

# The Millennium

## Revelation 20:1-10

Sunday, 12 February 2017

John MacArthur:

“Can you imagine a world where justice always prevails? Where righteousness is the rule? Where goodness dominates? Where everything is fair and equitable? Can you imagine a world where there is peace, total and lasting peace? Can you imagine a world where there is joy and happiness? Can you imagine a world where health is so widespread that if someone dies at a hundred years of age, they will be said to die as a child? Can you imagine a world where children can play in snake pits and find the snakes friendly and the snakes will find the children friendly? Can you imagine a world where lions and lambs will walk together with bears and cows? And the whole menagerie be led by a little child?

Can you imagine a world where food is profusely plentiful, even though the globe is experiencing the greatest population explosion ever?

Can you imagine a world that is ruled by one person, the whole world? One perfect mind, one perfect will, one who enacts perfect judgment, perfect wisdom, perfect justice, a loving perfect ruler? Can you imagine a world where all of the rulers and leaders and politicians who are in charge are saints? Can you imagine a world that is basically without rebels because they're judged instantaneously with a rod of iron?

You don't have to imagine it because that is the world described in the Scripture as the kingdom to come. That is the new world promised by God in the Bible and it is coming.

From the remotest point of antiquity, men have longed for and talked about a golden age, a utopia, an age of peace and justice and righteousness, a time when oppression and war will cease.

Poets have written about it. Folk singers still sing about it. Politicians promise it. Prophets predict it. Most people cry for it. And no one brings it.

There is, however, such a world coming. And it will be brought at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. It will be a kingdom the likes of which men have never even dreamed, though they have dreamed much. It will be a utopia beyond all utopia and understanding and comprehension. It will be a true age of blessedness.

At the present time a usurper has charge of this world, the kingdom of darkness reigns. Satan himself is the ruler of this world and the god of this age. But there is coming a kingdom in which Jesus Christ will reign both spiritually and physically. That kingdom is the subject of the text before us.”

I'm going to show you three aspects in connection with the Millennium starting Rev 19:11 to 20:10. I did not read from chapter 19 to save time and because we already looked at that last time. But to complete the picture of the millennium that I want to present today, I include this chapter in our study today.

- Before the Millennium
- During the Millennium
- After the Millennium

As I mentioned already to you before when I discussed the three different views on the Millennium that I lean on the classical premillennial view, which is...

- Jesus will return to earth, physically, personally, gloriously, powerfully before the in order to set up this literal 1000 year reign on earth.
- This view is classical or historical Premillennialism because this is the view of the second century church fathers. The first well-known premillennialists were Polycarp (John's disciple), Papias ("heard from John"), Irenaeus (discipled by Polycarp), Ignatius, and many others.
- This view also does not divide the second coming of Jesus into two phases, where there is a secret rapture first and Christ comes to gather the saints and then there is a gap of seven years, after which Christ will return to earth in Phase 2 with the saints and then set up the kingdom. No. This is not the classical view. This view became the predominant view in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- The classical Premillennial view is the church will go through the Tribulation. Then Christ returns the rapture occurs but Christ immediately returns to earth with the raptured saints and sets set up the millennial kingdom.

I am not saying that the historic or classical premillennial view addresses all of our questions regarding the Second Coming of Christ and the Millennium. Actually whatever view you hold, whether amillennial or postmillennial, there are questions that cannot be easily resolved. And so whatever view we take, we should remain humble, willing to learn, and learn to be charitable towards other believers whose view is different from ours.

So again, I will present to you three aspects of the Millennium (from the historic or classical premillennial point of view):

- Before the Millennium
- During the Millennium
- After the Millennium

## **A. Before the Millennium (19:11-20:3)**

According to Revelation, there are three things that will happen immediately before the Millennium begins:

- *The return of Christ*
- *The ruin of the enemies*
- *The removal of Satan*

### **1. The return of Christ**

There can be no literal thousand-year kingdom rule on earth without the arrival of the king. The future kingdom centers on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ's own words regarding the day of His coming are given to us in Matthew 24:29-31,

*29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days (Our Lord mentioned these days of Tribulation in Matthew 24. The book of Revelation gives more details regarding the Tribulation period where judgments of seals, trumpets and bowls are poured upon the earth. When all of the judgments of the Tribulation are complete, there are going to be great cosmic disturbances...) the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*

*30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. [And then...]*

*31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Cf. Mk 13:27 "...from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.")*

I believe that this is where 1Th 4:16-17 comes in.

