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# THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

## LESSON 14 – The Millennial Kingdom

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### LESSON OBJECTIVE

The goal of this lesson is to understand the interpretation of chapter 20 of the Revelation, with particular emphasis on understanding the Millennial Kingdom and the significance of the release of Satan at the end of the 1000 years.

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### NOTE ON THE TRANSITION PERIOD

Look at Daniel 12:11-12. We see references to 1,290 days and 1,335 days. Both of these measure from the abomination of desolation that occurs during the middle of the Tribulation. Since three and a half years is 1,260 days, the 1,290 days gives us an extra 30 days to account for. This may mean that, even after the Anti-Christ is destroyed in Armageddon, his image is permitted to remain for 30 additional days for some purpose (or it could be that the abomination of desolation happens approximately 30 days before the exact midpoint of the Tribulation). Also, with the 1,335 days, we have an additional 45 days to deal with (total of 75 extra days). There is considerable debate about where to place the extra 30 or 75 days; do they overlap with the end of the seven year Tribulation, the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom, or both, or is there a space of 45 or 75 days between the Tribulation and Millennium? The actual timing of where the extra days occur is not that important, although I believe most likely that the 45 days are either the first 45 days of the Millennium or a short transition period before it starts. The question then arises as to why there is a transition period. The answer would seem to be that certain events must occur to usher in this period known as the Millennium. For instance, at the end of chapter 19 with the battle of Armageddon, all of the armies of the earth were destroyed, and Jesus had a total victory. By implication, all unsaved persons were destroyed, but John did not expressly address the unsaved that were not at Armageddon (i.e., how they were killed). Thus, part of the transition events must be dealing with all those alive at the time to determine who gets to enter Jesus' kingdom (Jewish judgment, Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; Matthew 24:35-42; Gentile judgment, Matthew 25:31-46); I believe these transition events actually occur before the end of the seven years. There are other events as well, which certainly happen after the seven years. We will see below in the notes for chapter 20 that the conditions in the Millennium (e.g., environmental) will be totally different from now and especially from the environmental disaster in the Tribulation. It will take some time for these conditions to be changed. Also, God will bring the living Jews outside Israel back to Israel during this transition time (e.g., Hosea 1:10-11).

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### NOTES ON REVELATION 20

**20:1** “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.”

As we begin chapter 20, we need to reflect on the context. Jesus took the seven-sealed scroll (the Title Deed to Creation) in chapter 5 and began opening the seals in chapter 6. With the opening of each seal, a judgment or other significant event occurred. The seventh seal contained within it seven Trumpet Judgments, and the seventh Trumpet Judgment contained within it seven Vial Judgments (plagues). The first six seals unfolded during the first half of the Tribulation and the seventh Seal (and all it contained) unfolded in

the second half of the Tribulation. The completion of the opening of the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials occupied the text (with some parenthesis) from chapters 6 through 16. With that completion, Jesus has possession of the opened scroll and therefore possesses all the inheritance that the Father has given the Son as written in the scroll. Coinciding with Jesus' actual return to earth to take all that is his is the judgment of all that is opposed to God, starting with religious and economic Babylon (chapters 17 and 18; recall that religious Babylon was destroyed by the kings of the earth probably shortly after midpoint of the Tribulation, whereas economic Babylon is destroyed by God later, and the same kings of the earth mourn). Just prior to Jesus' return with his army of angels to do battle with the armies of men of the earth, the marriage of the Lamb is celebrated in heaven with a feast hosted by God the Father (figuratively, Jesus is married to all New Testament saints, and the guests are the Old Testament and Tribulation saints). Immediately after the celebration, Jesus returns with his army and the battle of Armageddon takes place. As part of this battle, the beast from the water (Anti-Christ) and the beast from the land (False Prophet) are killed and cast into the Lake of Fire (chapter 19). By the end of Armageddon, every unsaved person on the earth is dead. The only one that remains to be dealt with is Satan, and that occurs in Chapter 20. With Jesus' enemies out of the way, he can now rule as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16). This chapter is about Jesus' reign over the earth. John sees an angel coming from heaven with a key to the bottomless pit (or the abyss). This is not the first time John has seen something like this occur. For in Revelation 9, he saw Satan "fall from heaven" (i.e., he was pushed), but here John sees an angel "come down from heaven." In both instances, they had the keys to the bottomless pit, the abyss that serves as a prison for demons (see Luke 8:27-34). The key is symbolic of the fact that God has given this angel express authorization (and ability) to open and close the abyss. The chain is to be used to bind Satan. Despite Satan's power, God has given the angel a chain for this express purpose. Satan will not be able to escape.

