

A Critical Review of Sam Storms' *Kingdom Come: The Amillennial Alternative*
Dr. Mike Stallard, Baptist Bible Seminary
Preliminary Draft—Not for Distribution without Permission

Sam Storms' 2013 work *Kingdom Come* presents one of the latest detailed presentations defending amillennialism over against premillennialism.¹ Storms, lead pastor of Bridgeway Church in Oklahoma City, usually writes in an irenic tone which allows the reader who disagrees to engage the book without being emotionally directed. The book deals with many passages in an attempt to ground the amillennial position in biblical teaching. Unlike Sproul's work *The Last Days According to Jesus*, Storms refers to many Old Testament passages, something that most dispensationalists immediately look for in conversation with those coming from a New Testament priority position.² Storms' attention to prophetic passages that also attract premillennialists assures that his book is an important contemporary work in the dialog between amillennialists and premillennialists.

Overview of the Book

A book-length review would be needed to analyze every chapter in the book. However, an overview of the book is important before a critique of a few key points is given. *Kingdom Come* begins appropriately with a chapter on hermeneutics. Here Storms surveys five key "foundational principles" for interpreting prophecy, none of which are new in the debate between premillennialism and amillennialism. A second chapter attempts to define dispensationalism. While doing so, Storms presents doctrinal conclusions without paying a lot of attention to the hermeneutical underpinnings of those conclusions. In this way, his first two chapters seem to be unduly separated. Chapters three and four deal with eschatological texts in the book of Daniel, one chapter on Daniel 9 and the Seventy Weeks, and the other chapter on Daniel chapters 2 and 7-12. It is important for dispensationalists to see in these chapters how one amillennial approach differs and argues in some crucial passages.

Chapter five surveys problems with premillennialism according to Storms' assessment. Again, nothing new in argumentation appears. Premillennialists have been used to hearing amillennial arguments from such passages as Romans 8:18-23, 1 Corinthians 15:22-28, and 1 Corinthians 15:50-57. The following chapter six examines the theological concept of the people

¹ Sam Storms, *Kingdom Come: The Amillennial Alternative* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Scotland, UK, 2013). The book also presents a description and critique of postmillennialism, but the overwhelming focus is on premillennialism versus amillennialism and the biblical passages and concepts involved.

² R. C. Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000). See this author's review of Sproul's work: "A Review of *The Last Days According to Jesus: An Analysis of Moderate Preterism* by R.C. Sproul, Part I," *The Conservative Theological Journal* 6 (March 2002): 55-71 and "A Review of *The Last Days According to Jesus: An Analysis of Moderate Preterism* by R.C. Sproul, Part II," *The Conservative Theological Journal* 6 (August 2002): 184-203. In the review, attention is drawn to the lack of interest on Sproul's part in using Old Testament texts to discuss eschatology.

of God. Israel, the Church, and Replacement Theology are discussed. Traditional passages from the amillennial arsenal are marshalled such as Romans 9:6-7, Ephesians 2:11-22, Galatians 3, Galatians 6:16 and others in support of amillennial conclusions. Chapters 7 and 8 give an exposition of Matthew 24 in the Olivet Discourse. One specific issue in chapter 8 is Storms' insistence that the fig tree is not Israel.³ He certainly should respond to that view which is held by some dispensationalists. However, it may be that the majority of dispensational premillennialists hold that the fig tree in Matthew 24:32 is a natural figure and not a symbolic one.⁴ Storms does not acknowledge this fact in his overview.

Chapter nine of *Kingdom Come* gives a review of the book of Acts in the debate. In particular, Storms covers Acts 1:6-8 and Acts 15. Unfortunately, Acts 3:19-21, a crucial passage in the eyes of many dispensationalists, is left unexplored. Chapter 10 analyzes the extremely significant passage of Romans 11 and its discussion of the future of Israel. Chapter 11 in his book presents Storms' understanding of an already-not yet view of the kingdom of God that is in keeping with conventional wisdom within evangelicalism. In doing this, he explicitly states indebtedness to George Ladd. On the other side, dispensational premillennialists dispute the conventional wisdom of the evangelical herd. Chapter 12 gives an irenic analysis of postmillennialism while showing the differences with amillennialism.

