

The Millennium Revelation 20

Revelation 20 Introduction

- The Old Testament prophets foretold a time when Messiah would reign over a world full of peace and prosperity.
- This would be a time when even the nature of animals would be changed and the wolf and lamb would dwell together.
- This Messianic kingdom is still to come and is often referred to as the *Millennium*.

- The word *millennium* comes from the Latin for “one thousand years”.
- A 1000-year period, the *Millennium*, is mentioned six times in this chapter.
- Nonetheless, many sincere Bible students deny the future literal reign of Christ on earth and the literal sense of the millennium.

- It would seem, however, that an actual 1000-year span of time is exactly what this chapter is talking about.
- In all seriousness, there is nothing in the text that demands a figurative understanding.
- If we take this chapter just as it reads, it is really not that difficult to understand.

- A few biblical reasons may be helpful.
- We should understand why a period of time like this is not only a nice idea, which could be mere wishful thinking.
- It is, in fact, biblically necessary.

Purposes for the Millennium

1. To fulfill the O.T. promises to Israel regarding her future re-gathering and kingdom.
2. To allow the promised Messiah to reign on David’s throne, that is, as an earthly king.
3. To answer the saints’ prayer of “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”
4. To fulfill the promises to the church that the saints will reign with Christ.
5. To bring about the complete redemption of nature promised since O.T. times.
 - See also Rom 8:19-22
6. To allow Christ’s glory and righteousness to be displayed publicly to the nations.
7. To give fallen man an opportunity to serve the Lord in an earthly environment free from Satan’s influence.

Revelation 20 Outline

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|------|------------------------|----------|
| I. | Satan Bound | 20:1-3 |
| II. | The Thousand Years | 20:4-6 |
| III. | The Final Rebellion | 20:7-10 |
| IV. | The Great White Throne | 20:11-15 |

I. Satan Bound 20:1-3

- 20:1 *the key to the bottomless pit*
- The last time we saw this key was in Revelation 9.
- At that point a fallen angel used it to release demonic locusts upon the earth.
- This time an angel (presumably a *good* one) uses it to imprison Satan for the length of the Kingdom Age.

- 20:1 Notice that the angel in this section is not described as anyone special – not a “Super Turbo Powerful Cherub-class Angel.”
- He’s an angel – just an angel.
- When God decides it’s time for Satan to be bound, he can’t even put up a fight.
- In the end he is bound and cast into “the abyss,” which is then shut up and sealed.
- 20:2-3 *thousand years (2x) ... a little while*
- This latter short phrase can be unpacked as “an indeterminate period of time of short duration.”
- If John wanted to express something like “an indeterminate period of time of long duration,” they had the vocabulary to do so.
- For example, “a long while,” would have said it perfectly well.

Take Away Point:

- There is no way to make peace with the devil.
- *“There is no neutral ground in the universe; every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counter-claimed by Satan” – C.S. Lewis*
- That great tug-of-war will now be stopped as the Lord Jesus Christ asserts His rulership for the next 1000 years.

II. The Thousand Years 20:4-6

- Chuck Smith explains,
 - *“The Bible teaches that Jesus is coming again... The purpose of the second coming of Christ is to establish the kingdom of God on the earth. ... During the Millennium the damage of the Tribulation will be reversed, and Christ will reign on the throne of David (Isa. 9:6-7; Zech. 12:10).*
 - *“In Revelation 5:10, John said, ‘And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.’ Hence, when Jesus comes to reign, the church will reign with Him. Revelation 20:4 tells us that the length of our reign on the earth will be one thousand years.”*
- 20:4 Who exactly sits on these thrones and who has judgment committed to them?
- Very possibly the saints, who will have returned with Jesus Christ.
- *Souls of those ... beheaded* Since the church was already raised before the Tribulation, it would make sense that the Tribulation Saints would receive a special mention here.
- 20:5 *the first resurrection* How is that?
 - Christ was the first to rise from the dead and receive a resurrection body.
 - And what about those odd appearances just after that in Matthew 27:52-53?
 - The dead in Christ and raptured believers met the Lord in the air – necessarily before this point on any view of the Rapture.
 - And what about the two witnesses we read about in Revelation 11?
- 20:5 *the first resurrection*
- There are two possible explanations, both of which seem equally valid.
- First, it can be understood as the first resurrection *of the Millennium*.
- In that case we will see *the second resurrection* at the end of this chapter.
- This later resurrection is in 20:12-13 at which Christ judges the lost according to their works.

