

**Premillennialism Lesson 9, 10 & 11**  
**Adult Class – Embury Hills church of Christ - Spring 2002**

***THE REIGN WITH CHRIST AND THE BINDING OF SATAN***  
**REV. 20:1-15**

**Rev 20:1** Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. **2** He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; **3** and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

**Rev 20:4** And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. **5** But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. **6** Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

**Rev 20:7** Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison **8** and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. **9** They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. **10** The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

**Rev 20:11** Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. **12** And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. **13** The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. **14** Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. **15** And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation is the book around which the premillennial theories revolve. This is the text in which they “prove” that Jesus will return to earth and establish His kingdom and reign there in Jerusalem on the throne of David for 1,000 years.

**NATURE OF THE LANGUAGE:** Before we jump into this difficult passage we need to understand the way the entire book was written. John says in Rev. 1:1-6 that he wrote in “signs” – it was written in a way that would “signify” those things that would “shortly come to pass”. So John wrote in symbolic terms and words to communicate his message.

Hal Lindsey has gone on record that all scripture must be translated as literally as possible. However in his book “There’s a New World Coming” he wrote in his introduction that it would be quite impossible to interpret chapters 19 and 20 as literal. He goes on to say that the locust “might symbolize an advanced kind of Helicopter.” If locust can stand for helicopters, why can’t the 1,000 years stand for the victory of Christ over Satan? Every premillennial author faces the same problem. They are adamant in affirmation of a literal 20<sup>th</sup> chapter, but then face the problem of having to interpret portions of this book as literal and other portions as symbolic.

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**WHAT IS THE TIME FRAME OF THE BOOK?** No less than seven times John tells us that these things that he is writing about will occur “shortly”, that they will come to pass soon. Yet, Lindsey says (quoting Scofield) that “the prophecies didn’t have too much meaning to people a few centuries ago...” Why then would Jesus repeatedly tell the first century readers to “overcome” and make promises to those that did not compromise their faith and trusted in God?

**WHAT IS THE SUBJECT OF THE BOOK?** Now that we understand the book was written to disciples of John’s day because it was “shortly to come to pass”, we can then see the principal subject of the book is the Roman Empire. The book shows that Rome is a tool of Satan who will use her in his attempts to destroy the church (God’s kingdom). The church’s enemies, in this book, are (1) the dragon who is Satan, (2) the sea beast who is Rome, and (3) the land beast who is the false religion of Caesar worship. The battle of Armageddon which was mentioned in chapter 16:16 is actually fought in 19:11-21. Our Lord rides on a white horse to do battle. The beast is seized and the false prophet is cast into the fire that burns with brimstone. Christ is the victor over the Roman power and might. But this leaves one more enemy to deal with – Satan. What is to become of him? In the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter John reveals what is to happen to him.

**CHAPTER 20:** Make no mistake - this is a very difficult passage. Many disagree as to what John is saying in this chapter. Many un-biblical ideas have come out of this passage. Even among members of the church there is disagreement. While it is sound advice that we should not be dogmatic regarding our own personal interpretation of each symbol, I can confidently affirm that I know what John’s overall message is; Satan loses, Christ Wins!!! That’s it! I’ll give you my impression of what is being said here in a moment. But keep in mind that while we may not know exactly what the “binding”, and the “loosing”, and the “Gog and Magog” are all about, we do know that it all had to do with the persecuted Christians in Asia Minor. The purpose was to strengthen them and not to arouse our curiosity of future events.

From chapter 12 three enemies of the church have been closely allied in their struggle against it. They are the beast (Rome / Emperor), the false prophet (Roman priests whose job it was to enforce emperor worship), and the dragon (Satan). Two of them, the beast and the false prophet, have been overcome by Christ in chapter 19. This leaves only one - the dragon! At first these enemies of Christ seem to have been successful in their efforts. The picture was bleak and dark at times for God’s people. But a new day dawned with brightness of hope and gladness. Rome’s persecuting and oppressive powers would be annihilated and a new era of peace and tranquility would be ushered in.