Suitably, four entire chapters (13-16) are given over to analysis of the book of Revelation. Chapter 13 traces the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments following closely the work of Beale.⁵ Chapter 14, perhaps the most noteworthy part of the discussion of Revelation, outlines the debate in Revelation 20 and the binding of Satan, the Achilles' heel of amillennialism according to premillennialists. Chapter 15 continues the discussion of Revelation 20 by examining the reference to the first resurrection. Chapter 16 studies the personage of the Antichrist by reviewing Revelation chapters 13 and 17. A continuing study of the Antichrist is given in chapter 17 of the book as it addresses 2 Thessalonians 2. A concluding chapter summarizes a cumulative case made for amillennialism. Dispensationalists can appreciate the length of the book and the details provided by Storms. Hopefully, full book-length reviews can be provided by the premillennial side. What follows begins the process.

Case Studies in Three Key Passages

Elements from three biblical passages, two from Paul and one from John will be analyzed below giving examples of how Storms presents his amillennial case and how the premillennialist should respond. This is only a small portion of the passages which Storms discusses. Generalizations from these three case studies should only be made cautiously. Each passage and its use should be studied on its own. However, once all the information is

³ Storms, *Kingdom Come*, 274.

⁴ For example, see John Walvoord, *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 191-92, and Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1980), 278.

⁵ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 48.

absorbed, the student will find that Storms defends a classical understanding of amillennialism. There is little that is new. The positive contribution of Storms is to collect the large amount of argumentation in one place. In this, he has done a great service for the evangelical community.

I Corinthians 15:22-26; 50-58⁶

Storms summarizes the amillennial argument based upon 1 Corinthians 15:22-26 and 50-57 with the statement that if you are a premillennialist, “you must necessarily believe that physical death will continue to exist beyond the time of Christ’s second coming.”⁷ He goes on to couple that statement with the words “death is defeated and swallowed up in victory at the parousia.”⁸ The basic idea is that premillennialism cannot be right since it teaches that death continues after the Second Coming. How is this known? The NT explicitly teaches, according to Storms, that the Second Coming of Christ is the end of death. A biblical chapter of specific interest in this regard is I Corinthians 15 where some verses are taken by Storms to prove that premillennialists are wrong.

1 Corinthians 15:22-26 (NASB)

This particular passage frequently comes up in dialog involving amillennialists and premillennialists:

22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming,

24 Then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

⁶ This section of this article has been reworked and expanded from this writer’s blog response: Mike Stallard, “Why I Never Changed My Mind about the Millennium - # 1,” Our Hope, March 28, 2014, Internet; <http://our-hope.org/blog/2013/03/why-i-never-changed-my-mind-about-the-millennium-1/#more-1243>; accessed 9 September 2014.

⁷ Storms, *Kingdom Come*, 136. This writer first saw Storms’ six statements about premillennialism which helped him to reject the view in his posted article on the Gospel Coalition website. That article is “Why I Changed My Mind about the Millennium,” The Gospel Coalition; Internet; <http://thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-i-changed-my-mind-about-the-millennium/>; accessed 9 September 2014.

⁸ Storms, “Why I Changed My Mind about the Millennium,” The Gospel Coalition; Internet; <http://thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-i-changed-my-mind-about-the-millennium/>; accessed 9 September 2014.

This is certainly a beautiful passage that highlights the greatness of Christ's work on our behalf. In verses 23-24 there are three things listed in succession:

1. Christ the first fruits
2. Those who are Christ's at His coming (parousia)
3. The end (where death appears to be abolished according to v. 26)

Storms does a good job of outlining the two views.⁹ He argues from the amillennial perspective that the text leads assuredly to the conclusion that there is no gap between # 2 and # 3 (more below). These two events are linked so that the parousia (v. 23) ushers in the end (v. 24) when death is abolished (v. 26).

