

The Millennium

Revelation 20

The Thousand Years

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit[a] 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.

The Defeat of Satan

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[b] 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.

Judgment Before the Great White Throne

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.

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I will be the first person to admit that my knowledge to write this discussion guide with confidence falls way short.

There are doctrinally-solid, Bible-believing Christians who have many different theories about the Revelation 20 millennium. When I listen to different factions debate Revelation 20 using solid sources from other Scripture, I almost always walk away saying about all them “yep, that’s what I believe.”

The Christian views on the millennium fall into three general categories: Premillennialism, Amillennialism and Postmillennialism.¹

- **Premillennialism** – The millennium follows the return of Christ. Jesus will rule the earth with his saints for 1,000 years (literal or figurative perfect length of time), during which time peace will reign, the natural world will no longer be cursed and evil will be suppressed (though not completely abolished). After a final rebellion, God will crush evil forever; judge the resurrected, non-believing dead; and establish heaven and hell.
- **Amillennialism** – The millennium is not a specific period of time. Instead the millennium refers to the heavenly reign of Christ and his departed saints. The return of Christ will occur at the end of history. The church has always lived in “the last days.”
- **Postmillennialism** – Christ will return following the millennium. The millennium is brought to fruition through the ever-increasing influence of the preaching and teaching of the Gospel by the church. Evil will diminish through conversions, the increasing role of the church, earthly prosperity, and Christian values solving social ills. Christ’s return and final judgement will end evil forever.

Even within our Church, Austin holds to the Premillennial view while I (Jonathan) tend be Amillennial.

I hope that you can see there is merit to all three views. For example, if you see that secularism, genocide, persecution and worldliness are making things worse on the earth with every passing year you would likely be sympathetic to Premillennialism. If you conclude that there are certain eschatological themes present in a study of every age of church history, but no future event is necessary to precede the return of Christ, you would tend to agree with the Amillennial viewpoint. If you observe that two thousand years of church history has gradually diminished the evils of slavery, hunger, disease, poverty, and the subjugation of women you might be more inclined toward Postmillennialism.

Biblically, a lot depends on whether Revelation 20 should be read as a chronological continuation of Revelation 19 or the beginning of a seventh cycle of judgments. This is one of

¹ Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms, ed. Stanley Grenz, et. al., Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999

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those debates where a single minor presupposition can determine which “camp” you ultimately land into.

We must keep our eyes on that fact that the purpose of Revelation 20 is to unite and encourage the church, not to sow discord and division.

There is no way I can possibly address every potential question you may have about Revelation 20 in one discussion guide. Please feel free to reach out to us [on Facebook](#) or [through our contact page at \[daretoventure.org\]\(http://daretoventure.org\)](#) and we'll be glad to help you find answers.

Revelation 20 is the only place in the NT where the phrase “thousand years” is used to refer to the kingdom of Christ. This does not mean that the millennium isn't a primary concern of Scripture. On the contrary, the kingdom of God is THE primary concern of the New Testament. If you don't believe me just do a google search of the word “kingdom” in the New Testament.

In Revelation we view another angle of looking at the kingdom of Christ and the defeat of the reign of Satan.

The point of the Bible's emphasis on the Kingdom of God is that Jesus is King! Living in a democracy we often have to put on our thinking caps to understand what is involved in being king. We don't have anything in our lives that presently compares to this absolute righteous monarchy.

The sovereignty of King Jesus is demonstrated in two broad areas:

1. Jesus' power to destroy to destroy Satan and his work and
2. Jesus' absolute prerogative to righteously judge all men who have lived in the past, present, and future.

In destroying Satan's work, the greatest thing defeated is death. In destroying that Jesus will resurrect the dead — both those who died believing in Christ and those who died as unbelievers.

The martyrs and the church are invited into ruling with Christ. Those who stand before Christ without names written in the book of life will be cast into eternal fire.

Discussion Questions

- What do you fear about Christ establishing his kingdom?
- What aspect of the kingdom do you long to see?
- How does the fact of the resurrection of the dead affect your life today?
- How would you rate your confidence in Jesus' ultimate victory of Satan's work?
- Should the torment of the lake of fire cause us to live differently as witnesses in this present age?

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- Who in your life needs to come to terms with the reality of the Great White Throne?
- How can you be a witness to that person?