

Revelation, Part 27

Rev 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. 2 And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 3 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.

4 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. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. 6 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.

7 And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison 8 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. 9 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, 10 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.

11 Then 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. 12 And 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. 13 And 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. 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.

The use of the word “then” (*kai*) in verse 1, sometimes translated as “and,” often indicates the action that follows in logical and/or chronological sequence. Accordingly, there is no reason why chapter 20 should not be considered as describing events that follow chapter 19, the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In addition to the grammar which connects these incidents, there is also the causal connection of the events which follow naturally from the fact that Christ will have returned to the Earth. In chapter 19, these events include casting the beast and the false prophet into the “lake of burning sulfur” and destroying their armies. Having disposed of the world ruler and the false prophet as well as the armies, it would be only natural that Christ should then turn to Satan himself, as He does in chapter 20.

Rev 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. 2 And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 3 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.

John saw an angel descend from heaven holding the key to the Abyss and a great chain. The angel grabbed Satan, bound him, threw him into the Abyss, and locked it. He would prevent Satan from deceiving the nations any more for a thousand years. Note that he was bound for only 1,000 years and cast into the Abyss, not the Lake of Fire as were the False Prophet and Antichrist.

Here we have our first mention of the Kingdom identified by 1,000 years. Satan is imprisoned until the 1,000 years are completed. Then he will be released to cause mischief once again.

As with other areas of Scripture, there are varied interpretations of what we see in chapter 20. They center around the question of when the Kingdom/Millennium takes place. There are three main views of that and a bunch of sub-categories.

1. Literal or premillennial view — The Second Advent is before a literal 1,000-year Millennium.

2. Amillennial view — There is no such thing as a literal 1,000-year reign of Christ; it is spiritual instead and, of an undetermined period of time. They believe we are experiencing it now. This could also be called “non-millennialism” on the basis that there is no literal millennium.
3. Post-Millennial View — They see the Second Advent of Christ as occurring after the Millennium, which is a literal and yet future 1,000 years. Their “Millennium” is usually seen as being the last 1,000 years of this Church Age.

Premillennialism

This is the position that I believe is the most consistent with Scripture.

Premillennialists believe that Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation and before a literal 1,000-year-long Millennium. There are several forms of premillennialism:

- **Historical School** — Interprets Revelation 6-19 as largely fulfilled in history and largely figurative. It has to be seen as such because the events described in verses 6-19 cannot be found literally in history, thus they charge that figurative language is used in these chapters, but chapters 20 and following are yet future and generally seen as literal.
- **Soteriological School** — Soteriology deals with Salvation. This position is usually advocated by the Covenant Theology bunch who believe one is saved by faith but works maintain or prove salvation. They see the Millennium as yet future and primarily as an aspect of God’s soteriological program. But the political aspects and the prominence of Israel as a national entity are subordinated. In a sense, it is not incorrect to emphasize the soteriological characteristics of the Millennium because it is a major element of God’s plan for salvation but not to the extent they do.
- **Theocratic School** — This group differs from the Soteriological School in that they put much more emphasis on the theocratic character of the Millennium. It is yet future but more a fulfillment of the promises to Israel, specifically concerning the re-establishment of David’s Kingdom under the “Son of David,” Jesus Christ. This group sees the Millennium with a profoundly more Jewish character than the others. Advocates of this view include Louis Sperry Chafer, Charles Ryrie, C. I. Scofield, J. Vernon McGee, Bob Thieme, and a host of others who are mostly graduates of Dallas Seminary. It is sometimes called the “Dispensational Interpretation,” as it views the Millennium as the last of a series of identifiable eras or periods or dispensations of

human history, and each begins with the blessing of man by God and ends with the judgment of man for his failure under the blessing.

Amillennialism

Broadly speaking these do not believe in a literal Millennium of 1,000 years in length, thus the six references in the passage we just read are not specific numbers. They argue that the term “thousand” is used in Scripture and never denotes a specific period. Such as...

2 Peter 3:8 With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day

They argue that’s figurative language, and it could be, but who is to say a day in the life of the Lord is not the same as 1,000 years to man? Who says it should not be taken literally? And if it is figurative language, how does that negate the fact that a specific 1,000 years period is mentioned six times in Revelation? Their view is the entire book of Revelation is nothing but symbolism. This is the Catholic view. It is essentially a denial of the literal reign of Christ. Generally speaking, it believes we are in the Millennium now, and when we have finally taken the Gospel to all points of the world and all have come to Christ, then Christ will return. In this, they are like the Postmillennialists.