With a chain and a key to the bottomless pit, an angel came down from heaven and bound the dragon (Satan) for 1,000 years. Satan was cast into the pit and held there so that he could no longer deceive the nations. All of this is symbolic - the chain, the key, the pit, and the 1,000 years! John is trying to describe what has happened to the devil to give his persecuted readers some encouragement. Satan was to be effectively stopped in his operation through the persecuting power and emperor worship. He was to be completely restrained. The “1,000 years” is symbolic of completeness and meant complete defeat to Satan, and complete victory to Christ and His faithful martyrs. That needs to be understood. The “1,000 years” does not stand for a period of time at all (compare Psa 50:10; 1 Chron. 16:15; and Deut 7:9). It speaks of a state of affairs, a condition of things. When it applies to Satan, it means that he is perfectly and altogether bound (this is in reference to the working through Rome against the Church). When it applies to Christians it speaks of their perfect and total victory and triumph. It

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represents the complete defeat of Satan. Many hold that Satan's binding occurred when Christ rose from the grave after His crucifixion, but this does not fit the chronological context. His binding was to come after the overthrow of Rome (when the beast and the false prophet were cast into the Lake of Fire). It is more logical not to view this binding as a specific point in history, but to say that it is an on going action to prevent him from having the type of widespread civil power to inflict evil upon God's people. When Rome fell Satan lost a powerful ally. He was then bound, not able, or restrained from "*deceiving the nations*" from believing DOMITIAN was a god. The worries of the church were over. DOMITIAN was not in control - GOD IS IN CONTROL.

Now what about this loosing of Satan after the 1,000 years have expired? The same thought is picked up again in verse 7 when the writer talks about "*Gog and Magog*". Remember, the 1,000 years stands for the triumph of Christ, and neither Satan nor his followers will have any part in that victory. The "*little while*" does not stand for a period of time after the 1,000 years that Satan will break forth in one final attempt to defeat Christ and His church. Why not? Because the 1,000 years is not literal (if we make that literal then the chain, the key, the pit, the beast, only those beheaded will reign with Christ, must also be literal if we are to be consistent), nor does it stand for a period of time at all! If it did then at one point the Saints would quit reigning. The "*little while*" stays with the "time" figure, and tells us that the devil is not through tempting God's people when Rome was defeated. The loosing for a "*little while*" obviously then stands in contrast to the 1,000 years. The "*little while*" is period of loosing, the devil, while we should beware of him and never under-estimate him, is still under God's control. God permits him to tempt us, to deceive us, and cause us to sin. But the "*little time*" means he can't do it very long. He is weak compared to the all powerful, 1,000 year reigning Christ!!!! The bottom line to all this is that God wants us to know that as surely as He has protected his people in the past, He will protect us in the future. Just as surely as He defeated Rome for His children, He will do it again to anyone, at anytime if they oppose Him.

In verses 4 - 6 we have the souls of those who died for their service to Christ reigning with Him for 1,000 years (a perfect, complete period of time). This is where the *premillennial theory* gets its "stuff". But to make their theory work they have to make this passage say something it doesn't say (i.e., second coming, Christ on earth, Jerusalem, bodily resurrection, the throne of David, etc...). John saw souls, not bodies. He said they "*lived and reigned*" **not** "*we shall live and reign*". Only those beheaded would have the privilege of reigning with Christ (too bad for those who were fed to the lions). Further more, they lived while they reigned. If the reigning ceases after the supposed literal 1,000 years, so does the living. Some millennium! Do you see the trouble with trying to make this literal. It just doesn't work.

John calls their reigning with Christ the "*first resurrection*". This can't mean a physical, or bodily resurrection because that would contradict other NT passages. There is to be only one resurrection. So what can this mean? The O.T. will help us here. The same type of thing is described by Ezekiel in Ezek. 37:1-14. Israel was in the grave of captivity in Babylon (where have we heard that name before). Their return to Palestine from exile is described as a resurrection. This "*first resurrection*" then is a resurrection of a cause. These martyrs had been raised from humiliation to glory. Revelation was written at a time when Christianity seemed about to be crushed. But instead of the church being abolished it was resurrected, and her persecutors shall instead be brought to an end. They may have been hurt by the "*first death*" (which is implied in the passage), but they will not be hurt by the

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“*second death*”. The second death is reserved for those who stood with Caesar and opposed God and His people (vs. 15).

