

The Continuation of the Kingdom

The Revelation of St. John, Part Two

The Biblical Hope: Part X

Revelation 20

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John's Final Seven Visions

19:11-16	The Ascended Christ Ruling the Nations
19:17-18	The Birds Being Invited to Judgment
19:19-21	The Judgment of the Beast & False Prophet
20:1-3	The Millennial Kingdom & Satan Bound
20:4-10	The First Resurrection & the Judgment of Satan
20:11-15	The Second Resurrection & the Final Judgment
21:1-8	The Consummate New Heavens & New Earth

I. Another Distinction

Unfortunately, for the last couple centuries, eschatological study has been shaped by one's approach to the 1000 year period in Revelation 20. The very names used – *premillennialism*, *amillennialism*, *postmillennialism* – drive us to this text. The only position happy with this is _____ because its system is entirely dependent upon a specific interpretation of Revelation 20.

- A. Premillennialism – Unrealized Millennialism
- B. Amillennialism & Postmillennialism – Realized Millennialism

II. John's Seven Visions (19:11-21:8)

John's visions in Revelation 20 parallel Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:22-26:

²²For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. ²⁴Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. ²⁶The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

III. John's Vision of the Millennial Kingdom & Satan Bound (20:1-3)

John sees Satan bound for 1000 years "so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished" (3). Satan is bound, in other words, so that the Gospel might go forth to all the _____ of the earth and bear fruit. So are we waiting for this binding of Satan to be accomplished in the future or has it already been accomplished? The NT insists that it has _____ happened (cf. Mt 12:28-29; Jn 12:31-32; Col 1:13-14; Heb 2:14). The Eternal Son of God took on human flesh and made war on Satan, defeating him through His death and resurrection.

IV. John's Vision of the First Resurrection & Satan's Judgment (20:4-10)

- A. This is the first resurrection (4-6 cf. 1 Cor 15:23)

John sees the *souls* of (1) those martyred and (2) those faithful sitting on thrones, ruling with Christ during this 1000-year period, a period John calls the "_____ resurrection" (5b), a reality which the "rest of the dead" (unbelievers) do not enjoy (cf. Eph 2:1, 12; 1 Tim 5:6).

¹ And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Paul emphasizes that believers have been *made alive together with Christ!* We were *dead in trespasses and sins*, but Christ has *made us alive*. By His grace, we participate in His resurrection life now, taking part in the _____ resurrection, the new way of life inaugurated by Christ's resurrection, and serve God as kings and priests (cf. Rev 1:6; 1 Pet 2:5,9).

John calls this period "*the _____ resurrection*" because the resurrection occurs in two stages: "*Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming*" (1 Cor 15:23). Jesus is "*the firstborn from the dead*" (Rev 1:5). This twofold hope of the resurrection was typified in the sacrificial system (Num 19:11-13; 1 Cor 15:29). The *second resurrection* will be accomplished by the same Spirit who has enabled us to participate in Christ's _____ resurrection (Rom 8:11).

B. Putting an end to all rule and authority and power (7-10 cf. 1 Cor 15:24)

The Messianic Age ends with Jesus' complete overthrow of Satan and his forces: "*Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power*" (1 Cor 15:24). Toward the close of His work in the world, Christ will release Satan in order to complete his destruction. Satan and his minions (those who throughout history fight against God and His people, His holy city) will be completely destroyed when Christ returns in glory like "*fire out of heaven.*"

Joining Satan in the lake of fire are "*the beast and the false prophet.*" Who are these characters? "*The early Church had two great enemies: apostate Israel and pagan Rome. Many Christians died at their hands (indeed, these two enemies of the Church often cooperated with each other in putting Christians to death, as they had with the crucifixion of the Lord Himself). And the message of the Revelation was that these two persecutors, inspired by Satan, would soon be judged and destroyed. Its message was contemporary, not futuristic*" (Chilton, 165).

Rome (and its leaders like Nero) is the _____; apostate Israel (and its leaders like Caiaphas) is the false _____. Together with their master Satan, they would be cast into the lake of fire (19:20). All men, nations, and religious movements that spurn Jesus the Messiah will be completely destroyed. They will not triumph in history nor at the end of the world. Jesus Christ is Lord. He rules the nations with a rod of iron and conquers them with the sword coming out of His mouth (19:11ff).

V. John's Vision of the Second Resurrection & the Final Judgment (20:11-15)

John's vision of the final judgment and the destruction of death itself parallels Paul's conclusion in 1 Corinthians 15:26, "*The last enemy that will be destroyed is _____.*" All will be raised from the dead (13) and summoned to answer for their deeds (12). Those who failed to love God and neighbor as they ought will be condemned while those who were reconciled to God through faith in His Son, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, will be vindicated. As Jesus Himself had said:
²⁸ ... the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear [the Son of Man's] voice ²⁹ and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (John 5:28-29)

VI. Conclusion (Rev 21:1-8)

While John's sixth vision is judgment, his seventh vision (21:1), which is also an eighth (21:2), is consummation. It celebrates the joy that those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life shall enjoy, a reality that we taste even now.