

After the Thousand Years

📖 Revelation 20:7-15

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📅 December 31, 2017

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In our series Major Prophetic Passages, we have come to the conclusion that we are premillennial. Pre- means before and millennium means a thousand years, and so pre-millennialism means Christ will return before the thousand-year kingdom and that this kingdom is entirely future and not now. Sometimes we are accused of basing this belief on Revelation 20, and there have been some like Ladd who were premillennial only because of Revelation 20. But Revelation 20 is not the reason we are premillennial. Revelation 20 is the reason we say the kingdom will last a thousand years. But most of our understanding of the kingdom itself comes from the creation mandate, the covenants, the OT prophets with confirmation by the NT prophets and apostles. So, we're not building our argument for a future earthly kingdom on Revelation 20. All Revelation 20 adds is the duration of the kingdom. But when I say that, understand there are two phases of the kingdom, because we can see in Revelation 20 a phase of limited duration, a thousand years, but in Revelation 21-22, a phase of eternal duration. So a two phase kingdom. Let's review a bit.

Revelation 19 records the day of the Second Coming. Revelation 20 records the thousand year phase of the kingdom. What's not here is what is found in Daniel 12 where he was told there would be a period of 75-days between these two chapters, so that when Messiah comes He comes in His kingdom, but there are a number of things that must take place before the blessings of the kingdom begin. Some of those things involve a judgment on surviving Jews and Gentiles, so that only those who believed in Messiah by the day of the Second Coming will be granted entrance into the kingdom, the removal of the abomination of desolation, further topographical changes to the world and especially the land of Israel, the construction of a millennial temple, the resurrection of OT and tribulation saints, and, of course, the imprisoning of Satan for the thousand years.

His arrest and incarceration are what we are seeing in 20:1 with the "angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand." Of course, angels can't be held by physical chains, so the point is to understand that Satan will be held by spiritual chains. In 20:2 the angel "laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years." However, a spirit being is "bound," that is what happens here. In 20:3, "he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him," and then the purpose is given, "so that he would no longer deceive the nations." I've thought about this some

more, and I concluded that you could look at this deception of the nations as general or specific. In general, it would just mean going about deceiving with regard to all kinds of issues. But if it was specific, it would be with respect to something in particular. From the later context of vv 7-10, where Satan is released afterward, it seems specific, because you see him in those verses going out to deceive all the nations to gather them in the land of Israel to go up against Jerusalem, the beloved city. So the deception is with respect to Israel and Israel's place in the plan of God. This is Satan's deception when it comes to the nations. He wants nations to not understand Israel's place in the plan of God and He wants nations to think that Israel is the problem and if we could just get rid of Israel then the world could have peace. That is what Haman thought, that is what Antiochus Epiphanes thought, that is what Vespasian and Titus thought, that is what Hitler thought, that is what has been thought by many nations and world leaders over and over and over. You'd think people would see the pattern here, but they're part of the pattern and so can't see out of the deception. And what vv 7-10 are saying is that when Satan is released after the thousand years he will use this same deception and people will be deceived by it and go up against Israel again! But before that, verse 3 tells us that Satan will "not" be able to "deceive the nations" for the thousand years. And what that means is that the nations will not go up against Israel. They will not be under the delusion that Israel is the problem during the millennial reign. Instead, Isaiah indicates they will be a highly sought after people. But that will only last for a thousand years because the end of verse 3 tells us that "after these things he must be released for a short time." In 20:4 John says, "I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them." Those who sat on the thrones and were given judgment are described in the rest of the verse as Tribulation martyrs. "And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years." So tribulation martyrs will be resurrected before the thousand years to co-reign with Christ. This is a tremendous privilege. Now the rest of the dead, verse 5 tells us, "did not come to life until the thousand years were completed." The rest of the dead are unbelievers who were killed during the Tribulation. Their resurrection will be after the thousand years. Then John says, "This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection." The word translated "first" is from *protos* and can mean first in a sequence, but that is obviously not correct. The first in sequence was Christ. Christ is the firstborn from the dead, then come those who belong to Christ at His coming, which is the Church at the pre-trib rapture, then the two witnesses three and a half days after the midpoint of the Tribulation, then the OT saints, and then the tribulation saints during the 75 day interval. So the tribulation saints are not the first in sequence, but the fifth. That means *protos* does not have the sense of first in a sequence here. Instead it has the sense of "preferred" or "favored." This is the preferred resurrection. There are two resurrections being compared here, a resurrection before the thousand years to reign with Christ and a resurrection after the thousand years to be cast in the lake of fire. The preferred one is the first one, to be raised to reign with Christ. Verse 6 pronounces a blessing on them, "Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years." The second death has

