

The Apocalypse | Finding Composure in the Unveiled Christ

“All Things New”

Revelation 20.1-21.8

7.11.21

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ² And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

⁴ Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

⁷ When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. ⁹ And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." ⁶ Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. ⁷ "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. ⁸ "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

We're coming to the end of our fairly long (14 part) look at *The Apocalypse* – the last book of the Bible.

You may have noticed that, in our attempts to stay fixed on the main ideas of Revelation and not wander into the conjectural stuff, we applied more to the First Century Church than you may have heard in the past.

I imagine those young Christians in what we now call Turkey... many of whom were Jewish... they have seen or WILL see the City of Jerusalem and the Temple destroyed (70AD). In the Jewish mind The Temple was, the place where Heaven touched Earth, the Axis Mundi, the center of the world. When the Temple fell so that the practice of Judaism is no longer possible (no more sacrifices!) – they thought the world was ending.

Jewish and Gentile Christians had to imagine what role Christianity would play in the world. Would Jesus Christ return soon...maybe when the Temple falls, then Jesus returns (70AD)? Did they have any idea that the movement would continue for decades and centuries and up to OUR day (2,000 years!)?

Have you been in on the ground-floor of a new thing, a business, a school, an organization or club or movement that might endure... but for 2,000 years?!

Maybe *The Book of Revelation* is there to tell our 1st C brothers and sisters to go ahead! Don't be freaked out by the Temple's collapse or by opposition from the Empire or even by death – just keep on believing and testifying about the Resurrected Man – this is how we fight our battles, how we overcome... and 2,000 years from now they'll be talking about us.

Today we come to a section and a question that is for many Bible students it's THE dividing-line issue. What do you believe about the Millennium, the 1,000 Year Reign of Christ in Revelation CH 20? That, answer, will for many people, define a person's "eschatology" or entire view of the End Times – that determines what camp you're IN.

And it IS in the Bible and it *should* be taken seriously but the whole NT is eschatological (*it's about the end of the Old Creation and the beginning of the New*) so let's see the Millennium for what it is (better than we know).

Let's look at:

- 1. This Life Is Heavier Than You Think It Is**
- 2. The Afterlife Is Better Than You've Imagined**

The basic order of this heavy chapter is (heavier than we think it is!) it's the Millennium, Satan's release for a short time, the Second Coming of Christ and resurrection of all the dead, the Final Judgment.

Just by a plain reading we would conclude that the 1,000 years (the Millennium) comes before the Second Coming and the Judgment. I realize that events in *Revelation* are NOT always strictly sequential but it does look like they follow that order here.

I'm with the scholars that see the numbers in this book to be almost always symbolic. We've seen the repetition of symbolic 7, 3, 12, 10, 3 ½, 666, 144,000.

This number combines 10 (like our fingers) and 3 (like the Trinity) so that 10 to the third power (10 cubed) $10 \times 10 \times 10 = 1,000$. If ten is a complete number and three is another complete number than what do you suppose 10^3 means – what does 1,000 years mean?

Well, it means ... a really long time!

The earliest Christians were being told that this little movement was going to be around a long, LONG time! Satan was bound from deceiving the Nations for a long, long time. He can no longer dupe or trick the Nations (the Gentiles) from entering the Kingdom of God. It's not that the Dragon is gone but that he's not allowed to keep the Nations from knowing God – the Gospel, the Good News is for all Nations (not only the Israelites) and the Good News will prevail against the Gates of Hell and set the captives free wherever that Gospel is proclaimed.

Jesus Christ spoke of Satan when He said, "Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And *then* he will plunder his house." (Matthew 12.29)

Jesus is the Grave Robber come to plunder the strong man – the evil one. Matthew uses the same word as Revelation: "the strong man must first be bound" and the Satan is bound for 1,000 years that he might not deceive the nations.

Jesus used this image of the plundering of Satan in conjunction with preaching the Good News of the Kingdom. When the 70 disciples came back from their preaching tour, He said, "(as YOU were preaching) I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning." (Luke 10.18)

When they were about to close the door on the world and Jesus spend those intimate moments with the disciples in the Upper Room (the meal before the battle as we saw last week) these Greeks (Gentiles) came to see Jesus. And Jesus said, "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out." (John 12.20-31).

In other words – when the Nations (in this case the Greeks) get the Good News that's evidence that the dragon-ruler of this world is cast out. The Gospel being proclaimed renders Satan unable to deceive the Nations and keep them out of God's Kingdom of grace. The devil is bound NOT in every way but chained from lying to the Gentiles that they cannot know God.

The strong man is chained and his house is being plundered during the long, long time that the church is telling the nations about Jesus Christ.

The word, “*unchained*” is the very last word in the Book of Acts – “Paul proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ-- with all boldness and unchained” (Acts 28.31) Paul is chained (under house arrest) and Satan is chained *but the Gospel is NOT!*

What is the Millennial Reign of Christ? It’s the time when the witnesses – the martyrs – continue to ransack the strong man’s house and set the Nations free to know and trust in Israel’s God. It’s NOW.

A time will come...when an agent of Satan will again deceive the Nations – an anti-Christ will lie to the world that entrance into heaven is NOT available to the Nations...and that we should instead trust in him. But for now, the serpent of old is powerless to neutralize the Gospel AND the Gospel is the antidote to evil, falsehood and judgment.

