

NOON BIBLE STUDY: REVELATION 20 (PART 1)

IN REVELATION 20, WE'RE AN AUDIENCE TO WHAT JOHN SEES CONCERNING THE DEFEAT OF EVIL AND SATAN. THE CHAPTER GIVES US SOME VERY IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON THIS TOPIC TO HELP PAINT A MORE COMPLETE PICTURE WHICH HAS ALREADY BEEN WORKED ON BY THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS AND THE TEACHING OF JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES.

THE CREATION IS LONGING FOR REDEMPTION AND RELIEF FROM THE CURSE THAT HAS AFFLICTED IT SINCE THE FALL OF HUMANITY IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN. THE DEVIL WAS A DEVASTATING PART OF THAT ORIGIN STORY AND AS THE BIBLE NEARS ITS CLOSING CHAPTERS, WE READ HOW GOD IS DEALING WITH THESE PROBLEMS AND WORKING TO BRING ABOUT WHAT HE ORIGINALLY INTENDED IN THE BEGINNING. (SIDE NOTE: THE FIRST 3 & LAST 3 CHAPTERS OF THE BIBLE HAVE A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF PARALLEL THEMES, ITS A GOOD EXERCISE TO READ BOTH TRIADS & OBSERVE THEM).

REVELATION 20:1-3 - SATAN'S CAPTURE

THE **ABYSS** WAS THE PLACE WHICH MUCH OF THE EVIL OF REVELATION HAS EMANATED FROM (9:11; 11:7; 17:8) AND NOW AN ANGEL IS SENT TO CAPTURE AND IMPRISON THE DEVIL IN THIS PLACE. HE IS THROWN IN THE ABYSS WHICH IS THEN SHUT AND SEALED. THIS IMPRISONMENT CANCELS HIS ABILITY TO INFLUENCE AND DECEIVE.

THE TEXT TELLS US THAT THIS IMPRISONMENT IS FOR 1000 YEARS (OR A MILLENNIUM). WE WILL LEARN MORE ABOUT WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS 1000 YEARS NEXT, BUT THIS FIRST SECTION CONCLUDES BY SAYING "AFTER THESE THINGS (THE DEVIL) WILL BE RELEASED FOR A SHORT TIME. THIS MAY SEEM STRANGE TO YOU. WHY CAPTURE THE DEVIL ONLY TO LET HIM OUT AGAIN? WE'LL TRY AND SORT THAT OUT IN A MINUTE. FIRST, I THINK IT MIGHT BE HELPFUL TO SHARE MY INTERPRETIVE VIEW ON THIS SECTION.

JUST AS WE GET TO THE GREATEST CHAPTERS OF THIS BOOK, WE ARRIVE AT SOME OF THE VERSES WHICH ARE MOST DISCUSSED AND DISAGREED UPON IN CHRISTENDOM. THE TIMING OF CHRIST'S RETURN, THE TIMING OF THE RESURRECTION AND THE DEFEAT OF THE DEVIL ARE ADDRESSED HERE AND THERE ARE THREE MAIN SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT AND INTERPRETATION.

HERE IS HOW THE ESV STUDY BIBLE EXPLAINS THESE THREE VIEWS:

1 - **PREMILLENNIALISTS** - (THOSE WHO BELIEVE CHRIST WILL RETURN "PRE" [*BEFORE*] THE MILLENNIUM) THINK THAT THIS THOUSAND YEARS (LATIN, *MILLENNIUM*) IS A FUTURE TIME OF GREAT PEACE AND JUSTICE, WHICH IS USUALLY THOUGHT TO BE A LITERAL 1,000-YEAR PERIOD THAT WILL BEGIN WHEN CHRIST RETURNS TO REIGN ON EARTH AS A PHYSICALLY PRESENT KING, AND WHICH WILL INCLUDE RESURRECTED BELIEVERS REIGNING WITH HIM.

