

### INTRODUCTORY NOTES:

- This chapter details the 1000 year reign of Jesus we call the "Millennium" (mille=1,000 and annum=year). It can be seen as a continuation of chapter 19, as Jesus comes and takes His throne and establishes His kingdom on earth.
- Most of our understanding of this period comes from this chapter, as well as Zechariah 14, and many parts of Isaiah and Daniel. A lot happens in this chapter, so we'll take it a "chunk" at a time! (By event)

### IMPORTANT NOTE OF INTERPRETATION

The Millennium is viewed from two basic and different approaches: either the **literal interpretation** of scripture (**Millennialism**, belief that the 1000 years is literal and happens at the end of the Tribulation just as Revelation and other scriptures state) or the **symbolic interpretation** of scripture (**Amillennialism\***, belief that the millennium is NOT literal, but symbolic, as is much of scripture) which says we are in the "millennium" now. We will not dwell on the difference between these two, but will state here that we whole-heartedly reject the concept of Amillennialism, and believe in the literal reality of a 1000 year reign of Jesus on earth. **The symbolic Amillennialist position violates scripture and makes God a liar. To believe in Amillennialism you must believe that God has broken His covenants with Israel. God cannot do that. That violates His nature.** This chapter 20 of Revelation uses the **"1000 years" phrase 6 times in this chapter** alone. He is making a point that this is a literal period of time. Unless one interprets scripture literally, confusion and problems occur as each person attempts to provide his or her own symbolic interpretation. God's Word is intended to be taken literally. God does what He says, and He says what He does. Period.

**COMMENTARY: The thrones are literal; the martyrs are literal; Jesus is literal; the Word of God is literal; the Beast is literal; the image is literal; the mark of the Beast is literal; their foreheads and their hands are literal; and the thousand years are literal. It is all literal. A thousand years means a thousand years. If God meant that it was eternal, I think He would have said so. If He meant it was five hundred years, He would have said so. Cannot God say what He means? Of course He can, and when He says a thousand years, He means a thousand years. (McGee)**

- **\*Amillennialism originated** about the 3rd and 4th centuries AD with Augustine and Origen. It ultimately spawned anti-semitism, and is the belief of the Catholic Church and many mainline Protestant churches. It uses allegory and symbolism to interpret God's Word, and does not take the Word of God literally, especially the prophetic portions. The "pre-millennial" view of scripture which was the position of the early church, that Jesus would return to destroy all evil, became unpopular after Christianity was made the state religion of Rome. Roman leadership thought of itself as god-like. Therefore, the prevalent pre-millennial view was altered to appease Rome. The "amillennial" view believes that Jesus will not rule physically, as the scripture says, but rather spiritually. This became the dominant view of the Roman Catholic Church, and is also widely held today by many mainstream protestant churches.

- *The literal interpretation, however, belief that Jesus will physically reign from earth for 1,000 literal years, was favored by such scholars as Irenaeus and Sir Isaac Newton, but it has mostly remained a minority belief. Today, regardless of denomination, there are literal Bible believing Christians who stand firm on the literal interpretation of these passages, as well as all scripture. This is the only completely safe and steadfastly sure position regarding the Word of God.*
- The **purpose of the Millennium is to fulfill all the OT covenants**, to confirm the need of man for God, to provide another opportunity for obedience to God (still freewill, choice, although rule is enforced), and to fulfill all the OT and NT prophecies about the reign of Jesus.
- We should note that there is a **75-day gap between Armageddon and the Millennium**. We know this from Daniel 12:11-12: *“And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.”* There is a great deal of speculation and controversy about this mysterious time period. We don’t know exactly why, but we do know that many things will happen in this time. Some of these things are 1) the cleanup after Armageddon, including antichrist and the false prophet thrown in the lake of fire; 2) removal of the abomination of desolation; 3) satan is bound; 4) remaining Gentiles are judged; and 5) resurrection of the Old Testament and Tribulation saints. These are just a few of the many things that will happen in this time.