There are also several sub-views within amillennialism.

- **Historical Augustinian Amillennialism** — Human history would be completed in 6,000 years and the seventieth millennium is the eternal state. He intended to interpret the 1,000 years as literal but was not emphatic about that. The first resurrection is a spiritual resurrection and the second resurrection described in Rev 20 occurs at the time of the Second Advent.
- **Preterist School of Theology** — They believe the 1,000 years of the millennium describe the period between the First and Second Advents of Christ, and that is not a literal 1,000 years but a period of time of undetermined length.
- **Modified Augustinian Amillennialism** — Most popular view. They believe the Millennium relates to the saints reigning in Heaven. The First Resurrection is when the soul is taken to Heaven and the second is the resurrection of all men.

Amillennialists take the position that the binding of Satan in verse 2 has already taken place and is in effect now. That Satan was bound at the first coming of Christ, however, Revelation 20:1-3 contradicts that position. Throughout the Scriptures Satan is said to exert great power not only against the world but also against Christians (Acts 5:3; 1 Cor. 5:5; 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; 1 Tim. 1:20). If there is still any question whether this is so, it should be settled by the exhortation of 1 Peter 5:8: "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." Amillennialists answer this by saying that Satan is limited by the power of God. But this has always been true, as illustrated in the Book of Job and elsewhere. To describe Satan's present situation as being locked in the Abyss and unable to deceive the nations for a period of a thousand years is simply not factually true today. And it requires extreme spiritualization of the literalness of this passage as well as other New Testament references to Satan's activities and present power. This same power of Satan is further revealed in the Great Tribulation when he empowers the world ruler (Rev. 13:4). Satan will have been cast out of Heaven at the beginning of the Great Tribulation and will then be more active than ever (Rev. 12:9, 13, 15, 17). If Satan is actually deceiving the nations today, as the Scriptures and the facts of history indicate, then he is not now locked in the Abyss, and the 1,000-year Millennium is still future? This interpretation is also supported by the final statement that after the 1,000 years, he must be set free for a short time (20:3). Here expositors again are at a loss to explain this except in a literal way, making possible a final satanic rebellion at the end of the millennial kingdom.

Post-Millennialism

This is a fairly recent view, at least in the modern definition. It believes the Millennium must be completed before the return of Christ. It is similar to amillennialism in that it views the millennium as the final triumph of the Gospel in this present age. The Millennium is a literal 1,000 years, but it is the last thousand of this present Church Age. They do see it as yet future.

A variation of post-millennialism connects post-millennialism to evolution. Both post-millennialism and amillennialism see man as evolving ever closer to Christ-likeness and, as such, brings in the attributes that are associated with the Millennium. They posit that Christ reigns in the hearts of all men, and the utopian characteristics that are associated with the Millennium *result* from this fact. But man is not truly evolving upward

morally. World Wars I and II, plus events since then, have caused both amillennialism and post-millennialism to lose favor.

Premillennialism

The only Biblically supportable view is the premillennialism view. The events are in the following order:

1. Christ returns to terminate the Tribulation.
2. Satan is bound.
3. There follows a series of judgments.
4. Then the Millennium begins and is literally 1,000 years long.
5. Satan is released near the end and once more causes mischief to be ended by acts of God.
6. There is a final judgment that ends the Millennium.
7. Then all enter an eternal state with the creation of a new heavens and new earth.

What do we have so far in our study of Revelation?

Christ has returned and defeated Satan, Antichrist, the False Prophet, and all their minions, and ended the Tribulation. There is no indication in Scripture that the returning hosts with him, the Church and angelic hosts, have any active combative part in the process. It would appear that Christ does all the work, as is the case elsewhere in God's plan. Satan is cast into the Abyss in chains where he will remain for 1000 years. Antichrist and the False Prophet go to the Lake of Fire as the only two occupants at this point in time.

Resurrections and Judgments at End of the Tribulation

Rev 20:4 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. 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 ended.) This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy are those who have a part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

At the Second Advent, a number of things must happen before the beginning of the next dispensation which is the Kingdom/Millennium.

- The re-gathering of Israel from among the nations
- The judgment of Israel
- The judgment of the nations
- Resurrection and evaluation of all OT and Tribulation saints

We will examine the judgments in detail in our next class. Meanwhile, we will deal with the subject of resurrections here.

