**THE THOUSAND YEAR REIGN OF CHRIST**

**REVELATION CHAPTER 20 – PART 2**

In the last two weeks of our study of Revelation quite a lot has taken place. In Chapter 19 we saw Jesus return to earth with the saints (including us). We saw Him defeat His enemies at the Battle of Armageddon. The beast (antichrist) and the false prophet were cast into the lake of fire. All the followers of the antichrist were killed by the sword from Jesus’ mouth. As we began Chapter 20 (last week) we saw where Satan’s control over this world was taken away from him and he was thrown into the pit. Jesus then set up His kingdom here on earth and then proceeds to rule as King of kings and Lord of lords for 1000 years. This is a period of peace and tranquility, of joy and righteousness. O.T. saints, the 12 apostles, N.T. saints who were resurrected during the Rapture (1 Thess 4) rule and reign with Jesus on earth. In Chapter 20 we observed the resurrection of the Tribulation saints (those who were saved during the seven-year Tribulation period). They also are rule and reign with Jesus.

I pointed out something last week that you need to remember: the Millennial Kingdom that we see in Chapter 20 is NOT to be confused with the eternal kingdom that we are going to see in Chapters 21 and 22. They are distinctly different. One of the big differences is that during the 1000 year reign of Jesus there will be people living on earth who have not yet died. In other words, they’re still in their physical bodies, the same type bodies we live in today. They still have a fallen sin nature. These people will continue to die, to procreate, just as has been the case throughout human history. During the 1000 year reign of Christ they have children. Their children then have children. And so it goes for some 40 to 50 generations! So, even though Satan has been bound and his influence has greatly been diminished, sin continues to exist within the human heart. While it is true that during the time that Jesus rules, righteousness dominates because of Jesus, evil will continue to exist on planet Earth to some degree. It will not be as prevalent and open as it is today, but there will still be an undercurrent of unrighteousness that exists during the Millennial Kingdom.

What do you suppose would be the result of evil continuing to exist? There will be some people who by their own free will reject the King. Does that surprise you?

At the end of Jesus’ 1000-year reign it all comes to a head. Jesus must deal with this rebellious group of people who have rejected Him as Lord. You would think that they would learn from history, that rejecting Jesus is not a good idea. But they don’t. Just like they don’t today. Some people just do not learn from the mistakes of the past. So keep all this in mind as we move forward in the rest of the chapter.

V 7-8: And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison 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.

Why does God turn Satan loose? It almost seems irrational. This is certainly one of those cases where we CAN say that the Lord works in mysterious ways! Clearly, based on these verses, not all of the individuals in the ensuing generations of those living on the earth are going to be saved. They are human beings who still in the flesh. They possess a sin nature and a free will. These people do not suddenly get transformed into robots controlled by Jesus. They retain their free will. Even in a near-perfect society dominated by righteousness and joy, not all mankind will choose to follow Christ. There will be a lot of people who will reject Him. V 8 describes the number of the enemies of Christ “like the sand of the sea.”

Again, does this surprise you? It shouldn’t. Let me remind you that Adam and Eve lived in a perfect world. They had intimate fellowship with God in the Garden of Eden. Yet, they still willfully sinned. Rules and regulations, no matter how perfect they are; government, no matter how good it is, cannot guarantee righteous behavior and wise choices. And so it is with the Millennial Kingdom.

There is one thing that God will never do. He will not force somebody to be saved. During the 1000-year reign of Christ conditions will be perfect for salvation. Yet we know that countless individuals will inexplicably reject Jesus Christ – even then!

Satan is released in order to stir things up on the earth one last time and, in effect, force all humanity to declare which side they are on. Gog and Magog, who are they? Well, we don’t know for sure. Whoever they are they are the enemies of God. The Battle of Gog and Magog is where all the enemies of Christ gather together at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, banded with Satan. And it is here where the Devil finally meets his end.

V 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…

At the Battle of Gog and Magog the enemies of Christ that arose during the 1000-year reign are destroyed by fire from heaven and Satan goes down with them.

V 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.

Notice that the beast and false prophet who had been thrown into the lake of fire (Ch 19) are not dead yet. Rather, they have been in torment for the last 1000 years. Satan now joins his evil cohorts in a place of eternal misery. It is a place that Jesus described where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth! Can you imagine being in extreme agony continually day and night without end? Death no longer exists as a way of ending their pain and suffering!

