

Darkness Defeated

Revelation 20:1 – 21:8

Open your bible to **Revelation 20**. Revelation is the last book in the style of the Old Testament prophetic visions. John writes his prophetic vision with great emphasis on symbolism and descriptions of things that are not yet to be, but which are certain to ultimately be. Very gifted and bright and God-fearing scholars have given much time and to accurately discern what the Lord is saying. Different positions on symbols and sequences have developed as interpretive frameworks to understand things. Those different positions take different routes, if you will, and even understand time periods differently, but they all get to the same place in the end and share these main themes: the return of Christ, the final judgment of removal of all wickedness, and the awesome beauty of the eternal state of believers. Today we are going to consider destination points, as it were, and not deal with whether we are taking the interstate, or flying, or in a submarine. My approach should not be understood as a discounting of those positions, nor should it leave anyone thinking that study of these things is not productive valid if we can't know for sure. All study of God's word is valuable. Indeed, we will see that there is a blessing attached to reading and studying these things. But today, we just deal with the final destination, not the road maps or the journey. A robust study of Revelation that considers all the various views would be a worthwhile study either on your own or perhaps in a small group of serious-minded people who are prepared to study not only Revelation but the other parallel prophetic books, and history to see how all of these things fit together.

PRAY

Revelation 20 — a passage I trust you took time to read in preparation for this morning. We will cover a lengthy passage, and then we have fellowship lunch together that will include the Lord's Supper, so we are on an unusually condensed schedule. Therefore, trusting your pre-reading, I will reference only key verses rather than reading and exploring them phrase by phrase as our usual manner. We will move quickly from defeated darkness to life in Christ. So here we go...

Satan Bound — **Vvs. 1–3** of **Revelation 20**... the key verse, v. 2 — **And he** [that is, God's angelic champion] **seized ... Satan and bound him for a thousand years.**

In the millennial reign Satan is imprisoned — he's bound, handcuffed as a prisoner in jail. Our foe, who roams about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour is seized and secured. We do well to think rightly about this now when our enemy would seek to do us harm, when he accuses, when he

2

whispers lies. Let's be clear-headed: Jesus is the Victor and Satan is a defeated foe. There is no Star Wars theology. Satan is not controlling the Darkside of the force with the final outcome in jeopardy. Satan is created, and he is Christ's dupe and servant. He wins nothing. He is restricted and ultimately eternally punished as God wisely sees fit.

vv. 4–6 — Martyrs Honored. Key verse: **v. 6 — Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection!** There are two resurrections coming. Those who are raised in the first resurrection are those who lost their lives for Christ's sake, the martyrs, as **v. 4** tells us. In chapter 19 the martyrs are avenged, as we saw. Here they receive special honor and reward for remaining faithful even though it cost their earthly lives. They share in judgment over evil. Those who did not worship deceiving false gods will now see those false gods revealed as powerless and worthless as they judge and condemn them. Bear this in mind when worldly wisdom presents itself as superior to God's wisdom. The martyrs are blessed and made holy reigning with Christ. Death is no more for them. What sweet sound that must be in the ear of those who tasted death for their King! Those who worship only the Lamb now, even at the cost of their lives, will worship him forever in his eternal life and resurrection power.

There was a time when martyrdom for Christ was virtually unthinkable for those raised in the US. But is it possible I am now speaking to those who may be appointed to endure death for Christ's sake? It sounds horrible. But if some hearing these words are called to lay down their lives, be sure of this: ***reward is coming!*** And in eternity what is suffered here will seem like light and momentary affliction. Imagine the glory of heaven if execution here will ultimately seem light in momentary there. Stay faithful even under death. Run the race to win the prize of the Lord Jesus who gives eternal life and blessing. Eternal life is forever. This life, this world are fleeting.

Let goods and kindred go; this mortal life also.

The body they may kill; God's truth abideth still. His kingdom is forever!

Remember and embrace this truth.

Vvs 7–10 — Tormentor Tormented. At the end of the millennium Satan will be released as it were from prison. He will then attempt to wage war on the people of God, but, lo, his doom is sure. God will not only imprison him, but throw him into the lake of fire and sulfur where he will be tormented day and night forever and ever along with all the demonic minions. Hell is a real place, and it is forever. It is created for the Devil, and its first inhabitant will be the Devil. Only God's Kingdom is forever.

