

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 14TH–15TH, 2024 // REVELATION

A GREAT CHAIN (REVELATION 20:1–3)

7 VISIONS OF THE END

1. The Return of Christ (19:11–16)
2. The Great Supper of God (19:17–18)
3. Armageddon (19:19–21)
4. Satan Bound (20:1–3)
5. Millennial Reign of Christ (20:4–10)
6. Great White Throne of Judgment (20:11–15)
7. Re-creation (21:1–2)

At the end of this great battle, the source of the rebellion (the “dragon,” “devil,” “serpent,” and “Satan”) gets captured.

- The angel with the keys to the abyss showed up in Chapter 9, and now he is back.
- Satan is bound in the “abyss” or “bottomless pit”—the temporary place of incarceration for certain demons and now Satan (this is not the final place of judgment).

The length of the period for which Satan will be bound is defined as “a thousand years,” which is precisely recorded and emphasized six times in this chapter (vs. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7).

- The purpose of this binding is not punishment, but banishment—to keep him from deceiving people for a millennium.
- After this 1,000 years, Satan will be released for a “short time” to once again deceive (v. 3).

VIEWPOINT #1: PREMILLENNIALISM

The millennial kingdom refers to a future, physical kingdom that Christ will establish upon His return. Jesus will return before (pre-) this time.

- The Kingdom, which will be centered in Jerusalem, will last 1,000 years, after which this world will be destroyed and replaced by the New Earth.

VIEWPOINT #2: POSTMILLENNIALISM

Christ will return AFTER (post-) a general period of peace and prosperity has been established.

- The millennium is simply the period of the Church; because of Christian influence, society will continue to improve until it reaches a utopian-like state.
- Thus, it is Believers who will bring in the millennial kingdom (“Kingdom now,” “Dominionism”).

VIEWPOINT #3: AMILLENNIALISM

The millennial kingdom is not a future, literal thousand-year kingdom on Earth (“A-” means “no”).

- Rather, it’s a spiritual kingdom that refers to Christ’s rule in the hearts of His people during the church age.
- Some believe this refers to Christ’s literal Kingdom in heaven where saints rule with Christ.

So which view is right?

- Over the centuries, bitter theological battles have been fought over this topic, with the major disagreement being whether this is to be thought of as a spiritual and invisible or a literal and visible Kingdom: or maybe something else entirely!
- This isn’t a matter of heresy but of honest differences of interpretation.
- I tend to lean more towards one than the others...

Satan must be released? (v. 3)

- Some believe this shows God’s power by loosing evil just to conquer it once and for all.
- Others see it as God’s devotion to mankind’s free will and human responsibility to choose to love Him willingly.
- Still others see this as a way to prove that sin has nothing to do with economic conditions or the environment—it’s a matter of rebellion.

THE 1,000 YEAR REIGN (REVELATION 20:4–6)

With Babylon, the False Prophet, the Beast, and Satan out of the way, the millennial kingdom of peace will be established.

- This vision John receives is of God’s people being resurrected, rewarded, and reigning with Christ for a period of 1,000 years.
- John sees thrones—symbolizing judicial and legal authority—and God’s people sitting on them with the authority to judge (v. 4).

WHO EXACTLY IS OCCUPYING THE THRONES FROM V. 4?

Many viewpoints abound, but the text suggests it will be either one of two groups—all Believers in Christ throughout history, or just martyrs who have given their lives for Christ.

- In the text, special emphasis is given to the martyrs receiving this Kingdom as a special reward for their suffering, but maybe they’re a highlighted part of the larger group of Believers.

John makes a distinction between the first resurrection (v. 5) and the second resurrection/death (vs. 12–14).

- This 1st resurrection seems to be only for followers of Jesus Christ as they are brought to life and given perfect, glorified bodies.
- “The second death has no power over them” (v. 6). Those resurrected for Christ will never have to worry about eternal damnation.

When this text is compared with OT passages, it seems this time will be a fulfillment of many OT prophecies that speak of a physical, Messianic Kingdom where Christ rules and reigns over all the Earth from Jerusalem.

- It is a time marked by joy, righteousness, and peace (Isaiah 12:3–4; 32:17; 61:3, 7).
- It is a time when the physical curse of sin is lifted (Isaiah 11:7–9; 30:23–24; 35:1–2, 7).

Food will be plentiful (Joel 2:21–27), and physical health and well-being will abound (Isaiah 33:24; 35:5–6).

- During this time, the lion will lie down with the lamb (Isa. 65:25) and this Earth will be restored to what it was intended to be in the first place!
- Christians will rule and reign with God (think of Adam in the garden) and bring this Earth under the lordship of and submission to Jesus.

If this is a literal 1,000 years, think of what this means!

- Jesus is going to run this world the proper way, and we’re going to be the ones who rule the nations with Him.
- Radio, television, media, government, courts, and banks will all be in Christian hands.

