

The Grace of Wrath

Studies in the Revelation of Jesus Christ

Text

Chapter 20:1-15

Topic

The dragon, that serpent of old,
who is the Devil and Satan, is cast into the Lake of Fire

Title

*"Please Allow Me to Introduce Myself,
I'm About to be Thrown Into the Flame"*

Introduction

You're labelled a Millennial if you were born after 1980 and into the early parts of the 21st century because you are the first generation to come of age in the new millennium.

Millennials were initially called *Generation Y* because of the widespread use of the term Y2K to designate the turn of the century.

I suggest we keep calling them *Generation Y* because there is a time coming in which the true Millennial generation will be revealed.

Millennial, as you probably know, is from the compound Latin word that means *thousand years*. In our text we are going to see the words "thousand years" repeated six separate times in just fifteen verses. It is the length of time that Jesus will rule over the Kingdom of Heaven on the earth between the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of eternity.

This thousand year kingdom is therefore often referred to as THE Millennium.

The true Millennials are those whose futures are discussed in these verses. We'll see they fall into two very distinct groups.

I'll organize my thoughts around the following points: #1 If You're A First Resurrection Millennial, You'll Reign With Jesus, Then See Him For All Eternity, but #2 If You're A Second Death Millennial, You'll Rebel Against Jesus, Then Be Separated From Him For All Eternity.

#1 If You're A First Resurrection Millennial,
You'll Reign With Jesus, Then See Him For All Eternity

(v1-6)

Let me get something out of the way. This is the only chapter in Revelation where a period of a thousand years is mentioned, and the fact that it follows immediately on the heels of the Second Coming in chapter nineteen, and is emphasized six times, and is clearly described as a period of time before which and after which certain historic events take place, strongly lead to the conclusion that it is **a literal thousand-year period.**

I have to tell you that because there are those who don't take this to be a literal period of time.

There are dozens, if not hundreds, of places in the Old Testament that promise Israel an earthly kingdom at the end of the age. The early church almost universally believed in an earthly, historical reign of Jesus, initiated at His return. It's why the disciples asked Jesus, at His ascension into Heaven, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).

Tyconius (in the late 300's) was among the first to teach a spiritualized interpretation of the Book of the Revelation, denying the idea of a literal kingdom on earth lasting a thousand years after the resurrection.

His view was adopted by Augustine, the Roman Catholic Church and most Reformation theologians. It's technical name is amillennialism. It teaches that from the ascension of Jesus in the first century until His Second Coming, both good and evil will increase in the world as God's kingdom parallels Satan's kingdom. There will be no rapture, but when Jesus Christ returns the end of the world will occur with a general resurrection and general judgment of all people.

Postmillennialism is the belief that Jesus Christ will return *after* the a golden age or era of Christian prosperity and dominance, ushered in by the church. This era, they say, is the Millennium, but it may or may not last one thousand years; just a long time.

We are not amillennial. We take the Millennium to be literal. After all, everything else in this chapter is certainly literal: Jesus, the devil, the angels, the resurrections. All of that is literal.

We are not postmillennial. The thousand year reign of Jesus on the earth clearly follows His Second Coming at the end of the seven year Tribulation. Things are not going to get better and better but, rather, worse and worse.

We are called premillennialists. We believe Jesus Christ will return to this earth to establish and govern the Millennium directly; and that it will last exactly one thousand real years.

Revelation 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.

The “bottomless pit” is the abyss. It's a prison for demons. Some commentators say it may be the chasm in Hades that separates the place of torment from Abraham's bosom.

The “angel” has an assignment as a jailor. The “key” and the “chain” are real but also symbols of God's authority and power over those incarcerated in the pit.

Revelation 20:2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

The four names of Satan describe four aspects of his strategies over the centuries:

1. As the “dragon” he has sought to interfere with God’s promise to send a Savior into the world. You see this most vividly in Revelation twelve where the dragon is seen waiting to devour the Savior born from the nation of Israel.
2. As the “serpent of old” he has sought to tempt mankind with his subtle lies. Think Eve in the Garden of Eden.
3. As the “devil” he is a liar and slanderer, accusing God before men.
4. As “Satan” he is at the throne of God, accusing men before God. Job one & two.