Premillennialists see a gap of one thousand years between the parousia (# 2) and the end (# 3). This is justified partly by the obvious fact that there is a gap of nearly two millennia between # 1 and # 2 in the list if Jesus were to rapture the Church today. So the idea of an interval between the 2nd and 3rd things in the list is not far-fetched. As Lowery notes, "If about 2,000 years can elapse between the first and second phases in this selected presentation of events, a lapse of half that time, that is, a millennium, between the second and third phases should cause no consternation."¹⁰ Premillennialism requires an interval. The wording of the passage allows for that and even encourages such an understanding. Thus, these verses are not a clear argument in favor of the idea that the Second Coming brings the end of death immediately.

The amillennial argument of Storms acknowledges the gap between the first two items in the list and the use of this fact by premillennial interpreters.¹¹ He further acknowledges what some amillennial interpreters do not—that the word *then* (*eita*) in verse 24 does not by itself suggest that the parousia and the time of the consummation are chronologically coinciding:

Before proceeding, note well that the matter under dispute is not whether the terms Paul used (*epeita* and *eita*; both of which are translated "then" by the ESV) will admit of a time gap. Obviously they may. The question is whether or not in this context they do. I will argue below that other factors in the text prohibit our interpreting Paul as saying that there is a gap of 1,000 years (the millennium) between the resurrection of Christ's people at his second coming (v. 23b) and "the end" (v. 24a). This is not to deny the obvious gap between the resurrection of Christ (v. 23a) and that of Christians (v. 23b). But no such gap, I will argue, is possible in the case of our resurrection and "the end."¹²

⁹ Storms, *Kingdom Come*, 143-48.

¹⁰ David K. Lowery, "1 Corinthians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 544.

¹¹ Storms, *Kingdom Come*, 144.

¹² *Ibid.*, 144-45. Lenski argues that "then cometh the end" as it is given in verse 24 leads directly to the absence of any hope for an interval: "Those who think of a double resurrection supply a future tense.... 'then *will be* or *will come* the end.' This permits the interval which they find, for they may extend this future tense into a

Storms correctly avoids saying too much about *eita*. The historic premillennialist Grudem notes, “The two words translated ‘then’ in this passage (*epeita* and *eita*) both take the sense ‘after that,’ not the sense ‘at that same time.’ Therefore the passage gives some support to the idea that, just as there is an interval of time between Christ’s resurrection and his second coming when we receive a resurrection body (v. 23), so there is an interval of time between Christ’s second coming and ‘the end.’”¹³ Grudem goes on to cite examples: “The Greek word *eita* does mean ‘after that’ (see Mark 4:17, 28; 1 Cor. 15:5, 7; 1 Tim. 2:13). It does not always indicate temporal sequence, because it can also introduce the next item or argument in a logical progression, but in narrating historical occurrences it indicates something that happens after something else...”¹⁴ The Pauline examples are instructive. Even earlier in 1 Corinthians 15 (v. 5, 7), the words *eita* and *epeita* are used to introduce elements in a list when there are definitely time intervals between the items.

Rather than rely upon a conclusion based upon the adverbs in the verses, Storms appeals to a larger context question:

In summary, “the end” (*to telos*) marks the close of Christ’s reign, or at least that phase of it with which Paul is concerned. It is brought to its climax by the complete and final overthrow of death. The point of dispute is the time of the “end.” The premillennialist argues that the “end” is the end or close of the millennial age, 1,000 years after Christ has returned to earth. The amillennialist argues that the “end” is the end or close of the *present* church age, signaled and brought to fruition by Christ’s second coming.

It seems clear that all one need do is demonstrate which of these two options is correct and the millennial debate would come to a close. This isn’t as difficult as one might think. Since both eschatological schools agree that Christ’s reign consummates with the destruction of death, and since the destruction of death signals the end, we need only ascertain the time of “death’s death!”¹⁵

thousand years or as far as they please. The only difficulty is that Paul sets down no verb and no tense; and a doctrine which is based on a verb or a tense that are inserted rests on what does not exist. ‘Then the end,’ with neither verb nor a tense or any kind, means: then at the Parousia. No known rule of language allows us to supply a future tense, to say nothing about the long interval” (R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of I and II Corinthians* [Columbus, OH: Warburg Press, 1946], 672-73). Kistemaker argues, “Because of its brevity, the clause then comes the end does not appear to support the teaching of an intermediate kingdom before the consummation of the age” (Simon J. Kistemaker, *I Corinthians* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993], 552). This conclusion appears to contradict the lexical research presented by Grudem cited below.

