

The Purposeful Reign of God's Son

Revelation 20:1-15

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Introduction: Imagine yourself as a city dweller who has taken a hike deep into a wilderness area. You come upon a beautiful, cascading waterfall. You are almost breathless as you view the scene, overwhelmed not only for the magnificent view before you, but stricken by what you do not see. There are no car horns, traffic jams, littered streets, or scurrying crowds of people. You cannot help but be amazed at not only what is there, but equally amazed by what is not there. In like manner will be the experience of those who enter into the millennial kingdom of Christ. Those privileged to be there will be wonderfully & happily pleased at what they see as well as what they do not see. What is this millennial kingdom? The word "millennial" comes from the Latin word for "one thousand years." Review with me in your minds the outline of the Book of Revelation given back in 1:19, *"Write the things which thou hast seen, & the things which are, & the things which shall be hereafter."* We have previously identified the *"things which thou hast seen"* as John's vision of Christ in 1:1-18. *"The things which are"* refer to the seven messages given to the seven churches in chapters 2 & 3. And the *"things which shall be hereafter"* begin with 4:1 & continue through to the end of the Book. The third part of our outline consists also of three parts: the Tribulation (chs. 6-19), the Millennium (ch. 20), & the Eternal State (chs. 21 & 22). It is in the second part of *"things which shall be hereafter"* that we find our text for the day, which can be divided again into 4 sections: the **restricting** of Satan (:1-3), the **reigning** of saints (:4-6), & the **rebell**ing of sinners (:7-10), & the **reality** of sinners' judgment [the Great White Throne Judgment] (:11-15). I direct your attention now to the literal 1,000 year rule of Christ which involves the restricting of Satan & the reigning of saints. Then we will see the rebelling of sinners & the reality of their judgment.

I. The **restricting** of Satan (:1-3)

- A. The *power* of restriction (:1-3) > an angel
 - 1. His identity.
 - 2. His ability.
- B. The *person* of restriction (:2) – His 4 "names."
- C. The *place* of restriction (:1 & 3)
 - 1. Its identification.
 - 2. Its location.
- D. The *purpose* of restriction (:3)
 - 1. Satan is rendered unable to deceive the nations
 - 2. Satan is removed as an excuse for man's sinful tendencies

II. The **reigning** of saints (:4-6)

- A. Their *recognition* (:4) - 2 distinct groups:
 - 1. Those upon thrones > church saints (of the Body & Bride of Christ).
 - 2. Those beforehand beheaded > Tribulation saints.
- B. Their *resurrection* (:4-6)
 - 1. A physical resurrection - "anastasis" - 'standing again' (used 40 times in N.T.) .
 - 2. A "*first resurrection*" -
 - a. A completion - "*this (is) the first resurrection*" - could mean, this completes the first...
 - b. A comparison - John 5:28-29 > 2 kinds of resurrection, "*of life*" & "*of damnation*."
- C. Their *resolution* (the nature of their reign) (:4 & 6)
 - 1. Their reign is judicial (:4) > "*judgment was given unto them*"
 - 2. Their reign is sacerdotal [Latin, "priest" + "to do" hence, 'to do the work of a priest'].
 - 3. Their reign is regal (:6) > "*shall reign*" (& cf. 19:15)

Summary: "Not only will the saints reign with Christ a thousand years, but also they will be His priests (Rev. 1:6), thus directing both the civil government & spiritual instruction for the millennial populations. Christ is High Priest, as well as King of kings, & all the resurrected saints will exercise

varied religious & political functions under His supreme command throughout the millennium, in accord with the faithfulness of their service in this present life" (Morris).