In verses 7-10 Satan is loosed for a “*little while*” and he gathers his forces of God and Magog to battle against the church. Gog and Magog stand for any people who rally with the Devil and oppose God (Ezek. 38 & 39). Fire came down from heaven and destroyed them. In verse 10 the Devil is cast into the lake of fire where the beast and false prophet are. Wallace says in his commentary that “The defeat of the emperor-worship was described in verse 10 with metaphors of torment and endless punishment.” These were *systems* cast into the lake of fire, denoting their complete destruction. This does not mean that Hell is not a real place (Matt. 25:41). Many think that this is eternal hell in verse 10 and they could be right. To me the context seems to demand that we take it symbolically.

The remaining of the chapter gives additional encouragement to John’s readers (and to us today). Divine judgment is being executed. Righteousness is acquitted and wickedness is convicted and condemned. The books are opened. They contained the record of the evil deeds of those who opposed the church and they were judge accordingly. They had the mark of the beast on them. The book of life symbolized the approved; those who were sealed of God, and “*followed the Lamb wherever He went.*” The wicked are all cast into the same punishment as that of the Devil. The period of martyrdom had ended!!!

I believe that this judgment scene is not the general judgment that we will all experience at the end of time when Christ comes again (Matt. 25:31-46, Acts 17:30-31). The principles obviously characterize the judgment day when Jesus returns. It will be the same kind of fearful and glorious day. The day that we all hope for, and wait for with anticipation, but the sinner dreads.

A study of the book of Revelation is to say the least a challenge, but it is a wonderful experience and a source of great encouragement. It is important to keep asking yourself; “What would this mean to John’s first readers?” In this book you see the persecution the church has endured, and the encouragement they’ve been given to “*overcome*” these tribulations at the hands of an evil Roman Empire. We see their victory as Rome has been defeated, and their exaltation and praise towards God for protecting them. When we get to Revelation chapter 20, the language certainly fits our “image” of what the judgment at the end of time should look like. It fits how we view heaven, and eternity (both for the wicked and righteous). And to say that this would not be encouraging to the first century Christians because of what they were going through right then is the same as saying that it is not be encouraging to us today. We should be encouraged by looking toward heaven, and with expectant hope desire for the judgment day to dawn soon. But on the other hand, John clearly says these things are going to happen “soon”, they are “at hand”. I have trouble going through chapters 1 - 19 which clearly relate to the time at which this book was written (94-96 AD), and then in the middle of chapter 20 making a quantum leap to the end of time. We just got through discussing the defeat of Rome, the emperor, the state religion, and how Satan is bound for 1,000 years, to then discussing the end of time? With all this in mind, I find it important to interpret Revelation consistently and look for the meaning to the Christians in John’s day. Please understand that I am not dogmatic about this interpretation. It just seems to make more sense to approach it in this manner.

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**QUESTIONS CHAPTER 20:**

1. Is the 1,000 years a literal period of time? How do you know?
2. What is meant by “the Lake of Fire”?
3. What other examples of “1,000” can you give where it is used figuratively?
4. In vs 10 the word “forever” is used when talking about the punishment of the Devil, Beast, and the false prophet. Is this literal? (Jude-7, Isa. 34:8ff)
5. With respect to question #4, read Isa. 34:1-37. How can Edom be condemned to burn forever and ever and yet be possessed forever by wild animals and have thistles grow in it? How can both of these be true?
6. If this is symbolic language then, how is Satan destroyed?
7. Has Satan’s power ever been limited before? Give passages.
8. Explain “Gog and Magog”.
9. What is the “First Resurrection”?
10. Has Satan already been loosed? Or is this event yet in the future?
11. List the other passages that refer to judgment. Is Rev. 20 talking about the judgment at the second coming of Christ?
12. What is the “2nd Death”?
13. Who are “the rest of the dead”? (vs 5)
14. How is the premillennial theory absurd?
15. How long is Christ’s reign? (This is a trick question!! Hint: vs. 4 says “with”. Who’s reign is being discussed?)
16. Read Psalm 50:10 – How many cattle belong to the Lord?
17. Read 1 Chron 16:15 – How long will are God’s people need to remember His covenant?
18. Read Deut 7:9 – How long will God be faithful and keep His covenant and His lovingkindness?
19. Read Rev 20 – How long will the Saints be victorious and how long will Satan be bound from using the Roman empire?