viz. Obot (→‘Spirit-of-the-Dead’), Peor (cf →Baal of Peor), and Abarim.”

If you have read my *Demons* book (or I think even I do this in the *Angels* book), the passage in Jude about Michael contending with the devil for the body of Moses, this is the key to understanding that. Because where Moses dies and is buried... Remember, he never gets into the Promised Land. He is buried in a place associated with the netherworld (the realm of the dead, the spirits of the dead). And so there was a strong tradition growing out of the burial place and the Old Testament terminology... You know, it was a dark place. There developed this tradition about, “Is Moses okay? What happened to Moses’ body?” And so Michael, who is the prince of Israel, is the one who “rescues” or protects Moses from the lord of the dead. This is the place where Gog is defeated and his troops wind up. Does it sound like Isaiah 14? The answer is, “Yes.” Okay? So that’s thread #2.

Thread #3: Kline says, “Well, what about the destination of Gog?” We’ve talked about where Gog hails from (“Where does he come from?”). We’ve talked about him having the antichrist complex that, “I’m going to go conquer the cosmic mountain. I’m going to go defeat Yahweh.” That doesn’t turn out so well for him. What about the destination of Gog? Ezekiel 38 and 39 make this quite clear (“Where is Gog headed?”). Kline writes:

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Gog advances against “the mountains of Israel” [MH: Ezekiel] (39:2, 17). It is God’s chosen Mount Zion in the heart of those mountains that is his central point of attack. As in the case of the mustering of the bestial armies in Revelation 16,

the destination and intended target for Gog and his hosts is Har Magedon, where the Lord's Anointed is enthroned at his right hand.

The indications for this are clear, even though Zion is not mentioned by name in Ezekiel 38–39. God does speak of the mountains of Israel as “my mountains” (38:21) and of the land of Israel as “my land” (38:16). Implicit in that is the royal mountain-city where Yahweh dwells and rules over the mountainous domain he claims as his own. Also, such a capital city on the cosmic mountain was regarded as the center of the earth...

And we've talked about this before, about cosmic mountain terminology (Eden, tabernacle, temple, Sinai). These places were viewed as the place where heaven and earth intersect. They are the center of the earth, not in terms of actual physical geography, but they are the center of the earth in that this is the place from which God runs things. Okay? So back to Kline, he says:

[I]n 38:12 Gog is described as scheming to assault the people of God dwelling at “the center (lit. navel) of the earth.” In that concept Gog's real objective is exposed—Yahweh's Mount of Assembly, rival to Gog's pseudo-Zaphon. In the Revelation 20 version of Ezekiel 38–39, Gog's armies are explicitly said to compass “the beloved city” (v. 9), which is Jerusalem/Zion.

Trajectory #4: what about Gog in Revelation 20? Kline summarizes this point as follows:

In Rev 20:7–10 the Gog-Magog assault on Zion marks the end of the millennium. Within Ezekiel 38–39 indications also abound of the eschatological finality of the Gog crisis. As in Revelation 20, it comes after a long age of secure preservation for God's people (Ezek 38:8)—in NT terms, after the age in which the Church, though sorely persecuted, is preserved by the Lord to complete the great commission task (cf. e.g. Rev 11:7). And as the judgment on Gog in Revelation 20 merges with the resurrection of the dead for final judgment (20:11–15), so God's judicial deliverance of his people from Gog in Ezekiel 38–39 institutes for them the eternal state of unending, never-again-disturbed felicity [MH: described in] (39:21–29).

So Kline has laid out four trajectories that align Revelation 16 (Armageddon) with Ezekiel 38-39. They're all clear. They all make sense if you're reading the passage in light of John's use of the Old Testament. If you're not doing that, then you're, I don't know... You're making something up. Again, you're talking about Russia and China or something like that. Well, go ahead. I can't stop you. But John isn't quoting from Mao Tse Tung, okay? Or something that Lenin wrote, or Marx. He's quoting from the Old Testament. He's quoting from Ezekiel 38-39 and

Psalm 48 and a little bit of Zechariah 14, plus some Daniel. Okay? John's use of the Old Testament tells us how to read chapters 16 through 19.

So you might ask, "Well, how does this connect to Revelation 19 specifically?" Because that's where we are here in this episode. As all interpreters of the book agree, Revelation 19:11-21 (which we read at the beginning) is the outcome of the great war against the beast. It's the outcome of Armageddon. It describes the climactic battle won by the returning Christ, the messianic warrior and judge. Revelation 19 repurposes descriptive content from the Gog and Magog battle in Ezekiel 38-39. Revelation 19 does it too. It's not just Revelation 16. So Kline writes:

Instruments of judgment mentioned by both Ezekiel and John include earthquake (Ezek 38:19–20...