Introduction of 20:7-10: On July 15, 1972, at 3:32 p.m., a housing project in St. Louis, Missouri was leveled to the ground by dynamite. The project was called Pruitt-Igoe. It had been built several years previously & regarded as a landmark of modern architecture. Its designers & builders considered it to be the state of the art in technology & it was to be the ideal utopia for its new inhabitants. The housing project would showcase for decades to come how to create a utopian society that would eventually envelope all of mankind. Yet, unfortunately, its new residents did not appreciate their "utopia" & shortly after residing there, vandalism began to occur. The building would be renovated time & again by large expenditures of government money. But after years of such expenditures & frustration on the part of the government planners, a decision was made. The building would be destroyed. And so it was on that afternoon in the middle of July, the building was reduced to rubble by a planned "implosion." What those governmental planners learned on a small scale back in the early 70's, will be demonstrated on a much greater scale during the millennial reign of Christ. Ryrie says, "The Millennium will prove, among other things, that a perfect earthly environment & even universal knowledge of the Lord will not change men's hearts." We have considered the literal, 1,000 year rule of Christ as it involved the restricting of Satan & the reigning of saints. Note with me now the rebelling of sinners, those who join in one final revolt against Christ, led by the great deceiver & arch-enemy of God, the Devil. We see in these verses Satan's deception, his defeat, & his destination.

III. The **rebelling** of sinners (:7-10)

A. The *deception* by Satan (:7-9)

1. Satan's release (:7)
2. Satan's resolve (:8-9) > to deceive
 - a. Who? b. What? c. Why? Note: What the kingdom will prove (Why must Satan be released?): [see Hoste's quote]
 - (1) To demonstrate that man even under the most favorable circumstances will fall into sin if left to his own choice.
 - (2) To demonstrate the foreknowledge of God Who foretells the acts of men as well as His own acts.
 - (3) To demonstrate the incurable wickedness of Satan.
 - (4) To justify eternal punishment, that is, to show the unchanged character of wicked people even under divine jurisdiction for a long period of time. (by Govelt)

Summary: "This is the single most horrible condemnation of mankind: in a perfect environment, surrounded by the millennial blessings, they will choose to follow Satan rather than God" (Custer).

B. The *defeat* of Satan (:9)

1. The pictured destruction > "*fire came down from God...*"
2. The prophesied destruction > Malachi 4:1 & II Peter 3:10.

C. The *destination* for Satan (:10)

1. His confirmed character - "*the devil that deceived them*"
2. His confined companions - "*the beast & the false prophet*"
3. His continued condemnation - "*tormented day & night...*"

We see here now the picture of God's White Throne Judgment & are reminded again, as Abraham voiced centuries ago, "*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*" (Gen. 18:25). As we consider in these verses the Judge, the Jurisprudence, & the Judgment to find words of condemnation, may we be moved with compassion & motivated by concern for those who are lost & stand only a breath away from going out into a Christ-less eternity only to face judgment at that great white throne.

IV. The **reality** of sinner's judgment

A. The **Judge** (:11-12a)

1. His *position* (:11).
 - a. The appearance of a throne.
 - b. The absence of the earth & heaven.
2. His *person* (:12a).
 - a. The Triune God? > "Here is seen only the great throne of divine justice, blinding in its whiteness. No human figure can be discerned there, no incarnate Son of Man. It is rather an awesome Presence, none other than the triune Godhead, the Creator & King & Judge of the universe..." (H. Morris). But compare I Timothy 6:16.
 - b. The triumphant Christ > Christ sitting in judgment; see John 5:22-23 & cf. Mt. 19:28, 25:31; Acts 10:42; & II Tim. 4:1.

B. The **Jurisprudence** (:12-13)

["jurisprudence" - (1) a system or body of law, or (2) the course of court decisions (precedent cases)]

1. Who? - the *people*.
 - a. "*The dead*."
 - b. "*Small & great*" (see also Rev. 11:18; 13:16; & 19:5,18).

2. What? - the *procedure*.

[Note: "The purpose of this judgment is not to determine who is to be lost or saved. This is a matter which must be settled before death... The purpose of final judgment is to exhibit the character of the judged & to reward them according to their works" (McClain).

a. The books:

- (1) The standard of God's authority ("system or body of law") > Romans 2:1-2, 12-15; 3:10; Judgment will be according to the standard of truth, God's Word.
- (2) The sinfulness of man's actions ("course of court decisions, precedent cases") > The **precedence**: man will account for his words (Mt. 12:36-37), his wishes or secrets (Rom. 2:16), & his works or wickedness (I Jn. 3:4, Rev. 20:12. [Where is this recorded? A

divine record of human deeds; book of memory; book of the universe - "a physical recording of the image of every act committed & the sound of every word uttered from the beginning of the world" (McClain). - [cf. Babbage].

