

## “REVELATION: DOES IT DESCRIBE OUR DAYS?” SERIES

### #17: “Chapters 20-22”

#### INTRO:

Chapter 19 brought us to the end of the church age – to “judgment day.” Now, chapter 20 takes us back to the church age, which is consistent with the pattern of the vision John was given. This is the seventh time the church age has been described.

Here in chapter 20 the “church age” is described as...

#### ***A THOUSAND YEARS IN WHICH SATAN IS BOUND.***

Verses 1-6: ***“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. <sup>2</sup> And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, <sup>3</sup> 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.***

***<sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup> 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.”***

What is shown to John here is the same as what was revealed in chapters 11 and 12, except with a different approach:

1. In Revelation 12, Christ is born, dies, ascends to heaven, and is crowned, while Satan is thrown down to earth. In chapter 20:1-3, Satan is bound, and instead of the nations conquering the church, the church begins to conquer (evangelize) the nations.
2. In Revelation 11 and 12, the church has a long period of witnessing to the world as the influence of Satan is minimalized. In Revelation 20:4-6, with Satan bound (limited) all during the church age, and in heaven the souls of the redeemed are living and reigning with Christ.
3. In Revelation 11, there is a brief period of severe persecution (three and one-half days), which is Satan’s “forty-two months” and the final manifestation of the power of the antichrist. In Revelation 20:7, there is a very brief period of severe persecution, culminating in the battle of Armageddon.

4. In Revelation 11 and 14, Christ comes in judgment. In Revelation 20:11 ff., Christ comes in judgment.

There's a very popular view of this chapter that has Satan literally in chains, Christ ruling the world from a throne in Jerusalem, and Christians having the upper hand, so to speak, throughout the world. I don't buy this. There's no literal "chain" that could hold Satan. Christ ruling the world from an actual "throne" in literal "Jerusalem" flies in the face of the truth that Christ's throne is in heaven, the church is the "new Jerusalem, Christians are the "temple" of God, and they rule with Christ "in heaven," not on earth.

In verses 1-3, Satan is "**bound**" for a thousand years. This binding of Satan began when Christ arose from the His baptism in the Jordan and won the victory over Satan when He was tempted in the wilderness. After that, He began to cast out demons. Then when the seventy were sent out, they discovered that "**...even the demons are subject to us in your name,**" to which Jesus added, "**I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven**" (Luke 10:17-18). John 12:20-32 parallels Revelation 20.

So, the thousand years is the church age, during which time Satan is "**bound**" or limited.

Hendriksen comments:

*"... we conclude that also here in Revelation 20:1-3 the binding of Satan and the fact that he is hurled into the abyss to remain there for a thousand years indicates that throughout this present Gospel Age, which begins with Christ's first coming and extends nearly to the second coming, the devil's influence on earth is curtailed so that he is unable to prevent the extension of the church among the nations by means of an active missionary program. During this entire period, he is prevented from causing the nations – the world in general – to destroy the church as a mighty missionary institution. By means of the preaching of the Word as applied by the holy Spirit, the elect, from all parts of the world, are brought from darkness to light. In that sense the church conquered the nations, and the nations do not conquer the church. Throughout this entire period churches are established.*

*"... The church has become international. This international church is very powerful..."*

*"Now please do not misunderstand our interpretation. We are not stating that the world is becoming better and better and that by and by nearly everyone will join the ranks of Christ's army. Many will hear the Gospel but will not heed it. Moreover, God's trumpets of judgments will not convert a world which is hardening itself in unbelief. The majority will ever be on the side of the evil one.*

*"We repeat: the devil is not bound in every sense. His influence is not wholly or completely destroyed. On the contrary, within the sphere in which Satan is permitted to*

*exert his influence for evil he rages most furiously. A dog securely bound with a long and heavy chain can do great damage within the circle of his imprisonment. Outside of that circle, however, the animal can do not damage, can hurt no one" (pp. 226-228).*

So, the meaning here is that Satan is limited during the church age, which means that he is limited now, but the time will come when he will be released **"for a little while."**

In verses 4-6, Christians who have given their lives rather than renounce Christ are reigning with Christ *in heaven*. This *does not* take place on earth. Christians are reigning with Christ this very moment! Others are joining their ranks even today.