¹³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 1130. For a similar understanding, see also D. Edmond Hiebert, “Evidence from 1 Corinthians 15” in *A Case for Premillennialism: A New Consensus* edited by Donald K. Campbell and Jeffrey L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 230; and Wilbur B. Wallis, “The Problem of an Intermediate Kingdom in I Corinthians 15:20-28,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 18 (1975): 230ff.

¹⁴ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1130-31, n34.

¹⁵ Storms, *Kingdom Come*, 145.

To answer this question and determine the correct interpretation, Storms now moves to the later context of 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

These verses speak of the elimination of the power of death over believers. Death is swallowed up in victory (v. 54) and the sting of death is removed (v. 55-57). Before that, Paul states that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (v. 50). Storms is correct in noting that there is a focus here on glorified believers entering into God's kingdom. However, Storms draws some unwarranted implications from that fact which premillennialists, especially dispensationalists, will dispute. He comments that "only those who have been consummately transformed in body and spirit by that resurrection / glorification brought to pass at the return of Christ shall inherit the kingdom of God."¹⁶ He goes on to say,

The 'kingdom' in view, according to the premillennialist, is the millennial kingdom, that very 'reign' of Christ we noted above in 1 Corinthians 15:24. But how can that be? The premillennialist argues that many believers will enter and inherit and enjoy the blessings of the millennial kingdom in their natural, unglorified, untransformed, 'flesh and blood' bodies. But that is precisely what Paul denies could ever happen.¹⁷

Consequently, Storms can end his logic by saying, "I'm compelled to conclude that Paul's declaration that unglorified, 'flesh and blood' bodies cannot inherit the kingdom of God precludes a millennium following the second coming of Christ."¹⁸

What is the premillennialist to say to such argumentation? Is Storms' approach the only plausible way to understand the text? The dispensational premillennialist begins his answer by relating this passage to the time of the pre-trib rapture: "we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye..." (v. 51-52). The passage speaks of this event as putting on immortality and the removal of death. The sting of death is removed—"death is swallowed up in victory" (v. 54).

From a dispensational understanding, the Apostle Paul is talking to the Corinthians about the glorification of Church saints at the pre-trib rapture of the Church ("we shall *all* be changed"). The amillennialist cannot assume that the word *we* refers to all saints of all times in history. One cannot assume a definition of Church as the collection of all the saved of all ages (or since Adam or Abraham). This is a doctrinal or theological assumption which will be challenged by dispensationalists. If that assumption is read into the text, then the amillennial position may have some ground to stand on. *If not, then the passage does not automatically say that the second coming ends death for the entire universe.* Instead, it is saying that the end

¹⁶ Ibid., 149.

¹⁷ Ibid., 150.

¹⁸ Ibid.

of death for Church saints happens at the rapture when there is a resurrection and glorification that takes place for that particular group of people. Death is certainly swallowed up forever and in victory for the Church at that time. The Church saints will never again have to face death for themselves. Thus, on this point, dispensational premillennialism is a position that can be harmonized quite easily with this passage. The premillennialist might say to the amillennialist that he makes the passage say too much and that a forced theological unity has been brought to the passage. Elsewhere on the timeline of God's end-time plan, the Lord will deal with other peoples according to His will such as the resurrection of Old Testament saints (along with tribulation saints who have died) at the end of the tribulation period (see Dan. 12:2).¹⁹

This way of rebuttal still leaves the question, raised by Storms and other amillennialists, of the ontological impossibility of a millennial kingdom with unglorified people (tribulation saints who survive and enter the millennium) based upon 1 Corinthians 15:50. But is ontology the real question? Is there something about human beings generally and inherently that must be changed in order for them to be part of the coming millennial kingdom or is 15:50 a statement of God's design for Church saints? In other words, is there an ontological necessity or is it simply something that God has decided to do for Church saints? Could it be that this is another case of the bent of amillennialists toward unity versus the dispensational bent toward diversity? Amillennialists here appear to collapse the plan of God down into a single event. Dispensational premillennialists respond that such a forced unity does not do justice to the details of the various texts and the timeline of those texts. Neither is the conclusion compelled by the context. Dispensationalists believe that the entire sequence of the end times from rapture to the new earth leads to the end of death in a universal sense, but that the Church saints begin to experience this victory at the start of the sequence. However, the "full blessings of the life to come" – to borrow a phrase from Hoekema²⁰ – will only be available in the eternal state.

