

THE MILLENNIUM
Revelation 20:1-15
By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. As human beings we are all unique. Everyone has a unique fingerprint. We all have different tastes, different preferences, different talents, different strengths and weaknesses, different personalities. But there are also some things we all have in common. Two of our most important commonalities are death and the final judgment. Everyone agrees that we're all going to die. The more controversial idea is that of a final judgment. But the Bible teaches that one day every human being will stand before Christ to be judged, and then sentenced to either eternal life or eternal punishment. Today we're going to learn about this final judgment and how to prepare for it.

II. RECAP

1. So far Revelation has been about God's divorce and judgment against Israel in the first century for rejecting Christ. It was written in AD 65-66, and then it was fulfilled in AD 70 when the Romans invaded Israel and completely destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.
2. In Revelation 19 we are assured once more of the ultimate fate that will befall two of the early church's great enemies – the beast and the false prophet. The beast was the Roman empire that persecuted Christians, and the false prophet was first century Israel. Both of these will ultimately be destroyed and thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 19:20).
3. In Revelation 20 we are told what will happen to the church's third great enemy, the dragon, or Satan. Since Satan will not be destroyed until the end of the world when Christ returns, we are now dealing with future events. Up until now, Revelation has been about things that would take place in the first century. Now John is going to see far into the future.

III. TEXT: Revelation 20:1-10

1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven holding the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan,, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the abyss, closed it, and put a seal on it so that he would no longer deceive the nations until the thousand years were completed. After that, he must be released for a short time.

4 Then I saw thrones, and people seated on them who were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and who had not accepted the mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed.

This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

7 When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle. Their number is like the sand of the sea. 9 They came up across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the encampment of the saints, the beloved city. Then fire came down from heaven and consumed them. 10 The devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet are, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

1. In this passage an angel binds Satan for a thousand years so that he can no longer deceive the nations. We also see a group of people reigning with Christ for a thousand years. After the thousand years, Satan is released for a short time to deceive the nations and gather them for a final battle against Christians. But God destroys them, and the devil is thrown into the lake of fire.
2. Since this passage deals with the future, we are going to be delving into eschatology, the study of the end times, or the study of the last things.
3. When it comes to eschatology, there are four main perspectives within evangelical, orthodox Christianity, and they are all based on this passage. This passage mentions a “thousand years” six times. The thousand years are called the millennium. The four views are based on their interpretation of the millennium, and on the relationship between the millennium and the return of Christ.
4. The four views can be divided into two categories:
 - i. Premillennialism: The prefix “pre” means before. Historic premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism both believe that Christ will return before the millennium.
 - ii. Postmillennialism: The prefix “post” means after. Postmillennialism and amillennialism believe that Christ will return after the millennium.
5. Let’s define these four views more clearly.

IV. 4 VIEWS OF THE MILLENNIUM

1. Historic premillennialism.

- i. Apostasy and antichrist. Before Christ returns, there will be a great apostasy and the appearing of the antichrist.
- ii. The second coming. Christ will return to earth with all the Christians in heaven to defeat the antichrist.
- iii. The rapture. All the Christians on earth will rise to meet Christ in the air, and together with those descending from heaven will be given their resurrected bodies.
- iv. The millennium. Christ will reign on the earth for a literal 1,000 years. Satan will be bound so that he can no longer do any damage. “Evil will be

greatly restrained, and righteousness will prevail on the earth as it never did before (Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 181)."

- v. The release of Satan. Near the end of the millennium, Satan will be released to instigate a worldwide persecution against the church, but Christ will defeat him.
- vi. Final judgment. "Unbelievers spend eternity in hell, while God's redeemed people live forever on a new earth which has been purged of all evil (Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 182)."

2. Dispensational premillennialism.

- i. Two peoples, two plans, and two purposes. It based on the idea that God has two peoples, with two plans: Israel and the church. God's covenant with Abraham promised his physical descendants the land of Canaan as an everlasting inheritance. God's covenant with David promised Israel that one of David's descendants would sit on his throne forever. The OT also promised that the people of Israel "will at some time once again be regathered in the land of Canaan, will enjoy a time of prosperity and blessing, will have a special place of privilege above other nations (Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 188)."
- ii. When Christ came the first time, he came to set up an earthly kingdom and to fulfill all these promises to Israel, but the Jews rejected Christ. As a result, God put His plan for Israel on hold, and initiated a new plan to offer salvation to the Gentiles. This is referred to as the church age, which is the present age.
- iii. Rapture. When the church age is completed and God's plan for the Gentiles is fulfilled, Jesus will then rapture the church out of the earth.
 - 1. All Christians, except for OT saints, will then receive their glorified bodies.
 - 2. "This body of believers, called the church, now goes up to heaven with Christ to celebrate with him for seven years the marriage feast of the Lamb (Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 190)."
- iv. Tribulation. Over the next seven years, the world will experience a great tribulation. This will include the antichrist, terrible judgments befalling the earth, a mass number of Jews turning to Christ, who will then convert a mass number of Gentiles, and a final worldwide battle against the people of God called Armageddon.
- v. Second coming. At the end of the seven-year tribulation, Jesus will return physically to defeat His enemies and establish his kingdom on earth for a literal thousand years.
 - 1. All the Christians who died during the seven-year tribulation, as well as the OT saints, will be given their glorified bodies. They will join the church in heaven.

