

The Millennial Kingdom of Christ on this Earth

Revelation 20

Revelation 20 - *"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. 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. ⁵ But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 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.*

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. 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.

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."

Background Notes

In the second half of Revelation 19 we have the return of the Lord to this earth at the end of the coming Tribulation period. He will return in judgment, so only those who are believers will enter the earthly kingdom that our Lord will set up when He returns. This earthly kingdom is known as the Millennium because it will last for 1000 years, according to Revelation 20:2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7. We believe that this is a literal 1000-year time period following the return of the Lord to this earth. The Lord Jesus Christ will literally reign on this earth as King for a literal 1000 years.

Some Christians interpret these 1000 years in a non-literal sense. They view the 1000 years as symbolic of the present time. They would say that Christ is reigning now in heaven, and even here on this earth He is reigning in a spiritual sense, because the Lord reigns in the hearts of all believers who make up the kingdom of Christ. The eschatology of Christians who take this position is called amillennial because they interpret the 1000-year period of Revelation 20 in a non-literal or symbolic sense.

The position that we take in "Talks from Revelation" is the futurist view of Revelation. This view is known as the pre-millennial eschatological position -- that is, Christ will return to earth before the literal 1000 years of Revelation 20. Of course, we don't deny that Jesus Christ is King now, and that His Kingdom exists now, and that believers are now part of that kingdom. However, we also believe that when Christ returns to earth, He will literally reign as King on this earth for 1000 literal years.

Doctrinal Points

1. Satan will be bound during the Millennium.

In Revelation 12 Satan was cast out of the heavenly realms and down to this earth in the middle of the Tribulation period, at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. Revelation 12:7-9: *"And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, ⁸ but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. ⁹ So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."*

Notice Satan's four labels in Revelation 20: dragon, serpent of old, the Devil, and Satan. This chapter tells us that Satan will be confined to the abyss for 1000 years while our Lord reigns as King on this earth. The "abyss" or "bottomless pit" is the very place that Satan opened with the key that was given to him under the fifth Trumpet Judgment in Revelation 9. There we saw that an innumerable company of demons who had been consigned to the abyss were released to torment the people on this earth for five months.

In Revelation 20 Satan himself is confined to this abyss by a strong angel from heaven. In John's vision, the strong angel will bind Satan with a great chain (v1). This is not Satan's final consignment to hell, which will come after the Millennium, but Satan will be confined in the abyss for the entire 1000-year kingdom reign of Christ on this earth.

Notice that Satan will not be able to deceive the nations during the 1000 years (v3). So, a logical question about the proper interpretation of this passage would be this: If the amillennial view is correct and the 1000 years is symbolic of the present time, and if Satan is therefore bound during this present time, then who is deceiving the nations (as well as individuals) at the present time? And if Satan is bound at the present time, what about the warning of 1 Peter 5:8? *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."* If Satan is walking about like a roaring lion, it certainly doesn't seem that Satan is bound now!

The answer to all these questions is quite simple. Satan is **not** bound at the present time, and he is deceiving the nations and individual people now! However, Satan will be bound for a thousand years in the future! Satan will be bound during the Millennium.

2. Tribulation Saints will be resurrected before the Millennium.

The word “death” means separation! The first death is physical death—separation of soul and spirit from the body. The second death is spiritual death—eternal separation of the soul and spirit from God. Praise the Lord, the second death has no power over believers (v6). They are a part of the first resurrection!

The first resurrection is in three stages, like a harvest: the first fruits, the main harvest, and the gleanings. The first stage was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was the “first fruits” (1 Corinthians 15:23).

The second stage, or main harvest, will be at the time of the Rapture, when all believers who have died in Christ will be resurrected. These believers are the ones John saw sitting on the throne in heaven in the first part of verse 4: “*And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them.*”

The third stage, or gleanings, will be the resurrection of the martyred Tribulation saints as seen in the last part of verse 4 through verse 6. It is clear that they are the Tribulation saints because they didn’t worship the Beast or his image, and they didn’t receive the mark of the Beast (v4). Notice also that they were beheaded. This is possibly an indication that the one-world false religion of the end times will be greatly influenced by the present radical Islamic movement.

The first part of verse 5 is a parenthesis, informing us that the unbelievers (who are not part of the first resurrection) will be resurrected at the end of the 1000 years. But Tribulation saints are part of the first resurrection. Tribulation saints will be resurrected before the Millennium.

3. Satan will be consigned to hell after the Millennium.

Verse 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.*”

After the wonderful 1000-year kingdom of Christ on this earth, Satan will be released for a short time from his imprisonment in the abyss. Once again, he will be permitted to deceive the nations!

Where will Satan find so many willing unbelievers at the end of the wonderful, benevolent 1000-year kingdom of the Lord on this earth? Answer: Many people will be born during the 1000-year period, and some of them will not become believers. These people will be born with sinful natures, just like every other human being. Even under the benevolent, peaceful conditions of the kingdom and the reign of Jesus Christ, the perennial sinfulness of man will be seen in this rebellion. Remember--we are not talking here about the resurrected saints. Once you have your resurrected body there will be no backsliding and no sinning! Praise the Lord!

This final rebellion of the deceived nations, symbolized by “Gog and Magog,” will be short-lived. The planned siege of the beloved city Jerusalem, which is headquarters for the kingdom, will end with fire from heaven. Then Satan will be thrown into hell, the place of eternal punishment. Hell was “*prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matthew 25:41), but it will also be the eternal destiny of all unbelievers. Satan will be consigned to hell after the Millennium.

4. Unbelievers will be judged after the Millennium.

Verse 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...*”

The Great White Throne Judgment is the judgment of the damned, who will be consigned to hell. The names of unbelievers, those people who turned away and rejected God’s gift of salvation, will not be found written in the Book of Life. Their eternal punishment in hell will be based on their deeds.

Right now the bodies of unbelievers who have died are in the graves and their souls and spirits are in a temporary state or condition called “Hades.” The sea and the graves and Hades will give up the bodies and souls of all unbelievers for the Great White Throne Judgment. Remember, the Great White Throne Judgment is not for believers. It is for all unbelievers. Unbelievers will be judged after the Millennium.

Practical Application

Remember -- 2 Ls and 2 Ns!

Maybe a more serious practical application should be given at the end of such an awesome chapter, but this application is very practical if you’re going to do any kind of writing or correspondence about the Book of Revelation.

First of all – remember – it is the Book of Revelation, not Revelations! It is singular, not plural!

And the word “millennium” is spelled with two Ls and two Ns! Don’t forget that this applies to all associated words like Millennial, or amillennial, or post-Millennial, or pre-Millennial.

It’s not really a big deal, but you might as well spell correctly when you’re writing about such an important book of God’s Word, and about important matters! Remember – 2 Ls and 2 Ns!