At least two corollary issues need to be considered. It is quite possible that the concept of inheriting the kingdom, a future prospect often overlooked in the emphasis of amillennialists on the present aspect of kingdom during the Church Age, refers to something other than an ontological necessity. Peters suggests that the idea of inheritance is the function of ruling which believers undertake.²¹ From this vantage point, it may be that those who enter the millennium unglorified (trib saints who survive) will not rule over glorified saints.

A second corollary of this debate would be the lack of Old Testament perspective for the amillennialist. Walvoord describes the problem this way:

A common assumption of amillennialism is that living saints will be translated at the time of the second advent. There is seldom any facing of the significant fact that none of the Old Testament passages dealing with the second advent teach anything on the subject of the translation of the saints. In fact, the idea of a general translation is

¹⁹ See John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 284-90;

²⁰ Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 251.

²¹ George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom* (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1972), 1:602.

foreign to the Old Testament. The viewpoint of Old Testament prophecies is that saints on earth at the time of the second advent will enter the millennial kingdom *in the flesh*, an obvious contradiction of the idea of translation. This is clearly taught by the fact that saints will till the ground, raise crops, and have children born to them, all of which would be quite incredible for translated saints. It is safe to say that no passage in the Old or New Testament which is accepted by all parties as relating to the second advent of Christ at the end of the tribulation ever speaks of translation of the saints. All passages dealing with translation concern the coming of Christ for His Church which is distinguished from the second coming proper.²²

This is not to say that Storms ignores the Old Testament.²³ His desire to treat it in many of its details is praiseworthy as mentioned earlier. However, the conclusions he draws do not account fully for the explanation of all the details. The judgment is that his approach is not comprehensive enough, a problem that all interpreters must face. At any rate, it is clear that 1 Corinthians 15 does not automatically eliminate the premillennial position as Storms asserts.

Romans 8:18-23

Another reason that Storms gives to remove the premillennial position from consideration is that if you are a premillennialist, “you must necessarily believe that the natural creation will continue, beyond the time of Christ’s second coming, to be subjected to the curse imposed by the fall of man.”²⁴ He goes on to affirm that, in conjunction with this idea, the natural creation is set free from its bondage at the parousia.²⁵ The basic idea is that premillennialism cannot be right since it teaches that Christ’s Second Coming does not end the curse on the natural created order. This particular argument is actually a variation or extension of the argument based upon 1 Corinthians 15.

In his book *Kingdom Come*, Storms gives a decent summary of the premillennial position of some who hold that view:

Notwithstanding the presence of Christ himself, as premillennialists argue, the earth will continue to be ravaged by war and sin and death, even if only at the millennium’s end (Rev. 20:7-10). As a premillennialist, you must necessarily believe that the redemption

²² John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 242.

²³ One Old Testament passage that Storms mentions often is Isaiah 65, which is a problematic passage since it teaches that death exists and children are born within the time of the kingdom, even using the label of *new heavens and new earth*. Premillennialists have a ready answer to the dilemma with their intermediate millennial kingdom that occurs before the eternal state. While all millennial positions have problems, this passage seems to be more of a difficulty for amillennialists. Storms is to be applauded for not ignoring this important section (for example, see Storms, *Kingdom Come*, 167-70). It will not be discussed here but will be saved for a later review.

²⁴ Storms, *Kingdom Come*, 136.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 152-53.

of the natural creation and its being set free from bondage to corruption does not occur, at least in its consummate expression, until 1,000 years subsequent to Christ's return.²⁶

