

Revelation chapter 20

Revelation chapter 20 is one of the most controversial chapters in the Bible, not because it contains anything essentially complex, but because it touches on a subject of preconceived bias.

Now is the time when Satan will be taken, bound and put into the bottomless pit (abyss), where his influence will not have any effect on the Tribulation Saints who have lived through the seven years of Tribulation. Can you imagine a life where Satan isn't around to tempt anyone? Do you think that the 1000 year millennium will be a time of paradise? That nothing bad will happen?

No one will enter into the 1000 year millennium unless they are a believer. Most will live for the entire one thousand years and will procreate and have children. Yes, even the curse on the animals is lifted and the wolf will lie down with the lamb and will live in peace with each other.

But human nature is what it is. The children of those Saints will still have to be taught about Jesus, even though He will be with them constantly, many will not accept Him. Remember, the heart is very wicked and unfortunately, that is the nature of man. Many of those children will be rebels and with a tremendous population explosion during those one thousand years, there will be probably billions of people at the end much like it is now. However, the unbelievers at that point will be as "the number of whom [is] as the sand of the sea" (verse 8).

Verses 1-3: The "bottomless pit" is simply the Abyss (Greek abussos), the abode of evil spirits (compare 9:1-11; Luke 8:31). The "key" shows authority, and the "chain" depicts imprisonment and binding. Before the millennial kingdom begins, "Satan" (compare 12:9), is "bound" in the Abyss. The "seal" indicates God's authority and guarantee that Satan will not be released until "a thousand years" have passed. During the Millennium (Latin for "one thousand years"), Satan will not be able to tempt or "deceive the nations". Any temptation to sin during the Millennium must come from within those people who are born after the kingdom begins. It must be assumed that all of Satan's demons or fallen angels are also imprisoned at that time (compare Isa. 24:21-23). Christ will reign on earth without opposition, and His kingdom will be characterized by righteousness, peace, and love (compare Isa. 2:3-4; 11:3-5; 35:1-2; Dan. 7:14; Zech. 14:9). However, after the thousand years, Satan will be released for a short time (verses 7-9).

Revelation 20:1 "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand."

This "angel" is not Jesus Himself but is a ministering spirit that Jesus has given authority to. This angel comes from heaven (near the throne). We can assume from this that Jesus has turned the key to the bottomless pit over to this specific angel and has given him power and authority for this job. This "great chain" in this angel's hand, shows the power God has given him over the devil for this task, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended.

“Key of the bottomless pit”: The place where demons are incarcerated pending their final sentencing to the lake of fire (see notes on 9:1; 2 Peter 2:4).

Revelation 20:2 "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,"

“Laid hold”: This includes not only Satan; but the demons as well (see article “[Satan](#)”). Their imprisonment will dramatically alter the world during the kingdom, since their destructive influence in all areas of human thought and life will be removed.

“Dragon”: Likening Satan to a dragon emphasizes his ferocity, and cruelty.

Here we see the devil spoken of as the dragon which we read about in a previous lesson (see note on 12:3). We also see him recognized as the serpent. You see, he was the one who deceived Eve in the garden (Gen. 3:1ff; compare 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14).

The devil will not be here on the earth to harass the Christians until the millennial 1000 year reign of Jesus is over.

When he bound the devil for the 1000 years, the angel put him in the abyss, not in the burning hell. This burning hell was reserved for his final punishment.

“A thousand years”: This is the first of 6 references to the length of the millennial kingdom (compare verses 3-7). There are 3 main views of the duration and nature of this period:

- (1) Premillennialism sees this as a literal 1000 year period during which Jesus Christ, in fulfillment of numerous prophecies (e.g., 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Psalm 2; Isa. 11:6-12; 24:23; Hosea 3:4-5; Joel 3:9-21; Amos 9:8-15; Micah 4:1-8; Zeph. 3:14-20; Zech. 14:1-11; Matt. 24:29-31, 36:44), reigns on the earth. Using the same general principles of interpretation for both prophetic and non-prophetic passages leads most naturally to Premillennialism. Another strong argument supporting this view is that so many biblical prophecies have already been literally fulfilled, suggesting that future prophecies will likewise be fulfilled literally.
- (2) Postmillennialism understands the reference to a 1000 year period as only symbolic of a golden age of righteousness and spiritual prosperity. It will be ushered in by the spread of the gospel during the present church age and brought to completion when Christ returns. According to this view, references to Christ’s reign on earth primarily describe His spiritual reign in the hearts of believers in the church.
- (3) Amillennialism understands the 1000 years to be merely symbolic of a long period of time. This view interprets Old Testament prophecies of a Millennium as being fulfilled spiritually now in the church (either on earth or in heaven), or as references to the eternal state. Using the same literal, historical, grammatical principle of interpretation so as to determine the normal sense of language, one is left with the inescapable conclusion that Christ will return and reign in a real kingdom on earth for 1000 years. There is nothing in

the text to render the conclusion that “a thousand years” is symbolic. Never is Scripture when “year” is used with a number is its meaning not literal (see note on 2 Peter 3:8).

Revelation 20:3 "And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season."

“The bottomless pit”: All 7 times that this appears in Revelation, it refers to the place where fallen angels and evil spirits are kept captive, waiting to be sent to the lake of fire, the final hell prepared for them (Matt. 25:41).

“Be loosed a little season”: Satan will be released so God can make a permanent end of sin before establishing the new heaven and earth. All who survive the Tribulation and enter the kingdom will be believers. However, despite that and the personal presence and rule of the Lord Jesus Christ, many of their descendants will refuse to believe in Him. Satan will then gather those unbelievers for one final, futile rebellion against God. It will be quickly and decisively crushed, followed by the Great White Throne Judgment and the establishment of the eternal state.

At the end of the 1000 years, Satan will once again be released to deceive the nations. He will find many unsaved descendants of those who lived through the millennium. There will be a very large number as we are told in verse eight as they will be like the sand of the seashore or a vast uncountable multitude.

Satan's deceptive way of getting those sinners to revolt against God is not revealed, but it will fit into God's plan when He destroys those rebels. These rebels will come from the four corners of the earth and this is also known as Gog and Magog (see article “[Gog and Magog](#)”). The first mention of Gog and Magog was in Ezek. Chapters 38 and 39 (which I suggest reading), and is mentioned here (in verse eight).

Revelation 20:4 "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and [I saw] the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received [his] mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

The “thrones” represent the administration of the messianic kingdom. Those whom John sees come to life are the Tribulation martyrs, who refused to worship the “beast”. They will rule the earth “with Christ” for “a thousand years”. Christ will rule through three classes of kingdom administrators:

- (1) Old Testament saints (compare Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2), who will be resurrected at this time;
- (2) The apostles and the church (compare Matt. 19:28-29);
- (3) Tribulation saints (compare Luke 19:12-27).

Only believers will enter the Millennium at its beginning (compare John 3:3, 5). God's promises to Abraham (Gen. 12:2-3), and David (2 Sam. 7:16), will be fulfilled (compare Luke 1:31-33; Rom. 11:15, 29). After the Millennium, Christ will deliver the kingdom to God the Father and will then be appointed Ruler forever (compare 1 Cor. 15:24-28).

“The souls of them that were beheaded”: These are tribulation martyrs (compare 6:9; 18:24; 19:2). The Greek word translated “beheaded” became a general term for execution, not necessarily a particular method of punishment.

“His mark” (see note on 13:16). Tribulation martyrs will be executed for refusing the mark of the beast (see article “[Mark of the Beast](#)”).

“Reigned”: Tribulation believers, along with the redeemed from both the Old Testament and New Testament times, will reign with Christ (1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12), during the 1000 year kingdom.

Many of the writers do not believe that this thousand years is a literal time. I personally do. They believe that this is spiritual, and that Jesus bound the devil when He defeated him on the cross. If that were so, who is this terrible thing that has been nipping at my heels all the time that I have been working for God. The devil is real. Just as he brought trials and tribulation (with permission from God), on Job, Christians are allowed to go through tribulation here on this earth to make them strong. Believe me; the devil is not locked up now.