And yet... after the age (dispensation) of the gentiles and the free *and universal proclamation of the Good News is over* and Satan once again deceives the nations (7) into war (8) *and a showdown when the dragon surrounds the saints* and God swats away the dragon like he was a dragonfly (a GNAT) and the deceiver is thrown into the lake of fire (BOOM! Over) – then the judgment. The books will be opened. The dead are gathered (even from the sea) for judgment.

Everyone will be judged. YOU will be judged... and that should (literally) scare the Hell out of you.

On that great and terrible day, Jesus Christ will be either your Defense Attorney or your Judge.

“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.”

Some will be charged *with* the death of Christ. Some will be acquitted *by* the death of Christ. Some will stand in the filthy rags of their own righteousness and others will be clothed in the perfection of His right-ness. God first declared us good and then, in the power of the Spirit who lives IN the believer – God declared us good and then begins to make us in practice what He’s declared us to be.

Look – life is heavy. To be born a human being and created in the “*imago dei*” (image of God) and made for relationship with God *is a very, very heavy thing.*

To think that every life that ever lived on this earth will be evaluated and a verdict rendered. To think that if your name is NOT in the Book of Life that you will be condemned to everlasting shame, a lake of unrelenting regret... is too much to fathom.

But fathom it we must. Because, for now, there’s a moment... an opportunity to find refuge. “But how can I know that my name is there...in the Book of Life?” Listen to this old hymn:

Jesus lives, and so shall I.^[SEP]
 Death! your sting is gone forever!^[SEP]
 He who came for me to die,^[SEP]
 lives, the bands of death to sever.^[SEP]

He will raise me from the dust:^{SEP}
 Jesus is my hope and trust.

Jesus lives and death is now
 But my entrance into glory.
 Courage! then, my soul, for thou
 Hast a crown of life before thee;
 You will find your hopes were just—
 Jesus is the Christian's Trust.

That hymn (Jesus Lives and So Shall I) reminds us that every single person who trusts in the Resurrected Man will find, in the end, that his/her name was written in the Book of Life from eternity past.

I know it's CRAZY – it's so heavy and so amazing, "You will find your hopes were just!" You'll NOT be disappointed – *your hopes will be exceeded and while you live awaiting that Day* – God will be preparing you for eternal relief, an everlasting intimacy that will be more real than what you experience on a daily basis.

You see - The Afterlife Is Better Than You've Imagined. We need to fight against the ideas and pictures in our minds that we've accumulated like barnacles on our hulls *that the next life will be misty and foggy*.

The truth is – before the final resurrection – I'm not entirely sure what the afterlife will be. We'll somehow NOT have resurrected bodies and yet we'll be infinitely satisfied in the Lover of our souls...

And then, a New Heaven and a New Earth will not replace but fulfill this old sin-stained and terribly marred OLD creation.

See, the Bible is not like other holy books. It NOT only starts with a beginning (as we'd expect) but it also ends with a beginning, which we DON'T expect! The sea will no longer be a place that terrifies us, a symbol of chaos ready to swallow us ...where monsters dwell.

We will be solid – more solid than you are right NOW. When the New Creation comes and when the Lords' Prayer is once and finally answered that prayed "Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN". (Matthew 6.9-13)

On that SOLID DAY – we who believe in Jesus Christ and trust in HIS doing and dying and His victorious resurrection will not only know relief from all that sin has done to hurt and mutilate and defile us and make us weep and sometimes inexplicably sad and overwhelmed... BUT we will know God. And we'll live and dwell IN God.

The bookend of John's Gospel – where John said, *“The Word became flesh and ‘tabernacled’ among us”* i.e. the Mind of God became physical and lived the human life. But now, at the end of John's volume two, the other bookend (21.3): *“Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men and He will dwell among them and they shall be His people and God will be among them...”*

He will walk with us in the cool of the Day *in a New Creation that will be like the Oak Tree is to the acorn* – now we're only seeds of what we will be... Yosemite National Park (it looks unimaginably beautiful!) it's only a seed of what it will be. *“Behold,”* says Jesus Christ, the Last Adam and the King of the New Creation – *“Behold, I am making all things new!”* YOU CAN BANK ON IT – only keep on believing.

He was the Alpha (in the first creation) and He will be the Omega in the New Creation. *“Things that eye has not seen nor ear heard and which has not even entered the imagination of those who love God and who wait for His mercy”* (1 Cor 2.9; Isaiah 64.4)

“I will be His God and he will be My son...”

“But for the cowardly and the unbelieving ...abominable and murderers and immoral persons, sorcerers and idolaters and liars... their part is in the lake of fire the death after death”

I quote that because...it's there AND to say, those who trust in Jesus Christ – we are all of these things (Jesus said hatred IS murder and lust IS adultery) but we have the antidote coursing through us – grace keeps us from being consumed by our sin/baser instincts.

And no matter who you are or what you've done that same antidote is available to you...now... but not forever. I offer it to you in the name of Jesus Christ – only believe. Put your past, present and future into His nail-scarred hands... and you'll find that He has taken your judgment and YOU WILL HAVE THE REWARD THAT HE DESERVES.