- vi. Binding of Satan. Christ will bind Satan for 1,000 years, preventing him from doing any harm.
- vii. Judgment of Gentiles. Now Christ will judge the living Gentiles on the earth based on how they treated Christ's brethren (Jews or Christians). Those who fail will be thrown into hell; those who pass will be permitted to enjoy the millennium.
- viii. Judgment of Israel. Then Christ will judge Israel – the Jews. Those who rejected Christ will be put to death, but those who accepted Christ will be allowed to enter the millennium.
- ix. Millennium. For a literal thousand years, Christ will reign on the earth, from Jerusalem, and fulfill all of God's OT promises to Israel. There will be a newly rebuilt temple, and the sacrificial system will be reinstated as a memorial to Christ.
- x. Release of Satan. At the end of the thousand years Satan will be released for a short time to instigate a worldwide persecution against Christians. Christ will quickly overcome and destroy them.
- xi. Final resurrection of the saints. All the Christians who died during the millennium will be resurrected.
- xii. Resurrection of unbelievers. All the unbelieving dead will be judged before the great white throne.
- xiii. Final state. "The final state will now be ushered in. God will now create a new heaven and a new earth... Though the people of God on the new earth will be one, there will remain a distinction throughout all eternity between redeemed Jews and redeemed Gentiles (Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 192)."

3. Postmillennialism.

- i. Binding of Satan. At Christ's first coming, He bound Satan so that He could not interfere with the evangelization of the world.
- ii. World evangelization. Eventually the vast majority of the world will be evangelized. This will lead to all nations adopting the law and morality of God.
- iii. Millennium. This will gradually lead to the millennium, a long period of global peace and prosperity. The 1,000 years is figurate, not literal, representing a long period of time.
- iv. Release of Satan. At the end of the millennium, Satan will be released to deceive the nations for a short time and instigate a mass persecution against Christians.
- v. Second coming. Christ will return with all the Christians in heaven to defeat Satan.

- vi. Rapture. All the Christians on earth will rise to meet Christ in the air, and together the Christians on earth and those descending from heaven will be given their resurrected bodies.
- vii. Final judgment. Christ will carry out the final judgment, in which unbelievers will be sent to hell, and believers will spend eternity with Christ in a newly created heaven and earth.

4. Amillennialism.

- i. Binding of Satan. Like postmillennialism, at Christ's first coming He bound Satan so that He could not prevent the evangelization of the world.
- ii. Millennium. The millennium represents the current church age between Christ's first and second coming. Christ is reigning from heaven and on earth in the hearts of Christians through the Word and the Spirit.
 - 1. The millennium is figurative, not literal, representing a long period of time.
 - 2. During the millennium/church age, the gospel will spread, but at times evil will spread. There will not be a worldwide Golden age of peace and prosperity.
- iii. Release of Satan. At the end of the millennium, Satan will be released to deceive the nations for a short time and instigate a mass persecution against Christians.
- iv. Second coming. Christ will return with all the Christians in heaven to defeat Satan.
- v. Rapture. All the Christians on earth will rise to meet Christ in the air, and together the Christians on earth and those descending from heaven will be given their resurrected bodies.
- vi. Final judgment. Christ will carry out the final judgment, in which unbelievers will be sent to hell, and believers will spend eternity with Christ in a newly created heaven and earth.

V. EXPOSITION OF REV 20

1. Now let's go back and look at Revelation 20:1-10, and I'll explain it from the amillennial perspective. I will do this by answering four questions.
 - i. **What is the binding of Satan?**
 1. Vs 1-3 shows an angel binding Satan with a chain for a thousand years.
 2. The disagreement is over the meaning of the binding of Satan. Is he completely bound, or only bound in a certain way? The text points to the latter.
 3. **Revelation 20:3** "so that he would no longer deceive the nations."
 4. While Satan is not completely neutralized, his power to deceive is taken away. I believe this means that he can't prevent the spread of the gospel around the world.