In the scripture above, we find that the martyrs and those who refuse to take the mark of the beast will reign with Christ right here on this earth. Christians, from all generations, will live here on this earth during the millennium and will rule and reign with the Lord Jesus. We will rule with Christ during those years but we will not be equal as we will reign as His subordinates. Won't it be wonderful to reign with the martyrs like Stephen?

This 1000 year Millennial reign of Jesus Christ here on this earth, I believe, has to be 1000 years. Mankind has worked six 1000 year days since Adam, and this will be the one “1000” year day of rest (sabbath). God set this universe up on six days of work, one day of rest. The land was set to work six years and one year of rest. Jesus hung on the cross six hours to complete his work. This will be a literal 1000 year of rest to conform to this pattern that God set up.

The thrones represent the administration of the messianic kingdom. Those whom John sees come to life are the Tribulation martyrs, who refused to worship the beast.

Verses 5-6: The “first resurrection” is the resurrection included in verse 4. It has three principal phases:

- (1) The resurrection of Christ (the firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:23; compare Rev. 1:5);
- (2) The resurrection of the church (the dead in Christ (1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 4:16); and
- (3) The resurrection of Old Testament and Tribulation saints (verse 4; Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2).

The “rest of the dead” (unbelievers), will be raised in the second resurrection, described (in verses 12-13).

Revelation 20:5 "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This [is] the first resurrection."

The rapture of the church is the first resurrection. Those dead who did not accept the Lord as their Savior, have not risen from the grave yet. This 1000 years is just for the resurrected Christians.

“The rest of the dead”: The bodies of unbelievers of all ages will not be resurrected until the Great White Throne Judgment (verses 12-13).

“First resurrection”: Scripture teaches two kinds of resurrections: the “resurrection of life” and the “resurrection of judgment” (John 5:29; compare Dan. 12:2; Acts 24:15). The first kind of resurrection is described as “the resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14:14), the resurrection of “those who are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Cor. 15:23), and the “better resurrection” (Heb. 11:35). It includes only the redeemed of the church age (1 Thess. 4:13-18), the Old Testament (Dan. 12:2), and the Tribulation (verse 4). They will enter the kingdom in resurrection bodies, along with believers who survived the Tribulation. The second kind of resurrection then, will be the resurrection of the unconverted who will receive their final bodies suited for torment in hell.

The first part of verse 5 is a parenthesis, and comes chronologically after verse 11.

A parenthesis is defined: A qualifying or amplifying word, phrase, or sentence inserted within written matter in such a way as to be independent of the surrounding grammatical structure.

The first resurrection is the resurrection included in verse 4. It has three principal phases:

1. The resurrection of Christ (the firstfruits; 1 Cor. 15:23; Rev. 1:5);
2. The resurrection of the church (the dead in Christ; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 4:16); and
3. The resurrection of Old Testament and Tribulation saints (verse 4; Isaiah 26:19; Dan. 12:2).

The rest of the dead (unbelievers), will be raised in the second resurrection, described (in verses 12-13).

The first resurrection is a resurrection to life (John 5:28-29), whereas the second resurrection is a resurrection to death. The second death is eternal punishment in the lake of fire (see verse 14).

Revelation 20:6 "Blessed and holy [is] he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

“Blessed”: Those who die in the Lord (14:13), are blessed with the privilege of entering His kingdom (see note on 1:3).

We Christians are the blessed. You can easily see that the wicked dead have no part in this resurrection. We believers in Christ (the redeemed), are not subject to death because we have life (which Jesus breathed into us), when we were born again. We will never die. This second death mentioned here is for the lost. Not only will the Christians reign on this earth with Jesus for 1000 years, but we will live for all eternity in heaven with Jesus, because we have eaten of the Tree of Life which is Jesus Christ our Lord.

“Second death”: The first death is only physical, the second is spiritual and eternal in the lake of fire, the final, eternal hell (verse 14). It could exist outside the created universe as we know it, outside of space and time, and is presently unoccupied (see note on 19:20 for the first two occupants).