**20:2** "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,"

We are not told who the angel is, but given his power to lay hold of Satan (the dragon), I believe this is the Archangel Michael (see Daniel 12:1, Jude 9, Revelation 12:7). Here, the Bible comes full circle. Everyone understands the serpent of Genesis 3 to be Satan, but this is the only verse in the Bible that expressly states that to be the case. Here, in referencing Satan's work as the serpent (causing the fall) and as the dragon, and identifying both as one and the same, namely the Devil or Satan, we understand why he deserves to be bound. The natural implication from Satan being bound here at the end of the Tribulation is that he is presently free. Note that he is to be bound for 1,000 years. While most commentators believe this is figurative (as they take most of the Revelation), that interpretation is incorrect. If God wanted it taken figuratively, he would not state the number six times in this chapter. Moreover, what could God have added or stated differently to convince the Catholics and Reformers that He really means 1,000 years? There is simply no contextual clue to indicate that the verse should be understood figuratively. The issue is not whether 1,000 years is literal (that is obvious), but rather, the question is why 1,000 years? The answer to that question is a major point of the chapter.

**20:3** “And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

Satan is imprisoned in the abyss for 1,000 years. A seal (or brand) is put upon him so that he cannot deceive the nations (as he has done throughout history) for the 1,000 year period. The seal here is probably literal (like sealing a door), further expressing the point that Satan is bound. At the end of the thousand years, Satan will be released for a short period of time (“a little season”). We will address this last point further in verse 7 below. Although the verse does not say what happens to all of the demons (including those released in Revelation 9:1-11), the implication from Satan’s binding, since he is their leader, is that all demons are bound with him.

**20:4** “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.”

Thrones are for people with authority (i.e., kings). I believe the ones on these thrones are the 24 elders (but we cannot be dogmatic here) that we understand to represent Christian leaders. The 24 elders have crowns, which suggest they also have thrones, or will have thrones, and they have figured prominently in several chapters in the Revelation (chapters 4, 5, 7, 11, 14, and most importantly, 19). The idea of saints taking a role in judgment is not unique to this passage (see, e.g., 1 Corinthians 6:2). John also sees the Tribulation Martyrs who were murdered, because they gave witness to Jesus, took a stand for the Word of God and refused to worship the Anti-Christ and his image and refused to take the mark. John tells us that the elders and the Tribulation Martyrs rule and reign with Jesus for 1,000 years. This is a statement of inclusion and does not exclude the participation of others. I think John focuses on the Tribulation Martyrs, because they have just recently endured the worst persecution of Christians in history, and now God has exalted them. The Tribulation Martyrs are not the only ones to be resurrected at this time. Recall that all New Testament saints were already resurrected at the Rapture. Moreover, all Old Testament saints are resurrected at this time as well (Daniel 12:1-2). God’s people will rule and reign with Jesus (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:28-31; 1 Corinthians 6:2; Romans 8:18-19; Luke 19:16-19; Revelation 3:21).

**20:5** “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.”

At this point at the beginning of the Millennium, all saved people from all time are alive. Those that were saved during the Tribulation will enter the Millennium in their original bodies, while all others will participate in the Millennium with incorruptible bodies. However, all of the unsaved people are not resurrected at this time, but instead, will be resurrected at the end of the Millennium. We need to understand that everyone has an eternal existence (though not eternal life). The unsaved will obtain a resurrection for the limited purpose of their judgment and be dispatched to the Lake of Fire (later in this chapter). John’s statement that “This is the first resurrection” has caused much debate because it occurs after the Tribulation, but the Rapture, which itself was a resurrection, occurred at the first. So why is this called the “first resurrection” and not the “second resurrection?” There is no conflict. This is the “first resurrection” in this book. Although there are at least two Rapture references in the Revelation, the Rapture is the culmination of the Church

Age. Chapters 4 through 19 of the Revelation are not about the Church Age (although chapters 2 and 3 address it in part), but are about what occurs after the Church Age. In that context (i.e., after the Church Age), this is, in fact, the “first resurrection.” All of this said, it would make sense to think of the First Resurrection in three phases: the Rapture as phase one, the resurrection of this verse as phase two, and the resurrection of the Old Testament saints (Daniel 12:1-2) as phase three.

