

1000 Years of Revelation 20 – Part 1

We will be looking at Revelation 20 as we consider the topic of 1000 year reign. Many hold to the premillennial position which includes three major elements, it begins with the rapture of the saints followed by a seven year Tribulation, Christ returns to earth to establish His Kingdom during the Millennium. All enemies of Christ who remain alive at His coming will be rounded up and executed as war criminals. Only the faithful will remain alive on earth. These faithful are joined by the faithful dead of past ages who have experienced "the first resurrection." Then Christ, once rejected by the Jews, will be crowned "King of the Jews" and will assume His rightful reign as the Son of David on the throne where he will reign for 1,000 years.. During the 1,000 years all on earth is peaceful and harmony reigns. The reference Isaiah 11:6-9 for this peace. The converted Jews will constitute the ruling authority over the entire world. Temple sacrifices will resume and there will be no death, except for those executed as rebels to God. After the 1,000 years Satan will try to lead a rebellion only to be destroyed by fire from heaven.

As you well know, much of Revelation is symbolic in nature and as a study principle; any interpretation of a symbolic passage must be in harmony with other texts of the Bible that deals with the matter which is not written in symbolism. Let's consider three points embraced by the premillennialists regarding the millennium or the 1000 year earthly kingdom.

FIRST, the doctrine states that Christ is to reign upon the earth.

The Bible shows that at the Lord's Second Coming there will be no earth existing! ***2 Pet 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*** Those that embrace the premillennial position contend that Jesus will come as a thief in the night (i.e. silently) and rapture away the righteous while leaving the unrighteous behind. Peter says that this coming as a thief (suddenly, unannounced) will be a noisy occasion and will result in the world as we know it being destroyed.

The premillennialist defender argues that there will be a "renewal" of this present earth, and the Lord will thus reign upon "the new earth" and in "the new Jerusalem;" but Peter is quite clear in telling us that this present earth will not be "renewed," it will be "dissolved"! Notice what John writes in Revelation 1. ***Revelation 1:7 Behold, he cometh with the clouds; AND EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM, and they which pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen.***

SECOND, The Premillennial position states that Christ's reign is "to begin when He comes." But the scriptures state that when Christ comes again the saints will receive their resurrected bodies and ***"then cometh the end when he shall deliver up the Kingdom to God" (1 Corinthians 15:24).*** Thus the Bible says the earthly Kingdom will end, not begin, when the Lord returns.

THIRD, The Premillennial states the Kingdom *IS NOT* yet established, but will be upon Christ's return. But notice what the scripture says about the Christians in Colossae. ***Col 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:*** Is the kingdom in existence at this point – yes it is.

Also notice that in Hebrew they were "receiving it." **Hebrews 12:28** *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:* Is the kingdom in existence at this point – yes it is.

Read Revelation 1:9 and you will notice that John was "in the kingdom". **Revelation 1:9** *I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.*

If the Premillennial doctrine of the 1,000 years is correct then writers of Revelation, Hebrews and Colossians were all deceived!

Now let's consider Revelation 20. The Premillennial doctrine "reads into" Revelation 20 details that are not found in the text. They claim:

- The reign takes place on earth;
- The reign takes place in Jerusalem;
- The reign requires a physical resurrection of dead saints;
- The reign requires a restoration of the Temple worship;
- The reign requires a restoration of fleshly Israel.

But as a careful reading is made it will be discovered that there is not even a hint of the reign taking place on earth and in Jerusalem. Revelation 20:1-6 does not even mention the Second Coming of Christ! This text makes no reference to the Lord's return, yet an entire doctrinal system about the Second Coming has been founded upon these verses.

As we analyze the text, it's important to lay some ground work. Revelation is written to early century Christians about things that was to happen soon. **(Rev 1:1)** *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass* Notice also the end of verse 3. **(Rev 1:3)** *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.* So the details of this book were something that had meaning to those people some 2000 years ago. A nuclear war somewhere over in the middle-east in the 21st century would have absolute no meaning to the people of that day. The message is specifically to the seven churches of Asia. John sees a glimpse into the future and what he sees are martyred saints crying out, "How Long?" **(Rev 6:9)** *And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: (10) And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? The answer they get is, "A little bit longer."*

Then the book unveils the enemies to the Christian in symbolic form. There is the **dragon, the beast of the sea, the beast of the earth, and the harlot**. The dragon is defined for us as being the devil, ole Satan himself. The others I conclude as being the corrupt Roman government and the city of Rome as they impose hardships on the Christians that do not bow down to the emperor of Rome. In chapters 18 and 19, three of the enemies are defeated, the harlot and the two beast. The main story of Revelation has been completed.

