

## THE REVELATION TO JOHN

### THE THINGS FUTURE, REVELATION 4 - 22

### THE MILLENNIUM AND THE GREAT WHITE THRONE, REVELATION 20

#### INTRODUCTION

- The events of chapter 20 follow chronologically the events of chapter 19. The reign of Christ on earth will be literal and last one thousand years. The unconditional promises to the nation Israel will be fulfilled during the millennial kingdom.
- John Walvoord, *Few verses in the Bible are more crucial to the interpretation of the Bible as a whole than the opening verses in Revelation 20.*
- Charles Ryrie, *Chapter 20 is like a great calm after the storm. In the major outline of the book this chapter is the second part of the third main section of the book. The third section includes "the things which shall take place after these things" (chaps. 4-22). The first part of this section was the description of the tribulation period (chaps. 4-19; this second part relates to the Millennium (chap. 20), and the third part describes the eternal state (chaps. 21-22).*
- Alan Johnson, ... *we may note that the ancient church down to the time of Augustine (354–430) (though not without minor exceptions) unquestionably held to the teaching of an earthly, historical reign of peace that was to follow the defeat of Antichrist and the physical resurrection of the saints but precede both the judgment and the new creation ...*

### THE MILLENNIUM, REVELATION 20:1-10

- A. The binding of Satan (1-3)
1. The appearance of an angel (1), ***Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain.***
    - a. Related verse, Revelation 1:17-18, *When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.*
    - b. Comments
      - 1) Charles Ryrie, *The agent that binds Satan is an angel. He is an angel to whom this authority has been given because he has the key to the Abyss and a chain (cf. 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6, where chains are also used to confine spirit beings).*
      - 2) Thomas Constable, *The first word, "Then," supports the idea of chronological sequence. It implies a continuation from the things that John had just revealed, namely, Armageddon and the Second Coming (cf. 19:11, 17, 19; 20:4, 11, 12; 21:1, 2, 22).*
      - 3) John Walvoord, *As John witnesses the scene, he observes the angel coming down from heaven possessing the key of "the bottomless pit," that is, "the abyss" (cf. 9:1, 2, 11; also "the deep," Luke 8:31; Rom. 10:7). This is the home of demons and unclean spirits. The angel is also observed to have a great chain in his hands ... There is thus no linguistic or grammatical suggestion that these events are anything other than events following the second coming of Christ and occurring in sequence ... Having disposed of the world ruler and the false prophet as well as the armies, it would be only natural that Christ should then turn to Satan himself, as He does in chapter 20.*
  2. Satan was bound and thrown into the bottomless pit (2-3a), ***And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 3 and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended.***
    - a. Related verses
      - 1) Revelation 12:9, *And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*
      - 2) Jude 6, *And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—*
      - 3) Revelation 20:7-8, *And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.*

b. Comments

- 1) Charles Ryrie, *The duration of his confinement will be a thousand years. This is to be understood as literally as other numbers in the book. The purpose of his being bound is "that he would not deceive the nations any longer"* (v. 3).
- 2) Thomas Constable, *God assigned an angel to bind Satan. Previously God had cast Satan out of heaven (12:9), and now He cast him out of the earth. This is the end of Satan's "short time" in which God allowed him to spread havoc on the earth (12:12) ... God did not reveal the length of the Millennium (from the Latin mille, thousand, and annum, year) before now. Neither did He reveal many other details about the future before He gave John these visions (cf. 17:5).*
- 3) John Walvoord, *Whatever the physical character of the chain, the obvious teaching of the passage is that the action is so designed as to render Satan inactive. The intention is not to represent Satan as merely restricted but as rendered completely inactive. In confirmation of this, verse 3 states that he is cast into the abyss, which by its character is a place of confinement. The angel uses the key and shuts him up in the abyss. If God wanted to show that Satan was totally inactive and out of touch with the world, how could He have rendered it more specifically than He has done in this passage? The fact that Satan is bound for a thousand years is confirmed by the multitude of passages dealing with the kingdom period in which Satan is never found working in the world.*
- 4) Warren Wiersbe, *Having taken care of His enemies, the Lord is now free to establish His righteous kingdom on the earth.*
- 5) Charles Swindoll, *Imagine a world in which Satan can no longer manipulate leaders, tempt sinners, take advantage of the weak, or corrupt the strong!*