no power over these Tribulation saints. What's the second death? Death always refers to a separation. The most obvious one is the separation of your body and spirit, which is physical death. But the first death is our spiritual death, caused by sin which separates us from God. We overcome spiritual death through faith, and come into a relationship with God. But if a person does not have faith, then they remain spiritually dead. When they die physically they go to a place called Hades and after the thousand years they will be resurrected, judged and cast in the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death, which is eternal separation from God. There are no second chances to believe. Everyone gets millions of chances in this lifetime, so when you die, if you did not believe during your life here on earth, that's it, no more chances. Sometimes people believe you'll get one more chance, especially if you didn't hear the gospel. But there will not be any more chances, even for those who did not hear the gospel, and there's a reason why we'll talk about in a while. But the bottom line is you get one life to live and the most important decision you can ever make, bar none, is to believe in Christ. These in verse 6 who are blessed to have part in the preferred resurrection made that decision. They believed in Christ and so will not be eternally separated from God but will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. They have great privilege in the kingdom.

Now two questions were asked about these things and now is the time to deal with those two questions. One is with respect to whether there will be death in the kingdom. The answer to that question is, yes and no. Yes, in the first phase, the thousand-year phase. No in the second phase, the eternal phase. Take something like Isa 65:20, clearly a kingdom context and it says that the one who is a youth will die at the age of 100. But then contrast that with Rev 21:4, another kingdom context, which says there will be no more death. Since you can't have death and no death in the same time period, there must be two phases of the kingdom. And that is the picture of Revelation 19-22, the first phase of limited duration, one thousand years, where there is still death, and the last phase of eternal duration, where there is no death. That being said, death in the first phase will be much later in life for most people. The world will be greatly improved over its present state, so that lifespans are much longer, animals are in harmony with other animals and man and animals are in harmony with one another. The whole planet will be a giant petting zoo. We won't eat meat, so dietary changes. Sickness and disease will be uncommon. My point is that although there will be death in the first phase of the kingdom, it will be a greatly improved world over what we experience now.

Now the other question was with respect to whether there will be people in the kingdom who are unbelievers. The answer is yes. As far as unresurrected people, when the kingdom begins it will begin with all believers, all in unresurrected bodies, like yours and mine, complete with a sin nature. Some will be Jewish and others will be from the nations. They will re-populate their respective people groups. And as they have children, those children will still have to believe in Jesus Christ, that He died for their sins and rose again. Some people think that is strange and who wouldn't believe if they could see Him ruling and reigning with the nail scarred hands and pierced side. But faith does not always come by sight. Thomas believed when He saw, but most believe by hearing. For faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. And they forget, it may be difficult for

people born in the kingdom to believe that Jesus could die, because He will be so powerful a king, so remarkable, it just may seem impossible to them. I don't know, that's a speculation, but one thing is for sure, everyone born in the kingdom will be an unbeliever, just like we are, and they will have to come to faith, and how many, or what percentage will, that kind of thing I don't know.

Let's see what we can know in Revelation 20:7. **When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from prison.** Alright, he's been locked away in the abyss for a **thousand years**. He's one unhappy jailbird and at this time he's released and let's see if he learned his lesson. See, this is the idea behind jail: rehabilitary justice. This is the kind of idea God is proving is stupid. Rehabilitary justice is built on the principle that someone can change his constitution. The Bible has never been pro-rehabilitary justice. The only people that were locked away in OT Israel were people waiting to go to court. Outside of that it didn't know anything about putting people in jail for a long time to serve a sentence in hopes that they would change their constitution. The biblical view of justice is restitution. Restitution means you pay back for your crime., and that payment is always equal to or more than the crime itself, which is a deterrent. But here God says, alright, let's demonstrate once and for all that all this rehabilitary justice is just a farce and you can't change the basic orientation of the heart, you just can't change it. Only God can do that. Here Satan has been in a rehabilitation program for **a thousand years**, and when he's released, and what does he do in verse 8? The same thing he did before the thousand years, **come out and deceive the nations**. Did the rehab program in jail work? No. And parents and grandparents, it won't work with kids either. You can't stick them in time out and say, "Think about what you did." That will not change them. You are doing the same silly thing unbelievers do. You are assuming man can change his basic orientation; that rehab and time will change it. That is a lie. The justice system in your home should be restitutionary. If the kid tears up their sister's clothes, the kid gets to buy the sister new clothes. If they break their toy they get to buy them a new toy. That'll teach'em. Try it. Now Satan didn't learn a thing for the thousand years because he goes right back to doing the same thing he did before, deceiving the nations. And what is the deception? It concerns Israel. Because in verse 9 they are going to go up against Israel. Satan is still trying to destroy Israel. So, the way he gets his army is deceiving the nations concerning Israel. He wants them to think that Israel is the problem and that the Jews are always running the show and the Jews are holding everybody down and it's always the Jews fault. You could hear that a thousand years ago in Europe, the blood libels, you could hear that 2,000 years ago in Rome, you could hear that 3,000 years ago on the streets of Philistia, you can hear that today and you will hear that again. It's a lie and it comes from the father of lies, Satan himself. That's what he goes out **to deceive the nations** about.