This second death mentioned here is for the lost. Not only will the Christians reign on this earth with Jesus for 1000 years, but we will live for all eternity in heaven with Jesus, because we have eaten of the Tree of Life which is Jesus Christ our Lord.

What is the Millennium? Christ's 1000 year reign upon David's throne is the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, Israel and to David, but its more than that, it is the final proof of the incorrigible nature of man's sinful heart. Christ is present in Jerusalem, ruling the world, and the saints of all ages in resurrected bodies administer the kingdom righteously under His direction. All evil is prohibited and punished immediately. Even Satan is locked away so that he cannot in any way influence mankind (see note on verse 2).

Verses 7-10: Many of the believers who enter the Millennium in their natural bodies as survivors of the Tribulation (compare Matt. 25:34), will begin to have children, who will also reproduce throughout the “thousand years”. Many of those descendants will remain unsaved and unregenerate and will therefore be able to sin. At the end of the Millennium, “Satan” will be released from prison to make one last attempt to defeat Christ. He will “deceive the nations” into rebellion against God. The reference to “Gog and Magog” shows that this final battle will be like the invasion described (in Ezekiel chapter 38). The “beloved city” is the earthly Jerusalem, headquarters of Christ’s millennial kingdom (compare Isa. 60:1-22; Zech. 14:1-20). The rebels will be quickly destroyed by “fire ... from God”. Satan will then be “cast into the lake of fire” where his henchmen, the Antichrist and the False Prophet are (compare 20:10, 15; 19:20). Their torment will be eternal.

Revelation 20:7 "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,"

“Satan ... loosed”: He is loosed to bring cohesive leadership to the world of rebel’s born to the believers who entered the kingdom at the beginning. He is loosed to reveal the charter of Christ-rejecting sinners who are brought into judgment for the last time ever.

Satan and his demons will be imprisoned in the abyss for 1000 years while Christ rules with unopposed sovereignty. They are not permitted to interfere in the affairs of the kingdom in any way.

All those who initially went into the kingdom were without doubt redeemed sinners who had turned to Christ in faith. The bad news is that they still will possess a sinful human nature. That sin nature is passed on to their children, grandchildren, etc.

Thus each generation born in the millennium will have need for salvation. Many will come to salvation but amazingly despite the most moral society the world will ever know, a great number will love their sin and reject Him.

When Satan is loosed, he provides the leadership needed to bring the latent sin and rebellion to the surface of those unrepentant sinners. This act of rebellion will start immediately when he is released.

Revelation 20:8 "And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom [is] as the sand of the sea."

This "battle" is very similar to the battle we read about in chapter 19 of Revelation. The only thing that makes this appear to be a different battle is that the one in chapter 19 happens in the valley of Megiddo. and this battle seems to be around the city of Jerusalem.

“Gog and Magog”: The name given to the army of rebels and its leader at the end of the Millennium. They were names of ancient enemies of the Lord. Magog was the grandson of Noah (Gen. 10:2), and founder of a kingdom located north of the Black and Caspian Seas. Gog is apparently the leader of a rebel army known collectively as Magog. The battle depicted (in verses 8-9), is like the one in Ezek. chapters 38 and 39); it is best to see this one as taking place at the end of the Millennium, not the Tribulation.

The use of Gog and Magog here and (in Ezekiel 38 and 39), has confused some readers. A thorough reading of the two passages will reveal that the events are not the same. The one thing these events have in common is that both national entities (Gog and Magog), are driven by the spirit of rebellion against God. In these two cases, God uses the same names because of the deceptively satanic spirit that motivates them both (see article “[Gog and Magog](#)”).

Ezek. 38:2 "Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him,"

“Meshech and Tubal”: Two peoples were recognized in ancient Assyrian monuments: one called Mushki (Mushku) and the other Tubali (Tabal). Both were in Asia Minor, the area of Magog, modern day Turkey. Summing up, a chief prince, who is the enemy of God’s people, will lead a coalition of nations against Jerusalem. The details of the enemy force and its destruction are given by Ezekiel in the rest of chapters 38 and 39.