Satan will be bound for one thousand years and, presumably, so will all his demons.

Rev 20:3 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.

I don't think we can begin to envision a world in which there is no devil, or demonic influence. The Rolling Stones capture a sense of Satan's all-pervasive influence in their song, *Sympathy for the Devil*. It's a terrible title, and filled with bad theology, but they nail the fact he has been at work wreaking havoc and causing chaos throughout human history.

Not so in the Millennium. At least, not until the end, as is ominously hinted at when it says, "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 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.

Two distinct groups are being described. One group is sitting on thrones performing the work of judges.

- Jesus promised His disciples that they would sit on thrones as judges in His kingdom (Luke 22:29-30).
- Paul told all believers - including **you** - that they would one day judge the world and even judge angels (First Corinthians 6:2-3).

You will work as a judge in the one thousand year reign of Jesus.

The second group is martyrs from the Tribulation. They, too, will reign with us, and Jesus, for the thousand years. Their bodies were slain but their souls lived on immediately in the presence of God in Heaven. In the Millennium they will “live.” It means they will be resurrected from the dead, that they will receive new, glorified bodies, as you read in verse five:

Revelation 20:5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

The Tribulation martyrs are resurrected as part of the “first resurrection.” The designation “first” confuses us. Because it is “first,” we tend to think of it as happening all at once, all at the same time.

The first resurrection is *not* a single event; it doesn't happen all at once. It is the resurrection of believers, as opposed to nonbelievers, and it follows a particular order over a rather long period of time.

- Jesus Christ was the first to be resurrected never to die again. Others, both in the Old and New Testaments, were raised from the dead - but not resurrected. Those who were raised from the dead died again. Resurrection is the transformation of the body into its final spiritual state. Jesus was the first to be resurrected, and He is the "firstfruits" of the resurrection (1Corinthians 15:20), meaning there are others who, like Him, will be raised to glory.
- Next in order in the first resurrection we find that certain saints were resurrected immediately following the resurrection of Jesus. In Matthew 27:52 & 53 we read, "and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many." This was a token to show that all the saints of the Old Testament would be resurrected.
- Next in order in the first resurrection are the saints of the Church Age. In First Thessalonians chapter four you're told that, at the rapture, "the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them." Deceased believers will be resurrected, then living believers will be raptured and given their resurrection bodies.
- Next in order in the first resurrection are the two witnesses of Revelation chapter eleven.
- Next in order in the first resurrection are the Tribulation martyrs we are reading about in Revelation twenty.

- Next in order in the first resurrection, according to Daniel 12:2, are the Old Testament saints.

To summarize: The first resurrection is the resurrection, in stages, over time, of all believers. *That includes you.*

Rev 20:6 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.

We who participate in the first resurrection are blessed because we will not be included in the second death, when all nonbelievers will be cast into the Lake of Fire (v14). We shall be "priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

There will, in fact, be a Temple in Jerusalem during the Millennium, requiring the service of priests. No further description or discussion of it is offered here, so we are to take this to mean only that we will have much to do.

If we rule and reign, and are judges and priests, who are the citizens, and who is the congregation?

Well, when Jesus returns in His Second Coming, there are people alive on the earth. He divides the believers from the nonbelievers.

- The nonbelievers are taken away to Hades to await the events we are going to read about in just a moment, which take place after the thousand years are over.

- Believers, in their human bodies, enter in to the Millennium and begin to repopulate the planet.

By the end of the thousand years there will be multiplied billions of people on the earth. **They are the citizens we rule over; they are the congregation we will minister to.**

When the thousand years end, and eternity begins, we will go forward into that future seeing Jesus forever and ever and ever. We will be like Him, having been raised from the dead or raptured. We will know Him fully, and one another, too.

Those who label the generations, like Generation Y, study them, and then list their characteristics.

First Resurrection Millennials ought to display the characteristics appropriate to our calling and destiny.