- A second possible explanation goes as follows:
- The *first resurrection* includes all the resurrections of the just from Christ, through the Rapture and then here.
- It is first in the sense that it is a first type of resurrection – a resurrection unto life.
- The *second resurrection* will be to judgment and will be followed by “the second death.”
- 20:6 Regardless of how we understand the word “first,” all who are resurrected by now will reign with Christ throughout the Millennium.
- The first resurrection is contrasted here with the second death.

Take Away Point:

- We will one day rule with Christ. We should be able to settle our differences peacefully even now. Paul makes this point to the Corinthians, who were taking one another to court.
 - See 1 Corinthians 6:1-8

III. The Final Rebellion 20:7-10

- 20:7 William R. Newell states,
 - *“Here we see the Devil loosed after the thousand years of imprisonment, and immediately rushing back to his old task of deluding earth’s inhabitants to that “war” against God, to which the “enmity against God” of the “mind of the flesh” was ever prone, but for which, during the thousand years, leadership was lacking.”*
- 20:7 Please note that Satan does not escape or fight his way out of the bottomless pit, but is “released.”
- God is still completely sovereign at this point and has simply decided that it suits His purposes to release the devil from his prison for “a little while.” (See 20:3)
- In other words, this was part of God’s original plan – from the beginning.
- This is probably not the same as the *Gog and Magog* battle of Ezekiel 38-39:
- In that case only certain named nations seem to be allied against Israel.
 - See Ezekiel 38:1-6
- It is also clear that in Ezekiel the earthly Israel continues and life goes on afterward.
 - See Ezekiel 39:11-16.
- This battle of Revelation is much more climactic:
- Nations from all over the earth are involved. (20:8)
- It ends with the devil cast into the lake of fire, followed by the White Throne Judgment. (20:10-15)
- 20:10 When the devil enters the Lake of Fire, the beast and the false prophet are still there.
- They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.
- This expresses both unbroken continuity and unending duration.
- We are wrong to try to diminish the language of this verse. See 22:18-19.
- 20:10 Robert L. Thomas emphasizes,
 - *“However the Bible may speak of that future punishment ... it presents a picture of mental agony and corporeal suffering combined in proportion to the guilt of those who have sinned.”*

- Once Christ establishes His kingdom, we might easily wonder about the purpose of this final rebellion.
- There are actually several possible reasons why God would allow something like this to take place.

Purposes for the Final Rebellion

1. To show us that the human race is not by nature good.
2. To show us that peace and prosperity will not save human souls.
3. To show us that living in a righteous environment will not save us.
4. To show us that good government cannot change fallen human hearts.
5. To show that humanity does not naturally seek after God.
6. To show that Satan will not change his ways, freely now – nor after long punishment.
7. To show that the only possible hope for salvation is the saving blood of Jesus Christ. After the Kingdom Age, human hearts will still be inclined toward evil.

IV. The Great White Throne 20:11-15

- Keep this separate from The Judgment Seat of Christ (Romans 14:10, 2 Corinthians 5:10), which will be for believers.
- That will happen before the Millennium – so that faithfulness of believers can be rewarded accordingly.
- This is illustrated by *The Parable of the Ten Minas* in Luke 19:11-27, but we won't get into that right now.
- 20:14-15 Again, from Robert L. Thomas,
 - *“Language like this leaves no room for any form of universalism, soul sleep, an intermediate state, a second chance, or annihilation of the wicked ...*
 - *This is the negation of eternal life which the lost could have received. But it is more than that. It is a ‘torturous existence’ ... the direct infliction of misery ... through the eternal fire.”*
- What are the books involved at the White Throne Judgment?
- Perhaps the following...

