

Revelation - Chapter 20

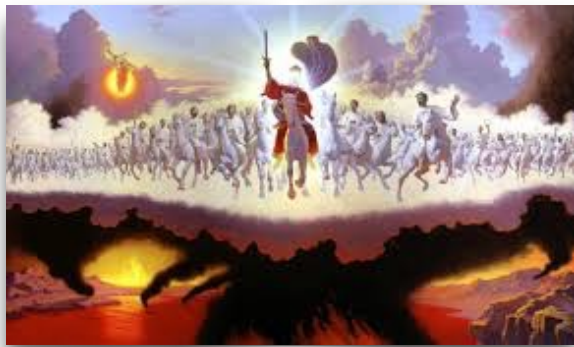
The Reign of Christ

John has just seen God's final judgement, the seven bowls of wrath poured out on the earth by seven angels. The first bowl of God's wrath is a plague on those who have received the mark of the beast, the second and third bowls kill all living things in the seas and freshwaters, the fourth causes the sun to scorch the earth's inhabitants so severely that it will seem that the atmosphere is on fire. The fifth bowl of wrath pours out darkness on the throne of the beast and his kingdom and the people are consumed by excruciating pain.



The sixth bowl of God's wrath causes the great river Euphrates to dry up and the way is prepared for the kings from the east to cross into Armageddon. Then Jesus speaks, giving a final warning that His coming will be sudden and un-announced. Jesus also assures believers that they will not be forgotten.

The seventh bowl of wrath causes a great earthquake as never before to occur. The shaking from the earthquake will be so severe that it will renovate and reconfigure the earth in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom. Sadly, the earth's inhabitants do not repent and receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior.



John witnesses the destruction of Babylon, representing false religion and also the judgment of a woman, the symbol of Babylon, described as the "the great prostitute", who is seen sitting on many waters - the many nations ruled by Babylon. Babylon has become the epitome of spiritual adultery and as such is judged by God.

Antichrist and the ten nations who unite will wage war against the Lamb. The Lamb will return as King of kings and Lord of lords and overcome the Beast and the kings of the earth. Christ will be accompanied by those who have accepted Him as Lord and Savior ("the called and chosen and faithful" Rev 17:14).

The Millennial Reign of Christ

This is one of the great chapters of the Bible. Here is recorded a series of events that relate to the millennial reign of Christ on earth. Here is where hundreds of Old Testament prophecies will be fulfilled, such as Jeremiah 23:5-6:

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. “In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The Lord our righteousness.’”
(Jeremiah 23:5–6, NASB95)



This chapter introduces for the first time in Scripture the exact length of Christ’s earthly kingdom which is one thousand years. Six times in Revelation 20 it is stated that there will be a literal thousand years in which Christ will reign.

The Millennial Kingdom is called by many names in Scripture. Jesus calls it the regeneration (Mat19:28), in Acts it is described as a time of refreshing and the period of restoration of all things (Acts 3:19, 21). The apostle Paul refers to it as an administration suitable to the fullness of the times (Eph 1:10). The Bible’s teaching on the kingdom is not confined to the New Testament. The kingdom is an important theme throughout Scripture; it is the goal toward which all of redemptive history progresses.²

In Johns’ vision he sees only the fact and duration of the millennial kingdom. The character of Christ’s reign on earth is fully described in many Old Testament passages such as Psalm 72, Isa 2:2-4; 11:4-9 and many others. From these Scriptures we learn that:

- Christ’s dominion is from sea to sea with all kings bowing down before Him
- Jerusalem will be the capital of the Millennial Kingdom (Isa 2:3)
- Israel is regathered from the various parts of the earth and brought back to her ancient land
- Israel will be exalted and Gentiles also will be blessed
- The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord (Isa 11:9)
- The earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord
- All nations will serve Him
- War will be no more (Isa 2:4)
- There will be a righteous reign of Christ (Isa 11)
- There will be peace and tranquility in His Kingdom

- There will be justice for all
- There will be economic justice for all
- There will be physical health and well-being (Isa 33:24; 35:5-6)
- Food will be plentiful (Joel 2:21-27)
- There will be long life (Isa 65:20)
- There will be deliverance from satanic oppression and evil
- The ungodly will be punished
- The natural ferocity of animals will be abated
- Fulfillment of God's prophetic Word



After the purging experience of the Great Tribulation, those who survive become the citizens of the kingdom after the rebels are purged out (Eze 20:34-38). Israel is then rejoined to God in the symbol of marriage, being transformed from an unfaithful wife to one who reciprocates the love of Yahweh.