1:00:00 Align that not only with Revelation 16:18-20, but earlier in the book (Revelation 6:12; 11:13).

... sword (Ezek 38:21; [MH: see] Rev 19:15, 21) and destructive hail and fiery brimstone (Ezek 38:22; 39:6; [MH: align that with] Rev 16:21; 19:20). Most striking is the distinctive motif of God's summoning the birds and beasts to feed on the carcasses of the defeated armies Gog had gathered, the banquet theme elaborated in Ezek 39:4, 17–20 and incorporated [MH: those passages—Ezekiel 39:4, 17–20] into the account of Christ's victory over the beast and his assembled armies in Rev 19:17–18.

You will look in vain to find some other passage in the Old Testament where we have the birds and the beasts summoned to feed on the carcasses of the dead at the cosmic mountain. There is only one passage that does that in the Old Testament, and it's Ezekiel 39. It's Gog and Magog.

So that is how Revelation 19 connects. So we've seen Revelation 16, 17... Seventeen and 18 are really about the beast. Specifically, Revelation 16 and 19 repeat, repurpose, recapitulate content from Ezekiel 38-39 (the Gog and Magog event) before we even get to Revelation 20, where Gog and Magog are mentioned by name. So we've got a repetition cycle between chapter 16, chapter 19, and chapter 20. They're describing the same series of events. It is not a linear chronology of three separate events. It is a recycling of one event three times. And if you do that, what it means... Before you get to Gog and Magog in Revelation 20 (before you hit there), you get all these references to the thousand years. If they're describing the same thing, then those thousand years must represent the believing age of chapter 16 and the believing age in chapter 19. It's the current present age.

Now to put it lightly, all of this cannot be coincidence. [laughs] Now Kline uses the very clear recycling, in his mind, to devastate premillennial eschatology. And this is what I was raised on: pre-trib rapture, premillennial return of Jesus, literal 1,000 year kingdom, so on and so forth. And Kline, by virtue of his skilled ferreting out of how John uses Ezekiel 38-39 in more than one place in these chapters, destroys that system. He doesn't really destroy a rapture question. I mean, that's a little bit different of a question. But it destroys the system—the general premillennial system. And he's happy to do so because he's an amillennialist. Now I would say, "Well, Professor Kline, as much as I love you and your article, that's kind of a 'yes and no.'" [laughs]

What does this all mean? We're going to wrap the episode with a few of these observations. What does this all mean?

1) Well, the Old Testament use by John of Ezekiel 38-39 in chapters that precede the second coming... Notice it preceded the return of the Lord. Because the return of the Lord marks the climax of Armageddon. And Ezekiel 38-39 are also in the chapters that follow the second coming (Revelation 20). This forces the conclusion that the kingdom language up through Revelation 20 is basically the present Church Age. Now you can't really argue out of that. Because you have to have two battles of Armageddon, not one. Okay? You'd have to have two Gog and Magog events, not one. Doesn't make any sense. There's only one Armageddon. There's one battle for Zion. There is one second coming. And you know, there's one Gog and Magog battle. So that's point #1. That's what it means. This is where you're driven by the text.

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2) Now that, in turn, produces an eschatology that has the present age (the Church age) headed toward Armageddon. Well, there's no surprise there. I mean, pretty much everybody would track with that. But amillennialists like Kline will use the abstraction of "1,000 years"... "Ah, see, we told you. A thousand years doesn't mean a literal 1,000 years. It just means a long time, because the Church has been around for more than 1,000 years, so it's an abstract idea." So amillennialists like Kline will use that abstraction in Revelation 20 to abstract everything else out of existence. [laughs] (1) Like a real antichrist. Does Kline believe that there will be a real, personal antichrist? I'm not sure. A lot of amillennialists don't. (2) How about a real, concerted chaos system driven by real supernatural beings? Well, we already know a lot of people in the evangelical world (and unfortunately mostly in the Reformed context, where you'll find amillennialism), they don't believe that. "That's too weird. It's too supernatural. Give us our core doctrines of that faith, and that's the supernaturalism we have. We don't want any more." So we know that that happens. (3) Third, how about the real release of demonic supernatural forces in Revelation 9? Well, most amillennialists would not say that's the release of the Watchers. Again, "that's too weird. Because if we said that then we'd have to affirm Genesis 6. God forbid." (4) How about the real re-inheritance of the nations and the real fulfillment of the