3. Satan will be released at the end of the Millennium (3b), ***After that he must be released for a little while.***

- a. Charles Ryrie, ... *at the end of that period he will be loosed "for a short time."*
- b. John Walvoord, *A seal is placed upon Satan himself making it impossible for him to deceive the nations until a thousand years have elapsed, after which, the angel declares, Satan must be loosed for a little while ... The period before Satan is bound, that is, the great tribulation, and the period at the close of the millennium, when Satan is again loosed, stand in sharp contrast to the tranquillity of the thousand years in between. The fact is that the only period in all human history in which Satan will not execute his work of deception will be the thousand years in which Christ will reign.*
- c. Charles Swindoll, ... *the devil will be cast into the abyss when Christ returns, not cast into the lake of fire. Once somebody is thrown into the lake of fire, there is no return. The fact that Satan is cast into the abyss, however, means that he will one day be released, but only "for a short time" (20:3).*

B. A vision of the Millennium (4-6)

1. There are three groups of saints (4)

- a. The church (4a), ***Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed.***

1) Related verses

- a) Matthew 19:28, *Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*
- b) Revelation 3:21, *The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.*

2) Comments

- a) Charles Ryrie, *He saw first those who sat on the thrones and who shared in the judging, apparently a reference to the church (cf. 1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12).*
- b) John Walvoord, *The most probable interpretation is that they are the twenty-four elders who are said to reign on earth (5:10). This correlates with the prophecy of Christ recorded in Luke 22:29-30: "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." These words addressed to the twelve disciples indicate that they will share with Christ His rule over the world and especially will judge Israel at the beginning of the kingdom. Inasmuch as the twelve apostles are members of the church, the Body of Christ, they represent the church as such. A parallel passage is found in Matthew 19:28.*
- c) Charles Swindoll, *So, the heavenly army clothed in white will include both the original cadre of Jesus' disciples and the church saints, who came to believe because of their preaching (John 17:20).*

- b. Martyrs who were beheaded and did not worship nor take the mark of the Beast (4b), *Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

1) Related verses,

- a) Revelation 6:9, *When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.*
- b) Revelation 13:15, *And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.*
- c) 2 Timothy 2:11, *The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him;*
- d) Revelation 20:6, *Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.*
- e) Revelation 5:10, *and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”*

2) Comments

- a) Charles Ryrie, . . . *he saw a particular group of martyrs - those who were “beheaded ... .. Finally, he saw those who had refused to worship the Beast and receive his mark. They (referring to those believers who die during the Tribulation ) live and reign with Christ and share in the joys of the Millennium. The church saints will have already been raised at the Rapture, but this Tribulation group of saints will be raised at the second coming of Christ.*
- b) Thomas Constable, *John also saw the souls of some people not yet resurrected who had been beheaded and who had not worshiped the beast. These are quite clearly Tribulation martyrs who died because they held steadfastly to the testimony of Jesus and the word of God (cf. 6:9; 12:17; 18:24; 19:2). They had refused to take the mark of the beast or to worship his image, and they had died for their faith (13:15). John saw these martyrs come back to life. That is, they experienced bodily resurrection (cf. v. 5; 1:18, 2:8; 13:14; John 11:25; Acts 1:3; 9:41). As a reward for their faithfulness these martyrs will reign with Christ on earth during the Millennium (cf. 5:10).*
- c) John Walvoord, *This detailed description fits only one class of saints, namely, the tribulation saints who in refusing to worship the beast are martyred. Here we learn that they are beheaded, first, for their positive witness for Christ and the Word of God, second, because they refuse to worship the beast and receive his mark. The background of this experience is found in Revelation 13:15–17. Included in the number of tribulation saints are the two witnesses of chapter 11, the “souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held” (6:9), and the martyrs referred to in 12:11. The group as a whole is seen in heaven in 7:9–17.*
- d) Charles Swindoll, . . . *those who had been executed during the tribulation, “who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand.” They also will come to life and reign with Christ and the saints for a thousand years. These righteous rulers will not only constitute a moral majority; they will be the only rulers over the earth. Not a single one will be corruptible by money, greed, pride, or power.*