2 - **POSTMILLENNIALISTS** - (THOSE WHO BELIEVE THAT CHRIST WILL RETURN "POST" [*AFTER*] THE MILLENNIAL PERIOD) THINK THAT BEFORE CHRIST RETURNS TO EARTH THE GOSPEL WILL SPREAD AND TRIUMPH SO POWERFULLY THAT SOCIETIES WILL BE TRANSFORMED AND PEACE AND JUSTICE WILL REIGN ON EARTH FOR A THOUSAND YEARS (OR FOR A LONG PERIOD OF TIME), AFTER WHICH CHRIST WILL RETURN FOR THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

3 - **AMILLENNIALISTS** - (THOSE WHO HOLD AN "A" [*NON-LITERAL*] MILLENNIAL VIEW) THINK THIS THOUSAND YEARS IS THE SAME PERIOD AS THIS PRESENT CHURCH AGE, AND THAT THERE WILL BE NO FUTURE "MILLENNIUM" BEFORE CHRIST RETURNS FOR THE FINAL JUDGMENT. (THEY BELIEVE THAT THE "MILLENNIUM" IS SYMBOLIC OF THE TIME OF THE CHURCH/SPIRIT AFTER THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

DEPENDING ON WHICH VIEW YOU TAKE, YOU WILL INTERPRET THESE SCRIPTURES, AND THIS CHAPTER DIFFERENTLY. THE ESV CONTINUES:

PREMILLENNIALISTS READ THIS AS PREDICTING A COMPLETE REMOVAL OF SATAN FROM THE EARTH DURING A FUTURE GOLDEN AGE (A "MILLENNIUM") OF SOCIAL RIGHTEOUSNESS, INTERNATIONAL PEACE, AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING, WITH CHRIST REIGNING ON EARTH. THEY ARGUE THAT THE PHRASES "SHUT IT" AND "SEALED IT OVER HIM" PICTURE A REMOVAL OF SATAN FROM THE EARTH TOO COMPLETE TO REPRESENT THE CURRENT AGE.

POSTMILLENNIALISTS ALSO THINK THIS WILL BE A FUTURE GOLDEN AGE, BUT THAT CHRIST WILL NOT RETURN UNTIL THE END OF THAT TIME.

AMILLENNIALISTS NOTE THAT THE NT AFFIRMS THAT JESUS' FIRST COMING HAS ALREADY BOUND SATAN (MATT. 12:29) AND BROUGHT GOD'S LIGHT TO THE NATIONS (MATT. 4:14—16; LUKE 2:32; ACTS 14:15—17; 17:30—31). THEREFORE THEY ARGUE THAT THIS BINDING OF SATAN FOR "A THOUSAND YEARS" REFERS TO THE GOSPEL'S SPREAD AMONG ALL NATIONS DURING THE PRESENT AGE, AND TO THE PRESENT RESTRAINT OF THE CHURCH'S PERSECUTORS UNTIL AN OUTBREAK OF REBELLION BEFORE CHRIST'S RETURN (SEE 2 THESS. 2:3—8).

FLAWS IN EACH OF THESE

CURRENTLY, I PERSONALLY (AND OUR CHURCH TEACHING) STANDS IN THE "PREMILLENNIAL" CAMP AND LOOKS AT THE BINDING OF SATAN TO BE AN OFFENSIVE MOVE ON GOD'S PART WHERE THE MESSIANIC AGE WILL BRING RESTORATIVE FLOURISHING UPON THE EARTH. (THE TEXT IS DESCRIBING MORE THAN JUST HIM BEING *LIMITED* IN HIS INFLUENCE BECAUSE THE GOSPEL IS MOVING IN THIS AGE). SO MANY OF THE OT PROPHECIES WILL FIND THEIR FULFILLMENT IN THIS TIME, FREE FROM THE INFLUENCE OF THE DEVIL AND HIS DECEPTIONS. FOR EXAMPLE:

ISAIAH 2:2-4 - NOW IT WILL COME ABOUT THAT IN THE LAST DAYS THE MOUNTAIN OF THE HOUSE OF THE LORD WILL BE ESTABLISHED AS THE CHIEF OF THE MOUNTAINS, AND WILL BE RAISED ABOVE THE HILLS; AND ALL THE NATIONS WILL STREAM TO IT. 3 AND MANY PEOPLES WILL COME AND SAY, "COME, LET US GO UP TO THE MOUNTAIN OF THE LORD, TO THE HOUSE OF THE GOD OF JACOB; THAT HE MAY TEACH US CONCERNING HIS WAYS AND THAT WE MAY WALK IN HIS PATHS." FOR THE LAW WILL GO FORTH FROM ZION AND THE WORD OF THE LORD FROM JERUSALEM. 4 AND HE WILL JUDGE BETWEEN THE NATIONS, AND WILL RENDER DECISIONS FOR MANY PEOPLES; AND THEY WILL HAMMER THEIR SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES AND THEIR SPEARS INTO PRUNING HOOKS. NATION WILL NOT LIFT UP SWORD AGAINST NATION, AND NEVER AGAIN WILL THEY LEARN WAR.