Resurrections

Here follows is one list of resurrections:

1. Christ as First Fruits
2. Those raised from the dead at the Cross
3. Church Age believers at the Rapture before the Tribulation
4. The two witnesses near the middle of the Tribulation
5. OT and Tribulation saints at the end of the Second Advent
6. Millennial saints at the end of the Millennium.

I would take issue with numbers 2 and 4. Both strike me as more resuscitations than resurrections. First, let's look at those who came out of the graves at the time of the Cross.

Mat 27:52 The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, 53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many

The passage says, "the tombs were opened". An opening of the grave is not required for someone in a resurrection body to exit the tomb. Yes, I know the stone covering the opening of Jesus' tomb was rolled back, but that was to reveal that it was empty. He did not need it open to exit.

Walvoord, however, sees them as "a fulfillment of the Feast of the First Fruits of harvest mentioned in Leviticus 23:10–14. On that occasion, as a token of the coming harvest, the people would bring a handful of grain to the priest. The resurrection of these saints, occurring after Jesus Himself was raised, is a token of the coming harvest when all the saints will be raised"

However, in 1 Corinthians 15:20 Christ is called “the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

In the case of the two witnesses in Revelation 11:3-13, it says in verse 11, “But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet.” When we consider other uses of this idea of the “breath of life from God” entering someone it is in the context of physical life (Gen. 2:7; Ezek. 37:5, 9, 10). They were seen taken bodily into Heaven, thus I see them as resuscitated.

Two Kinds of Resurrections

There are two "kinds" of resurrections spoken of in Scripture: The resurrection to life and the resurrection to judgment or damnation.

John 5:28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation

This is a broad-brush statement designed to gather the concept of the resurrections together. Jesus is not saying all will be resurrected at the same time, only that all who are in graves will be resurrected. Both resurrection types are also captured in this passage from Daniel.

Dan 12:2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Resurrection to Life or First Resurrection

The Resurrection to Life is also called the First Resurrection, and while spoken of as one event, it is actually several:

1. Church Age saints are resurrected at the Rapture and evaluated at the Bema Judgment and receive their rewards if any.
2. All Old Testament saints including Tribulation martyrs are resurrected at the Second Advent.
3. The saints of the Millennium, including the surviving believers delivered out of the Tribulation that entered the Millennium, are glorified at the end of the Millennium. Theirs is more likely a “translation” from a live corruptible body to an eternal glorified body as happened to live Church Age believers at the Rapture.

All three are captured in the term “Resurrection to Life” which refers to eternal life.

John 5:28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

The word translated as “good” (v29) is *agathos ag-ath-os*¹ and means good of intrinsic value, meaning it is useful and honorable. The same word is used in Romans 8:28 “God works all things together for good...” “Evil” is *phaulos fow'-los* and means worthless or ethically bad.

The terms “good” and “evil” in this passage are not referring to sin but are speaking of two kinds of human production. In the context of this passage, *agathos* is spiritual production done in the leading and power of the Spirit, or what we are calling “divine good” which is produced only by the believer and only when in fellowship. *Phaulos*, worthless works, characterize works produced in the power of the flesh and are what we are calling “human good”. It is the product of the unsaved and sometimes even a product of the saved when they are out of fellowship and not following the leading of the Spirit to do what He is calling the believer to do. That would include not only disobedience to single acts of calling, such as to witness to someone but also any failure of the function of the believer’s spiritual gifts.

Agathos (good) and *phaulos* (evil) are not causes, which is the way many incorrectly misinterpret this. They are identifying characteristics of those in each resurrection. The born again are expected to produce *agathos* in the leading and enabling power of the Spirit that is both pleasing to God and glorifying Him. The unsaved can produce nothing but a worthless product generated in the power of the flesh, *phaulos*. It is not pleasing to God nor does it glorify Him.

Taking considerable liberties with the text, another way to put this is “And those who come forth to the resurrection to life have produced divine good under the leading and power of the Spirit for the glory of God, but those to the resurrection of damnation have produced worthless human good done in the power of the flesh for the glory of self.”

The statement “all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth...” sounds like this is just one resurrection with two results, some “to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt”. It is actually two resurrections 1,000 years apart.

Luke 14:13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

Luke speaks of this divine good and how it will be repaid at the Bema judgment. It will pass the fire test as “gold, silver, and precious stones” mentioned in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15.