2. A note concerning the unsaved dead (5), *The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.*

- a. Charles Ryrie, *“The rest of the dead” that is, the unsaved dead, are not raised at this time according to verse 5. They will be raised at the conclusion of the thousand years.*
- b. Thomas Constable, *The rest of the dead evidently refer to the wicked who are physically dead whom God will raise at the end of the Millennium (v. 12) ... The first resurrection refers to the first of the two resurrections that John spoke of in the passage’s context (vv. 4–6, 12). This includes the resurrection of the Tribulation martyrs at the Second Coming of Christ (v. 4) plus other believers resurrected at the same time (i.e., Old Testament saints; Dan. 12:2; John 5:28; cf. 1 Cor. 15:23) ... The occurrences when God will raise the righteous are as follows: First, He raised Jesus Christ who is the first fruits of those who sleep (1 Cor. 15:23). Second, He raised some saints near Jerusalem shortly after Jesus’ resurrection (Matt. 27:52–53), though this was probably a temporary resurrection like that of Lazarus. Third, He will raise Christians at the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13–18). Fourth, He will raise the two witnesses during the Great Tribulation (11:3, 11). Fifth, He will raise the Tribulation martyrs at the beginning of the Millennium (vv. 4–5). Sixth, He will raise the Old Testament saints at the same time (Isa. 26:19–21; Ezek. 37:12–14; Dan. 12:2–4). Seventh, He will apparently raise the saints who die during the Millennium (cf. vv. 12–13).*
- c. John Walvoord, *John was also informed that the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This refers to the resurrection of the wicked dead, discussed later (vv. 11–15) ... John stated that what he was seeing is the first resurrection.*

3. The role of the saved during the Millennium (6), *Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.*
  - a. Related verses
    - 1) Revelation 14:13, *And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"*
    - 2) Revelation 20:14, *Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.*
    - 3) Revelation 2:11, *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'*
    - 4) Revelation 21:8, *8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."*
    - 5) Revelation 1:6, *and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*
  - b. Comments
    - 1) Charles Ryrie, *The "first resurrection" (in several stages) includes all those who believe, since those included in the first resurrection are called "blessed" (v. 6). Over them "the second death [cf. V. 14] has no power," as it does over the unsaved dead. The Lord indicated this same distinction of two resurrections in John 5:29, but He did not specify the time interval between the two.*
    - 2) Charles Swindoll, *Regardless of exactly when the Old Testament saints join the saints from the church and tribulation periods, we know that when the thousand-year reign begins, all the saved throughout all history will have been resurrected in glorified bodies. Only the unsaved will not be resurrected at that time. In 20:5-6, John describes that all those who partake of this first, multiphase program of resurrection, which began with Christ, will include the church, and it will culminate in the resurrection of all the saints ...*
    - 3) Thomas Constable, *Revelation's fifth beatitude, here in this verse, reveals that those who participate in the first resurrection are blessed and holy ... Those who participate in the first resurrection are further blessed because they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with Him for 1,000 years. These priests will apparently have unlimited access to, and intimate fellowship with, God. Exactly how they will reign remains to be seen, though the extent of their authority under Christ seems proportionate to their previous faithfulness (cf. Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27).*
    - 4) John Walvoord, *The Scriptures say very little about what we will do in heaven. But the Bible does say that Christians will reign with Christ in the administration of the millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:6) It also speaks of Christians reigning with Christ in eternity (22:5). Apparently Christians will be given spheres of authority in God's government both in the Millennium and in the eternal state. These spheres of service will relate to how well we have served Christ in this life.*
4. Selected characteristics and events of the Millennium
  - a. Physical characteristics
    - 1) Topography and geography of the earth changed, Isaiah 2:2; Ezekiel 47:1-12; 48:8-20; Zechariah 14:4, 8, 10.
    - 2) Wild animals tamed, Isaiah 11:6-9; 35:9; Ezekiel 34:25.
    - 3) Crops abundant, Isaiah 27:6; 35:1-2, 6-7; Amos 9:13; Zechariah 14:8.
    - 4) Human longevity increased, Isaiah 65:20-23.
  - b. Spiritual and religious characteristics and events
    - 1) Satan confined in the abyss, Revelation 20:1-3.
    - 2) Millennial temple built, Ezekiel 40:5-43:27.
    - 3) Animal sacrifices offered as memorials to Christ's death, Isaiah 56:7; 66:20-23; Ezekiel 43:18-27; 45:13-46:24; Malachi 3:3-4.
    - 4) Feasts of the New Year, Passover, and Tabernacles reinstated, Ezekiel 45:18-25; Zechariah 14:16-21.
    - 5) Nations worship in Jerusalem, Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:2, 7:12; Zechariah 8:20-23; 14:16-21.
    - 6) Worldwide knowledge of God, Isaiah 11:9; Jeremiah 31:34; Micah 4:5; Habakkuk 2:14.
    - 7) Unparalleled filling of and empowerment by the Holy Spirit on Israel, Isaiah 32:15; 44:3; Ezekiel 36:24-29; 39:29; Joel 2:28-29.
    - 8) New Covenant with Israel fulfilled, Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:25-32.
    - 9) Righteousness and justice prevails, Isaiah 9:7, 11:4; 42:1-4; Jeremiah 23:5.

