

The Millennium (Revelation 20:1-6)

Jesus is coming again and He is King of kings. As the ultimate King, Jesus will reign over an earthly kingdom. As a descendant of King David, Jesus will fulfill the promise of God to maintain David's throne forever (2 Samuel 7:16). Jesus will also fulfill the promises of Psalm 2, including universal rule. The Old Testament predicted that this messianic kingdom will be characterized by peace (Isaiah 2:1-4), righteousness (Isaiah 11:1-11), prosperity (Isaiah 35:1-2), and worship (Zechariah 14:16-21). This kingdom, offered by Jesus at His first coming (Mark 1:15) and delayed due to the unbelief of God's people, will be established at His second coming (Luke 19:11-27). Revelation 20:1-6 describes this future messianic kingdom and alone assigns the duration of this phase of Christ's rule as lasting one thousand years, a millennium. The Millennium, therefore, is the future messianic reign of Jesus Christ on earth. While some interpreters prefer to symbolize this reign as a present reality, the flow of the book of Revelation points to a future kingdom. The future reign of Jesus Christ on earth motivates us to welcome His present reign in our hearts. Jesus is King. When He reigns, things on earth will be much different. When He reigns in our hearts, things are also much different.

When Jesus reigns, Satan is powerless (20:1-3).

In Christ's millennial kingdom Satan will have no influence. Satan has interfered with humanity's spiritual existence since the Garden of Eden, but during the Millennium he will be confined, well out of reach and unable to further plague humankind.

John saw an angel descending from heaven and holding the key to the Abyss (20:1).

In his series of visions (compare Revelation 19:11, 17, 19) John next saw another angel descending from heaven to earth, where Satan had been thrown previously (Revelation 12:9). This angel possessed the key to the Abyss, the holding place for demons (Revelation 9:1-2, 11; 11:7; 17:8). He also had in his hand a great chain. Jude 6 says that certain demons are already bound and chained. Satan's turn has come.

The angel seized the dragon, Satan, and bound him for a period of one thousand years (20:2).

The angel took hold of the dragon, the serpent, the devil, Satan—all four terms are used to clearly identify the object of the angel's arrest (compare Revelation 12:9). They reflect Satan's ferocious, cunning, slanderous, adversarial role. Satan is a powerful being, worthy of caution—even the archangel Michael dared not accuse Satan and left Satan's situation in God's hands (Jude 9). So the angel who will apprehend Satan must be empowered by God Himself. That angel will bind Satan with a chain, some form of spiritual restraint designed for a spirit being. Satan will be bound for one thousand years. This is the first of six references to the thousand year reign of Jesus Christ. Because it's repeated six times in this context (verses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) and because there's no clue in the text to take this number in a figurative sense, it's

best to understand Christ's millennial reign as lasting one thousand years. His eternal reign, of course, will flow out of this millennial reign.

The angel threw the dragon, Satan, into the Abyss for a period of one thousand years (20:3).

The angel, empowered by God and equipped with the key to the Abyss, threw Satan bound into that hideous holding tank. The angel then shut and sealed the Abyss over Satan. During the Millennium, Satan will be unable to deceive the nations of the earth for that entire thousand-year period. Satan has deceived people from the beginning (Genesis 3:1-5). He's the father of lies (John 8:44). He, through the False Prophet, will deceive future nations and people, prompting them to reject God and worship the Beast. However, for one thousand years Satan will have no influence in this world. At the end of the Millennium, Satan will be released for a brief period of time. God's reason for releasing Satan is never stated. We do know that Satan will mount one last effort to topple Christ's kingdom, but that effort will fail (Revelation 20:7-9). So, for a thousand years Christ will reign on earth and Satan will be bound. When Jesus reigns, Satan is powerless.

**When Jesus reigns,
life replaces death (20:4-5).**

In Christ's millennial kingdom His martyred saints will receive resurrection life. Life replaces death when Jesus reigns.

John saw enthroned judges and the souls of those who had been martyred in resistance to the beast (20:4a).

Next John saw an unspecified number of thrones and people sitting on these thrones. The occupants of these thrones may be the twenty-four elders (Revelation 4:4), the church (1 Corinthians 6:2), the twelve disciples (Luke 22:28-29), or some other select group of future judges chosen by God. Those sitting on these thrones will be given by God the right to judge. They will apparently pronounce God's blessing on those who had died as martyrs under the rule of the Beast. John saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus Christ and the Word of God. They remained faithful to God's Son and God's truth in the face of the most severe persecution and gave their lives for their beliefs. They refused to worship the Beast or his image. They refused to receive the mark of the Beast on their foreheads or their hands. They died horrible deaths because they refused to deny Jesus Christ.

The martyrs came to life and reigned with Christ for a period of one thousand years (20:4b).

These Tribulation martyrs will be judged worthy of life. John says that they lived, they came back to life. They will experience physical resurrection. In their resurrected state they will reign with Christ for one thousand years.

The rest of the dead would not come to life until the end of the period of one thousand years (20:5a).

Apparently there will be a sequence of resurrections. The rest of the dead, that is, those who die as unbelievers, will not be resurrected until the conclusion of the Millennium.

The resurrection of the martyrs is the first resurrection (20:5c).

Those resurrected prior to the Millennium participate in what John calls the “first resurrection.” The first resurrection encompasses all of God’s people including those resurrected at the time of Jesus’ resurrection (Matthew 27:52), the church resurrected at the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:16), believing Jews from ancient times (Daniel 12:2), and Tribulation saints. This first resurrection stands in contrast to the second resurrection which will include only unbelievers. The first resurrection is a resurrection to eternal life. When Jesus reigns, life replaces death.

**When Jesus reigns,
His people reign (20:6).**

In Christ’s millennial kingdom His martyred saints will reign with Him. Those who love the Lamb who is Lord will share in His glorious joy.

Those who have a part in the first resurrection are blessed and sanctified (20:6a).

Because the first resurrection includes all who will enjoy eternal life in the presence of Jesus Christ there is a blessing attached to those who take part in this resurrection. All such believers are designated as “holy,” having been sanctified by faith through the sacrificial blood of Jesus.

Those who have a part in the first resurrection will not be subject to the second death (2:6b).

Another reason those who have a part in the first resurrection are blessed is because they will never experience the second death. The second death refers to eternal death. We die once when our bodies expire in this life. The second death comes when those who have rejected Jesus Christ stand in judgment and are condemned to eternal death. This second death, however, has no authority over those who share in the first resurrection. There’s a clear line of delineation between the saved and the lost, the believer and the unbeliever, eternal life and eternal death.

Those who have a part in the first resurrection will reign with Christ for a period of one thousand years (2:6c).

In contrast to eternal death, those raised in the first resurrection will become “priests” of God and of Christ (compare Revelation 5:10). A priest has direct access to God, and all believers will have direct access to God the Father and Jesus Christ forever, never to be separated again by sin. They will also “reign” with Jesus Christ for one thousand years. During the Millennium all believers will share in Christ’s earthly reign. This reign will flow into an eternal reign (Revelation 22:5). But in what way will believers reign with Jesus Christ? Over

what or whom will they reign? This shared reign may include a hierarchy of responsibilities within Christ's earthly kingdom and it may also include sharing dominion over the physical creation as originally intended in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1:26, 28). In other words, people will be at perfect harmony with God, one another, and nature in a righteous kingdom on earth under the ultimate rule of the Lamb who is Lord. When Jesus reigns, His people reign. The future reign of Jesus Christ on earth motivates us to welcome His present reign in our hearts. Jesus Christ is King!