*16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and **with the sound of the trumpet of God.** And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air,*

Let's read to Rev 19:11-16:

*11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. 13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.*

Our Lord Jesus is not specifically mentioned by name here but there is no question that this is He, the Conquering King, who returns to establish His Kingdom. Jesus is the Word of God. He will come personally, visibly, gloriously, powerfully with myriads of angels and glorified saints.

*14 And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.*

As we learned before the armies of heaven may include both angels and glorified OT and NT saints. Rev 19:15-16 completes the description of the coming King.

*15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.*

So, the first thing that we see before the millennium is the return of Christ. The next event that we see is the ruin of His enemies in Rev 19:17-21.

## **2. The ruin of the enemies (19:17-21)**

*17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, 18 to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great."*

*19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. 20 And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. 21 And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.*

Here we read about the destruction of the human enemies of Christ at Armageddon.

- The antichrist and the false prophet who are the leaders of the rebellious people will be captured and thrown alive into the lake of fire (19:20).
- The remaining human enemies of Christ will be slain by the sword that came from His mouth. This is not a literal sword but a symbol for the powerful word of Jesus that can kill his enemies.

*Who are these enemies Christ will slay with His Word?*

- These include all of those who received the mark of the beast and worshiped the antichrist, and joined him at Armageddon to oppose Christ.
- But I think that these will also include all the rest who remained at home all over the world but nonetheless received the mark of the beast and were worshipers of the antichrist.

I believe that the souls of these slain enemies of Christ are thrown to Hades and await the Great White Throne judgment, and then be thrown into the lake of fire, which is the final hell, Rev 20:11-15.

You may be wondering what will happen to the millions and millions of demonic forces who took part in deceiving people and tempting them to sin, what will happen to them? Revelation 20 does not mention what happens in their case but perhaps they too will be captured just as the antichrist and the false prophet were and to face judgment at the proper time. Maybe they will not yet be immediately thrown to hell. They are going to face judgment first. WE will see in a little while what may possibly happen.

And so after the antichrist and the false prophet are thrown to hell alive and the rest of Christ's human enemies are destroyed and their souls are thrown to Hades, and

every demon captured, the next thing we find before the millennium begins is the removal of Satan.

### 3. The removal of Satan (20:1-3)

*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.*

There can be no thousand years of peace, no thousand years of righteousness on earth while he, the great enemy of God, is at large, so God removes him. He is put into the abyss.

Notice that John saw an angel coming down from heaven and seizes Satan. Satan is not so powerful after all. Our Lord Jesus doesn't even deal with him personally. The Lord only sends his angel to capture Satan. There is even no struggle at all between this angel and Satan.

The angel holds the key to the bottomless pit, *abussos*. It is translated "abyss" in Lk 8:31, *And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss.*

It is translated "bottomless pit" here in Rev 20:1, but "pit" in v. 3. It is not the final hell but the temporary place of imprisonment for demons before they are judged and thrown into the lake of fire.

This may also be that place that is called Tartarus, or "gloomy pits of darkness" or "prisons of darkness" in the New Living Translation.

- *2Pe 2:4 NLT For God did not spare even the angels who sinned. He threw them into **hell** (Tartarus), in **gloomy pits of darkness**, where they are being held until the day of judgment.*
- *Jude 6 NLT And I remind you of the angels who did not stay within the limits of authority God gave them but left the place where they belonged. God has kept them securely chained in **prisons of darkness**, waiting for the great day of judgment.*

Ultimately demons who are placed here in the abyss will face the great day of judgment and then be cast into the final hell. This is perhaps going to happen at the beginning of the millennium as we will see later. Although others see this occurring at the end of the millennium.

The angel comes down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. He seizes the Satan, binds Satan with the chain for a duration of a thousand years. And that's how long the millennial kingdom will be.