Ezekiel 38:3 "And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I [am] against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:"

In Ezekiel 38 and 39 we read detailed information about a battle very similar to this. I believe "Gog and Magog" are modern Russia. When you read this in Ezekiel, you will see Iran (Persia), Libya, Ethiopia and Turkey. All of these are already having problems with Israel.

Look at these two scriptures:

Ezekiel 39:12 "And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land."

Ezekiel 39:9 "And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years."

When you look at the next scripture, you see a problem with the seven months and years of Ezekiel which doesn't fit the timing here. As in 20:9 that is pretty much the end of everything. So, you decide if this is two battles or one. One at the end just prior to the start of the Tribulation, or into the beginning of the Tribulation; and the second one to end the world as we know it at the end of the Millennium.

They will muster their forces from one corner of the globe to the other and will march on Jerusalem, where they will "surround the camp of the saints and the beloved city." But there will be no battle. No call to arms. No defensive strategy or late night negotiations or propaganda campaign or deploying of gigantic nuclear weapons.

The four quarters of the earth refers to the entire globe. Gog is used as a title for an enemy of God's people, not a particular person. Magog seems to be the term used here to describe area where the sinful rebels of all the nations come from, that gather together for the last war in human history.

The number of these rebels will be like the sand of the seashore which is a figure of speech used in the bible to define a vast and uncountable multitude.

Consider how when Joseph sent for his father and family that a total of 70 people came to Egypt. A little over 400 years later there were millions who God lead out of Egypt. There will be a lot more people left than 70 that will go into the millennium and there will be 250% more time for procreation. There will probably be many billions of people at that time so Satan could have a huge gathering that will join together for that final battle. "the number of whom [is] as the sand of the sea."

Revelation 20:9 "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them."

These enemies of God here come against Jesus and the saints. In fact, they surround the saints. The "beloved city" here mentioned is Jerusalem. When the devil thinks he has won, fire comes down from heaven (from God), and devours them.

“Fire”: Frequently associated in Scripture with divine judgment of wicked men (Gen 19:24; 2 Kings 1:10, 12, 14; Luke 9:54; 17:29).

Again, like in the battle of Armageddon before the millennium started, this battle too will in all reality be an execution. As the rebel forces moved in to attack, they are swiftly and totally exterminated. They will be physically killed and their souls will go into the realm of punishment awaiting final sentencing to the eternal hell that will shortly take place.

Revelation 20:10 "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet [are], and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

“Deceived”: Just as his demons will entice the world’s armies into the Battle of Armageddon, Satan will draw them into a suicidal assault against Christ and those with Him (16:13-14).

“Lake of fire and brimstone” (see note on 19:20).

The beast and false prophet have been waiting for Satan in the lake of fire and brimstone for the last one thousand years. Now their deceiver joins them.

“Tormented day and night” (see note on 14:11). Continuous, unrelieved torment will be the final state of Satan, fallen angels, and unredeemed men.

Revelation chapter 20 Questions

There will not be a moment's peace for them all the rest of eternity.

1. What did the angel have the key to?
2. What did he have in his hand besides the key?
3. This angel did what to the devil?
4. Name four names he was called here in verse 2.
5. What does the chain show?
6. For how many years does he bind the devil?
7. Where does the angel throw the devil?

8. What will happen after the 1000 years?
9. Describe this earth while the devil is locked up.
10. Why will the devil be loosed?
11. Who are going to judge with Jesus?
12. Name the groups and individuals who will reign with Jesus.
13. Why do Christians suffer tribulation?
14. How long approximately has it been since Adam?
15. How long did Jesus work on the cross?
16. The rapture of the church is called what?
17. This 1000 year Sabbath is for whom?
18. Who does the second death not have power over?
19. In verse 6, what are the believers?
20. We Christians are not subject to death. Why?
21. Who is the Tree of life?
22. What will Satan do when he is loosed?
23. What is the only thing that makes this battle look to be different than the one in chapter 19?
24. What do we read in Ezekiel 38 and 39?
25. Name three modern countries other than Russia.
26. What is the beloved city?
27. Who sends the fire down on them?
28. Where will the devil be cast after this battle?