

## The Thousand Years

### Revelation 20

**MPS** Jesus is coming again soon in power and glory to rule the earth with His people and judge all who reject Him.

**OBJ** Three promises God will fulfill with finality in the Millennium for the glory of His eternal Kingdom, and three applications for every person to Live Ready with urgency and priority today.

**INTRO** **What is a number so large to you it seems almost unfathomable?** For many, to consider 1,000 years is to much.

**TRANS** Last week we considered a party that broke out in heaven over Christ's victorious return. Today we see a people with Christ who join in His rule and reign.

**Jesus is coming again soon in power and glory to rule the earth with His people and judge all who reject Him.**

**OBJ** We will see Three promises that God will fulfill with finality in the Millennium for the glory of His eternal Kingdom, and conclude with three applications for every person to Live Ready with urgency and priority today.

**READ** Revelation 20:1-6 **The Thousand Years**

*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. **Revelation 20:1-6***

Revelation 20 may be the most unique chapter in all of Scripture because of the topic it addresses, the Millennium, a topic neither mentioned nor referenced in any other part of the Bible. By "unique" I do not mean to infer "more important", but to recognize the singularity of where this topic is dealt with in the Scriptures. This becomes even more important when one considers that throughout history this topic has been a significant determinant in how people approach the interpretation of the whole of Revelation, and in many ways, the whole Bible. One thing we can say, though, is that John intends for us to see Revelation 20 as following the second coming of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, a fuller consideration of the millennium is helpful for us at this point.

**Let's begin by considering, "What is the millennium?"** We learn first that the Millennium is a period where an angel comes down from heaven with a key and a great chain, binds Satan for a thousand years, and throws him into the bottomless pit, where he is sealed for a thousand years.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this imprisonment is so he cannot deceive the nations any longer until after the thousand years. Then, after the thousand years, he will be released for a little while.

<sup>1</sup> Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 360–361. Mounce states, "There is no specific indication in v. 1 as to when this event takes place, although it should be noted that the recurring "and I saw" of 19:11, 17, 19; 20:1, 4, 12; and 21:1 strongly implies a sequence of visions that carries through from the appearance of the Rider on the white horse (19:11) to the establishment of the new heaven and new earth (21:1ff.)."

<sup>2</sup> J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 262–264. Duvall states, "Here, the text itself points to a complete and total binding of Satan at the end of the age (premillennialism) rather than to a mere curtailing of his activities during the present age (amillennialism). Here we see Satan on total lock down, with no possibility of escape."



**During this time when Satan is inactive, the saints activate to reign with Christ on earth.** John saw thrones with people seated on them who were given authority to judge. John's vision includes all the saints of Jesus Christ who had died and now resurrected to life to reign with Christ for a thousand years. This is the first resurrection, a time that includes all believers of all the ages, the fulfillment of Jesus' promise in Matthew 10:39, "*whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*" And all who participate in the first resurrection are blessed because they will not experience the second death.<sup>3</sup> Instead of the second death, we will move to eternal life, reigning, judging, and ruling with Christ on the earth. And surprise, what this means is debated too. Three words that mean virtually the same thing, tell us that we will fulfill God's creational mandate in a renewed order where the curse of sin is non-existent.<sup>4</sup> The Millennium will provide a greater foretaste of glory divine, a hymnody reference, more complete than what we experience today but not yet the full eternal state of Heaven. And while sin will still be present because there will be people on the earth who are not saved, Satan's active presence and work will be absent. In the millennium, Christ's sovereign authority over Satan is demonstrated and an unabated opportunity for people to believe and receive Christ is provided. For a long period of time it will be obvious at every turn that "Satan is God's opponent but not God's opposite."<sup>5</sup> In the Millennium God reveals, "One last time I will show nations, all who have rebelled against me, that I am sovereign over Satan the deceiver so you will believe." And yet, people still refuse to believe and fall prey to Satan's deception. [God's justice will be manifested as people live in the reality of God's righteous rule and reign but continue to deny and reject Him.](#)

**Second, we should ask, "is this a literal thousand-year period of time?"** I find this question especially important when one considers it a "bookend" on redemptive history. The Bible begins and ends with passages of major debate over time, but it's not unclear. In Genesis the debate revolves around whether we have literal or figurative days of twenty-four hour periods. In Revelation, the debate is over whether this is a literal thousand years or simply an extended period. The argument often goes, "If one is literal then the other must be." I mention these debates because I find them correlating and helpful in our reading today. The short answer begins this way. The text of Genesis makes clear its intention to establish a literal day, what we know of as a twenty-four hour period, by the repeated phrase "*and there was evening and morning the \_\_\_ day*", which concludes each day to constitute it as a day. This is also critical because in Genesis God introduces by creating the concept of time where the movement and markers of history are recorded. In Revelation, we have a distinct literary genre and historical epoch. As we identified from the beginning, this is a book of apocalyptic and prophetic writing where numbers have symbolic meaning more than only literal measuring. We've discussed this with numbers throughout our study. So, when we approach the number one-thousand, we have a number equal to the third power of ten that represents an ideal wholeness and completeness.<sup>6</sup> And, when you consider the placement of Revelation in God's eternal plan, the millennium concludes the historical marking of time to transition into eternity, the cessation of time. [From this we rightly conclude that the millennium is an actual real and lengthy period of time, but not necessarily a literal thousand years.](#)<sup>7</sup>

