

A Journey Into the Heavens
The Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgement
April 19, 2016

Chapter 19 ended with the Second Coming of Christ and the Battle of Armageddon. The first word in chapter 20 is *And*, which brings us immediately to the calm after the storm.

This chapter is about the coming Golden Age, often called the “millennium.” The word *millennium* is a Latin word that means “a thousand years.” The phrase *thousand years* appears six times in the first seven verses of chapter 20.

One’s approach to the entire book of Revelation depends upon how the millennium is interpreted. Should this thousand-year reign of Christ be taken literally or symbolically? It would be very difficult to interpret the resurrection in verse five as symbolic or to spiritualize it in any way; therefore, it seems only reasonable to assume the entire chapter is about literal events that will happen at Christ’s second coming to earth.

I. The _____ (20:1-10)

The millennium begins as John sees *an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand* (20:1). The angel binds Satan for a *thousand years* (20:2). This also implies that all the evil spirits under his command will also be imprisoned.

The *great chain* is obviously not a physical chain, since a spirit could not be restrained with a chain of steel. However, whatever its nature, it will succeed in binding Satan for the millennium, and he will *deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season* (20:3).

This phrase *must be loosed* seems to indicate Satan must be set free for a short period of time at the close of the millennium because the people born during the millennium must be tested.

After the binding of Satan, John says in verse four, *And I saw thrones, and they that sat upon them, and judgement was given unto them...* This phrase is very difficult to interpret because very few specifics are given. The most probable explanation is that those who were on the thrones were the 24 elders (Revelation 5:10).

However, specifics abound in identifying the rest of the characters in this scene according to Revelation 20:4-5

No details are given in this passage concerning the nature of the millennium kingdom, perhaps because such information had already been provided by the prophets, and John saw no need to repeat. Therefore, for a better understanding of the Millennial Age lets look at the following passages of Scripture:

*And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. **Isaiah 2:4***

*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice 'den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. **Isaiah 11:6-9***

*The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. **Isaiah 35:1,6-7***

But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Micah 4:1-2

Revelation 20:6 clearly excludes from the *second death* those who are part of the first resurrection, and thus implies those who participate in the second resurrection are destined for eternal death. Thus, the first resurrection must include all the dead in Christ. It is also clear from these verses that the resurrections of the dead in Christ and the lost dead are separated by 1,000 years. The Lord distinguishes the two resurrections, even though he did not specify a time difference in John 5:28-29.

Revelation 20:7 says, *And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.* As predicted in verse three, Satan will be set free at the end of the millennium and will find plenty of people to deceive - from the *four quarters of the earth...the number of who is as the sand of the sea* (20:8). Satan's followers will apparently come from the unregenerate population born during the millennium.

The reference to *Gog and Magog* in verse eight is reminiscent of Ezekiel 38-39 but it is obviously not the same battle because the time is different. In Ezekiel 38:15 the army invades the North, but the one in Revelation 20:8 comes from the *four quarters of the earth*. The judgement is also different (see Ezekiel 38:19-22). This battle in the book of Revelation and the one in the book of Ezekiel have practically nothing in common except the names.

The millennium will be an age of peace, prosperity, and perfect environment, as well as a time when disobedience will be quickly judged. Yes, at the end of this period, apparently millions of people will follow Satan in rebellion against the Lord. This is evidence that a perfect environment cannot produce righteousness.

As is implied in Revelation 20:9 and specified in Ezekiel 40-46, there will be a great millennial temple in Jerusalem, and a form of Old Testament worship will be instituted. That is why Satan and his followers will go up to the *beloved city* (20:9). Apparently, Christ permits Satan's army to surround Jerusalem, and then when they are assembled, *fire will come down from God out of heaven* and will consume them (20:9)

After the destruction of the armies of Satan, the *devil that deceived them was cast into the Lake of Fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are...*(20:10). Satan now joins the other two personalities of the unholy trinity, who had preceded him into the *lake of fire* by a thousand years. This verse makes it clear that damnation is not annihilation - the wicked will exist forever in torment. As verse ten states, *they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

II. The Great _____ Throne Judgement (20:11-15)

The end of the millennium and the beginning of eternity is marked by the judgement before the *great white throne*. The word *great* denotes the greatest judgement ever held, and white depicts the divine purity and righteousness that characterizes God's decisions. At this time there will be a second resurrection of the unsaved dead, *small and great stand before God* (20:12). Each sinner now must stand face to face with God and receive His judgement for his or her evil works. *As the books were opened*, every thought, word, and deed were brought forth as evidence so each person could be judged *according to their works*.

It could very well be that the memory in our own minds is the record book God will call up and perhaps visually play as His objective "film" of evidence. (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

If the resurrected dead are already lost and condemned, why have this judgement? It is true that the place where they will spend eternity was determined on earth by whether or not they received Christ, but at the *great white throne* God will determine the **degree** of their eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire. (Matthew 11:21-24)

The *book of life* (20:12) is at this judgement only to show that no one standing before the throne has their name written in it. This judgement is not a balancing of good and evil works, because a person's destiny is not decided in the life to come but rather in this life by what one chooses to do with Jesus Christ. Only the degree of punishment is decided at the *great white throne* judgement.

The lost dead are retrieved from three places - the *sea*, *death*, and *hell* (20:13). The *sea* refers to the unburied dead. The word *death* is a reference to the bodies of all people who have died and their bodies decayed to dust. So, whether they were drowned, buried at sea, cremated, or buried in the earth, God will call together the atoms, which at the sound of His voice will all come back into bodily form and stand before His throne in judgement.

The third word used in 20:13 is hell (Hades) which is the immediate place of residence for lost spirits between death and the permanent doom of the Lake of Fire. In Revelation 1:18 we found that Christ had the *keys of hell* (Hades) *and of death*, but apparently He gave them to an angel in 20:1 so that this final judgement can be executed.

The phrase *death and hell* (or Hades) in 20:14, therefore, refers to everyone whose body has been dead until the second resurrection and whose spirit has been in Hades. They are the ones *cast into the lake of fire*, which is the *second death*. The *second death* is eternal separation from God.

The reason for this severe judgement is given in 20:15. This implies a careful search of the record books was made to prevent any mistakes. Even though these people are judged by their works, it is clear their eternal destiny was predetermined by the absence of their names in the *book of life*.

The vastness of God's mercy is beyond human comprehension, but it is NOT limitless, as this passage indicates. These verses dispel all human theories of universalism - that everyone will be saved in the end.

Before God can usher in His new heavens and new earth, He must deal with sin in a way that is sweeping and final. That He will do at the *great white throne judgement!* Not only will he permanently do away with sin, but also *death and hell were cast into the Lake of Fire*, so that God could declare in 21:4, *...and there shall be no more death.*

What an amazing passage of Scripture that we have just studied, may we live everyday of our lives in light of eternity and be busy doing the work of the Lord!