Psalm 82 judgment of real rebel gods? Well, we know they don't want to touch Psalm 82. (5) How about the real literal transformation of the earth back to a real Edenic state in real time? A lot of amillennialists don't want to go there, either. "The Church is the present age, and then the Lord comes, and then we have the eternal state, somewhere. It's this ethereal existence. And all this talk about the New Earth and the New Eden, well that's just flowery, allegorical language for something. Or heaven. Somewhere. I don't know." In other words, Kline and others will use the abstraction here to create a safe eschatological system for people who don't want to affirm these other "bizarre" supernatural elements. I don't. Okay? If you're wondering what their justification of such a dual hermeneutic might be, ask one of them. Not me. Because I'm not the traditional amillennialist.

3) Now the third observation about what all this means. Again, Kline targets premillennialism with this. But all he really destroys is the traditional definition of premillennialism. That's all he actually destroys. Pay attention carefully to what I'm saying here. This is important. I mean, the rest of it's important, but this is especially important. If "premillennialism" means "the system that takes Revelation as a linear chronology and bases its idea of a literal reign of Christ on earth only on the language of Revelation 20:1-6," well, yeah, then Kline has destroyed that. But what if we ditch the "millennial" language? What if we focus instead on the messiah literally ruling and reigning on earth without depending or even caring about the "1,000 year" language? See, then the literal kingdom idea is alive and well. But it doesn't conform to our theological systems. Now you already know this is where I'm at. Okay? My view of the literal earthly kingdom is the one that follows Armageddon and the final resurrection—final judgments. It *is* the new Eden. And it is not a thousand years; it is forever. A thousand years doesn't cut it. A thousand years is a blink of an eye for the reign of Christ on earth. But we are so bound to this language and bound to a word in Revelation 20 that when somebody like Kline comes along and shows us that we can't read Revelation 20 as a linear, sequential chronology, and he destroys the system, we think, "Well, I can't believe in a literal kingdom anymore. We might as well all just suck up to Kline and be amillennialists." No. No, no, no, no. The Church Age is the kingdom inaugurated when Eden returns to earth really, in real time. That is the consummation of the kingdom, and it is not a thousand years; it is forever. Kline has not touched that idea. He destroys a system. He does not destroy a point of biblical theology.

1:10:00

4) Now I would also add to this, as a footnote, Kline doesn't actually undo even the traditional premillennial system talk entirely. Because there is one reference to a thousand-year reign for which his use of the data does not account, and that's in Revelation 20:6. I'll get there in a moment. But the larger point here is that we ought to just ditch the traditional language. Folks, there is no cosmic rule that says that you have to articulate your theology using a glossary from a theology book or a theological system. There's no penalty flag that's going to

come out if you say things like, “Well, I don't really care if the thousand years in Revelation 20 are the Church Age. I still believe that there's going to be a literal kingdom reign of Christ on earth.” There's no penalty flag for that. Now you're going to have people try to throw one, because they can't think outside their box. What I'm saying is, “Don't care about their boxes.” Some scholars just can't do this.

And on a personal note here, they can't imagine living outside the boxes that traditional Christian theological schemes have made for us to play in. This is why even scholars who can't think outside the box their seminary training gives them will call *me* (Mike, yours truly) an amillennialist, like the recent reviewer of my *Demons* book in the Masters Seminary journal. The guy calls me an amillennialist! I'm not an amillennialist, because (I'm using the traditional terms now) amillennialists deny that there will be a literal messianic kingdom on the earth. I don't. For amillennialists, the kingdom is the Church now, and then an ethereal eternal state forever somewhere, in some form. They take the new Eden imagery as figurative, not literal. Again, I don't. So what if we ditch the language and tear apart the sandbox? Knock it down. My position is that when all this plays out on earth, that Christ will literally return, literally defeat the beast. In my view, that probably speaks more of a chaos system than a man, but I do think it includes a man. I think there *will* be a real antichrist. And then Christ will literally reign forever *on earth* in a new, global Eden. This is why I say a thousand-year kingdom is too short. Christ's kingdom on earth doesn't end after 1,000 years. We don't transition from the Church age here and now to some sort of indefinable nonliteral reign somewhere in the clouds that the New Testament writers mistakenly described as earthly. It's too bad that I believe that defining an idea like the messianic kingdom by one word (the word “thousand”) in Revelation 20 is a flawed approach. It's a system word and is no replacement to a biblical-theological idea. So sorry, I'm not playing the word game. Theology should not derive from words that theologians coin or systems theologians create using words they find in the Bible. It should derive from biblical-theological data, and the data pool here is a lot wider than Revelation 20. My actual view is *far* from traditional amillennialism, maybe as far as you can get without being an atheist. And I'm sorry; if you can't think outside your box, that's too bad. I might shed a tear for you, but probably not.