Gentiles who share in the Kingdom blessings have unparalleled spiritual and economic benefits, and the thousand-year reign of Christ is a time of joy, peace, and blessing for the entire earth. God's purpose in originally placing man in charge of the Garden of Eden will have its ultimate fulfillment in the Last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will reign over the earth.¹

John's vision reveals four essential truths about the Millennial Kingdom:

1. **Satan is Removed.** Most of God's enemies have already been removed. The beast (Antichrist) and the false prophet have already been thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 19:20), most human rebels were destroyed during the Tribulation judgments, those surviving the Tribulation judgments were executed at Armageddon (Rev 19:11-21) or the goat judgment (Matt 25:31-46).

The chief rebel, the dragon who is ferocious and cruel, the serpent of old dating back to the garden of Eden, the devil who slanders, and Satan the adversary who opposes God, Christ and all believers, is left. But not for long.



2. God sends a great angel, possibly Michael the archangel, the great adversary of Satan, who possesses great power, to bind Satan with a great chain. This chain is a great one, because of Satan's greatness and power as the highest created being (Eze 28:14).



The angel has the power to bind Satan, seize him, cast him into the abyss and seal it, and then release him at the end of one thousand years. This angel is given the key to the abyss. The abyss appears five times in Revelation (Rev 9:11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3) and is a temporary place of incarceration for certain demons. The lake of fire is the place of torment and final punishment (Mat 25:41). It is here in the abyss for one thousand years that Satan will not be able to deceive the nations.

- 3. Reign of the Saints.** With Satan and his demons gone and only believers in Christ left, Christ will establish His Millennial Kingdom of peace. John saw God's people sitting on thrones reigning with Christ. Judgment is given to them to rule subordinately over every aspect of life in the Millennial Kingdom and carry out His perfect will.

The martyred believers from the Tribulation were resurrected to reign with Christ for the thousand years. John calls the resurrection of the saints from all ages, the first resurrection. This resurrection is also called the resurrection of the righteous (Luke 14:14; Acts 24:15), the resurrection of life (John 5:29), the resurrection of those who are Christ's at His coming (1Cor 15:23), and the better resurrection (Heb 11:35).



The fifth of seven beatitudes in Revelation is given: blessed and holy are those who are a part of the first resurrection, death has no power over them, and they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for one thousand years (Rev 20:6).

The second death is eternal hell. No true believer in Christ will ever face God's eternal wrath (Rom 5:9). Believers are already a royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:9) and will now serve as priests by worshiping God and leading others to the knowledge of Him during the Millennial Kingdom.

- 4. The Return of Satan.** In God's perfect will, Satan will be released from the abyss after Christ has reigned for one thousand years. Satan was not permitted to interfere in the affairs of the Kingdom during the Millennial Kingdom, however after his release he will lead a final rebellion of sinners.

Even though the initial inhabitants of the Millennial Kingdom will be redeemed, they will still possess a sinful nature and will pass that sin nature on to their children. Each generation born during the Millennial Kingdom will be in need of salvation. Despite the personal rule of Christ on earth, despite the most moral society the world will ever know, many will love their sin and reject Christ (Rom 8:7).

When The Thousand
Years Are Over, Satan
Will Be Released From
His Prison

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As they did during his first presence on earth, sinners will refuse the grace and reject the Lordship of the King of all the earth. Satan will provide the supernatural leadership needed to bring to the surface all the sin and rebellion left in the universe. Satan's violent hatred of God, Christ, and those who believe in Christ will not change by his thousand years of imprisonment in the abyss. Satan will set out on his final act of rebellion.

- 5. The Revolt of Society.** Satan will once again deceive the nations. Those who are not saved will be fertile soil for Satan to sow his seeds of rebellion. They will be as unmoved by the peace, joy and righteousness of the Millennium as earlier sinners were by the devastating judgments of the tribulation (Rev 9:20-21;16:9,11,21).³



Although Satan's deception is not revealed, it will succeed in leading a revolt against the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan will collect the deceived nations from around the globe, all four corners of the earth. John gives these enemies of the King of Kings the symbolic title "Gog and Magog," naming them after the invasion force that will assault Israel during the tribulation (Ezekiel 38–39). Here John appears to be using the name Gog as a general title for an enemy of God's people. Even more

amazing is the number of the rebels. John describes them as a vast uncountable multitude.

Due to the peaceful and healthy conditions of the Millennial Kingdom, there will be a huge population explosion on earth. Vast numbers will join Satan in his final rebellion

against God. The rebel forces will come up on the plain surrounding Jerusalem. The saints will be enjoying the glorious presence of Christ when the attack comes.