The **principle**: man will be convicted (Jn. 16:7-11, *:9) & condemned (Gal. 6:7-8).

Summary: "The absolute justice of God is revealed in this judgment of works. Even for those who have spurned the Lord Jesus Christ there is differentiation in degrees of wickedness & apparently variation in punishment" (Walvoord). - See Lk. 12:47-48 & Mt. 11:20-24.

b. The Book: (the "*book of life*")

(1) Its identity > A book originally inscribed with the names of everyone born, given "life" by God - but those who rejected Christ have their names blotted out (Ex. 32:33, Ps. 69:22, Rev 3:5. Note: "If the point of view be adopted that the book of life was originally the book of all living from which have been expunged the names of those who departed from life on earth without salvation, it presents a sad picture of a blank space where their names could have been written for all eternity as the objects of divine grace" (Walvoord). Note: The Lamb's Book of life, in which are recorded only the names of those who trust Christ as personal Savior (Rev. 13:8, Phil. 4:3) - cf. "Is My Name Written There?"

- (2) Its testimony > *Singular* testimony (not one of the books, but another book!) & its *Silent* testimony (the omission of a name speaks of one who rejected God's salvation).

C. The **Judgment** (:13-15)

1. The scene (:13)

a. *Resurrection* unto the judgment:

- (1) "*Sea gave up the dead*" - the bodies of those who did not have a normal burial
- (2) "*Death delivered up...*" - the bodies of those raised up from the ground (cf. "*death*" &

"grave" used synonymously in I Cor. 15:55).

(3) "Hell..." ("*Hades*") - the souls of those raised up from their confinement in Hades (cf. "*Sheol*" in O.T. & "*Hades*" in N.T., both refer to the intermediate state, not the eternal state of punishment) - [contrast: "The righteous are given bodies like the holy, immortal, & incorruptible body of Christ in His resurrection. The wicked dead are given resurrection bodies suited for eternal punishment" (Walvoord).]

b. *Retribution* at the judgment:

(1) "*They were judged every man...*" - while judged as a group ("*they*"), judgment is individual ("*every man*" or "*each*").

(2) "*According to their works*" - "It is almost like a final act of grace for Christ to show men that on the basis of their own accords they deserve the lake of fire" (Ryrie).

2. The sentence (:14-15)

a. "*The lake of fire*"

(1) A place of separation - Mt. 8:12, "*darkness*."

(2) A place of suffering - Lk. 16:23, "*torments*"; Mt. 8:12, 13:42, 22:13, "*gnashing of teeth*."

"The lake of fire is the final end: fires of physical suffering, fires of bitter memories, fires of unfulfilled lusts, fires of hatred & malice that will never die down. No doubt the physical sufferings are the lesser of the elements of eternal retribution" (Custer).

b. "*The second death*"

(1) Physical death - the separation of the body from the soul > II Cor. 5:1-4, Lk. 16:22-23.

(2) Spiritual death - the separation of the soul from God > II Thess. 1:8-10.

Conclusion: One of the saddest verses in all the Word of God is this verse 15, "*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*" This one verse distinguishes between the only two groups of people in the world today & who have ever lived: (1) those whose names are in the book of life, & (2) those whose names are not in the book of life. How about you this morning? Is your name written there? Have you trusted Christ & Christ alone for your eternal salvation? If you were to die right now, do you know for sure that you would go to heaven? Those who have trusted Christ, repented of their sins, & put their faith in Him, are those whose names have been recorded for all eternity in the Lamb's book of life. Again I ask, "Is your name written there?" If you are not completely sure, why not come forward this morning & let us share with you how you might know for sure that your sins are cleansed by the blood of Christ & that you might have the assurance of an eternity in heaven?

Perhaps you may be thinking, "How could a God of love send any man or woman to hell?" The greater question to ask is, "How could a loving Father give His only begotten Son, to bear the sin of the world & be separated from His Father on the cross, in order to save sinful creatures such as you & me?" In light of that, how could any man or woman, boy or girl, not respond by calling out to God for mercy upon their sin-sick, hell-deserving soul & seek forgiveness of sin & find salvation in Christ? Hear again those sobering words, "*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*"