WHY NOT DESTROY THE DEVIL AT THE COMING OF CHRIST? I THINK THERE ARE TWO REASONS. THE FIRST ONE IS TO KEEP THE DEVIL AROUND TO SEE THE DEPTH OF HIS LOSS AND DEFEAT. FOR 1000 YEARS HE WILL SEE HOW GOD'S WILL IS BEING ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN, HOW THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST IS RULING IN POWER AND GLORY, AND HOW THE SAINTS WHOM HE FOUGHT AGAINST HAVE OVERCOME. THE SECOND REASON WILL BE HIGHLIGHTED LATER.

REVELATION 20:4-6 - 1ST RESURRECTION

THIS IS THE *FIRST* RESURRECTION (FIRST BECAUSE THERE IS A SECOND/FINAL RESURRECTION AFTER THE MILLENNIAL REIGN OF CHRIST, MORE ON THAT WHEN WE LOOK AT 20:11-15).

THE *FIRST* RESURRECTION IS THE TIME WHEN ALL OF THE FAITHFUL PEOPLE OF GOD WILL BE RAISED TO ETERNAL LIFE. OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS, THE SAINTS OF EVERY GENERATION RAISED TO LIFE WITH THE COMING OF THE KING. REVELATION 20:4 LISTS THOSE WHO ARE A PART OF THIS FIRST RESURRECTION, BUT THIS IS NOT AN EXCLUSIVE LIST, BUT RATHER A LIST THAT WOULD BE RELEVANT TO THE EARLY CHURCH AND

THE CALL TO "OVERCOME" IN THE EVIL DAY THEY LIVED. (MEANING, THE FIRST RESURRECTION IS NOT *JUST* FOR MARTYRS BUT FOR THOSE WHO HAVE KEPT THE FAITH UNTO THE END).

1 THESSALONIANS 4:14-15 - FOR IF WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS DIED AND ROSE AGAIN, EVEN SO GOD WILL BRING WITH HIM THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP IN JESUS. 15 FOR THIS WE SAY TO YOU BY THE WORD OF THE LORD, THAT WE WHO ARE ALIVE AND REMAIN UNTIL THE COMING OF THE LORD, WILL NOT PRECEDE THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP. 16 FOR THE LORD HIMSELF WILL DESCEND FROM HEAVEN WITH A SHOUT, WITH THE VOICE OF THE ARCHANGEL AND WITH THE TRUMPET OF GOD, AND THE DEAD IN CHRIST WILL RISE FIRST. 17 THEN WE WHO ARE ALIVE AND REMAIN WILL BE CAUGHT UP TOGETHER WITH THEM IN THE CLOUDS TO MEET THE LORD IN THE AIR, AND SO WE SHALL ALWAYS BE WITH THE LORD.

NOT ONLY IS THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS A CORNERSTONE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, THE BELIEF IN A LITERAL, PHYSICAL, BODILY RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD IS A FOUNDATIONAL BIBLICAL TRUTH.

DANIEL 12:2 - "MANY OF THOSE WHO SLEEP IN THE DUST OF THE GROUND WILL AWAKE, THESE TO EVERLASTING LIFE, BUT THE OTHERS TO DISGRACE AND EVERLASTING CONTEMPT.

JOHN 5:28-29 - "DO NOT MARVEL AT THIS: FOR AN HOUR IS COMING, IN WHICH ALL WHO ARE IN THE TOMBS WILL HEAR HIS VOICE, 29 AND WILL COME FORTH: THOSE WHO DID THE GOOD DEEDS TO A RESURRECTION OF LIFE, THOSE WHO COMMITTED THE EVIL DEEDS TO A RESURRECTION OF JUDGMENT.