5. Before Christ came, only the Jews had a relationship with God. The rest of the world was in spiritual darkness. But when Christ came, He bound Satan and the gospel spread to all nations.
- ii. What is the thousand years?**
1. The thousand years is figurative, not literal. It refers to a long period of time.
 2. In the Bible the number 10 stands for completeness. 1,000 is 10 cubed, or 10 times 10 times 10.
 3. The Bible often uses 1,000 to signify a long period of time, or a huge number. Psalm 50:10 says that God owns the cattle on a thousand hills. It doesn't mean God only owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and not 1,001 hills. It signifies a large number.
 4. Don't forget that Revelation is highly symbolic and figurative. If you insist on taking 1,000 literally, you must take the rest of the passage literally. Is Satan really a dragon? Will an angel use an actual chain to bind him?
 5. The thousand years, or millennium, began with Christ's first coming when He died and rose again, and it ends with Christ's second coming. It is the current church age that we live in.
- iii. Who are the souls reigning with Christ?**
1. Verse 4 describes a group of people who will reign with Christ for 1,000 years.
 2. Two clues are given about these people: They were "beheaded" (martyrs), and they "came to life."
 3. Therefore, I believe these people are the Christians who died and go to heaven, especially but not limited to Christian martyrs. It is talking about the Christians who die and go to heaven during the millennium before Christ's return. They are in heaven reigning with Christ.
 4. Verse 5 calls this "the first resurrection." Every Christian will experience two resurrections. The first is when you die, you will immediately wake up in heaven to reign with Christ. The second is when Jesus comes back, He will give you a new, resurrected body.
- iv. What is the release Satan?**
1. Verse 7 says that Satan will be released after the 1,000 years to deceive the nations and gather them for battle.
 2. At the end of the millennium, I believe that Satan will work through an Antichrist figure to instigate a worldwide war or persecution against Christians.
 3. But then Christ will return and destroy them (20:9-10).
 4. What happens after Christ returns and destroys Satan and the antichrist? The final judgment.

VI. TEXT: Revelation 20:11-15

11 Then I saw a great white throne and one seated on it. Earth and heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. 12 I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to their works by what was written in the books. 13 Then the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them; each one was judged according to their works. 14 Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

VII. FOUR FACTS ABOUT THE FINAL JUDGMENT

1. The time: At the return of Christ.

- i. This immediately follows the destruction of Satan and the antichrist, which happen at Christ's second coming.
- ii. Many other passages tell us that the judgment will happen at Christ's return (Mt 16:27; Mt 25:31-34; 1 Cor 4:5; 2 Cor 1:6-10).

2. The Judge: Jesus Christ.

- i. It doesn't specifically say who is sitting on the great white throne passing judgment, but we know from elsewhere that it will be Jesus.
- ii. **2 Corinthians 5:10** "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil."
- iii. Some people like to image that Jesus is this effeminate, harmless, all-accepting nice guy. He loving, but He is also the judge of all mankind.

3. The Judged: All people.

- i. This passage says "the dead were judged." But we know from the rest of Scripture that it will everyone.
- ii. **Romans 14:10** "For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God."

4. The criteria: Books.

- i. The passage mentions the books, and the book of life.
- ii. All of our works, both good and bad, are recorded in books in heaven. We will be judged accordingly.
- iii. If you are a Christian, then your name is written in the book of life. If you are not a Christian, then your name is not written in the book of life.
- iv. If your name is written in the book of life, then you will be rewarded according to your works and receive eternal life.
- v. If your name is not recorded in the book of life, then you will be thrown into the lake of fire, another word for hell.

VIII. CONCLUSION

- 1. A few years ago the world's top rugby player, Israel Folau, was icked off the team. Why? Because he tweeted a list of people who are hell-bound, which includes homosexuals. All he did was quote 1 Cor 6:9-11. For this he was kicked off the

team, losing his \$4 million contract, and condemned by almost all political leaders. Even the pastor of the famous Hillsong Church criticized him, saying that Jesus came to save and not condemn.

2. Yes, Jesus came to save. But He came to save from hell, because hell is real, and real people go there. And people need to know that unless they repent and turn to Christ, they will be thrown into the lake of fire.
3. Hell is real. The final judgment is real. But God doesn't want to send anyone to hell. He wants to save you. That's why He sent Jesus to pay for your sins. You can have your name recorded in the book of life if you will turn from your sins, make Jesus the boss of your life, and believe in Him.