

Read Revelation!

“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” (Revelation 1:3)

Chapter 20: The Kingdom of God!

In Chapter 19 of Revelation, we saw the return of Christ to earth with His glorified saints, His victory over His enemies, and the doom of the Antichrist and the False Prophet in “*a lake of fire burning with brimstone.*” These things will happen at the end of the Great Tribulation. Chapter 20 (a very important section of the Bible) opens with Christ setting up His kingdom on earth. Many, many Old Testament passages speak of God’s kingdom coming with the literal reign of God’s King on earth. You can read some of these prophecies in these places: I Samuel 2:10 (where the word “Messiah” or Anointed One is first used in the Bible), Psalm 24, Psalm 72, Isaiah 9:6-7, Isaiah 11, Isaiah 32, Jeremiah 23:1-6, Daniel 2:44-45, Daniel 7:9-14, Micah 5, and Zechariah 14. The Lord Jesus taught us to pray, “*Thy kingdom come*” (Matthew 6:10 and Luke 11:2). The mother of Jesus was told by the angel Gabriel that her son “*shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*” (Luke 1:30-33). The earthly kingdom of Christ predicted throughout the Bible is fulfilled in Revelation 20.

I. Satan Bound (verses 1-3).

Right after the Battle of Armageddon and the arrival of Christ and His saints on earth, an angel will take the Devil down into the “*bottomless pit*” (Hell) and chain him up there for “*a thousand years.*” During this millennium, Satan will “*deceive the nations no more.*” However, God plans to free him for a while after this thousand-year period (v. 3). Always remember that God rules over all, and that He is greater than Satan. The Devil is wicked and hates God, but even he is subject to God’s rule and authority. And He uses Satan’s wickedness ultimately to accomplish His divine purpose.

II. The First Resurrection (verses 4-6).

Now John sees people sitting on thrones and ruling the earth. Some of them are the martyrs who were killed for their allegiance to Christ during the Tribulation period. After the Tribulation, these martyrs will be raised from the dead in glorified bodies to reign with Christ and the other glorified saints in His earthly Kingdom. The “*first resurrection*” happens in several stages:

A. “*Christ*”

His resurrection that first Easter Sunday was “*the first fruits*” of the First Resurrection. Read about this in I Corinthians 15:20-23.

B. “*They that are Christ’s at his coming.*”

Involved in the Rapture will be the resurrection and glorification of those who “*sleep in Jesus.*” Read about this in I Thessalonians 4:14-17. As we have learned, these

glorified believers will be in Heaven during the Tribulation period on earth, and will come back to earth with Christ to destroy His enemies and to set up His Kingdom (Revelation 19).

C. *“Them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus.”*

When Christ comes to earth, He will raise the Tribulation martyrs in glorified bodies to reign with Him and the other glorified saints.

The First Resurrection was called by Jesus *“the resurrection of life”* (John 5:28-29), and we are told in Revelation 20:6 that *“the second death hath no power”* over those raised in the First Resurrection.

III. Satan Loosed and Damned (verses 7-10).

The Kingdom of Christ will be an era of unprecedented peace, prosperity, and righteousness. Revelation 20 tells us that it will last a thousand years. The term “Millennium” means a thousand years. This is why the kingdom age is often called by this name. As we saw in the first verses of the chapter, Satan will be bound in Hell for this time, but God plans to let him loose for a time at the end of the Millennium. Probably the reason God will free him to work again in the world is to demonstrate that environment has not been the reason for man’s sinfulness. For a thousand years, man will have a perfect environment on earth. Jesus Christ in person will reign as King over all the earth. The Devil will be absent from the scene, deceiving no one. Righteousness will prevail. And yet after a millennium of the Kingdom of God, Satan will be able to organize a multitude *“the number of whom is as the sand of the sea”* to rebel against the rule of Christ. Who will these rebels be? When the Kingdom begins, the nations will be judged by King Jesus (See Matthew 25:31-40), and only true believers will be allowed to live past the Tribulation into the Millennium. These folks will have natural bodies, although changes in the world will allow them to live to great ages (See Isaiah 65:20-25). The saints in glorified bodies will reign over them with Christ. These spared nations will give birth to children during the Kingdom age, and their children will need to trust Christ for salvation as they grow up. Obviously, many of those born in the Millennium will not believe, and will be ready to fight against the Lord when the Devil comes back! We can read about this final rebellion in Psalm 2. It will come because man himself is innately sinful, and because he can choose evil even when his environment has been good!

