

Revelation 20 - Resurrections and Judgment

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COURSE COMMENTARY

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20:1 - an angel with a chain

- [the importance of interpretation](#)

We spent considerable time in our introduction discussing the [interpretation of symbols](#) because it is **critical** to a correct understanding of the book of Revelation and especially this chapter. The majority of Christendom throughout history has allegorized and spiritualized this chapter and rejected the reality of an earthly kingdom for one-thousand years which follows upon the return of Christ.

- [the key to the bottomless pit](#)

"Bottomless pit" is *a'busson* : a compartment deep within the earth. Previously, we saw a "star" (probably an angel) fall from heaven and *open* this same compartment. See the discussion on [Revelation 9](#).

- [a great chain in his hand](#)

The chain denotes a spiritual power from God which is able to restrain fallen angels ([2Pe. 2:4](#); [Jude 1:6](#)).

20:2 - Satan is bound

- [bound him](#)

"Bound" is *e'desen* : used of actual binding or imprisonment ([Mark 5:3](#); [6:17](#)), but also used in a metaphorical sense. The deformed woman was *bound* by Satan ([Luke 13:16](#)).

- [for a thousand years](#)

Thousand is *ch'ilia* from which derives *chiliasm* : the belief in a literal kingdom on earth lasting one thousand years. This was the belief of the earliest Church Fathers. We discuss this in more depth in our next session on [the Millennial Kingdom](#).

20:3 - bound, shut, and sealed

- [shut him up, and set a seal on him](#)

He is now **bound** , **shut up** , and **sealed** . *Three strikes: he is OUT!* There is no *possibility* that he can affect *anyone or anything* during the thousand years. He is locked away and his demons are imprisoned in the region which was Babylon and Edom ([Isa. 34:8-17](#); [Rev. 18:2](#)). This may be the locking away of the "exalted ones" which Isaiah prophesied ([Isa. 24:19-22](#)).

- [so that he should deceive the nations no more](#)

He deceived Eve in the garden ([1Ti. 2:14](#)). He has been active in deception all through history, but no more so than during the Tribulation ([Rev. 12:12](#); [13:3](#), [11-16](#); [17:2](#); [16:13-16](#)).

20:4 - they reigned with Christ

- **I saw thrones and they sat on them**
In Revelation 4, we saw **twenty-four elders seated on thrones** which we believe are representative of the Church taken in the Rapture prior to the Tribulation. All saints have been given promises to rule (**Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21**). The ones on thrones here are also resurrected *men* : the church saints which rose at the Rapture (**John 14:1-3; 1Cor. 15:51-53; 1Th. 4:17**) and the Old Testament saints which rose after Jacob's trouble (**Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2**).
- **the souls of those who had been beheaded**
These are Tribulation martyrs (**Rev. 6:9; 7:13-14**).
- **who had not worshiped the beast or his image**
"Who" is *kai hoi'tines* : *and all the ones*. Many believe this refers to a third category: Tribulation martyrs from the time of mandatory Beast worship (the latter portion of the Tribulation).
- **they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years**
"They lived" is *e'zesan*, an ingressive aorist : *they came to life and began to live*. The same word describes the resurrection of Christ (**Rev. 2:8**) and the restoration of the Beast from his deadly wound (**Rev. 13:14**). By their identification with Christ, Who overcame death (**Rev. 1:18; 2:8**), they obtain this resurrection (**John 5:21; 11:23-25; 14:19; 2Ti. 2:11**).

20:5 - first resurrection

- **the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished**
The rest of the dead are not raised until after the Millennial Kingdom. There are *two categories* of resurrection: **1)** the resurrection of *life* , and **2)** the resurrection of *condemnation* (**John 5:28-29**). The resurrection of the *just* and *unjust* (**Acts 14:14**) do not occur at the same time, but are separated by the Millennial Kingdom. Between the resurrections, the unjust remain in *hades* suffering torment and awaiting judgment (**Luke 16:24**).

Order of Resurrection

Order	Resurrection	Timing	Participants	Description	Scriptures
1	First	The Third Day	Jesus Christ	The resurrection of Jesus, the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."	Mat. 28:1-7; John 20:1-18; 1Cor. 15:20
2	First	After Christ's Resurrection	A Few Old Testament Saints	Earthquake at crucifixion opened graves, saints arose after Christ.	Mat. 27:50-53
3	First	Before the Tribulation	Church	Resurrection of the Church, those <i>in Christ</i> , at the Rapture.	John 14:3; 1Th. 4:13-18; 1Cor. 15:50-53
4	First	Middle of Tribulation	Two Witnesses	God's two witnesses killed by the Beast.	Rev. 11:11-12
5	First	After Jacob's Trouble	Old Testament Saints	Old Testament saints resurrected to participate in the Millennial Kingdom.	Dan. 12:1-2; Isa. 26:19
6	First	Beginning of Tribulation	Tribulation Martyrs	Tribulation martyrs	Rev. 20:4-6

		Millennial Kingdom	Martyrs	resurrected to rule and reign with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom.	
7	Second	End of Millennial Kingdom	Unbelieving Dead	The unbelieving dead are raised to stand at the Great White Throne judgment.	Rev. 20:11-15

20:6 - the second death

- o [over such the second death has no power](#)

Christ promised overcomers in the church at Smyrna that they would not be hurt by the "second death" ([Rev. 2:11](#)). They were part of the first resurrection (having been raised at the rapture of the church). The second death is the destiny of the unsaved: the Lake of Fire ([Rev. 20:14](#); [21:8](#)). When a person is *born again* ([John 3:3-7](#)) he moves from the second resurrection to the first and avoids the second death.