In verses 7-10, Satan is released to do his thing. This results in a great time of persecution of the church (by the whole wicked world) and a final battle between Satan's army (symbolized by Gog and Magog) and Christ. Christ wins, those in Satan's army are killed, and Satan is thrown into the lake of fire. He is gone forever. He is destroyed.

As for Gog and Magog, Magog was a nation of people that existed for a short time after Noah. Gog was their king. Ezekiel mentions them in chapters 38 and 39. As used here, they represent the people of the nations of the world and their leaders who will wage an all-out attack on the church just before Christ comes. This is Armageddon.

In verses 11-15, the vision is of Judgment Day. This is the day of resurrection for all the dead. Hendriksen comments:

*"The sea gives up its dead; so do Death and Hades. Here is the one general resurrection of all the dead. The entire Bible teaches but one general resurrection! This one and only general resurrection takes place at the last day. Nowhere in the entire Bible do we read of a resurrection of the bodies of believers, followed, after a thousand years, by a resurrection of the bodies of the unbelievers. All arise at the same time – Death, the separation of soul and body, and hades, the state of separation, now cease. Neither in the new heaven nor upon the new earth nor even in hell will there ever be a separation between body and soul after Christ's second coming unto judgment" (p. 236).*

This is exactly what the apostle Paul wrote in 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:13-18. There is an order to the resurrections, but they all occur on the same day.

As far as whether or not soul and body are separated in hell or **"the lake of fire,"** I don't think it matters. I believe being thrown into "the lake of fire" is allegorical for being eternally destroyed. This is the meaning of *perish*. Jesus used the Greek for "perish" in John 3:16. "Perish" means to be destroyed. More plainly, I believe Satan, those who served him, and all other unbelievers, are destroyed or annihilated. In other words, they will cease to exist.

## **IN CHAPTER 21, JOHN IS SHOWN A VISION OF THE NEW HEAVEN, THE NEW EARTH, AND THE NEW JERUSALEM.**

In verses 1-8 John describes the picture of the new heaven and new earth that God shows him:

***<sup>1</sup>Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup>And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”***

***<sup>5</sup>And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also, he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” <sup>6</sup>And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. <sup>7</sup>The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. <sup>8</sup>But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”***

So, by this time, the earth and the universe that we know has been obliterated – it’s no more – it’s been destroyed, as Peter said that it would be in 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3. God shows John a vision of the new heaven and the new earth. Not a *different* heaven and not a *different* earth, but a restoration of what heaven and earth was as God originally created them! He sees a new Jerusalem coming from heaven to earth ***“prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”*** What does that tell us? *It tells us that this new Jerusalem is the church.* It’s every believer. It’s not the Jerusalem in Palestine.

It’s revealed to John that God will once more live with us and make our lives as they were before sin entered the world.

In verses 9-27 John describes a city God shows him – the new Jerusalem. However, this vision of a new Jerusalem is actually, in reality, a picture of the church on the new earth. It’s simply described in terms of the ideal city that the people of John’s day could imagine. To take it as a literal city wouldn’t make sense. Why would we need walls? And streets of gold? What’s with that? It’s all symbolical, people. It’s all descriptive of the church of Jesus Christ, not of heaven or the new earth.

## **IN CHAPTER 22 IS THE WARNING THAT JESUS IS COMING SOON.**

I think verses 1-5 belong in chapter 21. They’re just further description of the symbolical city which represents the church. I won’t take the time to go through each

part of the city, but if I did, I would try to show you how each part of the description represents something about the church.

Follow along with me in the concluding words of John's revelation, beginning with verse 6:

***6 And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."***

***7 "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."***

***8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, 9 but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."***

***10 And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. 11 Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."***

***12 "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."***

***14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. 15 Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.***

***16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."***

***17 The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.***

***18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.***

***<sup>20</sup> He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!***

***<sup>21</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.***

**IN CLOSING:**

And with that I bring my series on John's Revelation to an end. Jesus **IS** coming. Be faithful!