So the question becomes, "Are there clear passages that teach that Christ's Second Coming will remove the curse on nature?" Storms thinks so. The main passage in this regard is Romans 8:18-23.²⁷ He takes the passage to teach that the created order will be set free from bondage (v. 21) at the exact time when Christ returns (from a premillennial point of view at the end of the tribulation) to manifest or make known the sons of God in resurrection (v. 19, 23). In light of the continuing curse in the millennium for premillennialists (Rev. 20:7-10) and the removal of the curse after the millennium (Rev 21:4), Storm believes this is an insurmountable problem for premillennialists. Hendriksen concurs: "Verses 19-23 make very clear that he is referring to what will transpire at the time of 'revelation of the sons of God,' and of 'the redemption (glorious resurrection) of our bodies'; in other words, at the time of Christ's Return."²⁸ Strimple joins in making the same interpretive deduction: "The apostle Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, teaches us that the resurrection glory of the children of God will mark the resurrection glory as well." This is at "Christ's coming, not a millennium later."²⁹

Now there are some good things Storms has said here. In fact, it can be conceded that his approach to this text is a possible and reasonable interpretation. Premillennialists can understand where he is coming from. However, Storms' interpretation is not the only reasonable way to take the text. The text does not clearly give the timing of the removal of the curse on creation. It only says that the creation looks for the revealing of the sons of God and that creation will one day be delivered from bondage. To assume that these two things match chronologically is a reasonable deduction from the text but not a necessary deduction from the text.

Premillennialists have responded in a couple of ways. There are some premillennial interpreters who are willing to assert in agreement with Storms that the Second Coming is when the creation is set free from bondage. For example, Ironside notes that in the present age, creation "does not share in the liberty of grace. It shall have its part in the liberty of glory, the kingdom age of millennial blessing."³⁰ The changes to nature at the beginning of the millennium perhaps justify this conclusion (Zech. 14, Isaiah 11). Such interpreters would probably acknowledge if asked that the release from bondage is a beginning and not a consummation. However, Ironside's wording does not take this into consideration.

²⁶ Ibid., 136.

²⁷ Ibid., 152-54.

²⁸ William Hendriksen, *Romans Chapters 1-8* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 265.

²⁹ Robert B. Strimple, "Amillennialism" in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond* edited by Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 106.

³⁰ H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans* (reprint ed., New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1956), 105.

Another premillennial way of viewing this passage comes from Kroll, who probably represents the common way that dispensational premillennialists handle the text:

But just as humans are linked with the pain of the curse on the earth, so humans are linked with lifting that curse and its attendant pain. The whole creation is anxiously awaiting “the revealing of the sons of God” (v. 19), for it is only then that the pain that creation endures as a result of God's curse will cease. Today the curse covers the world and brings the groaning of pain even to that which is inanimate. Yet one day God will remove the curse and save the earth from its pain when He establishes his Millennial Kingdom here on the earth (Rev. 20—21). The Millennium is when the wolf will dwell with the lamb and the little child will put his hand into the snake’s nest and not be hurt (Isaiah 11:6—9). And as glorious as that messianic age will be, it will be only a prelude to eternity when “creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (v. 21).³¹

A similar understanding is provided by Witmer which may point in the direction of typical premillennial thought on the passage:

Similarly, since God’s program of salvation for people is one of a new Creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15), the physical world also will be re-created (Rev. 21:5). This will take place in two stages. First will be the renovation of the present cosmos in conjunction with the return to earth of the Lord Jesus and the establishment of the messianic kingdom on earth (Isa. 11:5—9; 35:1—2, 5—7; 65:20, 25; Amos 9:13). The second stage will be creation of “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. 21:1; cf. 2 Peter 3:7—13).³²

In this premillennial approach, it is possible to see Romans 8:18-23 teaching that the created order longs to see the manifestation of the sons of God at the Second Coming because it is a reminder that its redemption is on its way although at a later time. The syncing of the two chronologically is not necessary. The necessary linkage is the shared hope for redemption. This interpretation is not an unreasonable one unless one assumes an amillennial understanding at the outset.

³¹ Woodrow Kroll, *The Book of Romans: Righteousness in Christ* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002), 136-37.

³² John A. Witmer, “Romans,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 472.

The Binding of Satan in Revelation 20:2-3 and the Structure of the Book of Revelation

The ongoing problem that amillennialism has with the binding of Satan (Rev. 20:2-3) is dealt with in two chapters in *Kingdom Come*. Chapter 13 gives Storms' approach to the arrangement of the book of Revelation. The structure helps to set up the context of Revelation chapter 20 within the book. Hence, in the next chapter (14) of Storms' book, he deals with the binding of Satan which has become a problem largely because of the structure that has been chosen.