Now, again, as we wrap up here, there's an obvious question to all this that Kline has to answer. Kline is deceased. I mean, he obviously can't respond to it now. But all of the systems have to [answer it], especially if you're a traditional amillennialist. Anyone who's not in the traditional premillennial camp has to account for this question. And I'm going to tell you what the question is because it's going to be the focus of our next episode. So here we go. Now if the kingdom language from Revelation 16 through 20 is basically about the present Church age, headed toward Armageddon and toward the return of Jesus, then what is said about Satan in Revelation 20:1-7 becomes an issue. Now listen to this. I'm

going to read Revelation 20, the first seven verses, and I'm going to add a few thoughts in here just to make the point clear:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. ² And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years [MH: in other words, he bound him for the length of the Church age], ³ and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended [MH: in other words, until the length of the Church age had ended]. After that he must be released for a little while. [MH: okay, that's part of the Armageddon event]

1:15:00

⁴ Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

In other words, the dead in Christ during the length of the Church Age get resurrected and they reign with Christ. "Hmm. Well, they can't reign with Christ in a literal... Because we're amillennial. Maybe... Oh, I get it. I get it. Those who were martyred, they are alive in heaven and so during the length of the Church Age, they're ruling in heaven." (That's actually what most amillennialists believe, by the way.)

⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.

In other words, until the end of the Church Age. "Okay, well, alright. This is the first resurrection. So I guess that's when they get new bodies and now they're ruling and reigning *something* that isn't literal, but it's not the Church Age, because the Church Age is over.

⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they [MH: i.e., the ones raised after the Church age ends] will reign with him for a thousand years.

"Oops." You see, this thousand years cannot refer to the Church Age, because the Church Age has ended, according to the preceding verses. So here we have

a reference to a thousand years that can't be the Church Age. So Kline's approach doesn't account for this one reference in verse 6, does it?

⁷ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison...

Well, which thousand years? The first thousand years (the Church Age) or the age that comes after the Church Age? "Hmm." So what I'm getting at is Kline's approach is devastating to traditional premillennial thinking, but it's not as clear as he'd like to think. Verse 6 muddies it. But the larger point is, you don't need it anyway. The concept of a literal messianic reign on earth is built from a data pool that is much wider than Revelation 20:6.

So we're going to say a little bit more about this in the next episode. And the bigger question... I'm not going to get back into all the millennium stuff, because we've done enough of that here. But here's the bigger question: What about Satan? What could it possibly mean to have Satan being bound during the Church Age, if that's what the thousand years means? How is Satan bound during the present age, so that "he might not deceive the nations?" Looks to me like there's plenty of deception going on. Earlier in the book of Revelation, John has Satan alive and well, persecuting believers (Revelation 2:10, Revelation 2:13) and trying to kill off the messiah child (Revelation 12). The rest of the New Testament has a number of passages that presume Satan is active in tempting, persecution, blinding the eyes of the unbelievers. So how are those ideas true in light of what Kline and others are saying about Revelation 20? And how could Revelation 20 be true in regard to Satan with all this other stuff in the New Testament? How can this make sense? How do we get a sensible portrayal of Satan out of Revelation 20 if we're supposed to be reading this... And again, I'm sold by Kline's presentation here, but he has to answer this question. And he doesn't do it in the article. And frankly, the amillennialist answer to this is weak. I think there's a better answer to it. But if we're going to regard the thousand years here as the Church Age, Satan is limited in some respects so that he might not deceive the nations, we have to figure out what that means. Because whatever it means, it can't run and fly in the face of all this other stuff Satan is doing now in the present age. So how do we do that? That's going to be one of the places we camp (really, the first thing we tackle) in the next episode.

TS: Well, Mike, Satan does [inaudible]. He's probably majority owner in the mass media companies, is probably what he [inaudible] doing, so...

MH: [laughs] Something like that.

TS: Yeah, something like that. That's a good episode. I'm excited for the next episode, on chapter 20. It's getting good, Mike. I wonder how it ends. [MH laughs] I'm getting excited.

1:20:00 **MH:** Go ahead and cheat. You can look at the end. Go ahead and cheat.

TS: Alright, I might read the last page of the book and see how it all ends. Alright, Mike, well, good stuff. Good deal. Don't forget, you can send me your questions at TreyStricklin@gmail.com. And with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.