

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes

8-29-18

Revelation 20

The 20th chapter of the Book of Revelation is the Apostle John's Description of the Millennium. It immediately follows the Glorious Return of Christ in Revelation 19. After the defeat of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet by Christ, the millennial reign begins. Revelation chapter 20 explains some of the events that will occur during this period.

The Thousand Years - Verses 1-6

¹And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. ²He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. ⁴I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They 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 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. ⁶Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

20:1-3 Satan Bound At the outset of the Millennium the devil will be cast into the Abyss. The Greek word *abussos* means "without depth." In this passage the word is used alone, but in Revelation 9:1 it is used as an adjective for another Greek word, *phrear*, which means "cistern," or "prison." Together, these words are often translated "bottomless pit." In this pit Satan will be confined for the entire one thousand years of Christ's righteous reign on Earth.

To bind Satan it was first necessary to defeat his supporters, the beast, and the false prophet. Satan is now bound for a thousand years. The father of lies will not be able to deceive the nations of the world until the time comes (preceding the final judgment) that he is again loosed for "a little season." The angel John sees binding Satan is generally considered to be Michael, who commanded the armies of God during the war in heaven, when Satan was cast out. (He is the Ancient of Days in the Book of Daniel.) The binding is not punitive; rather it is a protection to nations of the earth. It should be noted that not all the nations of the earth will be destroyed, only those who were loyal to Satan.

20:3 John doesn't say why God releases Satan for a little while, but it is part of God's plan for judging the world. Perhaps it is to expose those who rebel against God in their hearts and confirm those who are truly faithful to God. Whatever the reason, Satan's release results in the final destruction of all evil (20:12-15).

20:4-6 Those believers and followers of Jesus who were converted during the tribulation period, and had been put to death--the martyrs of the tribulation period--will be raised from the dead (Revelation 20:4). They are those who would not receive the Mark of the Beast, and will have been put to death for their faith in Christ. They are raised again as part of the "first resurrection." Jesus Himself was the "first-fruits" of this first resurrection. At the Rapture believers of the church age are raised as part of this first resurrection. Now we see these believers also joining the ranks of this first type of resurrection. By speaking of the blessing of the first resurrection, John encourages and strengthens the saints of his day in the face of the great persecution they had to endure.

The Judgment of Satan - Verses 7-10

7 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison **8** and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. **9** They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. **10** And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

20:7 After the Millennium, Satan is allowed out of the Abyss to rally together all who do not trust in Christ. These people would have rebelled against Christ during the time of His righteous reign, but they would not dare. It is most amazing that some people, who have had the privilege of living in a perfect environment, and who have experienced a world ruled in righteousness, will still not accept God's plan for their lives. It gives us insight to the fairness of their future judgment, because they simply do not want to be with their Creator and Savior. Nothing could ever convince them how wonderful He is. They would be unhappy in his presence forever, even in Heaven.

20:8 Gog and Magog are representative of rebellious nations. This imagery is taken from Ezekiel 38 and 39, an earlier war which takes place before or during the Tribulation. Ezekiel presents Gog as a leader of forces against Israel (Ezekiel 38-39). Once again, rebellious nations and troops who are personally rebellious against Christ will seek to overthrow His control. This time they will be led by Satan himself.

The scene of this battle is Jerusalem, the city God loves. The outcome of this war is that those who follow Satan are destroyed by fire from above, and Satan is thrown into a Lake of Fire (compare Revelation 20:14 and 15), where Antichrist (the Beast) and the False Prophet already had been thrown at the end of the Battle of Armageddon.

20:9 This is not a typical battle where the outcome is in doubt during the heat of the conflict. Here there is no contest. Two mighty forces of evil—those of the beast (19:19) and of Satan (20:8)—unite to do battle against God. The Bible uses just two verses to describe each battle: The evil beast and his forces are captured and thrown into the fiery lake (19:20-21), and fire from heaven devours Satan and his attacking armies (20:9-10). For God, it is as easy as that. There will be no doubt, no worry, no second thoughts for believers about whether they have chosen the right side. If you are with God, you will experience this tremendous victory with Christ.

20:10 Satan's power is not eternal—he will meet his doom. He began his evil work in people at the beginning (*Genesis 3:1-6*) and continues it today, but he will be destroyed when he is thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The devil will be released from the Abyss ("his prison," 20:7), but he will never be released from the fiery lake. He will never be a threat to anyone again.

Judgment of Non-believers: The Great White Throne - Verses 11-15

11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. **12** And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. **13** The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. **14** Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. **15** Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

20:12-15 This event is often referred to as the Great White Throne Judgment. Revelation pictures Jesus as the judge over all the living and the dead, a role He predicted during His earthly ministry: "**The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son**" (**John 5:22**). It is the final judgment of God upon humankind. After this event, there will never again need to be a trial, and God will never again need to act as judge.

The Prophet Daniel also wrote of this time in a vision he was given hundreds of years earlier: "**As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened**" Daniel 7:9-10

No one knows for certain what is contained in the books mentioned in Daniel and Revelation. Many theologians speculate that they contain a record of sins committed in this life, and the resulting debt owed by each person to those they have wronged, including God, the ultimate target of all sin.

More is known about the book of life that is mentioned. According to Scripture, the book of life contains the names of all who have trusted in God for their salvation and have been saved from God's judgment. Paul mentions the book of life in one of his epistles: **"Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these...whose names are in the book of life" (Philippians 4:3).**

The Bible makes it clear that no person will spend eternity with God based on his works and that it is only faith in Christ that saves a person (Ephesians 2:8-9), John records that those whose names are not found in the book of life (i.e., those outside of Christ) are consigned to the lake of fire based on their deeds (Revelation 20:13, 15). Our works cannot save us, but they may condemn us.

Believers in Christ escape the Great White Throne Judgment because their debts and transgressions have been paid for by Christ, a fact that Paul mentions: **"And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:13-14).**

In the end, the Great White Throne Judgment underscores the fact that God's justice will be done and that, outside of Christ, that justice will be terrifying, sure, and final.

20:14 Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire. God's judgment is finished. The lake of fire is the ultimate destination of everything wicked—Satan, the beast, the false prophet, the demons, death, Hades, and all those whose names are not recorded in the book of life because they did not place their faith in Jesus Christ. John's vision does not permit any gray areas in God's judgment. If by faith we have not identified with Christ, confessing him as Lord, there will be no hope, no second chance, no other appeal.