Now note that by the end of the thousand years the earth is populated to **the four corners of the earth**, which is the four points of the compass. So we don't know the numbers of those that will enter into the kingdom, but the number seems relatively small according to Matt 24:22, but by the end of the thousand years the population will have spread across the whole earth. And Satan will go out to deceive all these nations, which are referred to collectively as **Gog and Magog**. And the purpose of the deception is **to gather them together for the war**; and

the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. So a great number will gather for war and verse 9 tells us this war will be in the land of Israel and for the city of Jerusalem.

Now the terms **Gog and Magog** are significant, and we've seen them before in Ezek 38 and 39. There the Son of man set his face toward Gog of the land of Magog, who is the prince of Rosh. We identified Magog as southern Russia, Georgia and a lot of the -stan nations like Khazakstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkemenistan and Azerbaijan. Gog we said is the title for a political leader and that he is most likely a Russian who will lead a coalition of forces against Israel when they are at rest living in unwalled villages. That battle will be unsuccessful as God will destroy them by fire from heaven in the northern mountains of Israel. We concluded that it will occur in the first half of the Tribulation and the dead carcasses will remain until the Second Coming of Jesus Christ when appointed work crews will bury the bones for a period of seven months as a transition issue going into the kingdom. The weapons will be of a substance that is flammable in the millennial environment and so will be used by Jews in the land as fuel for burning for the first seven years of the kingdom. This will give the trees in the kingdom time to grow to maturity after their devastation during the Tribulation. Also, a memorial will be set up in a valley where the bones are buried, that will be named Hamon-gog. This memorial will remain for the entire thousand years to serve as a reminder of what happens to those who go up against Israel.

But at this time, after the thousand years have completed and Satan is released, he will go to all nations and deceive them into going up against Israel. And in spite of the memorial of Hamon-gog they will go up. So even though **Gog and Magog** is used in both Ezek 38-39 and Rev 20:8, the two battles are not the same, but are separated by a thousand years. The reason the same names are used is to show that the nations disregarded the memorial of the first battle of Gog and because the battles end the same way. Both battles end with God sending fire down from heaven and devouring them. So there are two battles with similar names, but separated by over a thousand years.

In verse 9 the great number of them, like the sand of the seashore, **came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city.** To come **up on a broad plain** is, in my mind, to come up on a plateau. Of course, one of the transitional events during the 75-days before the blessings of the kingdom begin will be a topographical change of the earth. The result will be that the land of Israel will be an elevated plateau, standing high above the rest **of the earth** during the millennial kingdom. After the thousand years Satan will go out to deceive and the nations of the world will go up on this plateau and **surround the camp of the saints.** The word **camp** can refer to a fortified camp or a barracks, but it can also refer to "an army in battle array." It seems the nations come up and surround the army of saints which are in battle array, prepared for this final battle. It would seem that **saints** is general and refers to all believers, both Jew and Gentile. But chiefly the saints in the land will be Jewish saints since their land borders are outlined in Ezek 47-48. It seems to me that the chief purpose of them coming up on the plateau in the land of Israel is to destroy the Jewish saints once and for all. That is what the devil has deceived them into purposing, forgetting that the last time that

happened before the millennium, it failed. They also come up and surround **the beloved city**. This is unquestionably Jerusalem, the city which during the millennium will be known as YHWH-shammah, "which means "The LORD is there." So they are going up against Him too. But their attempt to destroy the Jewish saints is short lived, because John says, **and fire came down from heaven and devoured them**. This is the same way God destroyed Israel's enemies at the Battle of Gog. **Fire** simply **came down from heaven and devoured them**. The word **devoured** means "consumed." They will be incinerated.

In verse 10, as for the devil. **And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever**. The **beast and the false prophet** were cast in the **lake of fire and brimstone** before the thousand years. The **devil** will be cast in after the thousand years. So the first three members to be cast in the lake of fire will be the counterfeit Trinity, two men and one demon. According to Matt 25:41, the lake of fire was designed for the devil and his angels. However, men will end up there as well as indicated by the fact that the beast and the false prophet are there already and verse 15 says that men whose names are not found written in the book of life will be cast in the lake of fire. The imagery of **the lake of fire and brimstone** recalls images of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. But whereas that was a total destruction, verse 10 says the lake of fire will be eternal torment. This does not permit an interpretation that would limit the torment to a temporary period of time. The torment will be eternal because every opportunity has been afforded to all men to respond to the revelation they have been given in creation and in conscience. Some even received more revelation in the canon of Scripture, and still they rejected. A rejection of the lesser revelation is a rejection of the greater. In other words, if someone rejects that the revelation that creation is the handiwork of God, they would also reject the greater revelation of the gospel. So there is no need for them to hear the gospel, as that would not elicit a positive response.