The *“Gog and Magog”* named in verse 8 are also mentioned in Ezekiel 38 and 39. They refer to Russia and its leader, but the passage in Ezekiel obviously refers to a war that happens at a different time. It will be part of the fighting in the Tribulation period! But here in Revelation 20 we are reading about the great world war at the end at the Kingdom age. For some reason the Holy Spirit connects the two conflicts with the names *“Gog and Magog.”* The vast rebel army will surround the city of Jerusalem where Jesus is and from which the world will have been ruled for a thousand years. But God will destroy these rebels with fire from Heaven (v. 9) and then He will take the Devil and cast him into the Lake of Fire (v. 10). Thus ends the earthly Kingdom of Christ, and also the original creation itself (Notice Matthew 5:18 and 24:35).

IV. The Final Judgment (verses 11-15).

Now we will see something spectacular! After the last rebellion and the destruction of the rebels, all the unsaved of all time are dead and in Hell. All the saved have experienced the First Resurrection. Probably the “*saints*” who are alive at the end of the Kingdom will be given glorified bodies. Suddenly “*a great white throne*” appears in space, and “*the earth and the heaven*” disappear (v. 11—See Revelation 21:1). This disintegration of the original creation is described in II Peter 3:10:13 (Read it). It is now time for the Final Judgment.

A. Who will be judged?

Answer: “*the dead, small and great*” (v. 12). These are the unsaved dead, because at this time only the unsaved are dead! Saved people face “*the judgment seat of Christ*” after the Rapture at which they will be judged as either worthy or unworthy of rewards and authority in the Kingdom (See Luke 19:11-19, I Corinthians 3:11-15, II Corinthians 5:10, II Timothy 4:7-8, and I Peter 5:4). They will *not* be judged for their sins because their sins were already judged and condemned when the Lord Jesus died for them on the Cross (Read John 5:24 and 12:31-33). The unsaved will face this “*great white throne*” judgment for trial in regard to their disobedience to God’s Law and failure to believe in God’s Son.

B. How will they be judged?

Answer: Out of “*the books*” (meaning God’s written Word, the Bible) and out of “*the book of life*.” They will be brought out of Hell (vs. 13-14, called the “*bottomless pit*” when the earth existed, Revelation 9:1-2), given special bodies in which to be punished (See Matthew 10:28), and made to stand trial before the holy God! The books of the Bible will be opened to prove that they have all been guilty of willfully disobeying God (See Romans 2:1-16 and 3:10-19). The Book of Life will be examined to show that none of them have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. God will be vindicated and shown to be just in His judgment. Every lost person will have a fair, public trial. Their souls first inhabit the Hell that now is, and are tormented as they wait the Final Judgment (See Luke 16:19-24). When the time comes, they will be brought out of Hell to stand before the white throne. The books of the Bible will condemn them for sin (Look up John 5:45-47, 12:46-48), and the Book of Life will expose their unbelief.

C. Where will they be punished?

The Bible says that “*whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire*.” With the passing away of the original earth, the bottomless pit (the present Hell) will be gone. Its inhabitants will stand before God for judgment. After being judged, they will be sent to spend eternity in “*the lake of fire*.” The Hell that now exists is like the jail where accused criminals are held for trial. The trial will be in space at the white throne after the physical creation explodes. The condemned will then go to the Lake of Fire, where they will be punished, as we send convicted criminals to the penitentiary. In this Lake of Fire, the damned “*shall be tormented day and night forever and ever*” (v. 10). The Lake of Fire will exist out in space somewhere away from God’s abode and the new earth (See Revelation 21:1-8, 22:14-15). How awful! It is called the Second Death. We thank God that nobody needs to go there! Salvation from damnation is available free from the Lord Jesus Christ (See

22:16-17). Those who are *born twice* (John 3:6-7) will die only once (physical death). Those who are born only once (of the flesh) will *die twice*. The First Resurrection is the “*resurrection of life*,” and the Second Resurrection is the “*resurrection of damnation*” (John 5:29).