JOHN 11:25 - JESUS SAID TO HER, "I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE: HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME WILL LIVE EVEN IF HE DIES

CONTRARY TO GREEK MYTHOLOGY AND POPULAR CULTURE (AND EVEN SOME POPULAR CHURCH TRADITION), THE BIBLE DOES NOT TEACH THAT PEOPLE ARE *IMMUTABLE*/IMMORTAL. INSTEAD, THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT IMMORTALITY WAS SOMETHING *EXTERNAL* TO HUMANS, PROVIDED BY GOD. IN GENESIS IT WAS THE TREE OF LIFE WHICH PROVIDED IMMORTALITY AND THEIR EXPULSION FROM THE GARDEN WHICH LED TO THEIR DEATH (GENESIS 2:9; 3:22-24). THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES THAT IMMORTALITY IS A GIFT FROM GOD GRANTED TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE THE GOSPEL AND HAVE FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST:

ROMANS 6:23 - FOR THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH, BUT THE FREE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.

2 TIMOTHY 1:9-10 (NLT) - FOR GOD SAVED US AND CALLED US TO LIVE A HOLY LIFE. HE DID THIS, NOT BECAUSE WE DESERVED IT, BUT BECAUSE THAT WAS HIS PLAN FROM BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF TIME-- TO SHOW US HIS GRACE THROUGH CHRIST JESUS. 10 AND NOW HE HAS MADE ALL OF THIS PLAIN TO US BY THE APPEARING OF CHRIST JESUS, OUR SAVIOR. HE BROKE THE POWER OF DEATH AND ILLUMINATED THE WAY TO LIFE AND IMMORTALITY THROUGH THE GOOD NEWS.

THE RESURRECTION IS WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE BECOME IMMORTAL, WHEN THEY ARE BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE, GIVEN NEW BODIES AND RE-CREATED WITHOUT SIN TO LIVE FOREVER! HERE IS HOW PAUL TAUGHT THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH:

1 CORINTHIANS 15:50-55 (NLT) - WHAT I AM SAYING, DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS, IS THAT OUR PHYSICAL BODIES CANNOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD. THESE DYING BODIES CANNOT INHERIT WHAT WILL LAST FOREVER. 51 BUT LET ME REVEAL TO YOU A WONDERFUL SECRET. WE WILL NOT ALL DIE, BUT WE WILL ALL BE TRANSFORMED! 52 IT WILL HAPPEN IN A MOMENT, IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, WHEN THE LAST TRUMPET IS BLOWN. FOR WHEN THE TRUMPET SOUNDS, THOSE WHO HAVE DIED WILL BE RAISED TO LIVE FOREVER. AND WE WHO ARE LIVING WILL ALSO BE TRANSFORMED. 53 FOR OUR DYING BODIES MUST BE TRANSFORMED INTO BODIES THAT WILL NEVER DIE; OUR MORTAL BODIES MUST BE TRANSFORMED

INTO IMMORTAL BODIES. 54 THEN, WHEN OUR DYING BODIES HAVE BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO BODIES THAT WILL NEVER DIE, THIS SCRIPTURE WILL BE FULFILLED: "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY. 55 O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"

AND WHAT WILL BE THE FIRST JOB OF THIS RESURRECTED MULTITUDE? TO ADMINISTER THE WAYS OF GOD UPON THE EARTH FOR 1000 YEARS WITH CHRIST AS ROYAL PRIESTS.

REVELATION 20:7-10 - LOOSED FOR A SEASON → DESTRUCTION

V. 8 - GOG AND MAGOG - TWO NATIONS WHICH ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PAGAN NATIONS OF THIS EARTH. THIS COMES FROM EZEKIEL 39

AT LAST THE DEVIL IS JUDGED AND DESTROYED. HIS FINAL "RESTING PLACE" WILL BE THE LAKE OF FIRE AND IT WILL NOT BE A PLACE OF REST, BUT IT WILL BE FINAL. THE DEVIL, FRESH OFF THE HEELS OF HIS FINAL FAILURE, WILL BE THROWN INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE, A PLACE OF TORMENT AND PAIN. LIKE THE JUDGMENT UPON THE BEAST AND FALSE PROPHET, THE LITERAL DURATION OF THE EVENT IS ONE THING, BUT THE RESULTS OF THE JUDGMENT ARE FINAL AND ETERNAL.