Books Used at the Judgment

- The Bible (John 12:48)
- The Book of the Living containing the names of all who are born (Psalm 69:28)
- Those who die while rejecting Christ have their names blotted out of this book, for they are truly dead. (Revelation 3:5)
- Believers names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. (Revelation 13:8, 17:8, 21:27)
- The Book of Life in 20:15 might be either of the previous two.

In Conclusion

Take Away Points:

1. There is no way to make peace with the devil.
2. We will one day rule with Christ. We should be able to settle our differences peacefully even now.
3. The world ends with rebellion and judgment. The victory goes to the Lamb and those written in His book of Life.

- Revelation 20 has shown us that after Christ's return there will be a glorious Kingdom Age.
- But the Millennium will be followed by a Final Rebellion and a Final Judgment.
- The Lord leaves our eternal destiny in our hands.
- Only those who turn to Jesus now will be saved from the lake of fire.

One Last Scripture

"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

– John 3:17-18 (NKJV)

(See Below: Views of the Millennium)

Three Different Millennial Views

Amillennialism For most of church history this has been the most popular view. It holds that prophetic Scripture must be allegorically understood. The absence of a literal understanding of prophecy has led to a great variety of interpretations under this heading. Amillennialists believe that no literal, earthly kingdom will be established. Along with this comes a rejection of both the literal regathering of Israel and the thousand-year reign of Christ. It is still an extremely popular view in one form or another among the many, many churches that tend to steer clear of a literal understanding of the Bible.

Postmillennialism This outlook believes that the church is to progressively grow in power and influence until the whole world is Christianized. This gradual triumph of the Gospel is to usher in the Millennium during the last thousand years of the present age. The return of Christ is then placed after the Millennium. This view has existed since the 1700's, but lost many of its adherents during the world wars and political turmoil of the twentieth century as *premillennialism* gained in popularity. Nonetheless, it is experiencing a strong revival in conjunction with the Preterist School of prophetic interpretation.

Premillennialism This view holds to a literal understanding of the promises regarding Christ's earthly kingdom. Premillennialism believes that Christ comes back before the Millennium to personally reign on earth throughout the 1000 year period. This is the most straightforward understanding of Revelation 19 & 20. As it happens, this was the view of the early church, but it has not been emphasized through most of church history. It was later revived and mushroomed in popularity during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (Also known as *chiliasm*, from the Greek word *chilioi* or "1000")

The Millennial Kingdom

The Bible teaches that Jesus is coming again... The purpose of the second coming of Christ is to establish the kingdom of God on the earth. ... During the Millennium the damage of the Tribulation will be reversed, and Christ will reign on the throne of David (Isa. 9:6-7; Zech. 12:10). In Revelation 5:10, John said, "And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth." Hence, when Jesus comes to reign, the church will reign with Him. Revelation 20:4 tells us that the length of our reign on the earth will be one thousand years.

It is at this time that "the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Isa. 11:6). "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (Isa. 65:25). This is the time when "they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Mic. 4:3). God's promises to Israel included both earthly and spiritual blessings. Christ's disciples, who understood the earthly aspect of the blessings on Israel, asked Christ just prior to His ascension when He would fulfill the earthly blessings and establish His kingdom (Acts 1:6). They were then ignorant of the fact that this phase of Christ's kingdom would not take place until the End Times.

Until Christ returns, our purpose and commission is to be at work declaring His gospel to the world (Matt. 24:14). "Even so, come [quickly], Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20).

- Chuck Smith, from an article in the *Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible*