

A Reader's Guide to Revelation 19:6-22:21

Introducing the Big Picture

The last section of the guide focused upon the fall of the dragon's kingdom through:

1. the defeat of the harlot city, Babylon the Great, and
2. the defeat of the beast, the kings of the earth and their armies.

Because that was the focus of the last section, we only looked at some portions of Revelation 19. In this section, we'll look at the other portions of chapter 19, then work through chapters 20-22 to finish the book.

As you read chapter 19, watch for the two gatherings: a wedding supper of celebration, and a war supper of death:

Read Revelation 19

In the last section of the guide we considered heaven's song of celebration because the harlot Babylon has been defeated (19:1-4). Notice how that celebration flows right into the description of the marriage of the Lamb in verses 7-9. Heaven is rejoicing because of two closely related events: the fall of harlot Babylon and the marriage of the bride to the Lamb.

19:6 *the Almighty*: Why do you think this description of God is so central to the theme of the entire book? (1:8, 4:8, 11:17, 15:3, 16:7, 16:14, 19:6, 19:15)

19:7 *the marriage of the Lamb*: In Jewish custom, a marriage contract was agreed upon and a man and woman were "betrothed" to one another and legally married before the wedding itself (see Matt. 1:19). Between the betrothal and the wedding there was a time period during which the groom paid the dowry payment and the bride prepared herself for the wedding. Then the groom and the rest of his wedding party traveled to the home of the bride, bringing her back to his home (or the home of his parents). There the marriage feasting and festivities would last for several days. This description of the "marriage" and "marriage supper" in Revelation 19 probably refers to this time of feasting and celebration.

You can see that this description of the marriage is actually very short. Make yourself a list of everything verses 7-8 teach about the marriage of the Lamb.

Do you see any significance to the difference between the dress of the harlot (17:4, 18:16) and the dress of the bride (19:8)?

Consider these questions:

- If Christians have already been united together with Christ, as the New Testament teaches so clearly, what happens at the marriage of the Lamb?
- What is the meaning of *it was given to her to clothe herself*?
- Why is this brief description of the marriage placed at this point in Revelation?

- Do you think this marriage supper is something that occurs for a brief period of time, or from this point forward into eternity?

This is a rich theme in Scripture, which you could explore more through passages like these: Isaiah 54:5-6; Isaiah 61:10; Ezekiel 16 (note especially the wedding jewelry and clothes in verses 10-13); Hosea 2:14-20; Psalm 45; Matthew 22:1-14 (note that the parable is about the guests); Matthew 25:1-13; Mark 2:19-20; John 3:29; II Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:32.

The idea of feasting with God or in His kingdom also has rich background: Isaiah 25:6; Matthew 8:11; Luke 14:15; Luke 22:28-30, etc.

19:10 how does the angel define John's brethren?

19:10 *the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*: This is a bit of a difficult phrase, and there are several possibilities for the meaning:

- the testimony from Jesus [the message He brought] is the heart of all prophecy
- true prophecy always bears witness about Jesus
- the saints' testimony about Jesus is empowered by the Spirit like the message of the prophets was

19:11 *I saw heaven opened*: Look back at 11:19 and 15:5, and note how this is different from those other "openings."

19:11 *Faithful and True*: In what particular way does 3:14 say He is faithful and true?

19:12 *a name ... which no one knows*: Do you think this will be a name which no one will ever know, or a name which is hidden until that time? Look up Isaiah 62:1-5; Revelation 2:17; 3:12 for a fascinating possible connection.

19:13 *a robe dipped in blood*: His own? His enemies?

19:13 *The Word of God*: this is actually the only place where the full phrase is used for Jesus, though it surely brings to mind John 1:1 and I John 1:1. What would it mean for Jesus to be the "Word of God" here in Revelation, based on what Jesus is doing here?

19:14 *the armies*: While these armies may well include angels, this probably includes the saints as well (see 14:4, 17:14; also Zechariah 14:5). Can you imagine the size and appearance of this army, coming with Jesus?

19:15 *from His mouth...*: Here we learn more of what it means for Jesus to be "the Word of God." When God speaks just sentences of condemnation (or blessing), Jesus carries them out by His own words. He only needs to speak to win: look up Isaiah 11:2 and II Thes. 2:8. Also remember that this description was used for Jesus in Revelation 1:16, 2:12, 16.

19:15 *rule them with a rod of iron*: Your Bible might have a footnote here that the word translated "rule" is literally the word for shepherding. That might be a little confusing at first,

but keep in mind that a shepherd carries a staff or even club because he may have to protect the sheep. The picture here is probably of the shepherd defending his sheep with an iron rod.

Since the end of Revelation 19 was discussed in the last section of the Guide, we'll continue now into chapter 20.

Read Revelation 20

Start with the big picture: if you had to summarize this chapter down to three or four basic events, what would they be?

Verses 1-3

While verses 1-3 are fairly clear, there is a significant surprise here. Having seen the beast and false prophet cast into the lake of fire at the end of chapter 19, we expect to find that the same thing is done to the dragon Satan. But as you can see, something different is done to him.

20:1 *the abyss*: see the Guide on 9:1; also see 11:7 and 17:8

You can see clearly in verses 1-3 the purpose of Satan's imprisonment and the temporary duration of it.

Is this 1,000-year duration literal, or symbolic of a perfect period of time?

How would you discern when this imprisonment of Satan takes place (past, present, or future)?

Verses 4-6

The beginning of verse 4 seems like a sudden change of topic, but then the thousand-year time period is mentioned in verses 4, 5, and 6. So apparently verses 4-6 tell us about other things that are going on during this same time period described in verses 1-3.

If you had to summarize verses 4-6, how would you state briefly what else is going on during the 1,000-year time period?

Verse 4a raises several questions: (see the Appendix)

- Who are these people on the thrones? The 24 elders we met earlier in Revelation? The saints (I Cor. 6:2)? The martyrs described in the rest of the verse?
- Where are the thrones? In heaven or on earth?
- And what does it mean that "judgment" is given to them? Does it mean that a verdict is rendered on their behalf; that they act as judges; or that they reign? (see Dan. 7:22)

The rest of verse 4 seems clearer: the martyrs from the time of the beast come to life and reign with Christ for a thousand years.

Now the beginning of verse 5 is most likely a parentheses, like this (beginning with the end of verse 4):

They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed.) This is the first resurrection. So the "first resurrection" is what is described in verse 4. And even though the "second resurrection" isn't specifically named, it seems most likely to be what the parentheses describes. In other words:

- *They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years ... this is the first resurrection.*
- *The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed ... (this is the second resurrection).*

So if we try to summarize what we've observed in chapter 20 so far:

1. Satan is imprisoned for 1,000 years so that he cannot deceive the nations (1-3)
2. Someone sits on thrones and judges (4a)
3. The first resurrection: the martyrs from the time of beast come to life and reign for 1,000 years (4b, 5b)
4. The second resurrection: the rest of the dead come to life when the 1,000 years are completed (5a)

Now read verse 6 again - it tells us some more about those who come to life and reign with Christ for 1,000 years:

- they are blessed
- they are holy
- the second death has no power over them
- they are priests of God and of Christ (and reign)

Here's an important question: verse 6 doesn't directly say anything about those who do not come to life until the 1,000 years are completed (i.e., those who participate in the "second resurrection"). But does it imply something about them? Does it imply that they aren't blessed and holy, that they aren't priests who reign, and that the second death does have power over them?

So now we can expand our list a little further:

1. Satan is imprisoned for 1,000 years so that he cannot deceive the nations (1-3)
2. Someone sits on thrones and judges (4a)
3. The first resurrection: the martyrs from the time of beast come to life and reign for 1,000 years (4b, 5b). They are blessed and holy, the second death has no power over them; they are priests (6).
4. The second resurrection: the rest of the dead come to life when the 1,000 years are completed (5a). Possibly they are not blessed and holy, the second death does have power over them, and they are not priests (6).

That's all those verses tell us about this 1,000-year time period. You can probably see why Christians haven't always agreed on their interpretation of these things. While these six verses tell us a few things about the 1,000 years, they certainly don't tell us everything.

Verses 7-10 do gives us a little bit more information.

We have here the final demise of Satan after the 1,000 year time period (like we might have expected at the beginning of the chapter). But what else do these verses indicate about the 1,000-year time period itself? What people and places are named here?

Do you think that verses 7-10 describe the same events described in Rev. 19:19-21 or 16:13-21?

According to verse 11, what is the final end of Satan?

It's done! The dragon, the serpent, the deceiver, the accuser, the liar, the murderer, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who works in the sons of disobedience, the king of the demons, the great opponent of God is finally eternally gone!

For practical application, consider that Satan is described here as a *deceiver*. His false prophet was a deceiver (13:14, 19:20). The harlot Babylon was a deceiver (18:23). Satan deceives the whole world (12:9). Realize that this is a basic characteristic of Satan. When he schemes (II Cor. 2:11), he schemes how to deceive. How could Satan deceive you?

Verses 11-15 form one of the most sobering paragraphs in all of Scripture. I would encourage you to just read through these verses slowly two or three times in a row, to let the words sink deeply into your heart.

20:11 *great white throne*: there is no reference to a great white throne anywhere else in the Bible

20:11 *Him who sat upon it*: The Bible points to both Jesus and the Father as the Judges (John 5:22; Matt. 25:31-46; II Cor. 5:10; Matt. 18:35; Rom. 14:10).

20:11 *earth and heaven fled away*: the phrase "earth and heaven" is unlikely to refer to people, so it probably refers to the destruction of the physical heaven and earth. Look up II Peter 3:10-12.

20:12 *the dead standing before the throne*: Does this describe the judgment of all people, or just unbelievers? Based on this text alone, both answers are possible. Verse 15 implies that at the great white throne there are some people whose names are found written in the book of life, and some whose names are not. From what you read here in these verses, does it sound to you like a judgment of all people or just unbelievers?

On a note of practical application, some would say that believers cannot be included for they are not judged *according to their deeds*, as verse 12 says. We know that we cannot

be saved by our deeds (Eph. 2:9): yet our deeds do show whether we have been truly saved or not (Eph. 2:10). See Revelation 22:12. I think Grant Osborne has summarized it well: "We are saved by grace but will be judged by works. There are many other NT passages on the judgment of believers according to their works (Matt. 16:27, Rom. 14:12, I Cor. 3:12-15, II Cor. 5:10, I Pet. 1:17). The Bible never says exactly what this judgment will be, and we know that we have been forgiven for our sins and will be rewarded for our service to God. It must suffice to say that we will be faced with our evil deeds and then forgiven and will be rewarded for the good we have done. But we will have to face what we have done, the bad as well as the good; there is simply too much material in the NT on the believer 'judged by works' to ignore." (Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, p. 722)

(Now this does not prove that believers will be at this judgment - but that the phrase *according to their deeds* doesn't automatically exclude them from being present.)

20:13 *the sea ... death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them*: Throughout Revelation these things are used to personify evil. So this surely refers to the resurrection of all unsaved dead people to appear at this judgment.

20:14 *death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire*: Death and Hades aren't really physical things that you can throw away or burn up. What does this mean?

20:14 *second death*: Saved people die once and then experience an eternal life. Unsaved people die once, are resurrected to appear at judgment, and then experience a kind of eternal death. This is a second and even more terrible kind of death than the first.

When we finished looking at verses 7-10, we noted excitedly that "It is done!" But now as we finish verses 11-15 we must note with great sorrow that "it is done." At this point in the future, every person who rejected Christ will have been judged and will begin experiencing their eternity without Christ in the lake of fire. No more sinners will hear the gospel and be converted. No more families will be saved. No more nations will be reached with the good news. It will be done. The heaviness of Revelation 20:15 should be lingering upon us as we begin reading Revelation 21:1.

Read Revelation 21

The whole book of Revelation has been leading up to this. For example, most of the promises to the overcomers in the seven churches find their fulfillment here in Revelation 21:1-22:5. But beyond that, the whole Bible (at least since the sin of Adam and Eve) has been leading up to this! It is humanly impossible to fully grasp all of the biblical themes that come together and reach their grand conclusion here. There is not a page of the Bible that does not ultimately point us here.

In one sense these are very familiar verses for most Christians. But it may also be true that some parts of these verses are not well known at all - we may tend to just skim here and

assume we understand the meaning. So I would encourage you to work through this slowly and carefully.

21:1 *a new heaven and a new earth*: Now a new earth we can understand - but a new heaven? What does this mean? It's possible that this just refers to the sky, but unlikely (see verse 2). One thing is quite clear: in the Bible, heaven and earth are obviously separated and far apart. In Revelation 21, the new heaven and earth are not separated at all. The two become one.

Make sure you read Isaiah 65:17-22.

21:1 *no longer any sea*: Maybe you like the sea - why would God get rid of it? Remember that in Revelation the sea is consistently used as a negative symbol for several different negative concepts. All of those negative things associated with "the sea" will exist no longer.

21:2 *the holy city, New Jerusalem*:

This is another theme so rich with biblical background, and it is another example of how Revelation gives us the fulfillment of so many promises of God. There is a wonderful section in Dr. Grant Osborne's commentary that summarizes this so well. I'll quote an extended section:

"Park (1995:71-86) sees a pattern in Isaiah in which a new and glorified Jerusalem will be the center of the world in the last days (Is. 2:1-5; 18:7), and Yahweh will come to Zion as Redeemer (59:20) after destroying the apostate earthly Jerusalem (24:10-13; 25:2) and reigning on Mount Zion (24:23). At that time her 'wilderness will be like Eden' (51:3), and Zion will 'put on [her] garments of splendor' and be 'Jerusalem, the holy city' (52:1). Finally, in the 'new heavens and new earth,' God will 'create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy' (65:18). In Ezekiel there is the promised 'new exodus' in which the land will be like the Garden of Eden (Ezekiel 36:35; cf. 47:11-12), and God's sanctuary will be set in the midst of his people 'for evermore. My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people' (Ezekiel 37:26-27 = Rev. 21:3). In Ezekiel 40-48 the name Jerusalem is not used, and the city is renamed 'Yahweh is there' (48:35). In this restored city there will be twelve gates representing the twelve tribes (40:5-43 = Rev. 21:12-13). In Zechariah the New Jerusalem becomes the 'City of Truth' (Zech. 8:3) to which the nations come in pilgrimage (8:20-23) when Yahweh returns and dwells there. After Yahweh destroys the rebellious nations and delivers his people (12:1-9; 14:1-7), Yahweh will come, 'living water will flow out of Jerusalem' (14:8), and there 'will be no more curse' (14:11 = Rev. 22:3)." (Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, pp. 731-32, including quote from a dissertation by S.-M. Park)

Can you see the fabulous unity of Scripture, and the amazing depths of the biblical background in Revelation? For all that we do not understand about Revelation, we can be certain that God is keeping every one of His promises! So many of those promises come together and find their fulfillment here in Revelation 21:1-22:5.

We're looking specifically at the mention of *the holy city, New Jerusalem* in 21:2, and we're noting that this idea of a future "city of God" was very common in the message of the prophets. We also find this idea in the New Testament: look up Galatians 4:26 and Hebrews 12:22. Make sure you also read Hebrews 11:8-16 to see the daily, practical ramifications of this doctrine.

21:2 *coming down out of heaven from God*: Think of how many things in Revelation (especially judgments and angels) have come down from heaven or from God in one way or another. But this is the climax of all of them: when heaven and earth become one!

21:2 *a bride adorned for her husband*: We just saw in chapter 19 that the people of God are the bride of the Lamb. So is this "new Jerusalem" actually a city, or is John seeing a vision of a city that symbolizes the people of God? Do you see evidences in Revelation 21:1-22:5 that this is the people of God? Do you see evidences that this must be symbolic, not a real city? Do you see evidences that this is an actual city with the people of God in it?

21:3 *the tabernacle of God is among men ... God Himself will be among them*: Another beautiful biblical theme! We can't begin to trace all of the biblical background here. But note two important connections for the word "tabernacle":

1. This is the equivalent of the Hebrew "shekinah" glory: the glorious presence of God that was in the cloud and pillar of fire, the tabernacle, and the temple.
2. This is the same word used in John 1:14.

You could also see the fulfillment of Old Testament promise by looking up Lev. 26:11-12, Ex. 29:45, Jer. 31:33 (where it becomes part of new covenant promises), Eze. 37:27, Eze. 43:7-9, Zech. 2:11, Zech. 8:8.

This is a great point to just stop and meditate on this incredible promise. What reasons do you have to anticipate the day when God Himself will dwell among His people - with you?

21:4 *the first things have passed away*: the reversal of the curse of Genesis 3 and the consequences of sin.

21:6 *the beginning and the end*: we see these statements throughout Revelation (1:8, 22:13, etc.). Why is this an especially significant description of God at this point in Revelation? What does it mean for God to be "the end"?

21:6 *the water of life without cost*: Here we have two more themes you could trace throughout the Scriptures. You could start in Isaiah 55:1, John 4:10, Romans 3:24, etc. God glorifies Himself by freely and absolutely satisfying those who come to Him for salvation. This new Jerusalem, new heaven and earth, new everything will be deeply, fully soul-satisfying. It's priceless - yet you must receive it without cost. It cannot be bought.

21:7 *I will be his God and he will be My Son*: More rich themes and promises fulfilled: Genesis 17:7, II Sam. 7:14, Rom. 8:14-17, etc.

21:8 *But*: A strategically, startlingly-placed warning. Many people just assume they'll be in heaven (just listen at any funeral). Even professing Christians can make the mistake of just assuming that they'll be fine. Verses 7-8 present a sober challenge to John's readers: be an overcomer, not a coward. Now as we just read in verse 6, you cannot purchase the water of life. Your overcoming will not earn you salvation. But true salvation always results in overcoming. Those who are characterized by the things here in verse 8 have not tasted the water of life, and they will not experience the joys of eternity with God. Similar warnings are given in Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:26-31; James 5:19-20; II Peter 2:20-21; I John 5:16.

21:9-21 Does the middle of any other chapter in the Bible get skipped over as much as the middle of this chapter? This is like a hymn with three verses, but we never sing the second verse! Of course, the reason is because it is difficult to understand the purpose of this section. Of course, God's Word is perfect: we do need this. It might be good for you to reread verses 9-21 again. Can you think of some reasons why God might have inspired these measurements and others details about the new Jerusalem?

As you consider verses 9-10, be sure to go back and read 17:1-3, because the connection between the two passages is unmistakable. The new bride-city of Jerusalem is the exact opposite of the harlot-city of Babylon. Speaking a bit poetically, we can say that every person will spend eternity in one city or the other: destroyed Babylon or radiant Jerusalem.

While the descriptions of the gold, pearls, and jewels get most of the attention here, the opening words of verse 11 give the one characteristic of this city that is far more important than the rest: she has *the glory of God*. This was true in the tabernacle and the temple under the Old Covenant (Exodus 24:15-16; I Kings 8:10-12) - yet the people were required to stay away. Now, the city which has the glory of God is "the bride, the wife of the Lamb." The glorious God and His people are no longer separated.

21:12 *the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel*: Why do you think the names of the twelve tribes of Israel would be displayed so prominently at this city?

21:14 *the twelve names of the twelve apostles*: see Ephesians 2:20; also I Cor. 3:9-10, Rom. 15:20

21:15 *a gold measuring rod*: This actually has some Old Testament background as well (Jeremiah 31:38-40; Zech. 1:16; Zech. 2:1-2; Ezekiel 40-47). This idea also occurred earlier in Revelation, at the beginning of chapter 11. From these passages, it seems that the measuring might indicate the protection of God (stated quite clearly in Revelation 11), the greatness of the blessing of God (the large size; see Zechariah 2), or the certainty of the promises of God (the fulfillment will be so real that you can measure it).

21:16 *fifteen hundred miles*: The New American Standard makes an interesting translation choice here, choosing to convert the Greek measurement into miles. The Greek text says "twelve thousand furlongs." A furlong is approximately 600 feet long, so 12,000 furlongs would be approximately fifteen hundred miles.

21:16 *its length and width and height are equal*: a cube - just as the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and temple. Remember verses 3 and 11: God's presence is here!

21:17 *measured its wall*: since verse 12 says the wall was "great and high," this must be the thickness of the wall.

21:19-20 *every kind of precious stone*: the list here is similar to the stones on the priestly breastpiece. You'll want to read about this in Exodus 28:15-21, 30. What was the meaning of the stones on the priestly breastplate? Could this apply to these stones of the New Jerusalem? You'll also want to look at God's promise to Israel in Isaiah 54:11-12.

21:22 *no temple*: This might be unexpected, since there have been repeated references to the heavenly temple in Revelation. But remember that this is after God has made the new heaven and new earth. The New Jerusalem has the same proportions as the Holy of Holies, and it is characterized by the same glory of God that filled the temple. Redeemed sinners and the holy of holies have now been brought together. The saints won't just dwell in a city where God and the Lamb can be found if you go to a temple down a certain street; they will dwell in a city that is characterized by the immediate presence of God and the Lamb. To speak figuratively, the presence of God will be the very air you breathe. So no - there will be no need for a temple there.

21:24-26: This image seems unusual. With the final judgment completed and the new heaven and new earth created, we don't expect to read of the nations and kings of the earth coming to the new Jerusalem (especially if the new Jerusalem is only a symbol of the people of God). Maybe this is referring to the salvation of people from among all the nations who were saved before the second coming of Christ: now they are pictured as flowing into the New Jerusalem. (that seems possible because of verse 27, but maybe unlikely because of verse 25?). Or, maybe this is using the language of the Jerusalem of the Old Testament, but we should not press the language too literally here. Or maybe there is just something else we do not know. Regardless, it is quite clear that this is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy: if you read Isaiah 60:1-14, you'll see many unmistakable parallels. God is keeping His promises.

Before we continue into Revelation 22, we'll pause and consider the connection between this portion of Revelation and the end of the prophecies of Ezekiel.

Revelation 21-22 and Ezekiel 40-48

I've briefly noted a few of the parallels between this section of Revelation and some of the prophecies of Ezekiel. While studying Ezekiel 40-48 would go beyond the scope of this Guide, you should be aware of the very important connection. Here are three things to know:

1. The parallel is unmistakable

Ezekiel is receiving visions from God about the future, and at the beginning of Eze. 40 he is brought to a very high mountain and shown a city. Ezekiel's vision ends up focusing almost exclusively on a temple, which is measured by an angle and described in surprising detail. The temple is the place where God will dwell among His people, and the city is called "The Lord is there." A healing river flows from the

temple, with trees and leaves for healing. The parallel is unmistakable and obviously intentional: somehow Revelation 21-22 must describe the final fulfillment of God's promises through Ezekiel.

2. The context is fascinating

The parallel goes beyond just Ezekiel 40-48 and Revelation 21-22, for the context in Ezekiel is full of fascinating parallels to Revelation. After extensive prophecies of judgment on Israel and the nations, God begins to promise the restoration of Israel. He promises them a Davidic king who will also be their perfect shepherd; showers of blessing and peace for their land; that He will be their God and they will be His people (Eze. 34). Though the nations mock, the mountains of Israel will again be blessed with the people of Israel. But this time the people will be washed clean from their sin, given a new heart and the spirit of God. In that renewed spiritual condition they will live in the land that God had given to their fathers (Eze. 36). Though Israel seemed like nothing more than dry bones, God would place His Spirit within them and cause them to come to life and live on their own land. Judah and Israel would be united again, God's sanctuary would be in their midst forever, He would be their God and they would be His people (Eze. 37). However, in the latter years "Gog" from "Magog" would assemble great armies who would come against the land of Israel. God would rain pestilence and blood and fire upon them to destroy the invaders, and the birds and beasts would be called to come feast on the dead (Ezekiel 38-39). At the end of Ezekiel 39, God summarizes these promises, and then Ezekiel is taken up to the mountain for the lengthy vision of the temple where God would dwell among His people. The last words of the book read, *the name of the city from that day shall be, 'The Lord is there'* (Ezekiel 48:35).

3. The meaning is difficult

Just as Christians have struggled to understand Revelation 20-22, so they have struggled with Ezekiel 40-48. One of the major challenges is that the description of the temple worship in Ezekiel 40-48 includes the Old Covenant rituals of sacrifices, atonement, and cleansing. How could those things possible be appropriate during the millennium or in the New Jerusalem? Here are some possible perspectives:

✘ Perspective 1: Israel will dwell in their literal, earthly land during the millennium, with a rebuilt temple and sacrificial system which will be commemorative, not saving.

✘ Perspective 2: Ezekiel's temple vision is a symbolic representation of the blessings of God on the church in the new covenant. It is not describing any end-time city or temple.

✘ Perspective 3: Ezekiel's vision describes the New Jerusalem (in the new heaven/earth) using the language of ancient Israel and their temple, but the exact details (especially Old Covenant worship) should be taken symbolically.

Regardless of which of those perspectives is correct, we see again the incredibly unity of Scripture. We see again the depth of God's word, and we are reminded that part of the challenge for studying Revelation is that it connects so extensively with the rest of Scripture. More than anything else, the parallel with Ezekiel shows us that God is going to keep His promises. He unmistakably anchors His final promises (in Revelation) with all of

His earlier promises in Scripture. The Alpha and Omega, the one who has planned the end from the beginning, will accomplish His purposes.

As you move into Revelation 22, recognize that the first five verses of chapter 22 fit closely with chapter 21. Then the remainder of chapter 22 serves as a lengthy conclusion to Revelation.

Read Revelation 22

As we've seen in chapter 21, the New Jerusalem is like the ultimate "holy of holies," where God's people dwell together with Him. Now in these opening verses of chapter 22 we see that the New Jerusalem will be like the ultimate Eden. What parallels can you see between Revelation 22:1-5 and Genesis 2 (and 3)?

22:1 a river of the water of life: Another big biblical theme. For example, see Zechariah 14:8; Ezekiel 47:1-12; John 4:10-14; John 7:37-39; Revelation 7:17, 21:6, and 22:17.

22:2 the tree of life: The tree which has been forbidden for so long (lest mankind eat and live forever in their sin) is now freely accessible (Genesis 3:22).

22:3 no longer be any curse: Part of the promised future for Jerusalem in Zechariah 14:11.

22:3 serve Him: the word has the ideas of worship and priestly service. Whatever this means, it certainly indicates that we will not spend eternity inactive and bored! (Psalm 84:10)

22:4 they will see His face and His name will be on their foreheads: Stop and soak deeply in these words!

22:5 they will reign: How? Over what? We don't know. But we do know that God has been promising this for a very long time (Exodus 19:6; Daniel 7:18, 27; Rev. 1:6; etc.).

Now the rest of Revelation 22, beginning in verse 6, serves as the conclusion to the book. It's a fairly extensive conclusion that touches on many of the important themes of the book. I won't comment very much on this section - if you've been thinking deeply about Revelation for more than 22 chapters, you'll find a rich feast in these final exhortations of the book. I'll comment briefly on a couple of possible confusions:

22:11 let the one who does wrong still do wrong: Of course the Bible urges sinners to repent - not to continue in their sin. But this verse sounds like an exhortation to sinners to keep sinning! First of all, recognize that this is yet another part of Revelation that is connected to Old Testament prophecy: look at the similar words about Daniel's prophecies in Daniel 12:9-10. Also look at God's words to Ezekiel in Eze. 3:27. Maybe these words are a veiled exhortation to "choose you this day whom you will serve," because the end is coming quickly and then it will be too late to change. But I think it is more likely that this is a word of judgment: God can judge people simply by allowing them to continue in their own way. This may be like a parent saying, "OK, go ahead and do that, but you understand the consequences if you do." At the same time, those who are living in righteousness must

continue (the 'overcoming' theme throughout the book). This is like a parent saying: "I'm glad you're doing well, but you need to continue doing well."

22:15 *dogs*: This sounds unusual to our ears because it is a metaphor that we don't use. But it was common both in John's day and before to speak of a fool or unbelieving mocker as a "dog" (Prov. 26:11; Is. 56:10-11; Matt. 7:6; Phil. 3:2; II Pet. 2:22).

No portion of this conclusion is accidental. You can honor the Lord by meditating very carefully on these final 16 verses.

If you've made it all the way through Revelation, congratulations! I hope the notes you've accumulated will be useful for years to come. But more importantly, I hope that in your heart the fear of the Lord runs deeper, the gospel is more amazing, and the return of your Savior is even more exciting than it was before you began this study.

We are not sufficient, but Christ is. *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.*

Appendix: Perspectives on the Millennium

Introduction

The word "millennium" isn't in the Bible: it's from the Latin word for a "thousand years," and is used to refer to the time period described in Revelation 20:1-10. What characterizes this "thousand years," and when will it occur?

From the earliest days of the church, Christians have looked at this from quite different perspectives. Some of the early church leaders taught a future, earthly reign of Christ for exactly 1,000 years. This quickly became controversial, and many others taught a symbolic 1,000 year reign through the church during the church age. In the centuries after the Reformation, these varying perspectives multiplied into more specific views which were more clearly defined. To this day, Christians who agree on all of the central truths of Christianity may disagree quite dramatically about the millennium.

If Christians have disagreed for so long, why does it matter for you? There are certainly some senses in which your perspective on the millennium doesn't matter. This issue alone is certainly not a test of whether someone is truly saved or not. It's not an accurate test of whether someone believes in sound biblical doctrine or not, and it doesn't have a significant impact on daily Christian living. However, I would suggest three reasons why it should matter to you:

1. All of God's Word deserves our careful attention, and Revelation 20:1-10 emphasizes very important theological themes.
2. Your understanding of the millennium affects how you interpret several other parts of the Scriptures.
3. Your understanding of the millennium can quite directly influence your understanding of the nature of the church age (in which you live).

Basic Perspectives

Here is a list of three of the basic perspectives on the millennium. Before you begin considering these, you should reread Rev. 20:1-10:

1. The events of Rev. 20:1-10 occur during **the entire church age, from the first coming of Christ to the second coming of Christ.**
2. The events of Rev. 20:1-10 occur on earth during **the last portion of the church age, just before the second coming of Christ.**
3. The events of Rev. 20:1-10 occur on earth during **a future age after the second coming of Christ.**

Realize that there are many different "sub-perspectives" within each of these general categories. For example:

- Among those who take perspective #1, some believe the millennium is occurring on earth; others believe it is occurring in heaven.
- Among those who take perspective #3, some believe the millennium will be exactly 1,000 years; others believe it will be a perfect period of time, symbolized by "1,000 years."

Here is a brief explanation of each perspective:

1. The events of Rev. 20:1-10 occur during **the entire church age, from the first coming of Christ to the second coming of Christ.**
From this perspective, the binding of Satan at the beginning of Revelation 20 is a description of Satan's defeat during the first coming of Christ. Having been overthrown through the cross-work of Jesus, Satan is no longer permitted to deceive the nations so that they will not receive the gospel message. Though Satan is still very active in this age, He is not allowed to prevent the church from taking the gospel to the nations. Conditions will deteriorate through the church age, however, and at the end of the church age / millennium - right when it appears that the church has been defeated - Jesus will come again. The judgment of Revelation 20:7-10 is the same judgment described at the end of Revelation 19, and it will occur at the end of the church age / millennium. (As noted before, others believe that while the church age is happening on the earth, the millennium is simultaneously happening in heaven.)
2. The events of Rev. 20:1-10 occur on earth during **the last portion of the church age, just before the second coming of Christ.**
This perspective also views the binding of Satan at the beginning of Revelation 20 as a description of Satan's defeat during the first coming of Christ. It also views the result as the gospel going to the nations, because Satan can no longer deceive them to prevent this. However, from this perspective the 1,000-year period itself will occur when the gospel has been accepted by the vast majority of human beings, and a new age will dawn in which faith, righteousness, peace, and prosperity will prevail around the world. This will continue for an extensive period of time (symbolized by the 1,000 years), after which Satan will be loosed to deceive the nations one final time, and Jesus will come again.

3. The events of Rev. 20:1-10 occur on earth during **a future age after the second coming of Christ.**

From this perspective, Revelation 19 describes the second coming of Christ, and Revelation 20 describes events that follow the second coming. After Jesus returns to earth, He will completely stop Satan's activity on the earth, and reign here for a lengthy period of time (either 1,000 literal years or a perfect period of time symbolized by the number 1,000). At the end of this time Satan will be loosed and lead one final rebellion. He will be defeated in a battle (20:7-10) which is different from the one described at the end of Revelation 19.

Before you continue, you might want to go back and reread Revelation 20:1-10 again. Which of those three perspectives seems to most accurately represent what the text says?

That might be a frustrating question, however, since Revelation 20 probably doesn't tell you nearly as much as you want it to! So does the Bible talk about millennium anywhere else?

Other Biblical Information

Keep in mind that the word "millennium" isn't found in the Bible, and there is no other reference to a 1,000-year time period like this one. While there are other 1,000-year references in Psalm 90:4, Eccl. 6:6, and II Pet. 3:8, none of those have any direct relationship to the 1,000-year period in Revelation 20. But the Bible could still talk about the millennium in other places (just like we can learn about the Trinity from passages that don't use the word "trinity" or the number 3). Does it? Here is a sampling of some of the passages that might describe the same time period described in Revelation 20:1-10.

If you take the perspective (#1 above) that the events of Rev. 20:1-10 occur during **the entire church age, from the first coming of Christ to the second coming of Christ**, then you would probably see the suggestion of the millennium in any of the Old Testament texts describing a future time of worldwide peace and righteousness through the Messiah, the Jewish people, the land of Canaan, the city of Jerusalem, the temple, the sacrifices, and the throne of David. From this perspective, all of these promises used the language of the Old Covenant age, but they actually foretold the blessings of the New Covenant (church) age. So the promises about things like the land and temple are now fulfilled spiritually in and through the church (which is the true Israel, the true temple, the true Jerusalem, etc.). From this perspective most of the Old Testament prophecies about the coming reign of the Messiah are figuratively describing the church age, which is also the "1,000 years" described in Revelation 20:1-10.

If you take the perspective (#2 above) that the events of Rev. 20:1-10 occur on earth during **the last portion of the church age, just before the second coming of Christ**, then you would probably view texts like these as suggesting the millennium:

Genesis 12:2-3

Psalm 2:8 (noting that Psalm 2:7 was fulfilled as the resurrection / ascension, Acts 13:33)

Psalm 22:27

Psalm 72:5-8

Psalm 102:15

Isaiah 2:2-4 (noting that the "last days" began with the first coming of Christ, Acts 2:16-17)

Daniel 7:14

Matthew 13:31-33

Matthew 28:18-20 (the church will be the tool that the Savior will use to extend His authoritative control to all the nations)

John 12:31-32 (and other texts that speak of Jesus as the Savior of the world)

I Corinthians 15:24-25 (Christ is ruling until He subdues all of His enemies through the gospel here on earth)

These passages are used to support the idea that the gospel will continue spreading among the nations with power, until the gospel has been accepted by the vast majority of human beings, and a new age will dawn (the millennium) in which faith, righteousness, peace, and prosperity will prevail around the world. Christ will reign (spiritually) through the church for an extended period of time (symbolized by the 1,000 years) on earth; then Satan will be released for a brief time before Jesus returns (the second coming).