- c. Political characteristics and events
  - 1) Israel reunited as a nation, Jeremiah 3:18, Ezekiel 37:15-23.
  - 2) Israel at peace in the land (Deuteronomy 30:1-10; Isaiah 32:18; Hosea 14:5, 7; Amos 9:15; Micah 4:4; 54-5a; Zechariah 3:10; 14:11.
  - 3) Abrahamic Covenant land-grant boundaries established, Genesis 15:18-21; Ezekiel 47:13-48:8, 23-27.
  - 4) Christ in Jerusalem rules over Israel, Isaiah 40:11; Micah 4:7; 5:2b.
  - 5) Davidic Covenant fulfilled, 2 Samuel 7:11-16; Isaiah 9:6-7, Jeremiah 33:17-26; Amos 9:11-12; Luke 1:32-33.
  - 6) Christ rules over and judges the nations, Isaiah 11:3-5; Micah 4:2-3a; Zechariah 14:9; Revelation 19:15.
  - 7) Resurrection saints reign with Christ, Matthew 19:28; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 5:10; 20:6.
  - 8) Universal peace prevails, Isaiah 2:4; 32:17-18; 60:18; Hosea 2:18; Micah 4:2-4; 5:4, Zechariah 9:10.
  - 9) Jerusalem made the world's capital, Jeremiah 3:17; Ezekiel 48:30-35; Joel 3:16-17; Micah 4:1; 6:8; Zechariah 8:2-3.
  - 10) Israel exalted about the Gentiles, Isaiah 14:1-2, 49:22-23; 60:14-17; 61:5-9.
  - 11) The world blessed through Israel, Micah 5:7.
  
- d. Events following the Millennium
  - 1) Satan released from the abyss, Revelation 20:7.
  - 2) Satan deceives the nations, Revelation 20:8.
  - 3) Global armies besiege Jerusalem, Revelation 20:9a.
  - 4) Global armies destroyed by fire, Revelation 20:9b.
  - 5) Satan cast into the lake of fire, Revelation 20:10.
  - 6) Evil angels judged, 1 Corinthians 6:3.
  - 7) The wicked dead resurrected, Daniel 12:2b; John 5:29b.
  - 8) The wicked judged at the Great White Throne, Revelation 20:11-14.
  - 9) The wicked cast into the lake of fire, Revelation 20:14-15; 21:8.

#### 5. A brief summary of the Millennium

- As noted by John Walvoord, ... *the millennium is a period in which Christ will literally reign on earth as its supreme political leader and that the many promises of the Old Testament relating to a kingdom on earth in which Israel will be prominent and Gentiles will be blessed will have complete and literal fulfillment.*
- The term millennium comes from the duration of Christ's earthly reign which according to Revelation 20 is one thousand years. An understanding that this is a literal period of time is supported by the chronological order of the book and the sequence of events within this chapter.
- The sequence of events following the second coming of Christ include the following: Satan bound and locked in the Abyss (20:1-3); thrones of judgment (20:4); martyred dead of the Tribulation resurrected (20:4); wicked dead resurrected (20:5); and millennial reign of saints with Christ (20:6).
- The Millennium fits chronologically between the events following the second coming of Christ and those which precede the eternal state. Tribulation saints are resurrected 1,000 years before unbelievers in order that they may reign in the Millennial Kingdom. Also, Satan is bound 1,000 years during which time the righteous reign of Christ occurs.

***TO BE CONTINUED, LORD WILLING!***