Satan, in verse 3, is called by four names:

- He's called the *dragon*, it refers to his bestial cruelty, his oppressive powers that kill so many.

- He is called that *ancient serpent* to identify him as the same one who was in Eden, the great deceiver who caused our first parents to fall into sin. This has been his character from the start, and so he is called "the father of lies" (John 8:44). The term "ancient serpent" also reminds us that that he is also the one of whom God said that the offspring of the woman would bruise his head.
- He is also called the *devil*, *diabolos*, that means a slanderer. He is the accuser of the brethren.
- And he's called *Satan* which means adversary. He is the enemy of God and of all of God's people.

And for a thousand years Satan will be totally restrained and removed from the earth so that he will not deceive people.

MacArthur:

You say, "Does that mean there won't be sin in the millennial kingdom? No. There will be sin in the millennial kingdom because sin is not dependent on Satan. Sin is the reflection of man's fallenness.

- What there won't be in the Millennium is false religion. That's where Satan spends his time disguised as an angel of light.
- What there won't be is governmental corruption.
- What there won't be is anarchy.
- What there won't be is crime, pervasive runaway crime because it will be dealt with instantaneously.
- What there won't be is inequity in injustice and unrighteousness at the leadership level.

But sin, yes there will be sin because Satan is not the source of sin, fallenness is.

Now in verse 3 he is thrown into the pit. All that seven times that term "pit" is used it refers to the place where fallen angels, foul evil spirits are imprisoned. And as I said, final hell comes later.

But then notice, he is not allowed to deceive the nations any longer. He can't deceive them religiously. He can't deceive them politically. He can't deceive them militarily. He is bound. But then this, "Until the thousand years are completed, after these things he must be released for a short time." This is only temporary. He is going to be loosed at the very end. And when he is loosed, he is going to bring about a rebellion. He's going to be turned loose and he's going to be able to gather a force to strike against the Lord.

In fact, down in verse 7 he's released, he comes out, verse 8, to deceive the nations. I'll say more about that. But during the thousand year reign of Christ, Satan will be removed. And that's why you can have justice and righteousness and peace over the earth. It isn't that sin is eliminated, it is that Satan's work is in high places, religiously and politically and that is put to a complete stop.

## B. During the Millennium (Rev 20:4-6)

We are told very little about what will happen during the millennium here in vv. 4-6. G. R. Beasley-Murray, in his commentary of this section writes,

“It is extraordinary that after the portrayal of the coming of Christ is glory and his subjugation of the forces of evil, no real description of the rule of Christ is given, only a statement relating to the blessedness of those who participate in it with him.”

There are three things I see here:

- The saints will judge
- The saints will reign
- The saints will serve

### **1. The saints will judge (20:4a)**

*4 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed.*

John saw thrones and those who are seated on them. But he does not tell us who are the occupants of the thrones and who they will judge.

We can only guess who the occupants of the throne are. They may be ...

- The 24 Elders who surround the throne of God (*Rev 4:4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.*)
- the apostles who in Matt 19:28 are promised that they will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (*Mt 19:28 Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."*);
- The saints in 1Co 6:2-3 (*Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we are to judge angels?*);
- All who remain faithful to the Lord (*Rev 3:21 The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.*)

So based on these passages, the saints, which includes the apostles and the 24 Elders representing the OT and NT saints, will be sitting on thrones and do the judging. It will not be angels who will judge.

Based on the words of Christ, the apostles will be judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Based also on what Paul wrote, angels will also be judged and the saints will have a part in this judgment. I can understand if God will use the saints to judge fallen angels, but how good angels will be judged, I have no idea. Perhaps those who did not follow in the rebellion of Satan were already confirmed and so they are called in Scripture as "holy angels" (Mk 8:38; Lk 9:26; Rev 14:10). And so maybe we will no longer have to judge them.

And so maybe, when John saw thrones at the start of the millennium, saints will be sitting on them and part of their responsibility was to judge angels. Perhaps this is

when the captured demons that I mentioned a while ago will be judged. The saints will be involved in judging these demons and then they will be thrown to hell.

## 2. The saints will reign (20:4b)

*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.*

During the millennium John first saw throne and those sitting on them being given authority to judge. Next John saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their standing true to the Lord and His Word. These are the martyrs in the Great Tribulation period (cf. 6:9 18:24 19:2).