If you take the perspective (#3 above) that the events of Rev. 20:1-10 occur on earth during a **future age after the second coming of Christ**, then you would probably view texts like these as suggesting the millennium:

First of all, many of the same texts about the worldwide reign of the Messiah used in the previous list - like Isaiah 2:2-4 and Daniel 7:14. But these texts would be understood to describe the earthly reign of Jesus over believing Israel after His second coming, not a spiritual reign through the church before His second coming.

Isaiah 11

Isaiah 65:17-25 (though many would disagree about this because of the reference to new heavens and a new earth)

Jeremiah 23:5-8

Ezekiel 34:23-31

Ezekiel 37:21-28

Ezekiel 40-48

Amos 9:11-15

Zechariah 14:9-21

So, what do you think? Does it seem to you that the passages in those three sections are describing the same period of time described in Revelation 20:1-10?

One thing we can be fairly certain about: none of those lists of verses clearly proves the meaning of Revelation 20:1-10.

What Really Matters: Faithfulness to the Scriptures

As we consider all of these possibilities about millennium, what really matters is faithfulness to the Scriptures. Each of these differing perspectives on the millennium has biblical strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, your own perspective should be the one that has the most biblical

strengths and the fewest biblical weaknesses. In other words, you want the perspective that is most faithful to the Scriptures! With that in mind, I'd like to make an attempt to describe some of the biblical strengths and weaknesses of the third perspective in the lists above, which is usually called "premillennialism." This is the perspective that I prefer, and this Guide has generally viewed Revelation from this perspective (though I have tried to faithfully represent other perspectives). It would take far too much time and space to try to do this for every perspective on the millennium. But this is my attempt to honestly represent the strengths and weaknesses of the premillennial position. If you will take the time to think through this carefully, it should significantly help you think through what the Bible says about the millennium.

Remember that from this perspective the events of Rev. 20:1-10:

- occur on earth, not in heaven
- occur during a future age, not presently during the church age
- occur after the second coming of Christ
- involve the complete cessation of Satan's activities on earth
- include some people, both believers and unbelievers, who survive the events of the tribulation and live into the millennium
- fulfill the OT promises about a future earthly reign of Christ
- fulfill the OT promises about restoring Israel physically to their land and spiritually to God
- last for 1,000 years (or, in the view of some, a perfect period of time symbolized by the number 1,000)

At the end of this time Satan will be loosed and lead one final rebellion. He will be defeated in a battle (20:7-10) which is different from the one described at the end of Revelation 19.

Without further ado, here is my feeble attempt to list of some of the key strengths and weaknesses of premillennialism. This is certainly not an exhaustive list (nor could I possibly have enough wisdom and biblical understanding to produce an exhaustive list)!

Strengths of Premillennialism

1. It follows the natural flow of the text in Revelation. Other millennial views must insert a complete break between chapters 19 and 20, so that the events at the beginning of Revelation 20 actually take place before the events at the end of Revelation 19. While that is possible, the events of the end of chapter 19 and the beginning of chapter 20 flow together easily. After you read of the seizing of the beast and false prophet at the end of chapter 19, it is no surprise at all to read of the seizing of Satan at the beginning of chapter 20. The phrases at the beginning of 19:11, 19:17, 19:19, 20:1, and 20:4 all flow together very naturally.
2. It is a strong interpretation of the imprisonment of Satan (20:1-3). The text says that Satan is chained and thrown into the abyss which is both shut and sealed over him. Premillennialism believes that this indicates that he is not active on earth during the millennium. According to other millennial views, this strong description of his imprisonment is entirely figurative: Satan is still present and active on earth during the millennium, but in this one way (deceiving the nations) he is hindered by God. It is more

likely that verses 1-3 indicate a complete cessation of his activities instead of simply a curbing of his activities.

3. It fits well with the many NT passages which teach that Satan is very active in the present age. The premillennial position believes that Satan is still very active in the world today because he has not yet been imprisoned as Revelation 20:1-3 describes. This fits well with the many NT passages which teach the intense activity of Satan during this age. Other millennial positions must explain how Satan can be so active though he is presently bound and imprisoned in the abyss.
4. It can take the "1,000 years" at face value. It is true that the number 1,000 might be symbolic. But when we talk about symbolic numbers, we are always looking for some reason in the text why this particular number should be interpreted symbolically. For example, in Psalm 50:10b God says *The cattle on a thousand hills [are Mine]*. Well we know that God owns everything (see Ps. 50:10a *Every beast of the forest is Mine*). We know that there are cattle on far more than just 1,000 hills. And so we are certain that this must be interpreted as a figure of speech, for God owns the cattle on every hill. But in Revelation, are we certain that this 1,000-year time period of the imprisonment of Satan and reign of Christ must be a figure of speech? Does something in the text itself demand that Satan could not be imprisoned for 1,000 years, and that Jesus could not reign for 1,000 years?
5. It is a strong interpretation of the saints' judging and reigning with Christ (20:4-6). Rev. 5:10 says *You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth*. I Cor. 6:2 *Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?* Other millennial views have to explain how these things can be fulfilled in heaven instead of on earth, or as Christians during the church age on earth. In the premillennial understanding, there will be an earthly reign of Christ during which the saints will judge and reign with Him.
6. It is the strongest interpretation of the phrase *came to life* in Rev. 20:4. There is a "coming to life" at the beginning of the 1,000 year period (20:4) and at the end of the period (20:5). The same Greek word is used in both places. Since the second resurrection (v.5) is quite clearly a physical resurrection, it is most likely that the first resurrection is a physical resurrection. This Greek word, when used in the context of death, seems to always refer to physical resurrection in the NT. But only in the premillennial view does that word in verse 4 refer to physical resurrection. In other millennial views, it must be taken to refer to salvation itself, or to some other sort of spiritual resurrection. Here in Revelation 20:4, that is definitely not the strongest interpretation.