**20:6** “Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Those that are part of the first resurrection are blessed (happy) and holy. That they are holy is a result of their sinlessness. At the point of salvation, we are made new creatures in Christ, that is, our spirits are renewed (2 Corinthians 5:17). At this point in time, all saved persons also have new, incorruptible (i.e., sinless) bodies as well. The whole person is now without sin, or holy. The second death has no power over these people. The first death was the separation of body and spirit that everyone, except those living Christians that participate in the Rapture, have experienced. Death always indicates separation, and the second death will be eternal separation from God. These who have been resurrected will not experience the second death. Instead, they shall be priests of God and Jesus, which flows naturally from the fact that they will dwell with Jesus during the Kingdom Age. All of the resurrected saints will reign with Jesus for 1,000 years.

**20:7** “And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,”

This verse helps us understand much about the reason for the 1,000 year period of time. The reality is that Jesus’ kingdom does not end at the 1,000 year mark, but significant events happen at the end of the 1,000 years (or just before the end). One of the most important is the loosing of Satan from his prison in the bottomless pit. Note that Satan does not escape, but is allowed out. The real question is why? To understand the answer, we need to pause for a moment here and understand what life is like during the Millennium with Jesus as King of Kings. Though John gives few details, other passage throughout the Bible have much to say about this time in future history. I would draw to your attention the books by Dwight Pentecost and John Walvoord in the bibliography; I highly recommend both of them to you for further reading about the Millennium. We will summarize some conditions in the Millennium here (I am drawing from those two sources; this is just scratching the surface!):

1. Truth of God is widespread (Isaiah 11:9; Jeremiah 31:33-34)
2. Righteousness flourishes (Psalm 72:7; Isaiah 11:3-5)
3. Joy prevails (Isaiah 12:3-4, 61:3, 7)
4. There will be a new Temple with sacrifices (Ezekiel 40:1-46:24), observance of the Sabbath (Isaiah 66:20-23), and other rituals (Zechariah 14:16-21)
5. Universal justice and peace (Psalm 72 and Isaiah 11)
6. Curse is lifted in part (Isaiah 30:23-24, 35:1-2, 7)
7. General and widespread prosperity (Jeremiah 31:12; Ezekiel 34:25-27; Joel 2:21-27; Amos 9:13-14); no labor problems (Isaiah 65:21-25; Jeremiah 31:5)
8. Animals are changed (Isaiah 11:6-9, 65:25)
9. Good health (Isaiah 33:24) and healing (Isaiah 29:18, 35:5-6)

10. Longevity (Isaiah 65:20)
11. Increased birth rate to populate the Millennial Kingdom (Isaiah 30:19-20; Ezekiel 47:22)
12. Topographical changes and the exaltation of Jerusalem (Zechariah 14; Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1)
13. Theocracy in place (Jesus in charge!) (Isaiah 2:2-4, 9:3-7, 11:1-10, 16:5, 24:21-23, 31:4-32:2, 42:1-7, 51:4-5, 60:12; Daniel 2:44, 7:15-28; Obadiah 17-21; Micah 4:1-8, 5:2-5, 15; Zephaniah 3:9-10, 18-19; Zechariah 9:10-15, 14:16-17)
14. King David is regent under Jesus (Isaiah 55:3-4; Jeremiah 30:9, 33:15, 17, 20-21; Ezekiel 34:23-24, 37:24-25; Hosea 3:5; Amos 9:11)
15. Judges will be raised up (Isaiah 1:26)
16. Reign will be one of inflexible righteousness and justice (Isaiah 11:3-5, 25:2-5, 29:17-21, 30:29-32, 42:13, 49:25-26, 66:14; Daniel 2:44; Micah 5:5-6, 10-15; Zechariah 9:3-8, Psalm 2)
17. The reign will involve the Holy Spirit completely (Isaiah 11:2-3)
18. Sin will be summarily dealt with (Psalm 2:9, 72:1-4; Isaiah 29:20-21, 65:20, 66:24; Zechariah 14:16-21; Jeremiah 31:29-30)

By way of summary, it is fair to say that the 1,000 year reign of Jesus is a utopia on earth. And it is important to understand that while those with incorruptible bodies are ruling and reigning with Jesus, the Kingdom is populated with those who survived the Tribulation and do not have incorruptible bodies yet. They will have children who populate the Kingdom and are born sinners in need of a savior. So why does Satan get released? To prove that God is absolutely righteous in his final judgment (later in this chapter) in sending the unsaved to the Lake of Fire. No amount of time or opportunity would ever draw these people to Jesus Christ. What is proved here is that people are corrupt, and even in a perfect environment some people will reject Christ. The fact that they have the good life and visibly see Jesus and know who He is does not change their hearts. Since no amount of time (if 1000 years is not enough, no amount of time is) is sufficient to change their hearts, they will be eternally separated from God (the second death).