The structure of Revelation that Storms defends is what this author sometimes refers to as the amillennial recapitulation view.³³ It is often associated with the name of Augustine. Storms also refers to it as *progressive parallelism*.³⁴ This view appears to be the majority view within the amillennial camp. The specific outline divides the chapters of Revelation into seven sections as follows: 1-3, 4-7, 8-11, 12-14, 15-16, 17-19, and 20-22. Each section recapitulates the time beginning with the First Advent. This approach is based largely upon common elements in the seals, trumpets, and bowl judgments.³⁵ The advantage of this structure for amillennialism is that it allows the thousand years of Revelation 20 to be associated with the present age and not a future age. Revelation 20 begins the last recapitulation section of the book. Hence, it is clearly associated with the inter-advent period. In this way, amillennialism affirms the millennium of Revelation 20 usually as an indeterminate period of time that begins with the first coming of Christ.

Dispensational premillennialists give several responses to this particular approach to the structure of the book of Revelation.³⁶ First, the amillennial recapitulation view cannot be harmonized with the outline of the book given by the book itself in 1:19 – “Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now, and what will take place later.” This outline corresponds roughly to chapter 1, chapters 2-3, and chapters 4-22.³⁷ Futuristic implications stem from the dispensational approach. The amillennialist Beale, who holds to a form of the recapitulation

³³ See Anthony Hoekema, “Amillennialism” in *Millennium: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1974) and Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 200-206.

³⁴ Storms, *Kingdom Come*, 400.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 387-422. Storms shows that there are variations within the overall recapitulation view from the amillennial side. This amillennial view should not be confused with various recapitulation views within premillennialism. Premillennialists acknowledge some common elements within the seals, trumpets, and bowls – especially between the trumpets and bowls. However, they also note the differences in the various judgments which are enough by themselves to disprove a recapitulation view for the entire book of Revelation.

³⁶ For a summary of responses within the context of the overall literary structure of the book of Revelation, see Mike Stallard, “Preaching the Book of Revelation” (Houston, TX: Paper presented to the Council on Dispensational Hermeneutics, October 2012), available at http://www.bbc.edu/council/documents/2012/Stallard_Preaching-the-Book-of-Revelation.pdf.

³⁷ For example, see Robert L. Thomas, “A Classical Dispensational View of Revelation” in *Four Views on the Book of Revelation* edited by C. Marvin Pate (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 186-87.

view, understands the significance of the debate over 1:19 and dedicates a whole chapter to its understanding.³⁸

A second response to the amillennial recapitulation view is *kaimeter* in the book of Revelation. The dispensationalist Hindson adroitly notes the following:

The predominant term which keeps the book of Revelation constantly moving is the word *and* (Greek, *kai*). The term *kai* is used over 1,200 times in the Revelation and is generally translated “and,” although it also appears translated as “but,” “even,” “both,” “also,” “yet,” and “indeed.” The average reader does not realize that nearly every verse of the Apocalypse begins with *kai* (*and*). This phenomenon is known as *polysyndeton*, meaning “many ands.” These are used to bind together the numeric units of the Revelation in the pattern known as *kaimeter*.³⁹

Hindson goes on to add that it is “this constant sense of progression that clearly indicates the Revelation is moving the reader toward a final climax.”⁴⁰ This *kaimeter* gives the book of Revelation a Hebraic narrative feel reminding one of the Hebrew Waw-consecutive. What this observation means for the current discussion is that the historic progression of the text of Revelation cannot be denied in spite of various interludes along the way. The *kaimeter* mitigates against the possibility that there is a “restart” going back to the First Advent beginning in Revelation 20:1. Chapters 19 and 20 cannot be separated in light of the usual narrative progression.

Third, the subject matter of chapters 19 and 20 is part of a unity that cannot be divided. In particular, these chapters contain the final unified dealings of Christ with the unholy trinity: Antichrist, the False Prophet, and Satan. The first two are dealt with in chapter 19 and the last one in chapter 20. Thomas goes further in stating that the seventh bowl judgment extends from 16:17 to 22:5.⁴¹ Such a conclusion can only be reached if there is a unified approach to the final judgments that lead to the coming in of the kingdom. The flow of the chapters easily read as a unified whole rather than a subdivided recapitulated account. Coupled with the *kaimeter* mentioned above, one is hard pressed to dissolve the unity of chapters 19 and 20.