## 1ST EVENT: SATAN BOUND AND CAST INTO THE ABYSS

*<sup>1</sup> Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup> He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; <sup>3</sup> 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.*

- *"Bottomless pit"* - the Abyss, holding place of fallen angels (see Jude 6). This angel is acting on God's authority. This pit is mentioned seven times in Revelation (9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3)
- *"dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan..."* very clear ID here! No mistaking who this is. He is bound (which means he is not active or able to deceive) for the 1000 years.
- *"...and set a seal on him..."* no one opens this prison without God's authority!
- *"...so that he should deceive the nations no more..."* The purpose of satan’s binding. During these 1000 years, he will not be around to deceive. Truth will prevail.
- Isaiah 24 tells us he will not be alone, but all the demons will be bound with him: *“It shall come to pass in that day That the LORD will punish on high the host of exalted ones, And on the earth the kings of the earth. They will be gathered together, As prisoners are gathered in the pit, And will be shut up in the prison; After many days they will be punished.”* (Isaiah 24:21-22)



- *"...the thousand years..."* This time frame is specified six times here. God is underscoring the literal understanding of 1,000 years. Psalm 90:4 *"For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it is past, And like a watch in the night."* And 2 Peter 3:8 *"But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."* are used to justify the "allegorization" of this time frame. But the repeated use of this clear reference should most likely be interpreted literally.
- *"But after these things he must be released for a little while..."* many have asked the very legitimate question, **WHY?** We don't know for sure, but one reason is to show man's black heart even without the influence of the enemy. We often do not understand why God does what He does, the way He does. But we know He always has a plan, and His plan is always better than ours.

## 2ND EVENT: FIRST RESURRECTION, REIGN WITH THE MESSIAH

*<sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup> 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.*

- *"Thrones, ...and judgment was committed to them"...* WHO ARE THESE? It is not stated, but most believe these are the church saints (including those raptured), same as those in chapters 4 and 5 (the elders on their thrones).
- **Another group seen, "the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus..."** These are clearly the martyred saints of the Tribulation. They are resurrected and co-reign with Jesus, as do the other saints. This is the end of the first resurrection.
- **It is thought that four groups of people will participate with Jesus during the Millennium:** 1) the ones on their thrones, the same elders of chapter 4 and 5, who are the Church; 2) the tribulation martyrs, those who were killed for their faith; 3) Old Testament saints (Daniel 12:1-4, Isaiah 25:8-9); and 4) living tribulation saints (those who remained true to God, who lived through the tribulation). It should be noted here that the only people who will go into the Millennium are believers. All the rest have been killed at the final battle.
- *"The rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection."* The first resurrection is for believers only, and this is a "category" not a single event. The other dead (unbelievers) are not resurrected until after the Millennium. The Greek word used here for "resurrection" is "anastasis" which literally means to stand up again, or be raised back to life. The resurrection is a literal event where all the dead believers are raised to literal life, with a literal uncorrupted body (see 1 Corinthians 15).



- *"...over such the second death has no power..."* The first death is of the body, separation of the body from the soul. The second death is the separation from God. This second death, or separation from God, has no power over believers. It is reserved for unbelievers.
- *"...they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."* Those who reign with Jesus will be of the first resurrection, all believers. All believers will be priests, not just the Jewish Levites. We will all serve Him in some capacity.

### 3RD EVENT: SATAN RELEASED, GOG AND MAGOG, SATAN THROWN INTO LAKE OF FIRE

*<sup>7</sup> Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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.*

- **Satan to be released at the end of the 1000 years.** He will immediately go out to deceive the nations again. This shows the basic defect in man - a perfect environment (the Millennium) still reveals the fallen nature of man. Human nature doesn't change even under the rule of the Lamb. Human nature must be redeemed first.
- The Millennium starts out well, populated with believers. However, over the 1000 years, unbelief and rebellion, **the nature of unredeemed mankind, returns.** Even after a perfect rule by a perfect ruler, the black heart of man is still around. Some believe this period of time underscores this fact that man is essentially evil in nature, even without the enemy's influence. This perfect environment will reveal this nature, because just the environment cannot product a perfect heart. Only God can do this.
- **"Gog and Magog."** Don't confuse with same in Ezekiel 38 and 39. There is much debate and controversy about these two references. Ezekiel indicates a pre-Trib or mid-Trib event, whereas Revelation 20 is post-Trib. There are many similarities and many differences between these two references. In Ezekiel, Gog is a person or ruler, and Magog is the land of this ruler. Ezekiel tells us other ancient names of nations united (an alliance) with Gog and Magog in their attempt to destroy Israel. These ancient names can be traced to modern Arab nations today. Most commentators believe this is a Russian/Arab alliance in Ezekiel 38-39. Revelation 20 is not specific. The timing, participants and place are different. However, it is also a group gathered together to do battle against God and His people - another vain thing! (Psalm 2). Some commentators still insist this is the same as the Ezekiel battle. **However, a careful analysis of both events should lead to the conclusion that they are separate and unique.**
- *"whose number is as the sand of the sea..."* These people gathered are a VERY large number. It is sad to realize that huge numbers of people wish to rebel against God at this time. It is likely that there will be more people on earth than ever before since there is no disease, or want of anything. Mankind flourishes during this time and populations swell.
- *"...surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city."* This large group surrounds Jerusalem and outlying areas, again attempting to overthrow God and His people. Although Babylon has been in ruins for a 1000 years, the spirit of Babylon drives sinful man to rebel against God again and again. The Tale of Two Cities continues....

