

Text: Rev 20.1-15

Outline of Revelation:

1. The things you have seen (the vision of Christ) Rev 1
2. The things which are (the letters to the churches) Rev 2-3
3. The things which must come after these things (Rev 4-22)
 - a. The overture: the scene in heaven (Rev 4-5)
 - b. The seal judgements begin (Rev 6)
 - c. (Parenthesis): the believers of the Tribulation (Rev 7)
 - d. The seventh seal which reveals the seven trumpets (four in chapter 8)
 - e. The fifth and sixth trumpets (Rev 9)
 - f. (Parenthesis): Voices in heaven (Rev 10)
 - g. (Parenthesis): The Two Witnesses | the seventh trumpet (Rev 11)
 - h. (Parenthesis): The Long War Against God¹ (Rev 12)
 - i. (Parenthesis): The Beasts (Rev 13)
 - j. (Parenthesis): Triumph of the Saints foreseen (Rev 14)
 - k. (Prelude): Another Sign in Heaven (Rev 15)
 - l. The bowl judgements (Rev 16)
 - m. (Parenthesis): Fall of Religious Babylon (Rev 17)
 - n. (Parenthesis): Fall of Political Babylon (Rev 18)
 - o. The Second Coming (Rev 19)

p. The Great White Throne (Rev 20)

“Many other passages in Scripture indicate that a reign of peace and righteousness on earth will follow the Second Coming (Ps. 2; 24; 72; 96; Isa. 2; 9:6–7; 11–12; 63:1–6; 65–66; Jer. 23:5–6; 30:8–11; Dan. 2:44; 7:13–14; Hosea 3:4–5; Amos 9:11–15; Micah 4:1–8; Zeph. 3:14–20; Zech. 8:1–8; 14:1–9; Matt. 19:28; 25:31–46; Acts 15:16–18; Rom. 11:25–27; Jude 14–15; Rev. 2:25–28). Therefore it seems clear that chapter 20 describes what will follow chapter 19 in chronological sequence. Evidently Jesus Christ will begin to reign almost immediately after He returns to the earth.”²

“... we may note that the ancient church down to the time of Augustine (354–430) (though not without minor exceptions) unquestionably held to the teaching of an earthly, historical reign of peace that was to follow the defeat of Antichrist and the physical resurrection of the saints but precede both the judgment and the new creation ...”³

¹ I borrow the title of Henry Morris' book of this same name for our chapter heading here.

² Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Rev 19.21.

³ Alan Johnson, “Revelation,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 578.

“It should be evident that one’s interpretation of Revelation 20 is an important decision that serves as a watershed for various approaches to prophetic Scripture.”⁴

I. The binding of Satan (1-3)

- A. This section follows on sequentially from the preceding defeat of the beast and false prophet (‘then’ – 1)
- B. An angel is sent to the earth with a great chain and a key to the abyss [bottomless pit] (1)
- C. The angel lays hold of Satan and binds him for a thousand years (2)
 1. Satan is clearly identified: the dragon, the serpent, the devil
 2. The binding is for a specific period
 - a. Repeated throughout the passage
 - b. All numbers in Revelation make perfect sense if taken literally
 - c. There is no reason not to take the time literally
 - d. The ‘chain’ may be figurative since Satan is a spirit – a physical chain cannot bind a spirit
- D. The binding of Satan affects the nations of the earth (3)
 1. Satan is rendered powerless to deceive the nations
 - a. In our present time, Satan is actively deceiving men
 - b. Those who teach Satan is currently bound make nonsense of many Scriptures, including 1 Pt 5.8

^{1 Pt 5.8} Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
 2. A notation is mentioned that “after these things” – a specific sequence of events, *i.e.*, the thousand years – Satan must be loosed briefly [this notation implies a literal time]
 3. The nations here are those who remain alive after the tribulation, it is they who repopulate the earth

⁴ John F. Walvoord, “Revelation,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 978.

II. The first resurrection (4-6)

A. The martyrs of the tribulation are raised from the dead to reign with Christ for the thousand years (4)

1. Why is the church not raised? Already raised at the Rapture
 - a. May already be reigning with Christ, see 4a, "I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them"
 - b. If the 24 elders represent the raptured church, they are already resurrected and reigning

2. The tribulation saints thus join the resurrection saints as rulers

"There are four good reasons why Jesus Christ's reign will be a physical, earthly reign rather than a spiritual, heavenly one. First, Christ will be on earth after He returns (19:11–16). Second, at the end of His reign the saints, who reign with Him, will still be on the earth (v. 9). Third, God promised the saints an earthly reign (5:10). Fourth, the Old Testament Messianic prophecies anticipated an earthly kingdom (e.g., 2 Sam. 7:10–16; Ps. 2:8; Isa. 65:17–66:24; Dan. 7:27; et al.)."⁵

B. The rest of the dead remain dead for the thousand-year period – they have no part in the first resurrection (5)

C. Four facts about those who reign with Christ (6)

1. They are blessed and holy
2. The second death has no power over them (second death not here defined)
3. They will be priests of God and of Christ [intermediaries between God and man?]
4. They will reign with Christ for the thousand years

The resurrected saints join in the kingdom of Christ, administering the affairs of the living nations during this period.

⁵ Constable, *Expository Notes*, Rev 20.4.

III. The loosing of Satan (7-10)

- A. Occurs after the completion of the 1000 years (7)
- B. Is followed by renewed deception of the living nations, gathering a vast number from among them to a final battle (8)
 - 1. Those who survive the Tribulation are believers in natural bodies
 - 2. They will repopulate the earth (see Isa 65.18-25)
 - 3. Many (most, all?) of the following generations will profess to follow Christ
 - 4. When Satan is released, their true hearts will be on display; those who rebel (a great number) will have no real faith
- C. A note on Gog and Magog
 - 1. Not the same as the battle described in Ezek 38-39, though the names are the same
 - 2. Gog and Magog in Ezekiel are in rebellion to God, the terms are symbolic of rebellion
- D. They gather against the saints and the city but are destroyed by fire from heaven (9)
- E. The devil is cast into the lake of fire with the beast and false prophet to be judged forever in torment (10)
 - 1. Note: where beast and false prophet *are*
 - 2. These two have been in the lake of fire at this point for 1000 years

IV. The last judgement [the Great White Throne] (11-15)

- A. Everything in the vision is dominated by a great white throne and the one who sits on it (11)
 - 1. This may mark the end of the universe as we know it
 - 2. In Rev 21, a new heaven and new earth appear
- B. The dead (the rest of the dead, *cf.* v. 5) stand before the throne to be judged (12-13)
 - 1. The dead from every class
 - 2. The dead are judged according to the books, including the book of life (not identified beyond this)

3. The dead are 'resurrected' in a sense: their physical remains unite with their souls in Hades

"The mention of 'the sea' giving up its dead makes it clear that regardless of how far a body has disintegrated, it will nevertheless be resurrected for this judgment."⁶

4. The dead are judged according to their deeds (mentioned twice, v. 12, v. 13)

C. The destruction of the grave [death and Hades] (14)

1. From this point on there is no more death

2. The lake of fire is the 'second death' from which there is no rising

D. The destination of those not found in the book of life is the lake of fire (15)

"Though many have attempted to find some scriptural way to avoid the doctrine of eternal punishment, as far as biblical revelation is concerned there are only two destinies for human souls; one is to be with the Lord and the other is to be forever separated from God in the lake of fire. This solemn fact is motivation for carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth whatever the cost, and doing everything possible to inform and challenge people to receive Christ before it is too late."⁷

⁶ Walvoord, "Revelation in BKCNT," 983.

⁷ Walvoord, 983.