

SESSION 12

REVELATION 20:1-15

The Millennium and Subsequent Judgments

I. THE BINDING OF SATAN (Rev 20:1-3)

A. When does this take place?

1. The Amillennial/Postmillennial View

View: The *binding* of Satan takes place between the 1st and 2nd Coming of Christ, when Satan is restricted from being able to deceive the nations the way he has in the past.¹

Implication: The specified time of 1000 years has to be spiritualized.

$$1000 = 10^3$$

10 is symbolic of "completeness"

Hence, 1000 is a full complete period.

Problem: Notice verse three carefully!!

- 1) Satan's activity is not simply reduced. He is locked away in the *abyss*. He is off the scene!
- 2) If the 1000 years symbolizes the period between the 1st and 2nd coming of Christ, what does the last phrase of v 3 correspond to which says that Satan "must be released for a short time"? [According to Amillennialism, there is no more earthly activity after the 2nd Coming. Instead, we have a general resurrection and judgment followed by a new creation].

2. The Premillennial View

- a. Since the preceding context (ch 19) concerns the 2nd Coming, the natural understanding would be that the "binding of Satan" follows the 2nd Coming.
- b. The reference to 1000 years should be interpreted literally.
- c. Satan is *bound* in the sense that he will not be able to interfere with the earthly activities during the Millennial reign of Christ on earth.
- d. Why? God wants to halt deception and allow truth a chance to reign.

¹For an example of this approach, see Anthony A. Hoekema, "Amillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 155-187.

B. Where is Satan Bound?

1. Notice carefully the end of verse 7: "Satan will be released from his prison."

This clarifies that Satan is in a place of confinement, not merely restriction.

2. Satan is thrown into the abyss (v 3)

- a. The word abyss (Gk ἄβυσσος) is used nine times in the NT, seven of which are in the book of Revelation (9:1,2,11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1,3). This is not "hell" proper, but a place of demonic confinement.

- b. In Rev 9:1, it is used of the place where demonic beings (locusts) are locked away.

"bottomless pit" (NASB) = τοῦ φρέατος τῆς ἄβύσσου

- c. The *beast* is said to come up from the abyss (Rev 11:7; 17:8). This may refer to a demonic spirit which possesses him.

C. Notice the irony in the words "shut it and sealed it over him"

This reminds us of the tomb in which our Lord was placed (note Matt 27:62-66), but He could not be confined!

D. "he must be released for a short time" (Rev 20:3)

Indicates that God must have a purpose in allowing his release (see vv 7-10).

II. REIGNING WITH CHRIST FOR 1000 YEARS (Rev 20:4-6)A. "thrones . . . they sat upon them"

Who?

1. Suggestions

- a. 24 elders (as representative of the church)
- b. Tribulation martyrs
- c. God the Father and Christ
- d. Angels
- e. Apostles (recall Mt 19:28)
- f. All the saints

2. Observations

- a. "Sitting upon thrones" recalls Christ's promise to those who *overcome* (Rev 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10).

- b. "judgment was given to them"

The word for judgment is κρίμα, a noun formed from the verb κρίνω (judge, decide, separate). Notice how this verb is used in 1 Cor 6:2-3

1 Cor 6:2 "Do you not know that the saints will judge (κρίνοῦσιν) the world?"

Apparently, this must include the exercise of delegated authority:

1 Cor 6:3 "Do you not know that we shall judge (κρίνοῦμεν) angels?"

Implication: saints are destined to rule over the world, including jurisdiction over angels.

c. "reigned with Christ for a thousand years"

The idea of reigning with Christ is said to be *conditional* in 2 Tim 2:11-13.²

3. Conclusion

The ones who sit on thrones in Rev 20:4 are probably those who have appeared before the judgment seat of Christ and have been judged as "overcomers." As part of their reward, they are given the privilege of reigning with Christ. This presumes that some Christians will be denied this privilege.

B. The meaning of "they came to life" (Rev 20:4) - ἐξήσαν from Gk verb ζάω

1. The regeneration of the soul (Augustine)
2. A symbolic resurrection—this symbolized the triumph of the martyr's principles in society (Swete)
3. Translate differently: "they lived" (so James A. Hughes; Anthony Hoekema)

Significance: This would allow the reference to "the first resurrection" to refer to the soul's rising into heaven at the time of death. Thus, the dead in Christ are reigning with Christ now.

4. Technical Notes: ἐξήσαν is an *aorist* verb in Greek. The crucial matter is how the syntax of this word is understood:
 - a. "they came to life" = ingressive aorist [implies physical resurrection]
 - b. "they lived" = constative aorist [implies *continuation* of spiritual life, but without physical resurrection]
5. The *ingressive aorist* is the best option: "they came to life"
 - a. The ingressive aorist is used in the NT in Lk 15:32; Rom 14:9; Rev 2:8 and 13:14. The ingressive use of ἐξήσαν is also attested in Ezek 37:10 in the Greek Septuagint (dry bones that came to life).