- *"And fire came down from God..."* notice there is no battle mentioned here! They have gathered for battle, but it's apparently a non-event since God intervenes immediately and sends fire down to destroy them. So much for that "battle." Battling against God, whether in body or in spirit, has disastrous and often fatal results. Always.
- *"devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire..."* Now the enemy is sent to his ultimate eternal destiny - the lake of fire - to join the antichrist and the false prophet, and eventually all other unbelievers. They will exist forever in torment. Notice the two former occupants of this place are still there. They have not disappeared or been annihilated. They remain in torment.
- Many people ask **why this battle had to happen again**, especially after one previous Gog and Magog, and Armageddon. First, asking "why" questions is non-productive. We cannot know the mind of God, only that He is perfect and just and righteous. The only thing we can understand is that all sin must be destroyed prior to entering into the eternal state with God. Since living unredeemed people populated the Millennial Kingdom, the human heart still rebelled. This final battle reveals this, and also finalizes the preparations for the eternal state.

#### 4TH EVENT: GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT, FINAL DISPOSITION OF UNBELIEVERS

*<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. <sup>15</sup> And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

- *"Then I saw a great white throne..."* this section is often referred to as the "Great White Throne Judgment" - it is the judgment of the unbeliever, and the doomed, not the judgment of the believers. This is post-Millennium.
- *"...and Him who sat on it..."* Who is judge? Jesus!
- *"...from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them."* A reminder of verse in chapter 6, where the sky rolled up. This sounds like the destruction of heaven and earth that is referenced in chapter 21. A corrupt earth and heavens cannot remain in the presence of a holy God.
- **The unbelieving dead are gathered here.** These are the second resurrection. All believers have been resurrected prior to this. There is no difference between "small and great" in God's eyes.



- **ALL unbelieving dead appear here**, including those in the sea, and Hades. These verses prevent belief in "existentialism" or the fact that after death there is nothing. Wrong. After death there is judgment for the unbeliever, and ultimately an eternal torment in the lake of fire. Very sobering!
- **"...and books were opened."** What books? Perhaps books where all deeds are written by God, or perhaps the books of the Law. **God judges ONLY in two ways**, either you are under the Law, or under Grace. We choose. If under the Law, the Law judges us guilty, as all sin and fall short (*miss the mark*, that's what the word "sin" means literally) of the glory of God. If we are under grace, we are covered by the blood of Jesus, and judged by *His righteousness*. Jesus told the Pharisees that Moses would judge them - the Law. They declined His grace.
- **"And another book was opened..."** This is identified as the **Book of Life**. There is much speculation about this book. It is thought that the Book of Life initially contains the names of EVERY person ever born, as God desires that "none are lost." However, as people make choices against God, not to receive the gift of His Son, these people's names are removed from the Book of Life (blotted out due to unbelief). (See Exodus 32:32-33; Psalm 69:28; Revelation 21:27; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 13:8; 18:8, Luke 10:20)
- **"And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books."** The unbeliever's works are known here (perhaps included in the books opened) and compared to the Law. Since they have declined the grace of God, this is their only other point of judgment. The results? Romans 3:23. This judgment is a formality only. No one in this judgment is pardoned. All are condemned to eternal separation from God, the second death.
- **"Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire..."** This is literal physical and spiritual death, and Hades, the holding place of the dead (Hades in NT, Sheol in OT, a temporary place), incorrectly translated sometimes as "hell." These two entities are now also thrown in the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the ultimate permanent destiny of everything and everyone in opposition to God. It is what most people today call "hell."
- **"This is the second death..."** This death, which is separation from God, and an eternity of torment, is only for the unbeliever. It has no hold over the believer. Remember, this is completely necessary for a holy God, and for our protection from sin. It must be destroyed.
- **All those who names are not found in the Book of life are cast into the lake of fire.** Their names have been blotted out. The Lamb's Book of Life is like a subset of the Book of Life. OT saints didn't have Jesus to believe in, although they believed in God's promises of a Messiah. Everyone starts out in the Book of Life, then as decisions are made against God, those names are removed. In the same manner, as decisions are made for Jesus, those names are ADDED to the Lamb's book.
- This is a **simple and straight-forward passage**. It is the final event before the ETERNAL state, or what we call eternity. There are a lot of things we don't know, but God has given us what we need to know. Any speculation beyond what we are told is futile, a waste of time and perhaps harmful. Believe what God says. That is enough.