**20:8** “And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom *is* as the sand of the sea.”

Gog and Magog refer figuratively to God’s enemies. Satan is released to do that which he always does -- deceive. Note that Satan, like some persons in the Millennium, will not change. If 1000 years did not change him, no amount of time will. He is released and immediately goes to do battle with God again. He gathers nations, “the number of whom is as the sand of the sea,” to fight Jesus in a rebellion. We need to note that this is not a small uprising or even just a few thousand rebels, but millions who have lived in the Millennium and enjoyed the grace and benefits of Jesus’ rule (and his saints) and are ready to rebel.

**20:9** “And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.”

Satan and his rebels go to take Jerusalem in battle. Note that saints live in Jerusalem with Jesus. God brings down fire and kills the rebels immediately (consistent with how justice is done throughout the Millennium; rebellion and sin are not tolerated).

**20:10** “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

Now Satan follows the fate of the Anti-Christ and the False Prophet and is cast into the Lake of Fire (see also Revelation 19:20). This is a place of eternal torment.

**20:11** “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.”

Now that the thousand years have been completed and Satan has been dealt with (and by implication his demons as well), it remains for Jesus to deal with the unsaved from throughout time (except Anti-Christ and the False Prophet which were already judged). This is Jesus seated on the throne (see references to Jesus judging, John 5:22; Matthew 19:28, 25:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10). John sees heaven and earth flee away. The heaven is space (not where God the Father dwells). Their fleeing away is probably indicative of their being done away with (see Revelation 21:1; not necessarily a total destruction). Remember, when man fell in the Garden, the earth was cursed. That curse was partially lifted during the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ, but the elimination of sin was not complete (remember, people continued to sin during the Millennium). The unsaved have rebelled against God; they are part and parcel of the old heaven and earth, and with the old heaven and earth removed, they have no place to go.

**20:12** “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

John sees all of the unsaved. They have been resurrected for the purpose of this Great White Throne Judgment, and they stand before God (probably a reference to Jesus as God). The books are opened and another book was opened. I think the first books record their works. As it says here, everyone is judged according to his works. The point of the books, whether or not literal, is that all of their deeds are recorded. Nothing was ever hidden from God, and He never forgets. The Book of Life indicates those who have eternal life. No one at the Great White Throne Judgment is written in this book. None of them placed saving faith in Jesus Christ, and for that reason (which is why they are not in the book), they will be judged according to their works with no defense for their sins.

**20:13** “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.”

This is a resurrection of the unsaved from all times, from Genesis through the end of the Millennium. Death and hell refer to the grave (*Hades* or *Sheol*), the resting place of the unsaved (note, I am not suggesting “soul sleep,” but merely that the unsaved do not await the Great White Throne Judgment from heaven, but from another place, hell). Every man was judged according to his works. Without the blood of Jesus to pay his penalty, he is guilty.

**20:14** “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”

There is neither jury nor appeal. Death and hell, and by implication, all of the unsaved that were held in hell’s grip awaiting this final judgment, are found guilty. Their names are not in the Book of Life. They are cast into the Lake of Fire where they will spend eternity in torment. This is the second death, that is, death in the sense of permanent separation from God. They will never cease to exist.

**20:15** “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

This is not a time of mercy; no exceptions are made and there is no parole. If you rejected Christ before the first death, then you will experience the second death.

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### **COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record*, Tyndale House Publishers (1983)

### **ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY**

John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom: A Basic Text in Premillennial Theology*, Dunham Publishing Company (1959)  
(outstanding and authoritative treatment of the Millennial Kingdom)

J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come*, Zondervan (1965)  
(a thorough treatment of Biblical prophecy; this is an excellent book often considered the “standard” in the field)

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is highly recommended that each person taking this course read chapter 20 for this lesson and chapter 21 for next week in Henry M. Morris' commentary.