Fourth, the most debated point in the matter continues to be the binding of Satan as given in 20:2-3. If chapter 20 starts again with the present age within a recapitulation scheme, then the obvious conclusion is that Satan is bound today. Premillennialists point out several observations that make it clear that Satan is not bound today:

³⁸ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 152-70. For a good survey of views and one approach from a nondispensational premillennialist, see Grant Osborne, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 97-99.

³⁹ Edward Hindson, *The Book of Revelation: Unlocking the Future* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002), 9. Using Logos Bible Software, the word *kai* is found 1,123 times in the book of Revelation in NA27.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴¹ Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 567-85.

- In the letters to the seven churches, one can find three references to Satan's present activity of agitation in the churches (Rev. 2:9, 2:13, 3:9).
- In the book of Acts, there are clear mentions or inferences that Satan is active after the day of Pentecost (Acts 5:3, 13:10, 26:18).
- The Apostle Paul clearly teaches that the devil still vigorously opposes believers in the present time (Eph. 6:10-18).
- The Apostle Peter warns believers that "the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).

All such passages show that Satan is not bound today. In reply, Storms gives a usual amillennial answer by restricting the nature of the binding.

However, the question must be asked: "In regard to what is Satan bound? Is the binding of Satan designed to immobilize him from any and all activities?" The premillennialist thinks so. Beasley-Murray tells us that Satan's binding entails his inability "to harm the race of man." But that is not what John says. The premillennial interpretation errs in that it has attempted to universalize what John explicitly restricts.

Two statements in Revelation 20 tell us the purpose of Satan's imprisonment. First, in verse 3, John says that Satan was bound "so that he should not deceive the nations any longer."⁴²

In this context, Storms acknowledges the passages cited above by premillennialists but says that they do not apply to the issue of the binding of Satan to keep him from deceiving the nations. Satan cannot deceive the nations but he can persecute the church. Storms accuses premillennialists of taking the imagery of the binding too literally, when it is binding for a specific purpose.

However, the imagery of the binding must be taken seriously. It is the picture of the prevention of Satan's activity among the peoples of the world. In Acts 13:10, Paul confronts a person outside the church who is among the nations. Yet according to the text, Satan has his deceiving way with the pagan that Paul encounters. Is this not an example of Satan actively deceiving people among the nations? Mounce, in describing the imagery of Revelation 20:2-3, notes: "The elaborate measures taken to insure his custody are most easily understood as implying the complete cessation of his influence on earth (rather than the curbing of his activities)."⁴³ Walvoord asks the pertinent question, "If God wanted to show that Satan was

⁴² Storms, *Kingdom Come*, 439. The second statement which Storms gives later on the same page is Revelation 20:8.

totally inactive and out of touch with the world, how could he have rendered it more specifically than He has done in this passage?"⁴⁴

In the end, the premillennialist remains confident that his approach to the structure of the book of Revelation, especially chapters 19-20, is correct. Satan will be bound in a future time that begins at the second coming of Christ. While respecting the attempt by Storms and other amillennialists, the premillennialist will continue to be they have not made their case.

Conclusion

Sam Storms has provided a helpful work in *Kingdom Come*. In addition to a short survey of his work, this article has addressed three areas of Bible interpretation from his book: 1 Corinthians 15:22-26, 50-58; Romans 8:18-23; and the book of Revelation, especially chapter 20. The large amount of detail provided by Storms deserves a longer response. However, it does not appear that there are a lot of new amillennial interpretations provided by Storms. Nonetheless, the collection of the massive amount of data will make his work one of the standard defenses of amillennialism in the days ahead. Premillennialists, however, will remain unconvinced by the arguments for his position.

⁴³ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (revised ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 362. In addition, Thomas affirms similarly that the imagery of the binding of Satan "requires an absolute stopping of his activity" (*Revelation 8-22*, 405).

⁴⁴ John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 292.