Let's explain that a little bit more, because it can easily be confusing. It's clear in Rev. 20 that there are some Christians who judge and reign with Christ during this 1,000 year time period. It's also clear that they "come to life" first. In the premillennial view, they "come to life" because they are physically resurrected at the second coming of Jesus. Then they reign and judge with Christ on the earth. But from other millennial perspectives, this 1,000-year time period takes place during the church age, either on earth or in heaven. But we await our resurrection at the end of this age. So how can we "come to life" to reign and judge with Christ before or during this age? It could mean that we come to life spiritually, or that our soul is taken to heaven at death. But remember that the same word is used for physical resurrection in the very next verse. And any time the word is used in the context of death, it refers to physical resurrection. Is "spiritual resurrection" possible in v.4? Yes. Likely? No.

7. It does not have to read the second coming of Jesus into verse 9. Rev. 20:9 says that *fire came down from heaven and devoured Satan and his armies*. In the premillennial view, this is a final defeat of Satan that occurs 1,000 years after the second coming of Christ. But in some other views, Rev. 20:9 is the second coming of Christ. It seems that if this fire coming down from heaven is the great second coming of Jesus that the Bible has anticipated, there would be some mention of Jesus or His coming here.
8. It does not have to minimize Revelation 20. It is surprising that Christians who are so diligent to give weight to every word of other parts of Scripture seem uncomfortable even talking about Revelation 20. For example, one author who is writing about the millennium says "I would prefer to leave Revelation 20 out of my presentation" (*Three Views on the Revelation and Beyond*, p.50). Premillennialism does not have to minimize this chapter.
9. It does not have to argue for the complete uniqueness of Revelation. Some of the other views of the millennium have to repeatedly emphasize that Revelation is an entirely different kind of book that has to be interpreted quite differently than we interpret the rest of the Bible. If so, there are difficult questions about how we know what the new rules of interpretation are, and how we apply them. Premillennialism recognizes the unique aspects of Revelation without having to call for very different rules of interpretation.
10. It is able to literally interpret the Old Testament promises of the future, earthly reign of Jesus over Israel in their land. In premillennialism, there is an actual reign of Christ in Israel, just as God promised so many times. In other millennial views, these promises are set aside completely and no longer have any meaning, or they are fulfilled in very symbolic ways in the church age. The Old Testament promises about things like the second coming of Jesus and the battle of Armageddon are found in passages in which God also clearly promises the physical and spiritual restoration of Israel to be reigned by the Messiah in their own land. Only premillennialism really takes those promises at face value.

Weaknesses of Premillennialism

1. In most premillennial views, all of the saints rule and reign with Christ on the earth during the millennium. But Revelation 20:4 makes it sound like it is much more limited: the martyrs from the time of the beast are those who reign with Christ for the 1,000 years. Now there are some reasons to think that this might expand beyond just the martyrs (20:4a, 20:9). But the burden of proof is on the premillennialist.
2. Revelation 20 never says that this reign of the saints with Christ takes place on earth. It doesn't say it doesn't (Rev. 5:10) - but it doesn't say it does.
3. There is much symbolism in Revelation, and the number "1,000" certainly could be symbolic of a perfect period of time.
4. Many NT passages describe a binding, casting out, or falling of Satan that occurred at the first coming of Jesus (Matthew 12:28-29, Luke 10:17-18, etc.). If this is the exact same thing described in Revelation 20:1-3, then the premillennial position is not correct.
5. From the premillennial perspective, the battle in Revelation 20:7-9 is not the battle of Armageddon (described at the end of Revelation 19) - it occurs 1,000 years after

Armageddon. However, one of the classic Old Testament texts about the Battle of Armageddon is Ezekiel 38-39, which describes the leader of that battle as "Gog of the land of Magog." So then the premillennial perspective expects Gog and Magog to be mentioned at the end of Revelation 19 - but they are not. They are mentioned in Revelation 20:8. This is more easily explained by other perspectives on the millennium, for they believe that the battle at the end of chapter 20 is the same battle as the one at the end of chapter 19.

6. Premillennialists have to explain how their can still be unsaved people and "nations" (Rev. 20:8) during the millennium. Now there are some pretty reasonable possibilities, but still the burden of proof lies with the premillennialists.
7. Premillennialists sometimes struggle to explain why the millennium is necessary or has any point. Some suggest it is a reward for the martyrs; others suggest that it is a final demonstration of the depravity of man and vindication of the justice of God; others suggest it is predominately intended to fulfill Old Testament promises.
8. Premillennialists have to explain why some of the passages that they use to define the millennium also speak of things which are not true of the millennium. For example, premillennialists often use verses from Isaiah 65 to explain the nature of the millennium (wolf and lamb graze together, youth will die at the age of one hundred, etc.). But this passage clearly begins with the words "behold, I create new heavens and a new earth." The new heaven and new earth are created after the millennium, so this does not fit together very well in the premillennial system. (Then again, it doesn't fit into anyone's system very well to say that people die in the new heavens and new earth!)
9. Premillennialists have to explain how people can get saved after the second coming of Christ. If there are unsaved people alive during the millennium, then presumably some of them get saved. Yet the New Testament seems to consistently emphasize that the second coming terminates all possibility of getting saved.
10. Premillennialists have to explain how there can be death after the second coming of Christ. It is clear from Revelation 20:9 that there are mortal people on earth who die at the end of the millennium. But from the premillennial perspective, the millennium comes after the second coming of Jesus. The reason this is a problem is because I Corinthians 15:23-26 seems to indicate that the last enemy, death, is defeated when Jesus comes again. So if death has been finally defeated when Jesus comes again, how can there be death after that - during the millennium?

Now many other things could probably be added to both of these lists, and lists like these could be made for every one of the different millennial positions. The point is simply to try to think through God's Word carefully. As I said earlier, you want the perspective that is most faithful to the Scriptures!

Now in the midst of these controversies, we can easily miss the major themes in Revelation 20:1-10. I could encourage you to go back and reread those verses carefully, looking for the theological themes. What do those verses teach about Satan, God, mankind, Jesus, history, etc.? While we won't figure out the things God didn't choose to tell us, we must hear the things He did choose to tell us!

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