- How are we going to “rule the earth” if we can’t even manage our homes, jobs, and churches?
- 1 Corinthians 6:1–3 (CSB)

One of the biggest questions most people have about a literal millennial kingdom is “who will the resurrected Christians rule and reign over?”

- One theory is that those who became Christians in the tribulation and don’t die will enter the millennial kingdom alive, where they will live long lives, marry, and have children (Isa. 65:20–25).
- Another theory is that the Church will rule the unbelieving survivors of Christ’s 2nd coming.

SO WHY DOES JESUS COME BACK TO THIS EARTH AND SPEND 1,000 YEARS RULING OVER IT WITH HIS PEOPLE?

To demonstrate what this Earth can be under the rule and reign of God.

- To bring humanity back to its original purpose of bringing the Earth under submission to the purposes of God.
- To demonstrate that Jesus is deeply committed to the restoration of all things.

REBELLION? (REVELATION 20:7–10)

At the end of the thousand years, Satan will be released from his prison (v. 7) where he will come out to “deceive the nations” (v. 8).

- Why would God allow this?
- Many believe this is God’s commitment to human free will and confidence in His own sovereignty.
- Others believe this is to demonstrate the nature of sin.

Many say that vices, crime, sin, and wickedness would disappear from Earth if only conditions would improve.

- But here we see Jesus demonstrating that sin has nothing to do with economic conditions or environment—it’s a matter of rebellion against God!
- Some believe this final battle is simply a retelling of Armageddon (others say it’s another final battle).

Whether this battle is Armageddon retold or another battle, the point is that wherever the devil is, large groups of people will be deceived.

- V. 8 says a group too large to count will be assembled to battle against Jesus.
- Magog was the grandson of Noah from the north (Ezekiel), and Gog was a prince of the land of Magog.
- This may be an actual area or just a group of people.

Who is in the group that is deceived and duped by Satan and rebels against Jesus?

- One theory is they are the unsaved descendants of those who enter the millennial kingdom in their physical bodies.
- They will be unmoved by the peace, joy, and righteousness of the millennium, just as earlier sinners were unmoved by the devastating judgments of the tribulation.

The “encampment of the saints” (v. 9) is an allusion to the OT showing God’s people are temporary residents of Earth, even during the 1,000-year reign.

- V. 9 foreshadows Jesus replacing the temple permanently in heaven.
- Like in previous battles with God, Satan is defeated quickly, but now his defeat is permanent.

Satan is thrown into the “lake of fire” where he is to be tormented “day and night forever and ever” (v. 10).

- This seems to indicate that hell is eternal—the same phrase translated “forever and ever” is used in Rev. 1:18 to speak of Christ’s eternity.
- Jesus taught that the punishment of the wicked is as eternal as the eternal life of the righteous (Matt. 25:46).

THE WHITE THRONE (REVELATION 20:11–15)

The 2nd resurrection and the 2nd death take place at this scene, and it’s a terrifying picture (v. 11).

- Think of everything God has ever created “fleeing” from His presence.
- In other words, the universe will go totally out of existence as God “un-creates” it (2 Pet. 3:10).
- Only a few things remain—God, His throne of judgment, unbelieving humanity given temporary resurrected bodies, and “the books” (v. 12).

The 2nd resurrection now takes place with “the rest of dead” (unbelievers, v. 5) being summoned from the grave and the sea.

- Scripture teaches that at death, unbelievers are tormented in a temporary place of punishment (Luke 16:23), but now the time has come for them to be sentenced to the final, eternal hell.
- The “books were opened” (v. 12) and they were “judged according to their works.”

This 1st group of books contains the record of every thought, word, and deed of every unsaved person who has ever lived.

- Because this group did not accept Christ’s judgment on their behalf in life, their deeds are measured against God’s perfect, holy standard.
- No one will be able to claim perfect obedience to God’s holy standards. They’ll be sentenced to judgment corresponding to their deeds.

The second book mentioned is the “book of life.” This is imagery that corresponds to the registry of citizens in ancient cities.

- This “book of life” is a record of all people who have been saved. Anyone whose name was not found written in it was “thrown into the lake of fire” (v. 15).
- This is the “second death, the lake of fire.” It’s reserved for those who did not trust in Christ.

There’s absolutely no room in this text for us to try to twist, reimagine, or interpret it to include an eternity with no hell.

- The Bible is clear—there will be punishment for those who choose not to repent and accept Christ’s sacrifice for their sins.
- If we don’t want to repent and let Jesus pay for our sins, we will end up paying for our sins.

WE NEED A SOBERING REMINDER.

- There will be rewards for good works done in this life for Believers in the Kingdom to come (2 Cor. 5:9).
- We are to be faithful in the little things before we are given authority over many things (Matt. 25:23).
- There will be eternal punishment for our sins if we refuse to turn from them and let Christ pay for them: and not a single deed will go unnoticed (Rev. 20:12).
- If we really believe this, shouldn’t we be warning, telling, and praying for those who don’t?