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The Mission

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Revelation 20

You know a lot of people plan for their retirement which may be thirty, forty or even fifty years down the road more or less depending on your age, but I wonder how many people have planned a thousand years down the road? Because the truth is, we're all going to be somewhere in a thousand years aren't we?

Well, as we get into Revelation chapter 20, we're going to see that there's coming a time and it could be in the near future that there is going to be a time which will be much more important to us than the few retirement years we're going to have while we're here on this earth.

And in these next fifteen verses or so, we're going to learn about a thousand year period where every person who has ever lived will go through. And the most important question we can ask ourselves about this 1000 year period, is where will we spend it?

Now, in the last chapter, in chapter 19, we saw Satan and the antichrist and the false prophet come against Christ at the battle

of Armageddon, and we watched as He defeated them all and the Antichrist and the False Prophet at that time were thrown into hell never to be heard from again.

And this, of course came at the end of the seven year tribulation period. And I'll remind you once again of the timeline. The church is Raptured, or suddenly removed from the world. And that event though it is still future, could happen at any moment now.

And then after the Rapture of the church, will come this seven year period on the earth that the Bible calls the Tribulation. And the last 3-1/2 years of that seven year period is referred to as the Great Tribulation Period

But now, here in chapter 20, the attention shifts to the judgment of Satan. Only Satan's not going to be cast into hell immediately. And we're going to see that in verses 1-3 as John describes what he sees in this next vision.

Look at verse 1 if you will.

Revelation 20:1, Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on

him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

And so here, John sees an angel come down from heaven who is not named, but it's more than likely Michael. Elsewhere in the Bible we see this angel Michael contending, or fighting, or standing against evil spirits and principalities, and also with the devil himself.

We read about him in Daniel chapter 10, in Jude verse 9; and also in Revelation chapter 12. And so more than likely this is Michael. But whoever he is, John here describes how this angel lays hold of and binds the devil, throws him not into hell, but into the abyss and then locks him there for a thousand years.

Now, there are some in the religious world who don't believe in a literal future kingdom. They're called Amilennialists versus premilennialists and they reject the view that Christ will physically reign on the Earth for a thousand years.

They interpret this "one thousand years" to be a symbolic number, not as a literal duration of time. And they believe that the millennium has already begun, and parallels the current church age.

They also believe that Christ's reign during the millennium is spiritual in nature, and at the end of the church age, Christ will

return in final judgment, and then establish His permanent reign in the "new heaven and new Earth".

But for that to be true, according to the word of God, Satan would have to be bound now. And all the scriptures that refer to him in the New Testament would have to be wrong. And so common sense tells us that Satan is not bound now. He's very alive and walking about seeking who he may devour at every turn. And his influence can still be seen in the goings on in this world.

And so we're going to take this scripture literally, not symbolically.

And so Satan is tossed into this pit—which is called the abyss. And while there he's going to be unable to "deceive the nations" for a thousand years—which will be throughout the entire reign of Christ as He sets up His kingdom here on the earth.

So who is involved in this thousand-year reign of Christ?

Well, look at verse 4.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Now, there's a lot of speculation as to who they are.

I'm not really sure why because a simple process of elimination leads you to the answer.

They can't be angels because angels are never mentioned in the Bible as reigning with Christ. But the saints are.

In 1 Corinthians 6:2, Paul writes this. Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

So among those seated on these thrones are definitely New Testament believers, and more than likely Old Testament believers as well. And then it tells us that those who came to Christ during the tribulation and were martyred will reign as well.

So, every believer throughout human history will have by this time have been given their resurrected, immortal bodies to reign with Christ.

These are all part of what is called here in Revelation 20:5, the "first resurrection." The second resurrection won't come for another thousand years. And that will include all who were unbelievers. The wicked will continue on where they are in hades, while they await that final judgment which will be the Great White Throne judgement.

So, in this vision, John sees that the kingdom of Christ has finally arrived. Verse 6 says

6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Old Testament prophecies tell us that the conditions here on earth during this time will be similar to those which were present in the garden of Eden. And finally, there will be world peace and that peace will prevail.

Jesus will rule from Jerusalem, where a magnificent new temple will be built. And things will be so peaceful that even the animal kingdom will be brought into harmony with humans, so much so, that a little child will be able to play with a lion cub just like he would his puppy. And all that was prophesied by Isaiah thousands of years ago. In fact, you may want to mark that in your Bible.