**"But Pastor,"** someone may respond, "**I thought you were a literalist in Biblical interpretation?**" I am, as a foundational, principle for interpretation. I like the way Alistair Begg puts it when he states, "The plain thing is the main thing, and the main thing is the plain thing." And this is what I exercise both in the Genesis example and here in Revelation. Being a literalist never means literalistic. A literal approach to Scripture recognizes the genre to interpret according to the author's purpose in using a particular genre. And this is never more important than in Revelation. [In the Millennium, God's tells of an extended time where His justice in judgement is revealed as His people of all the ages reign with Him as victorious, and unbelievers who are alive see and live in the reality of His righteous rule, yet still reject Him.](#)

<sup>3</sup> J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), Teach the Text Commentary Series, 269. Duvall notes, "In addition, all believers must be included in the first resurrection so as to be exempted from the second death (see 20:4b–6). Therefore, all believers will be present during the millennium."

<sup>4</sup> J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), Teach the Text Commentary Series, 269. Duvall states, "If, as suggested in 19:21, all wicked human beings have already died, over what do the saints reign? The simple answer is creation itself (5:10)."

<sup>5</sup> J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), Teach the Text Commentary Series, 262.

<sup>6</sup> George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 262. Ladd states, "It is difficult to understand the thousand years for which he was bound with strict literalness in view of the obvious symbolic use of numbers in the Revelation. A thousand equals the third power of ten—an ideal time. While we need not take it literally, the thousand years does appear to represent a real period of time, however long or short it may be."

<sup>7</sup> Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament, 362–363. Mounce notes, "the majority take it to indicate a lengthy period of undetermined duration."



**Not everyone understands the millennium in the same way.** (There are some who are right, and then there are the rest.) While I do not want to make light of so to infer this is not an important doctrine, I will say that one's perspective of the Millennium is a secondary matter, a matter that is not worthy to break fellowship over. Good, solid, Christian scholars, pastors, and people differ on perspectives of the millennium. There are three main views, Post-millennialism, A-millennialism, and Pre-millennialism, which has some sub-views. I am not going to go into these today. I do plan to host a time to discuss in greater detail a time of discussing how to study Revelation where I will explain the views.

**OBJ** Here we see the **first promise** God fulfills with finality in the Millennium for the glory of His eternal Kingdom.

**Promise #1: God will resurrect His people who will reign with Him for 1,000 years as His priests, of whom the second death has no power.**

**The eternal destiny of every soul is determined while alive upon this earth.** Consider the blessing of verse 6. Those who are twice born, born by water and born again by Holy Spirit, will only face physical death. The second death has no power over them. Those born only once by water must face the second death. **Of sole importance for every person is to know, "Have you been born again?"**

#### Revelation 20:7-10

<sup>7</sup> And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>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, <sup>10</sup>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. **Revelation 20:7-10**

Following the Millennium, God will release Satan to do what he has not been able to do, deceive the nations. Once released he immediately returns to his work of deceiving the nations, and his reach will extend to cover the whole earth. Gog and Magog refers to the wicked nations during the Millennium that are gathered for battle by Satan upon his release. One scholar comments here, "Apparently a thousand years of confinement does not alter Satan's plans, nor does a thousand years of freedom from the influence of wickedness change people's basic tendency to rebel against their creator."<sup>8</sup> Their number is overwhelming in count, compounded by the description of their march, "*over the plain of the earth*", a phrase that essentially describes the whole horizon. The descriptive intent of the image and number is to overwhelm, their intent by which they surround "*the camp of the saints and the beloved city*". And just as their victory and the doom of the camp appears inevitable, fire falls from heaven and consumes the whole of them. The devil is thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur with the beast and false prophet, to be tormented day and night for eternity. **And with that, Satan's final and eternal defeat is done.**

**OBJ** Here is the **second promise** God fulfills with finality in the Millennium for the glory of His eternal Kingdom.