3

Now, **Books Opened**. We will focus our time in vv. 11–15, so let's read the paragraph.

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Some observations with eternal ramifications:

There is a throne of judgement and it is occupied by God. God is not just a judge, he is our judge; we are accountable to him on his terms. God is inescapable. As Robert Mounce says, no one is so great, or important as to be immune from judgment, and no one is so small or unimportant as to make judgment inappropriate. This is what we are warned of in 2 Corinthians 5:10 — **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.**

And are God's terms? The standard is God's character and law. Rightness, moral goodness, justice... these are not culturally defined; they are defined by who God is. Those who want to define moral rightness separate from God will be separated from God. The sexual Revolution has propounded a new moral standard, and failure to embrace and celebrate it will get you canceled. But the new morality is simply the ancient rebellion. Those who seek to cancel God will have their rebellion canceled.

In this post-truth generation, objective truth stubbornly endures, and will always do so. This is highest level offense to a generation who embraces such insane notions as, your truth, my truth, or their truth. There is no variable truth. There is no version of reality for those who worship the Lamb, but a different reality for those who "don't believe." There is no alternate outcome based on what I imagine or feel, or what I believe or refuse to believe. There is simply and massively this: God's throne of judgement is our destiny. Whatever denials are offered today, in the end there will be no unbelievers; all testify that Jesus Christ is Lord. The end of the matter is sure and certain.

4

While this should cause us to rejoice in God's ultimate triumph over sin and rebellion, it should also cause us to grieve over those who embrace the sin that will merit hell's fire. If our heart's inclination is a smug "you'll get yours; just wait," we have missed the heart of God and his merciful call in this day of grace to repent. We are ambassadors for Christ who calls people away from what cannot satisfy to him who gives living water. We are evangelists who proclaim good news of life in Christ in place of certain destruction in sinful separation from God.

Are you living your life in light of the of both this day of grace of grace and the coming Great Day of Judgement? Does your Monday morning worship, or your Thursday evening worship look like your Sunday morning worship when we discipline ourselves, if you will, to look long at God and consider what he has done in salvation and what he will do in judgment? Knowing this certain appointment looms somewhere in the future, do you trust him? What are you pursuing today that will be prove to actually by worthy pursuing on that day? Are you calling others to turn from death to life in Christ? Are you loving them in light of this truth?

Note, now, that judgment is not arbitrary, but based on the evidence of life. God has accurately and completely recorded our deeds — that is what is in the books, plural. Have we lived for Christ? Not in human effort, but in the power of the Spirit? The dead are judged by what they have done, but that is not to say salvation is granted on the basis of works — rather, the evidence of one's life proves him to belong to Christ, or to be spiritually dead. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. But the faith that saves is never alone — works are the fruit of faith, and the life of Christians will have this evidence of a transformed heart.

The evidence of rebellion and treason against God the judge will be irrefutable. This should, at this point, leave us saying to ourselves, if only a day or two of my sin is recorded, I'm finished. I don't need all the chapters to condemn me; a paragraph will do it. And the sentencing guideline for rebellion is recorded in v. 15 — thrown into the lake of fire. That's condemnation and wrath.

The evidence recorded in the books of charging documents, if you will, is damning. The only way to escape the wrath and condemnation of God in that day is to flee to God who offers salvation and grace in this day. Today is the day of grace. There is another book, singular, isn't there? The Lamb's book is freeing, not condemning. The Lamb who was slain has recorded in his book of life all those who have come to him in faith and repentance. The sin recorded in the first books has not been

5

forgotten, but transferred to the Lamb. That is why he was slain: to fully pay the penalty of every sin written in the books. It is wise to wrestle with the truth of the coming judgment, considering the impeccable record of deeds. It should lead us to ask, "What must I do to be delivered from the condemnation my sin has earned? How can I be entered in the Lamb's book of life?" In short, "What must I do to be saved?" Simply, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." You cannot earn your way into his book. You cannot write your own name there. You can be fall on his mercy and ask for his eternal life. The greatest news I have is to say to you that he is calling today to do exactly this. Come Jesus and drink of his living water. He commands that we come and live. He commands that we turn from our wicked ways and warped thinking. Turn to me, all the ends of the earth, and be saved; for I am God and there is no other. (Isaiah 45:22) I cannot make it clearer than this.

PRAY