Isaiah 11:1, There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

**2 The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of**

counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

**3 His delight is in the fear of the Lord,
And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes,
Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;**

**4 But with righteousness He shall judge the poor,
And decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.**

**5 Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins,
And faithfulness the belt of His waist.**

**6 “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.**

**7 The cow and the bear shall graze;
Their young ones shall lie down together;
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.**

**8 The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole,
And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den.**

9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,

**For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
As the waters cover the sea.**

**10 “And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse,
Who shall stand as a banner to the people;
For the Gentiles shall seek Him,
And His resting place shall be glorious.”**

And the best part is that you and I, are going to reign with Him.

Now, who will we reign over or rule over in this kingdom? Well, the earth during that time is going to be populated with the millions of believers who came to faith in Christ during the tribulation and survived. And when Jesus returns and we return with Him, all these believers are going to be ushered in as well to this kingdom. And their bodies will still be mortal, though Isaiah indicates that God will tweak their bodies so they will live, like Adam and Eve, for hundreds of years.

Isaiah 65:20, “No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.

So these mortals will marry, they will have children, they will flourish, and build nations and economies, while all the while they will enjoy all the kingdom benefits.

The only trouble is, that their children will be born with that old sinful nature. That means every person born during the millennial kingdom will have to personally accept the gospel of Christ. But sadly, as time passes, more and more will refuse to believe.

And we know that will be the case, because there will be a final rebellion at the end of the thousand-year kingdom. Look at verse 7.

7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

Satan will be released from his prison and will be allowed to come out one last time to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth . . . to gather them for battle; and John says, their number is like the sand of the sea.

It's hard to imagine, that after living in peace and living in the very presence of Christ, that people will be deceived into rebelling against King Jesus!

But this is just a reminder that even a peaceful and beautiful environment cannot erase our old sinful nature! Solving social problems will never solve the sin problem! The remedy for sin will always be the same. Their heart has to be changed from the inside out.

Well, this final rebellion against the Lord doesn't last long.

In verse 9

John writes, 9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. 10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Finally, Satan will be put away forever.

And then in verse 11 we arrive at that terrifying, final judgment of the unsaved.

John writes in verse 11, 11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And

the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

And who is the judge? Well,

John 5:22, tells us. For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son,

This is Jesus Christ, who sits in judgment of the wicked. And the white color of His throne symbolizes the purity of this courtroom scene. There is not one speck of injustice or partiality.

But this won't be a typical courtroom scene. There won't be any two way dialogue. From this throne will come the verdict of guilty, an eternal verdict that will be end of any and all chance to believe in Christ.

John adds in verse 11 that **“earth and sky fled away.”** This of course refers to the destruction of the universe prior to a new earth and a new heaven.

2 Peter 3:10, But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away

with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

So, every unbelieving person from all of human history is now standing before this throne. “Standing” indicates that their bodies have been resurrected. This is the final resurrection, and they will have been given an immortal body eternally suited for hell.

Verse 13 says, **“The sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them.”**

In other words, no unbeliever, no unredeemed person will avoid this final judgment. No matter where their bodies were located or decomposed or were buried, God will regather their DNA, and He will reconstruct their bodies back to life.

And then in verses 12-13:

Books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books . . . each one of them, according to what they had done.

God will take the time to individually justify the degree of punishment each one deserves, and that will be determined by their deeds.

All unbelievers will realize, to their horror, that God—who knows everything, who has been present everywhere—was an eyewitness to every sinful thought and deed. Not only that but He

is keeping a written record. And God will prove to them all, why they are being judged forever.

Verse 15 indicates that their names are not written in the “book of life.” This is the registry, the roll book of the citizens of heaven. John writes, **“If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”**

In verse 14, John calls this the “second death”, which in biblical terms, never means cessation of existence; death in Bible terms means separation. In the first death—it’s physical death—the soul is separated from the body. But in the second death, which is experienced only by unbelievers, there is separation from God forever.

The truth is, we have all sinned. And if we were to stand before God in this judgement, our record would not look any better than those who will stand there condemned.

But God! And thank God that as Christians, there is no record of our sins, because every sin has not only been paid for by Christ, but He has also erased the record.

Amen!