**Promise #2: God will demonstrate His sovereign power over Satan by executing His final sentence to eternal torment forever and ever.**

Predictable and unimpressive is the battle of Gog and Magog, with even less fanfare than Armageddon. God simply fulfills the promise of His Word sovereignly, unchallenged and unabated, by the power of His Word. With striking clarity and convicting accuracy, scholar Robert Mounce sobers moment with his explanation, "Perhaps the most reasonable explanation for this rather unusual parole is to make plain that neither the designs of Satan nor the waywardness of the human heart will be altered by the mere passing of time. Once loosed from prison, Satan picks up where he left off and people rally to his cause."<sup>9</sup> This passage provides overwhelming evidence with sobering clarity of the potency of the human will to reject God, to stand guilty before Him and completely deserving of His judgment. **Is this you, friend? Are you holding today to your posture and position of rejecting God?** No matter how neutral your rationale, failing to receive God in any form

<sup>8</sup> Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 363.

<sup>9</sup> Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 371–372.



is to align with Satan in full rebellion and condemnation. [Hear God's promise of eternal life today, believe and repent to worship Jesus as Lord.](#)

#### Revelation 20:11-15

*11Then 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. 12And 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. 13And 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. 14Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. **Revelation 20:11-15***

Once God wins the war of Gog and Magog, all the rest of the dead are resurrected to the great white throne judgment. (.5) Time as we now know it passes away. Everyone not raised in the first resurrection is now raised to join all who were still alive by had not confessed Christ as Lord. "The resurrected saints are not subject to the great white throne judgment because only "the dead" are judged."<sup>10</sup> And together they stand before the great white throne to be eternally judged. Books are opened, and next to them the Book of Life is opened. The dead are judged by what was written in the books, because their name was not found in the Book of Life. "No one is so important as to be immune from judgment, and no one is so unimportant as to make judgment inappropriate. The great white throne judgment is not arbitrary but based on the evidence written by the life of every person."<sup>11</sup> When God knows your name, recorded in the Book of Life, your deeds cannot be found so you are judged by Christ's work for you. When God does not know your name, you are judged by the evidence of your deeds, which never measure up and always end in judgment to eternal condemnation. [At the great white throne judgment, Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire with all who are judged by their deeds for the second death.](#)

**TRANS** "With this vision the theme of judgment on evil finds its final expression. With this vision we close forever the chapter on sin and stand ready to enter the eternal state of glory."<sup>12</sup>

**OBJ** Here is the **third promise** God fulfills with finality in the Millennium for the glory of His eternal Kingdom.

**Promise #3: God will judge every person whose name is not written in the book of life according to what they have done, and throw them into the lake of fire for the second death.**

There is a somberness at this moment in the text in recognizing what has transpired. God's invitation to believe and repent, that we have traced from Revelation 6, by His warning through increasing and advancing, accelerating and escalating judgment, now comes to an end: all opportunity ends at the second death. And yet we hear this today while His opportunity remains. I long for every person who has not believed on Jesus to repent of sin and follow Him as Lord to do so today. And I long for every Christ-follower to be simultaneously overwhelmed with joy and peace at God's sure and certain promise, that they are compelled by this reality to go share the gospel with all who do not believe while time remains. [Today's message is not one of doom and gloom, but of urgency and priority; for every person to believe on Jesus and be saved, and every Christ-follower to submit their whole life to serve the gospel and make Jesus known for the salvation of every person.](#)

**OBJ** Christ-follower, the Great Commission declares that all this begins with us. I conclude today with **three practices for every person to Live Ready today:**

**1. Surrender your whole life completely to Jesus today.**

Until God knows your name because it is recorded in the Book of Life, nothing else matters. **What are you waiting on, looking for, expecting before you believe on Jesus to be saved?** Believe on the Lord Jesus today and be saved. We are celebrating salvation on May 14 with a baptism Sunday and would love to celebrate your new life in Jesus Christ. [In response to the work of God's Holy Spirit in your heart today, believe on Jesus today and be saved!](#)

<sup>10</sup> J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), 275.

<sup>11</sup> Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 376.

<sup>12</sup> Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 374.



2. **Submit your whole life completely every day to Jesus' Lordship.**

Christ-follower, the Spirit of God who lives in you is working in your heart today too! **Where have you lost or neglected Jesus' Lordship in your life? Where has urgency for the Lord's Kingdom been overrun by busyness of life or complacency of heart? Where has priority for Jesus been replaced by neglect? Your belief today is to repent, and return to serve His Lordship in our life.**

3. **Share the gospel with as much zeal and as many people as possible today.**

The flame of God's love and Holy Spirit conviction burning within us leads us to share the gospel. Who is that person(s) in your life that the love of God in you is compelling you to share His love with. Call that name to God and commit to go share this week. **Time is short and fleeting; eternity forever and ever. With urgency and priority, submit fully to the Lord Jesus to use you as His instrument to share the gospel today!**

