

Millennial Thoughts

by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez

Why could not the sin problem, in all of its cosmic ramifications, be resolved at the second coming of Christ? Why does God wait until the end of the millennium to eliminate sin from the universe?

The fundamental issues involved in the cosmic conflict and the conflict itself are not confined to this planet. According to the Scriptures, the resolution of the sin problem takes place in stages because of the complexity of the problem and God's interest in revealing to the universe the justice of His decisions and actions. We find in the millennium an indispensable eschatological event that will result in a cosmic acknowledgment of God's justice and love that will reconcile the things on earth and in heaven (Rev. 20:15–21:1; cf. Col. 1:20).

1. The Millennium Creates the Proper Setting for the Conclusion of the Controversy: At the Second Coming the cosmos will not yet be ready for the annihilation of all evil from the universe. The Second Coming will reveal that the sacrifice of Christ not only saves repentant sinners but also liberates them from the constant threat of the enslaving power of sin. However, the eradication of a fragment of God's intelligent creation from the cosmos is unquestionably a more radical step in His redemptive purpose. This must take place at the appropriate time, at the moment when it will result in the healing of the universe and the restoration of perfect harmony, or shalom; otherwise there could be a deeper fragmentation. The millennium provides the needed time for a move toward universal congruence in support of God's solution to the controversy. God's intelligent creatures need to experience this important stage in the eschatological drama.

2. The Millennium Is a Time of Cosmic Reflection and Analysis: During the millennium the results of the great controversy will be reviewed both in heaven and on earth. After the death of the wicked at the Second Coming (Rev. 19:21), Satan and his angels will find themselves imprisoned in a desolated planet (Rev. 20:2, 3). They will be forced to reflect on their role in the cosmic conflict while at the same time contemplating the results of their rebellion. This introspection will contribute to the reconciliation of the universe, indispensable for the closure of the conflict.

The reflection in heaven takes place in the setting of the judgment of the evil ones (Rev. 20:4; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3). The redeemed will join the heavenly court in the examination of the lives of those who persisted in rebellion against God. They have a contribution to make toward the resolution of the cosmic problem of sin because they have had a personal knowledge of its enslaving power. But they have also experienced the redeeming power of the cross and the unfathomable love of God. They know by experience that there is no

valid excuse for personal submission to evil powers. They can witness all that God has done to save repentant sinners—if they so wished.

God wants all intelligent creatures who during the great controversy remained loyal to Him and who will spend eternity with Him to participate in the judicial process (cf. Dan. 7:10). The members of God's kingdom will be involved in the decision to obliterate the anomaly of sin from the cosmos. God's people on earth are part of that kingdom and will enjoy the same privilege.

3. The Millennium Leads to Universal Adoration: At the end of the millennium the reflection of evil powers on earth and the reflection in the form of judicial proceedings in heaven will reach a common conclusion. Both will acknowledge God's judicial decisions as just and righteous. The wicked, Satan, and his angels will appear before God's throne to experience the result of their rebellion (Rev. 20:11, 12). They will publicly and voluntarily admit that they were fighting for the wrong cause, confess God's righteousness, acknowledge Christ's lordship, and accept the divine sentence pronounced against them (Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 16:5; cf. Rev. 19:1, 2). Then every intelligent creature in the universe will unite in praising God's love and justice. At that moment the universe will be ready to witness the eternal extinction of sin and sinners from God's creation. In order to reach that goal the millennium is indispensable.