V 11-13: 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. 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. 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.

There is a lot of injustice in our world, but we know from reading Revelation that there is coming a time when God will judge this world. We have now reached the end of Jesus’ 1000-year reign. Sinful humanity is raised from the dead and now each person stands face to face with the Living God and cannot escape Him. The great white throne judgment has arrived.

OK, so let me point out that there are two different judgments spoken of in the N.T. They are often confused with each other and misunderstood. One is the great white throne judgment (Rev 20:11) and another is the judgment seat of Christ.

**Judgment Seat of Christ** – in 2 Cor 5:10 we read, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.” Paul is talking to believers in this passage about the judgment seat of Christ. For Christians our eternal destiny is already determined. We are going to heaven because our names are written in the book of life (Rev 3:4-5). That is not the issue. Here we see that it is our actions as believers will be judged by our Lord, not for condemnation but for rewards.

Then in 1 Cor 3 Paul talks about our works being tested with fire. “If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.” (1 Cor 3:14-15)

We Christians will be evaluated on the way we spent our life. So, yes, there will be rewards in heaven for the saints. These will be in the form of various crowns that we will get the privilege of casting at the feet of Jesus. The million dollar question is “when will this take place?” Good question. It is not talked about in Revelation. Most scholars believe it will take place in heaven sometime between the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ.

**Great White Throne Judgment** – there is another kind of judgment and this one Jesus spoken about in the verses we just read in Rev 20. Jesus mentioned it also in Matt Ch 11… “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! [These are two towns in Galilee that rejected Jesus]. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you” (Matt 11:21-22). In Matt Ch 7 Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness’” (Matt 7:21-23).

Those passages in Matthew speak about the judgment of lost people at the great white throne judgment. Those who stand before God then will be judged on more than just their good or bad works. They will be judged and ultimately condemned to an eternity without God because they willfully rejected Jesus. There are books being kept on the deeds of every lost man, but they are ultimately condemned for their rejection of Jesus. People are lost because they turn their backs on the revealed truth that God has given them. But, as the Bible tells us, “they are without excuse” (Rom 1:20).

The great white throne judgment is the final judgment on lost man. All will stand on their past and give an account of themselves. However, without Christ their only future is one of fiery judgment and condemnation.

There are a couple of misnomers about both the judgment seat of Christ and the great white throne judgment that we need to address: Neither judgment is held to determine whether one goes to heaven or hell. By the time Judgment Day rolls around that will have already been determined. One’s eternal home is NOT based on deeds, good or bad. It is based on whether one has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ or not. Some scholars surmise that the severity of hell or the degree of heaven is based on one’s deeds. I don’t know. It sounds good and reasonable, but there is no real Scriptural basis for it.

Well, let’s take a look at what happens to those who do, in fact, reject Christ…

V 14-15: Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

The first death that everyone experiences is physical death. The second death for those who reject Christ is a spiritual death in a literal hell.

Within each man it is revealed that there is a God and they can know God. We are each responsible for the revelation God has given us and we will be judged based on how we respond to that revelation. God does not need a computer to keep accurate records. He knows everything that has ever been done. He knows who has accepted His Son and who has rejected Him. The opportunities for repentance are well documented in God’s perfect record. Thank God that the files containing the records of those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord is marked, “PAID IN FULL.”

After all is said and done, God is faithful and just. The path to God must come through Jesus Christ. The Bible does not say that there are many ways to God. That is a lie from the Devil! There is only one path to salvation. When you say “No” to Him you leave God no choice but to condemn you.

Jesus promises overcomers in Revelation 2:11, “He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.” That story from Exodus offers a perfect illustration of both God’s mercy and His justice. He gives us a chance to escape the second death. However, those who do not do put the blood of Jesus over the doorposts of their heart will not be spared. God has only this one requirement for salvation and that is faith in Jesus.

Do you know Jesus Christ as the King of the Kingdom? Yes, He is THE King, the only King. He is going to rule for 1000 years on this old earth. Afterward, He will transform His creation for all eternity where there shall be no more darkness, nor sin nor tears, nor strife. That’s where we are going in the next two chapters. I can’t wait! Jesus Christ, having proved Himself to be who He said He was, will lead us into eternity to worship Him forever and ever.