WHY HAVE THE DEVIL LOOSED AFTER 1000 YEARS OF WATCHING GOD WIN? THERE IS A SECOND REASON, A PRACTICAL REASON, THAT MIGHT EXPLAIN. HERE IS THE THOUGHT:

SOMETHING WE HAVEN'T TOUCHED ON MUCH IN OUR JOURNEY THROUGH REVELATION, IS THE FACT THAT EVEN AFTER MANY PLAGUES AND JUDGMENTS ARE ENACTED UPON THE EARTH, THERE WILL BE A NUMBER OF HUMANS THAT WILL REMAIN WHO HAVE SURVIVED THE CALAMITIES BUT WHO ARE NOT GOD'S PEOPLE. THESE WILL BE THE NATIONS THAT THE MESSIAH AND HIS PEOPLE RULE OVER DURING THE MILLENNIAL REIGN. PRACTICALLY SPEAKING, THE MORTALS WHO REMAIN AND LIVE UNDER CHRIST'S RULE WILL ENJOY BLESSING AND BEAUTY AND WHAT LIFE IS LIKE WITHOUT THE DEVIL'S INFLUENCE. LIVING WITHOUT WAR, WITHOUT CORRUPTION, WITH LOVE AND JUSTICE FLOODING THE WORLD! (THEY WILL LIKELY LIVE LONGER AS THEY ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF CREATION BEING HEALED) CAN YOU EVEN IMAGINE? YET, JUST AS IN THE GARDEN, GOD DOES NOT FORCE ANYONE TO LOVE HIM, BUT OFFERS THEM THE GOOD CHOICE TO LOVE HIM.

SO, WHAT WILL BE THE QUALIFIER FOR THOSE WHO ARE OBEYING JESUS CHRIST DURING THE 1000 YEAR REIGN? WHAT WILL THE "CHOICE" THEY ARE GIVEN WHICH WILL DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT THEY HAVE SUBMITTED TO CHRIST WITH A GENUINE AND GOOD HEART? HOW ABOUT THIS: "WILL YOU STAY FAITHFUL TO HIM WHEN THE DEVIL IS RELEASED TO REBEL AT THE END OF THE AGE?" THOSE WHO SIDE WITH THE DEVIL WILL BE DESTROYED, THOSE WHO REJECT HIS TEMPTATION AND DECEPTION WILL HAVE THEIR NAMES WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE AND ENJOY LIFE IN THE ETERNAL STATE.

A LOT TO CHEW ON. PROBABLY A GOOD IDEA TO TAKE SMALL BITES AND CHEW WELL!

WE'LL DIG INTO THIS SECTION AND IT'S THEMES MORE IN THE COMING WEEKS. BUT AS WE PAUSE HERE, A FEW THINGS ARE CLEAR NO MATTER YOUR INTERPRETATION - THE DEVIL'S DAYS ARE NUMBERED, THE SAINTS WILL HELP RULE THE WORLD WITH CHRIST, AND JESUS CHRIST IS COMING TO RAISE THE DEAD AND BRING IMMORTALITY TO THOSE WHO BELONG TO HIM. THAT'S NO SMALL THING TO TAKE AWAY AS WE READ!

WE OUGHT TO PRAYERFULLY STUDY AND TALK ABOUT HOW AND WHEN THE TRUTHS OF THE FIRST 10 VERSES OF THIS CHAPTER WILL UNFOLD, BUT WE CAN DO IT KNOWING THAT THE CENTRAL TRUTHS OF THE SECTION ARE NOT VEILED. REGARDLESS OF YOUR VIEW OF THE MILLENNIUM, THE DEVIL'S FUTURE IS SIGNED, AND SEALED AND *WILL* BE DELIVERED. AND SO IS YOURS.

REVELATION 20:6 (NLT) - BLESSED AND HOLY ARE THOSE WHO SHARE IN THE FIRST RESURRECTION. FOR THEM THE SECOND DEATH HOLDS NO POWER, BUT THEY WILL BE PRIESTS OF GOD AND OF CHRIST AND WILL REIGN WITH HIM A THOUSAND YEARS.

HALLELUJAH AND AMEN.