- **Many ask about the believer's judgment.** There WILL be one. We call it the BEMA seat of Christ, from the Greek word for the official seat of judgment - bema. It is referenced in 2 Corinthians 5:10 - *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."* This is not a salvation judgment, but a rewards judgment. It is where we will give account for what we did with what God gave us. We don't know exactly when this will take place, but most think it will be sometime after the rapture and before the second coming. We will receive our rewards (aside from salvation) based on this judgment. This is a "believers only" judgment.

## MORE ABOUT THE MILLENIUM

- It is essential for the **fulfillment of promises to Israel and Christ** (His unconditional covenants to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all Jews.)
  - Promise of the Land (See Genesis 12:7; 13:15-16; 17:7-8); a kingdom and a greater One, Son of David (Messiah) as King (See Psalms 89:27-37)
  - Promise of restoration to the land of Israel from worldwide dispersion and establishment of Messiah's kingdom (See Jeremiah 31:37; Ezekiel 36, 37, 38, 39, etc.)
  - Promises that a remnant of the Israelites will be saved (See Romans 11:25-29; Zechariah 13:8-9; Isaiah 10:20-22)
- **Promised to David** (See 2 Samuel 7:12-17; 23:5) under oath (See Psalm 89:34-37)
- **Predicted in the Psalms and the Prophets** (See Psalms 2; 45; 110; Isaiah 2:1-5; 4:1-6; 11:1-9; 12:1-6; 30:18-26; 35:1-10; 60; 61:3-62; 66; Jeremiah 23:3-8; 32:37-44; Ezekiel 40-48; Daniel 2:44-45; 7:13-14; 12:2-3; Micah 4:1-8; Zechariah 12:10-14:21)
- **Promised to Mary** (See Luke 1:32; Micah 5:2; Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 2:44) reaffirmed to apostles (See Luke 22:29-30)
- **Lord's Prayer states "Thy Kingdom come"** and "For thine is the kingdom (See Matthew 6:10, 13; Acts 1:6; Psalms 45, 46, 47, 48)
- **Rule** (See Psalms 2: 110) **with a "rod of Iron"** (See Revelation 12:5; 19:15)
- **Every knee must bow** (See Philippians 2:6-11)
- **Preview in Matthew 17.** (the transfiguration)
- **Melchizedek** a "type," served as King and Priest (See Zechariah 6:13)
- **Millennial Temple** (See Isaiah 3:17, 22; Ezekiel 43:7; 44:2; 46:1-3)
- **In Zion** (See Isaiah 2:2-4; Jeremiah 23:3-6)
- **David** (See Ezekiel 37:24, 25; 34:23, 24; Jeremiah 30:9; Hosea 3:5)
- **All creation will be changed.** Physical changes (See Zechariah 4:9, 10; Isaiah 35:1-10); **Curse lifted** (See Isaiah 11:6-9); **Creation redeemed** (See Genesis 3; Romans 8:20-22); **Earth full of knowledge of the Lord** (See Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14)
- However, these changes are **not for eternity**. In the Millennium there is still death, sin (See Isaiah 65:20); Each to have land (See Micah 4:15) and Fruitful (See Amos 9:13). In Revelation 21, we see that the heavens and the earth are destroyed and recreated in perfection.