

CHAPTER 20

Revelation 20:1–5

[1] Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. [2] And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, [3] and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

[4] Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. [5] The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.

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There are still angels in heaven based on John's writings at the beginning of this chapter. They are attending to the Father in the throne room of heaven. God the Father remains in heaven throughout the Millennial Kingdom.

The angel descends to earth with one purpose, to bind Satan for 1,000 years. And this marks a time of peace on earth. The holding place for Satan will be the abyss. We talked about the abyss a few chapters ago and if you remember it isn't Hell, but it is somewhere similar. It is a place reserved for demonic spirits until the appropriate time when God will unleash them on the earth in Tribulation. Both Hell and the Abyss are temporary holding places.

John then moves onto the citizens of the kingdom. Remember that the church was raptured, first those that were dead and then those who were alive, and in the rapture received new glorified bodies. Those counted in this number were those who were alive during the church period, the time between Pentecost and the Rapture. These individuals returned with Christ during the second coming of Christ. Those Old Testament saints and those who died during the Tribulation were present at the marriage supper of the lamb only in soul form so they need bodies on earth because the Kingdom is a physical place. So John says that they receive physical bodies.

These 45 days after Christ's return and the beginning of the Kingdom will be a time where these individuals receive their physical bodies.

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Daniel 12 sets the stage for this judgment in the beginning of the chapter when he speaks about individuals being raised to everlasting life and others to disgrace and contempt. Those who are righteous will be raised to receive new bodies, but the unrighteous will wait until the end of the Millennial Reign for their judgment.

John sees four thrones setup and these four thrones are used for judging. As John describes them they are in soul form meaning they have yet to receive a body. The term "came to life" describes their receiving of physical bodies.

What about the unbelieving Jews who were alive at Christ's return? They repented and called on Him for help, but they have sinful bodies, so what do we make of them? We don't have enough time to go through all of it right now, but if you look at the Old Testament concerning the new covenant that God will make with Israel that we've been grafted into in Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Isaiah, we can say that some of Israel will be perfect possessing glorified bodies, but others will have natural bodies. There is no clear indication of exactly how this will play out, but for now that is the best that we can speculate about.

John concludes this portion of Scripture by stating what we mentioned earlier, those who are not resurrected will not come to life until the end of the Millennial Reign. There will be two judgments, the first of the righteous and the second of the unrighteous. Believers will be judged first and then the unbelievers.

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Revelation 20:6–9

[6] Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years. [7] And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison [8] and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. [9] And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them,

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Between verse 6 and 7 we learn that the kingdom begins and then in verse 7 we see what happens after it ends. Revelation doesn't speak much to what happens because the rest of the Bible has a number of details about what happens. Throughout Scripture, the idea of the Kingdom progresses. It begins as a promise to a proposal to a program to a physical place.

In the book of Revelation it becomes a physical place. It is a very real place, a very real world that we will inhabit for 1,000 years. We don't know exactly what it will look like, but it will be a world that is beautiful and meant to be enjoyed. And it will be all the more enjoyable because we will know, serve and worship God in a way that we never have before.

So at the end of this 1,000 years, John says that Satan is released from his prison. You might remember that he was thrown into the abyss at the beginning of the Millennial Reign. But when Satan is released, he immediately begins to tempt humanity.

And the result is a war on earth for the first time since the Tribulation. This involves countless individuals from Gentile nations and their target is Israel and the temple in Jerusalem. Verse 9 states that these nations come to the broad plain which if you refer to Zechariah's description of Israel during the Millennial Reign in Zechariah 14, you see him talk about a broad plain around Jerusalem. This battle ends quickly as they are devoured by a fire that comes from heaven. So there are a number of questions about why this is happening and what's going on right?

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This first question we may ask is why was Satan released in the first place? We know that Satan is the father of lies and that his role is as a deceiver and accuser. He stands in contrast to Jesus who is the Truth and our advocate before the Father. The Bible says that when Jesus rules the earth during this kingdom, He will do so with a rod of iron enforcing perfect righteousness. If Satan were loosed, there would always be a chance for sin to take a foothold and undermine the authority. There are still individuals in this kingdom who possess natural bodies. And because of that sin, can still take hold in their lives.

The second question is why doesn't the Lord destroy Satan at the beginning of the Millennial Reign? The very purpose of the Millennial Reign is so that Jesus can fully rule over sin both spiritually and physically. At the end of all of this all creation will be under the perfect rule of God. The corrupting effect of sin will no longer be a problem because sin will be destroyed and perfect holiness restored. So the reason that Satan is released is so that Jesus can finally crush him completely.

The third question is who are Gog and Magog in this final war? Gog and Magog are references to the book of Ezekiel. If you read Ezekiel 38 and 39 you find a lot about what is prophesied concerning this war. Gog is an actor from the nation of Magog. Gog is a title, not a specific name, similar to Pharaoh or Caesar. This man comes from Magog and has allies from the south and east who will start this war. There are very rudimentary war elements in use as Isaiah says that all metal will be fashioned into farm equipment during the kingdom.

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Gog desires to attack Israel under the influence of Satan. He sees this as an opportunity to obtain wealth since Israel will be blessed more than any other nation during the kingdom.

So this army comes toward Israel like a cloud covering the land. Israel is defenseless because for 1000 years there has been no war, so even primitive weapons from a large gathering pose a threat. But as this army attempts to destroy Israel, God sends fire from heaven to consume them. So once again we see the Lord providing for Israel.

With this, the final attempt of the enemy to destroy Israel is thwarted. And at this point the Millennial Reign is completed, but there are a few more things that need to be discussed in this chapter.

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Revelation 20:10–15

[10] and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. [11] Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. [12] And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. [13] And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. [14] Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. [15] And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

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The last part of this chapter is about judgements being held. And the first individual to be judged is Satan himself. Satan begins a new existence of eternal torment in the lake of fire with the Antichrist and the False Prophet. It appears that this lake is somewhere in the heavenly realm and right now it is vacant, but at the end of the Millennial Reign, it will house the False Trinity of Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet.

This place is the very definition of spiritual death. It's a place for those who are unable to enter the presence of God. It's a place of torment not just because of the conditions, but also because of the separation. Anyone who is thrown into this lake will be eternally separated from God. After death there is no chance for repentance, so this is an eternal state that the soul will occupy.

John goes on to describe a second resurrection. Remember that the first resurrection was a blessed resurrection. It was those who believed in Christ. The second resurrection will not be a blessed event as these are the unrighteous who are resurrected. All unbelievers will now face their eternal judgement.

John sees a great white throne appear and Jesus is seated on the throne to judge the unrighteous. John describes that all unbelievers are brought up from hell and judged before Christ. Remember our bodies are temporary, but our spirits or souls are eternal.

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John also describes the sea, or the abyss giving up their dead and this is a reference to where Satan was bound for 1,000 years. And the indication here is that most likely his demons were sent there with him and that now they too will be judged. Judgment comes in the form of a book.

We learned earlier that there is a Book of Life in which all names to whom the Lord has show mercy and who have called Him Lord is written. Verse 12 mentions books, so what may these other books be? There are a number of ideas, but one is that they are a list of all the sins that individuals have committed.

A second idea is that it is the Law of Moses by which one sin will cause the whole Law to not be kept. The Great White Throne is a judgement only for unbelievers. And anyone who is not found in this book will be thrown into the Lake of Fire.

And this is a sobering reminder of our need to make sure that we spread the Good News of Jesus. Hell is not just a place of fiction, it is a real place.

The Lake of Fire is not just a made up store, it is a literal place of eternal torment and separation from God.