Like Armageddon a thousand years earlier (Rev 19:11-21), there will be no battle. Fire comes down from Heaven and destroys God's enemies. They are instantly exterminated. Satan's forces will be killed and their souls will go into the realm of punishment awaiting their final sentencing to eternal hell. Satan is thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and false prophet have been for one thousand years. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev 20:10).

The Great White Throne Judgement

We now move to the most serious, sobering and tragic passage in the entire Bible. John describes a terrifying scene before him. Christ is seated on His throne of judgement and all the accused, the unsaved of all generations, are standing before Him.

Revelation mentions throne nearly fifty times. This throne is a great white throne because it is very large and it is the seat of God's sovereign rule. It is white because it is pure, holy and just. The verdict handed down from this throne will be absolutely just. It is Jesus who is sitting on the throne since Scripture teaches that Jesus will judge sinners (John 5:22, 26-27; Acts 10:42). It is God in the person of Jesus Christ who will sit in final judgment.



John also describes another startling reality; the uncreation of the universe. The earth will still be tainted with sin and subject to the effects of the fall so it will be destroyed also. In its place God will create a new heaven and a new earth (Rev 21:1). The present earth will not be moved or reshaped. It will go out of existence. John states that "no place was found for them" (Rev 20:11). Peter describes the final expression of the day of the Lord:

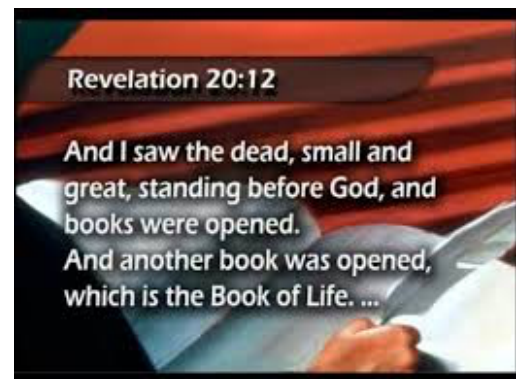
"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."

(2 Peter 3:10–13, NASB95)

All the unsaved dead will be raised regardless of the condition of their bodies, coming from the sea, the earth and Hades. The evil dead are given resurrection bodies suited for eternal punishment.

John sees the unsaved from all walks of life and degrees of greatness. They will all face God's judgement for there is no partiality with God (Rom 2:11). They are standing because they are about to be sentenced. Since their death the unsaved have been tormented in a place of punishment. Now they are summoned for their final sentence.

Their judgment is made on the basis of the books that are opened. There appears to be two classifications of books; the book of life and the other books which are probably the divine records of their works. The book of life refers to the roll of those who are saved and have eternal life.



There will be no debate over their guilt or innocence. There will be a prosecutor, but no defender; an accuser, but no advocate. There will be an indictment, but no defense mounted by the accused; the convicting evidence will be presented with no rebuttal or cross-examination.

God has kept perfect records of every person's life and the unsaved dead will be judged according to their deeds. No one will have the slightest grounds for complaint about his or her sentence. Their deeds will be measured against God's perfect, holy standard which no one can meet apart from the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Their deeds will also determine their punishment. While works are never a ground for salvation, they are considered important before God. The book of life will determine where they will spend eternity; their deeds will determine their degree of punishment in hell.



Then death, Hades, and all whose names are not recorded in the book of life were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death. Just as the new heaven and new earth are an eternal existence so is the lake of fire eternal for its inhabitants.

Jesus taught on hell more times than He taught on any other subject. Jesus taught that the punishment of the wicked is as eternal as

the eternal life of the righteous (Matt 25:46). The destruction of the wicked in hell stretches throughout all eternity is also taught in 2 Thes 1:9.

Hell is described throughout the Bible as a place of total darkness, which will isolate its inmates from each other (Mat 22:13; 2 Pet 2:17), a place where the worm devouring the wicked will never die which is possibly emblematic of an accusing conscience (Isa 66:24; Mark 9:44); as a place of banishment from God's kingdom (Mat 8:12; 22:13), and as a place where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mat 13:42; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28).⁴

Summary

While it may be difficult to understand why God releases Satan from the abyss where he was chained for one thousand years, it does reveal the incurable evil of the human heart that does not experience the saving grace of Christ. Satan's release shows the power and necessity of the righteous judgment of God.

Those who reject God's grace and mercy in this life will inevitably face His justice in the life to come. Unrepentant sinners will experience God's justice at the great white throne judgment. Those who have accepted God's grace and forgiveness of sins by believing in Christ will enter the new Heaven and new Earth.

There is only one way to avoid the terrifying future of hell. Those who confess their sins and ask God to forgive them on the basis of Christ's substitutionary death on their behalf will be delivered from God's eternal wrath (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9).