



We begin our study in Rev. 20, a key chapter about the kingdom of God. Until this chapter, Bible commentators have been somewhat helpful, but now in this chapter, they are of little use since they don't believe in a literal 1,000 year kingdom of God on the earth instead of going to heaven. Hence, most of their comments are quite useless, as we will see.

John begins, "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 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. 20:1-3).

After Christ vanquishes the hostile forces against Him and takes care of the Beast and False Prophet, He now is going to punish the real instigator of all of this rebellion—Satan the Devil. This punishment was symbolized by the Day of Atonement ritual where the goat represented Azazel (in Hebrew it generally means "the expelled one"). *The Keil & Delitzsch O.T. Commentary* says Lev. 16:8 refers to, "...the Devil himself, the head of the fallen angels, who was afterwards called Satan; for no subordinate evil spirit could have been placed in antithesis [or opposition] to [God] as Azazel is here, but only the ruler or head of the kingdom of demons."

Satan (who as the head also represents his angels, Rev. 12:9, 12) is imprisoned in this bottomless pit, which means a pit so deep you can't see the bottom of it. Later, in Rev. 20:7 this pit is called a "prison." We also know he acts with his angels and his fate will be shared by them, as Mt. 25:41 points out.

Once Satan and his angels are removed, Christ can now reign in peace over the earth for 1,000 years without these rebellious angels causing more havoc.

John adds, "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 worshiped 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. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 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. 20:4-5).

So at the start of the Millennium, the saints receive the reward of reigning under Christ on the earth (Rev. 5:10). This is described in Dan. 2:44 of the rock destroying the image, and Dan. 7:13-22 says, "I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion...and the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever...and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and *the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.*"

Jesus mentioned this same period to His apostles, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, *you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*" (Mt. 19:28). The term "judging" is in the Gk. *krino*, and it can mean *ruling and judging at the same time*, since a ruler makes judgments as well. In Lk. 19:17 He also taught this reward in the Parable of the Pounds. Lastly, in Rev. 2:26, Christ gives this promise, "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations..."

Now all of this is just a natural reading of this passage, but most of Christianity does not believe it in this way. It was *Augustine* in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the Catholic theologian who invented so many heresies, much based on allegories and Greek philosophy, that in this way consolidated the Pope's power in Rome.

As historian Paul Johnson, a British Catholic, admits, "Augustine was *the dark genius of imperial Christianity, the ideologue of the Church-State alliance, and the fabricator of the medieval mentality.* Next to Paul, who supplied the basic theology, *he did more to shape Christianity than any other human being.*" Johnson later gives this shocking conclusion,

"...if we contrast his philosophy with Paul's, it can be seen that *Augustine...was the heresiarch – the greatest of all, in terms of his influence*" (*History of Christianity*, 1976, p. 112, 122).

*Expositor's Commentary* adds about Augustine and Rev. 20:4, "The main problem concerns whether the reference to a Millennium indicates an earthly historical reign of peace that will manifest itself at the close of this present age or whether the whole passage is *symbolic of some present experience of Christians or some future non-historical reality.*

"In the first place, we may note that the ancient church down to the time of *Augustine* (354-430) ([with] minor exceptions) *unquestionably held to the teaching of an earthly, historical reign of peace that was to follow the defeat of Antichrist and the physical resurrection of the saints...*When he came to [Rev. 20], *he interpreted the thousand years in nonliteral terms and understood the period as referring to the church age, the time between the first and second advents of Christ...*Moreover, the reign of the saints and their 'thrones of judgment' *had already begun in the church and its rulers. Augustine... 'cast the die against the expectation of a millennial kingdom for centuries to come.'* The recapitulation method adopted by Augustine continued through the centuries and *is not without its modern exponents in both the Protestant and Roman Catholic branches of the church."*

So, mostly through Augustine and the Pope, they got rid of the teaching about Christ's Millennial rule.

Now, who are "the rest of the dead [who] did not live again until the thousand years were finished"? Obviously, they *are not resurrected* in the first resurrection. The next resurrection is found in Rev. 20:12, "And I saw *the dead*, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened."

*Expositor's* asks, "Why does John call this the 'first' resurrection? The Gk. term *prote* clearly implies *the first in a series of two or more.* John does not directly refer to a second resurrection; *a second resurrection is, however, correctly inferred* both from the use of *prote* and also from the expression 'the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended' (v. 5)."

Our booklet on Revelation mentions about the Millennium, "During the Millennium many will be born who will not be exposed to Satan's influence. God's way will be the only way they will have ever

known. Yet the Scriptures reveal that God *tests* people to see if their obedience is from the heart (Deut. 8:2; Rev. 2:10). One way He does this is to allow them to *choose* between good and evil (Deut. 30:19). John indicates this will happen at the end of the Millennium" (p. 69).