THE MESSAGE the early Christians needed to know was that heavy persecution was going to come from the Roman Empire seeking to force them into emperor worship. Being faithful to Christ during this time is vital in stopping Satan's scheme to kill the church by persecution. Even if they must die for their faith, it will be

worth it. God will care for them and will eventually bring the persecuting power to defeat. This is where chapter 19 ends.

So we pick up in chapter 20 where chapter 19 stopped with Christ adding an epilogue to that story which would carry the reader on to the end of time and into eternity. The harlot, the beast, and the false prophet have been defeated but the one who had used them as his agents, Satan, the dragon, remains. What happens to him?

REVELATION 20:1-6: THE THOUSAND YEARS

John sees an angel coming down out of heaven with a key to the Abyss and a great chain. He lays hold on the dragon, Satan, and binds him with the chain and casts him into the Abyss and imprisoned him there for a thousand years. The reason this is done is **"to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years is over" (20:3).**

That's what it says. What does it mean? This passage is full of symbolism. Satan isn't really a dragon and God doesn't actually bind him with a chain and throw him into a pit without a bottom. But the message He gives to those Christians 2000 years ago (and to us as well) through this imagery the certainty that Satan is going to be restrained and cannot "deceive the nations" anymore.

- First we note that this binding begins when chapter 19 ends. Chapter 19 ended with the fall of the Roman Empire. So the binding of Satan indicated here begins after Rome falls.
- Secondly, this binding is said to be for the purpose of keeping Satan from deceiving the nations anymore. Earlier in the story Satan had deceived those nations controlled by the Roman Empire and had gotten this world-wide coalition of nations to join him in trying to wipe out the church. God says, in effect, *I let him do this once, but I will not let him do this again.* For the duration of the thousand years, then, God will not let Satan use a world-wide empire in an attempt to persecute the church out of existence. This binding is a limitation on Satan so that *he* cannot do again what he has just done earlier in the story of Revelation.
- He can still tempt individuals to sin, and he does. He can still work against Christians and the church in some ways, and he does. He is not bound in every sense. But he is bound in that he cannot repeat what he had just tried to do in seeking to wipe out the church through by persecution from a world-wide empire.

But notice also that not only is the binding of Satan said to last for a thousand year period, but during that same thousand year period, (vs. 4~6), while Satan is bound, "souls" are also reigning with Christ. Here is what the text says about this thousand-year reign. ***"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (20:4)."***

That's what it says. What does it mean? To learn about the thousand-year reign, let's consider four basic questions of the text: **WHO, WHY, WHERE, WHEN.** For time sake, we will look at the first two questions this morning and look at the other two tonight.

Who reigns with Christ? The text says it is those who had been beheaded (killed) because of their testimony for Jesus and because they would not worship the beast. We are introduced to these people in 6:9 where they were asking "How long?" and when they received a white robe. Then we saw them in chapter 7 where they were wearing their white robes and serving before the throne of God.

By chapter 14, they had been joined by more martyrs, the 144,000, and these all followed the lamb and sang the song only they could sing. In chapter 15 these same martyrs were gathered around the heavenly sea where they sang the song of Moses and the lamb and were identified as those who were "*victorious over the beast.*" Finally in chapter 19 they shout, "Hallelujah!" because the harlot has been judged, and then they join Christ as He rides in victory over the two beasts.

These are the martyrs of the Roman persecution, beheaded for their testimony and because they would not worship the beast. These same ones are seen throughout the book are now said to reign with Christ for a thousand years. The story of Revelation is their story. The book was sent to the seven churches, those about to undergo this terrible persecution, and as they passed through their fiery trial, they were killed for refusing to worship the beast. These are the heroes of the story and it is they alone whom the text says will reign with Christ for this thousand years. **So, who reigns? The martyrs of the Roman persecution.** Nothing is said in these verses about anyone else reigning with Christ during this time.

2. Why do they reign with Christ? To answer this "why" question we must look at the context. What has just happened? As chapter 19 came to an end, the great enemies of the church had been defeated. Those who sought to persecute the church out of existence have failed and the church prevailed. In addition, as the thousand years begins, Satan is bound so he cannot do again what he had just tried to do i.e. destroy the church by persecution. So what would Christ and the martyrs naturally do as result of all of this? When you have won a great victory, what do you do? Celebrate! And that is exactly what the thousand-year reign is - a victory celebration where Christ and those killed because they would not worship the beast. They celebrate the beast's defeat. He tried to stop the church but Christ stopped him.

In this celebration we see the martyrs with Jesus. The thousand year reign, then, is a symbolic way of portraying the joy the martyrs will have when their enemy has been defeated. So, why do they reign? **As a victory celebration!**

We invite you back tonight as we continue to look at the 1000 year reign by considering the final two questions of "where" and "when."

From this story we see that the victory celebration is for those that remain faithful in serving the Lord. This is why we are told in Revelation 2:10 to remain faithful unto death in order to receive the crown of eternal life. Are you being faithful; are you a Christian?

Invitation