John stated that these martyred dead **"came to life."** This means that they are given resurrected bodies. These resurrected believers will assist with Christ's thousand-year reign on earth.

During the millennium, are these Tribulation believers the only ones who will assist Christ in His reign? Although the text does not mention others, I think that they will not be the only ones to reign with Christ. Here are reasons why I say this:

- *If only the martyred saints of the Tribulation period will reign with Christ during the millennium, then this will contradict the teaching of Revelation from beginning to end because it will restrict the kingdom to one generation of the church only.*
- *In Rev 2:26-27, the kingdom reign will be shared by every believer who overcomes (The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, 27 and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.)*
- *In Rev 5:9, the new song that was given to the Lamb tells us about the church that was ransomed with the blood of Christ. And verse 5:10 says, "and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."*
- *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.*
- *Paul also writes in 2Ti 2:12 The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we endure, we will also reign with him;*
- *Apparently, the martyrs represent the whole church that is faithful to Jesus, whether or not they have actually been killed. As such, the phrase "*those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God,*" is a synonym for overcomers (chs. 2-3). Thus John could count himself in this group, though he may never have suffered death by the axe of the beast. He too, as well as all other believers who have been faithful to Christ will reign with Him.*

Now I want you be careful with Rev 20:5 because there are people who get confused when they read this verse: *The rest of the dead did not come to life until the*

*thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.* Many who read this wonder if the first resurrection refers to the first half of verse 5.

Actually the first part of v. 5 is parenthetical. Imagine in your mind that that first part of verse 5 is enclosed with a parenthesis. (The NIV, NET, and NLT do this.) John tells us that the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This refers to the resurrection of the wicked dead of all ages. They will not be resurrected until the great white throne judgment (20:11-15).

Now referring back to the martyrs who came to life in verse 4, John says, *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,*

What is the meaning of the phrase "first resurrection." That is another confusing term. Is this limited only to the martyred saints who are resurrected? When you read the passage, it would seem to teach that, but I think we can consider a larger picture here.

Scripture teaches two kinds of resurrections:

*Dan 12:2 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.***

*John 5:28-29 Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good **to the resurrection of life**, and those who have done evil **to the resurrection of judgment.***

Our Lord Jesus calls this first kind of resurrection as the "resurrection of the just" in Luke 14:14. You may call the second kind of resurrection as the "resurrection of the unjust."

Based on those passages and observations, I therefore make this conclusion. The term "first resurrection" in Rev 20:5 refers to the resurrection of the just, the first kind of resurrection. And so all the righteous, regardless of *when* they are raised, take part in the first resurrection.

And so all of the individuals who were resurrected at different times, whether during the time when Christ resurrected or during the time of the Tribulation or at the second coming, may be considered as belonging to the first resurrection:

- Matt. 27:52-53 *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 resurrection of the two witnesses in the Great Tribulation (Rev. 11:3, 11).
- Then the resurrection of the martyred dead of the Great Tribulation here in Rev 20:4-5.
- To these may be added the resurrection of Old Testament saints and the NT saints which apparently will also occur at this time, though it is not mentioned in this text (cf. Ezek. 37:12-14; Dan. 12:2-3; 1Th 4:13-18).

All of these believers who are resurrected are part of the first resurrection.

So we have seen two things that will happen to saints during the millennium. They will sit on throne and judge, they will reign with Christ, and thirdly, they will serve as priests.

### **3. The saints will serve. (20:6b)**

The saints will serve as priests.

*but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.*

Again do not get confused with this. This statement does not only apply to the resurrected saints who were beheaded during the Great Tribulation mentioned in Rev 20:4. It is clear from several other passages in Revelation that all of those who have been purchased by the blood of Christ are priests to God.

- *Rev 1:5-6 To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood 6 and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*
- *Rev 5:9-10*

*And they sang a new song, saying,  
"Worthy are you to take the scroll  
and to open its seals,  
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God  
from every tribe and language and people and nation,  
10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,  
and they shall reign on the earth."*

WE will continue next week and see what happens after the millennium.