The next verses are best translated by the *Modern King James Version*, "And when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be loosed out of his prison. And he will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle. The number of them is as the sand of the sea. And they went up over the breadth of the earth and circled around the camp of the saints, and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of Heaven and devoured them. And the Devil who deceived them was cast into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *were*. And *he* will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Rev. 20:7-10). Note it says "where the beast and the false prophet *were* (not are). The Gk. verb is absent here. Also, it says "he" will be tormented, referring to the Devil, not "they."

Our booklet is the best source to understand this passage: "God does not reveal if this is the only test He will use during the Millennium to separate insincere people from those who were sincere. But it will certainly be the final and most significant test of the 1,000 years. It will be a vital part of the *judgment* process. Now comes the time for Satan's permanent removal from the picture..." (p. 70).

We believe, as Ezekiel 39:1-6 portrays, "Gog and Magog" are symbols of rebellious people--from "the four quarters of the earth." Humans, toward the end of the Millennium, might have felt they could never be deceived by the Devil if he was released, so God then tests them. Many succumb to Satan's deceits and they storm Jerusalem, where Christ rules. He then takes care of this rebellion in short order. It is the final lesson of why God can't depend on human beings and can only rely on "glorified" spirit beings.

In the lake of fire, the Beast and False Prophet, being physical, were incinerated, as other humans later cast there. But what about Satan and his angels? Notice he "will be tormented day and night forever and ever." They are spirit, immortal, and can't die (Lk. 20:36). They will watch as the incorrigibly wicked suffer the second death in it.

The analogy of the Azazel goat permanently released into the desert could symbolize Satan and his angels being judged and banned from the universe--now Christ's and the saints' inheritance (Rom. 8:17-21; Heb. 1:2:). He is not later pictured as being *on the new earth*, so perhaps he is sent *beyond the universe* to outer darkness. Jude 13 uses an analogy of "wandering stars" for false teachers, "whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." It appears this analogy is taken from the book of Enoch, quoted in verse 14. This book does refer to Satan being expelled forever. Yet, it's just a possibility--we will have to wait for more revelation.

John says, "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. 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" (20:11-12).

After Satan and his demons have been taken care of, now comes the "second" resurrection. It comprises of all kinds of human beings, poor and rich, young and old, famous and insignificant.

As our booklet points out on page 70, "The dead who are resurrected to appear 'before the throne' of God (vs. 12) after 'the thousand years have expired' (vs. 7) have never fully known God and His ways. They have never comprehended what it means to really repent of their sins. Are they resurrected to be condemned forever? Not at all. Notice the purpose of this second resurrection...They are resurrected, then judged by biblical standards--according to their response to the spiritual enlightenment they now receive for the first time.

"The word translated 'books' in this passage is the Greek *biblia*, the root of which has given us the English word *Bible*. When God resurrects these people, He will explain the full meaning of the books of the Holy Scriptures to them. When they respond and repent, their names also can be written in the Book of Life. But notice what happens to those who, after being resurrected and receiving a clear understanding of what God expects of them, still *refuse* to repent. 'And anyone not found written in the Book of Life *was cast into the lake of fire*' (vs. 15).

So this judgment will be done by Christ (Jn. 5:22; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:1) based on God's Word, just as it is being done with us (Lk. 16:31; Rom. 2:2; Heb. 4:12-13; 1 P. 4:17). The Book of Life will be "opened" to them to have their names registered there after repentance, baptism and laying on of hands to become members, just as Paul mentioned about some members in his day had their names written in this Book of Life (Phil. 4:3).

John then writes, "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. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:13-15).

Our booklet on Revelation mentions, "Other scriptures indicate that a third group must be resurrected to be included in this final destruction of the wicked in the lake of fire. Jesus said that some would deliberately and knowingly despise the spiritual knowledge that God would open their minds to understand. This calculated blasphemy 'against the Holy Spirit,' He said, will not be forgiven 'either in this age or in the age to come'" (Mt. 12:31-32). Those who have turned down all opportunities to repent and be forgiven must also be resurrected for judgment at the end (Rev. 21:8). These are people who have deliberately rejected God's way of life—even after they have been 'once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit' (Heb. 6:4-6). They once were forgiven and given the Holy Spirit. But afterwards they chose to reject God's rule over them and blaspheme the Holy Spirit...Therefore it appears that this final resurrection, of necessity, must include the wicked who have already been condemned to perish in the lake of fire—however few they may be, comparatively speaking...

"By the end of the final judgment period all human beings who have ever lived will have been given the opportunity to choose between life and death—to repent and submit to God to receive eternal life or refuse to repent and, by so doing, choose eternal death. There is ultimately no middle ground, no other choice" (pp. 71-72). So ends this amazing chap. 20 of Rev. which so few can understand--and thanks be to God--we can! Let your kingdom come!