Phil 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Paul is here claiming that it is not his righteousness that counts but the righteousness of Christ imputed to him based on faith at salvation that justified him. The term “resurrection of/from the dead” in verse 11 is *exanastasis* {*ex-an-as'-tas-is*}. *Ex* means out from, and *anastasis* means to rise up as from the dead or resurrection. It should be literally translated as “resurrection out from the dead” implying that only some are resurrected and others are not. Philippians 3:9-11 is saying there is a resurrection of the righteous, those in the possession of the righteousness of Christ (believers) who are resurrected, leaving some of the dead behind. This is the First Resurrection.

Resurrection to Damnation (Judgment) or Second Death

This resurrection shows up in several places in scripture. We have already seen it once in John 5:29 as the resurrection of judgment (NASB) or damnation (KJV)

Rev 20:4 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. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. 6 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.

Verse 5 is a little confusing because of the sentence structure.

Rev 20:5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.

“Rest of the dead” in the Greek text means “the remaining ones” and implies the dead other than 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”. The “rest of the dead” implies there are dead remaining to be resurrected, and they did not meet these criteria.

And with the context being the Second Advent, it tells us those believers resurrected are resurrected before the Kingdom/Millennium. And look at verse 6

Rev 20:6 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.

The statement at the end of verse 5 “This is the first resurrection” refers not to the “rest of the dead” of verse 5 but to the dead Tribulation saints in verse 4, and verse 6 supports that, “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.”

Verse 5 “The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended” is a very brief glimpse of the resurrection of the “wicked dead” at the end of the Millennium, also called the “Last Judgment” or “White Throne Judgment”. In Revelation 20:11-15 we see that judgment of

the "wicked dead" or, as we know them in Revelation 20:5, the "rest of the dead," and those "out from the dead" that were left behind in Philippians 3:11.

The Order of the Resurrections

We begin with the resurrection of Christ at the beginning of the resurrection program as the first fruits among many.

1 Cor 15:23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming.

This is followed by the resurrection/translation of both dead and living Church Age believers at the Rapture. (I am not counting those that came out of the graves at the time of the Cross as a resurrection.)

1 Thess 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.

The resurrection of the Tribulation period martyrs together with the resurrection of OT saints, comes next at the Second Advent. (I am not counting the two witnesses during the Tribulation as a separate resurrection.)

Dan 12:1-2 "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. 2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

"At that time," refers back to this "time of trouble," at the end of the Tribulation, the OT saints will be raised. Note that it says, "many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" — many but not all. Some (awake) to everlasting life and some to "everlasting contempt." Nothing here implies this is one event. It is actually two events. The "some to

everlasting contempt” (“damnation” in some translations) occurs 1,000 years after “some to everlasting life” which is at the Second Advent.

Isa 26:19 Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.

The resurrected Tribulation martyrs and OT saints enter the Millennium on the same basis as the Raptured Church Age saints. They are in their glorified bodies just like the raptured saints of the Church Age.

At this point of the Second Advent, all believers throughout human history thus far have been resurrected and are in their eternal state. Except...

Millennial Saints

When will those who enter the Millennial Kingdom still in their corruptible human bodies receive their glorified resurrection bodies? The timing of the resurrection of Millennial saints is one of the most challenging questions in scripture because the Bible does not clearly address this moment. Some believe Millennial saints receive a new body in a “rapture-like” moment when they turn 100 years old and point to Isaiah 65:20 as their proof text.

Isa 65:20 No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.

But I don’t believe this passage says that at all. Others, including myself, see it translated thus:

- The statement “There shall be” means “from that time forward” and refers to the time of the Second Advent forward to the establishment of the Kingdom.
- “No more” will there be an “infant who lives but a few days”. None will be short-lived. And “no more” will there be “an old man” who “does not fill out his days”. None shall die without attaining a full old age, which I believe is the entire 1,000 years.
- “The young man shall die a hundred years old” means that any man who would die a hundred years old would die a mere child.
- “The sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed” means his death at so early an age, which in those days the hundredth year will be

regarded as if it were mere childhood, shall be deemed it is because of God's special visitation of wrath upon him.

What this means is the longevity of men that was experienced in the Garden before the fall will be enjoyed again. Men will live for 1,000 years, and anyone who dies before that will be because of divine discipline. Because such discipline is possible, this passage also proves that the "better age to come," the Kingdom, though much superior to the present Church Age, will not be a perfect state because of the presence of people in corruptible human bodies with fully functioning sin natures. However, with the presence of Christ ruling with His iron scepter (rod), the tolerance for any sin will be extremely limited.

Next class we will have a detailed look at the White Throne Judgment also called "The Last Judgment" or "The Judgment of the Wicked Dead."