²The warning in 2 Tim 2:12 that "He will deny us" is probably to be interpreted that some unfaithful Christians (by a life in which they have essentially denied Christ) will be denied the privilege of sharing in the reign of Christ. This interpretation is based on the near context, since the preceding verse promised "if we endure, we shall also reign with Him."

- b. ἔζησαν is used to describe Christ's physical resurrection in Rev 2:8 (ingressive aorist).
 - c. The same verb (ἔζησαν) is used in the very next verse in Rev 20:5 to describe the unbelievers, and the same word must be understood in the same way in verse 4 and verse 5. [verse 5 would make no sense to say "they did not live until the thousand years were completed." For unbelievers, they will never "live" in Christ's presence as believers do].
6. Significance
John is talking about *physical resurrection* when he says "they came to life." Hence, there is a physical resurrection before the 1000 years for believers (the 1st resurrection), and there is another physical resurrection after the 1000 years for unbelievers (the 2nd resurrection).
- C. The Place of the Saints's Reign
- 1. Amillennialists say the reign is in heaven, but premillennialists say that it is on earth.
 - 2. Observations:
 - a. Notice vs. 9 – the saints are on earth, for that is the place where Satan comes to attack them.
 - b. Rev 5:10 is anticipatory of Rev 20:4-6 – *on earth!*
 - 3. Conclusion: this is a reign on earth with Christ.
- D. They are *rewarded*: they reign with Christ!
- 1. Positive commendation:
 - a. "because of the testimony of Jesus" (Gk: objective genitive)
 - b. "because of the word of God"
 - 2. Negative aspects:
 - a. did not worship the beast or his image
 - b. did not receive the mark upon their forehead or on the hand

LESSONS:

- 1. Faithfulness to God may cost us (they were beheaded).
- 2. Faithfulness is more than the avoidance of great evil! (there must be a positive aspect also)
- 3. Faithfulness does pay off! Some will reign!
- 4. Notice what God values so highly:
 - a. Our testimony to Jesus - unashamedly claiming Him as our Lord and

Savior.

b. The Word of God

A serious *labor* in the Word should characterize our walk with God (Josh 1:7-8).

III. SATAN'S LAST REBELLION (Rev 20:7-10)

A. Is this the same event described in Ezek 38–39?

Yes! See J. Paul Tanner, "Rethinking Ezekiel's Invasion by Gog," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (March 1996).

1. A close study of the Ezekiel 38–39 passage will reveal that this event takes place after believing Israel has been restored and the Lord has fulfilled the New Covenant with them. Hence, this must be after the 2nd Coming, not before (i.e., during the Tribulation).
2. There are several close parallels between Ezek 38–39 and Rev 20:7-9
 - a. Both passages refer to Gog and Magog, and this is the only NT passage to do so. There must be a reason why Rev 20 is drawing on these names from Ezekiel.
 - b. Both passages emphasize a tremendous number of soldiers in the conflict:

Ezek 38:4 – "a great company"

Ezek 38:6 – "all its troops—many peoples with you"

Ezek 38:15-16 – "a mighty army . . . like a cloud to cover the land"

Rev 20:8 - "the number of them is like the sand of the sea"
 - c. Both passages locate the battle in Israel.

Ezek 38:8 – specifies that Gog and his allies will "come into the land that is restored from the sword" (see 38:18 – this is Israel)

Rev 20:9 – refers to "the beloved city" (undoubtedly Jerusalem)
 - d. Both passages teach that the battle is supernaturally concluded by God with fire.

Ezek 39:6 – "And I shall send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety; and they shall know that I am the LORD" (cf. Ezek 38:19,22)

Rev 20:9 – "fire came down from heaven and devoured them"

B. Why must Satan be loosed to lead this last rebellion after the Millennium?

1. This demonstrates the incurable wickedness of Satan.
2. This demonstrates that man, even under the most favorable circumstances (the best of

environments) will fall into sin if left to his own choices. Hence, sin must be totally and finally removed!

3. This justifies eternal punishment.

IV. THE RESURRECTION OF UNBELIEVERS FOR THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT (Rev 20:11-15)

- A. Notice that this throne is distinguished: *great white throne*. Believers may sit on thrones (vv 4-6), but this judgment is reserved for God alone.
- B. Notice that there are two categories of books:
 1. "books were opened" (cf. v 15)
 2. "another book was opened, which is the book of life"
- C. According to v 13, unbelievers are judged according to their deeds. This suggests that there will be variation in degree of punishment.
- D. Two resurrections (note v 5)?
 1. Previous revelation: Dan 12:1-3 & Jn 5:28-29
 2. Analogy: Isa 61:2
- E. Is the "lake of fire" part of this creation?

No. See Rev 21:8