20:7 - Satan released

- o [when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison](#)
"Prison" is *phulake's*, the same word which described the place of incarceration of the demons in the region of Babylon ([Rev. 18:2](#)). Satan is not omnipresent. During the entire Millennial Kingdom, he remains incarcerated and cannot deceive *anyone* to *any degree*. He is not so bound today!

20:8 - Gog and Magog

- o [Gog and Magog](#)
Gog of the land of Magog invaded Israel previous to this rebellion ([Eze. 38-39](#)). This is not the same invasion:
 - 1) The Ezekiel invasion is from the north, this is from the entire earth.
 - 2) The Ezekiel invasion requires seven years to dispose of weapons, whereas here the Great White Throne judgment immediately follows.
 - 3) The Ezekiel invasion occurs before the establishment of the kingdom, whereas this occurs afterwards.
 - 4) The Ezekiel invasion is destroyed on the mountains of Israel, whereas these are destroyed around Jerusalem. This is not the same Gog and Magog. Perhaps, based on past history, *Gog* denotes the God-opposing rulers and *Magog* the peoples under them?

20:9 - fire came down

- o [surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city](#)
Children are born within the Millennial Kingdom ([Isa. 65:20](#)). After one thousand years, multitudes have been born who have not come to faith, but who have rejected Christ's righteous rule in their midst. Mankind fails its last *dispensational test*: even in an ideal environment with an ideal ruler and in the absence of Satan, man still rejects God!

20:10 - devil to the Lake of Fire

- o **The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire**
The devil, once an anointed cherub of highest order ([Eze. 28:14](#)), is cast down in a series of judgments to finally reside in the Lake of Fire which was prepared for he and his angels ([Mat. 25:41](#)). The Beast and False Prophet are still there, after having been tormented for one thousand years ([Rev. 19:20](#)). Those in hell are never annihilated, but suffer eternally.

20:11 - great white throne

- o **a great white throne and Him who sat on it**
The one who will judge the wicked dead is the Lamb of God Who paid for their sins ([John 1:29](#); [1Ti. 2:6](#); [Heb. 2:9](#); [2Pe. 2:1](#); [1Jn. 2:2](#)), but Whom they rejected. The Father has given judgment to the Son ([John 5:22-23](#); [Acts 17:30-31](#)).
- o **the earth and heaven fled away and there was found no place for them**
The old order of things gives up its dead and retreats in preparation for the creation of a new heavens and earth ([Rev. 21:1](#)). Peter described this event when the elements themselves are dissolved ([2Pe. 3:10-12](#)).

20:12 - books were opened

- o **I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God**
Every category of man now stands before God on an individual basis. This is the first and last time the unredeemed dead will have direct access with God.
- o **books were opened and another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life***
The *books* (plural) record the all of the good and bad deeds of each individual. The *Book of Life* records those whose sins are covered by the redemption of the Lamb ([Rev. 5:9](#)). *If* salvation could be by works (performance), then there would be no need for the presence of the *Book of Life* at this judgment. These about to be judged have rejected the righteousness provided by God in favor of reliance on their own righteousness--which is no righteousness at all ([Isa. 64:6](#); [Rom. 10:2-3](#)).
- o **the dead were judged according to their works**
The first part of the judgment determines their guilt by degree. This is based on:
 - 1) the knowledge of God available to all men ([Ps. 19:1-4](#); [Rom. 1:20-22](#); [Rom. 2:5-9](#)).
 - 2) Additional knowledge they were individually given ([Mat. 11:20-24](#); [Luke 12:47-48](#); [John 19:11](#); [Rom. 2:5-9](#)).
 - 3) Their sin.
 These factors influence the *degree* of their torment.
- o **Man's rejection of God is *active*, not *passive*!**
Twice in history, *every person alive* knew God: after creation and after Noah's flood. Men *actively rejected* God and walked away from Him. "Although they *knew God*, they did not glorify Him as God " ([Rom. 1:20-22](#)). Men actively "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" ([Rom. 1:18](#)).

20:13 - dead delivered up

- o **the sea... Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them**
The righteous dead are not among these, having previously been raised. Now, the *unrighteous dead* whose bodies were lost at sea and in the grave (Death) are resurrected.

Their body joins their soul and spirit which have been awaiting this judgment in Hades (Luke 16:24). This is the "resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:29).

20:14 - the second death

- o **Death and Hades were cast into the Lake of Fire**
In the destruction of the old order, both Death (representing the bodies of the dead) and Hades (the compartment where the unsaved dead were held) are destroyed. This is an essential step on the way to the eternal state where death will be no more (Isa. 25:8; 1Cor. 15:24-26; 1Cor. 15:54-55). The Lake of Fire is also referred to as *Gehenna*, a garbage dump outside Jerusalem. The Lake of Fire is like a "cosmic garbage dump."
- o **This is the second death.**
Being cast into the Lake of Fire is the *second death* which results in eternal torment and separation from God. Jesus promised the overcomer that he "shall not be hurt by the second death" (Rev. 2:11). Those who participated in the first resurrection are exempt from the second death (Rev. 20:6).

20:15 - not written in the book

- o **anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire**
The *degree* of punishment was determined by the books containing their deeds. But their *ultimate destiny* is determined entirely on their presence or absence from the *Lamb's Book of Life*. Having rejected Jesus, they stand without any covering for their sin and cannot be in God's presence. They are cast into "hell," the Lake of Fire. Salvation is found in **Jesus Christ ALONE!** (Mark 16:16; John 3:18, 36; 1Jn. 5:11-12). *These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power* (2Th. 1:9).

Jesus' words to each of us: *My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!* (Luke 12:4-5).

For additional information on this topic, see the [commentary](#).