If we stick to our text, First Resurrection Millennials are characterized, in verse six, as "blessed and holy."

Do you understand how blessed you are? To be saved, not fearing death, knowing Jesus is preparing you a custom mansion and will return imminently to take you there?

Are you pursuing holiness? And by that I mean, Do you cooperate with Him as Jesus is seeking to changed you day-by-day into His image?

If you cannot be described as "blessed and holy," get with the Lord, and ask Him for a refreshing in the Holy Spirit.

#2 If You're A Second Death Millennial, You'll Rebel Against Jesus, Then Be Separated From Him For All Eternity

(v7-15)

You probably have not heard of the group, Christian Exodus. This is from their website:

Christian Exodus was founded in November of 2003 in response to the moral degeneration of American culture, and the rampant corruption among the powers that be.

The initial goal was to move thousands of Christian constitutionalists to South Carolina to accelerate the return to self-government based upon Christian principles at the local and State level. This project continues to this day, with the ultimate goal of forming an independent Christian nation that will survive after the decline and fall of the financially and morally bankrupt American empire. We have learned, however, that the chains of our slavery and dependence upon godless government have more of a hold on us than can be broken by simply moving to another State.

That last statement is code for, "We failed."

You know what? No society of human beings in their natural state can hope to achieve a utopia. As we are about to see, incredibly, even with Jesus as Head of State, and billions of glorified Christians on the earth, mankind will rebel.

**Revelation 20:7 Now when the thousand years have expired,
Satan will be released from his prison**

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In Satan's absence there will be justice for all, the wicked will be properly and immediately punished, and even the natural ferocity of the animals will be abated. Righteousness and peace will flourish. There will be economic prosperity and physical healing.

It's as perfect an environment as is possible this side of eternity.

Revelation 20:8 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.

The shocking truth you learn is that, even with Jesus ruling the perfect earth as King of kings and Lord of lords, multitudes will reject Him. You can be forced to obey, but you cannot be forced to be saved; it is a matter of free will.

Who are "Gog" and "Magog"? We see these terms in Ezekiel 38 & 39 in conjunction with a coalition of nations who invade Israel in the latter times but are miraculously destroyed by God. The battle in Ezekiel occurs *before* the Second Coming of Jesus. The reference to "Gog" and "Magog" here is *not* that battle.

"Gog" seems to be a demon king and "Magog" are a people, probably related in history to the ancient Scythians.

Revelation 20:9 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.

We're still "camp[ing]" in the Millennium. We're still awaiting our eternal home.

Once we are gathered together in "the beloved city," in Jerusalem, "fire [comes] down from God out of Heaven and [devours] them."

None of these conflicts in the Revelation are very interesting. They're like the recent MMA title fight between Ronda Rousey (rou-z) and Cat Zingano, which lasted 14 seconds. Blink and you missed it.

Revelation 20:10 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.

Satan is then cast into "the Lake of Fire," his final place of torment for all eternity.

Here is something of great importance. The "beast and the false prophet" were thrown in the Lake of Fire at the very beginning of the thousand year reign of Christ. *These two guys are still there, still alive.*

There is no such thing as annihilation after death; you must go either to Heaven or to the Lake of Fire. Much as I'd like to teach otherwise, the Bible says there will be eternal conscious torment for unrepentant sinners.

At the end of the thousand years comes the second resurrection. It is the resurrection of all nonbelievers from all of human history. Unlike the first resurrection, which occurs over a period of time, the second resurrection does occur all at once.

While it is indeed a resurrection in which people receive bodies it is called “the second death.”

- The first death is the separation of the soul from the body.
- The second death involves a resurrected body, but one that is separated from God for all eternity.

These next verses are perhaps the most terrifying in all of Scripture:

Revelation 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.

This is a time stamp. Earth and Heaven flee away when God creates all things new, as eternity begins. These nonbelievers are on the very precipice of eternity.

Revelation 20:12 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.

Revelation 20:13 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.

Revelation 20:14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Revelation 20:15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Is it Jesus on the throne? He did indicate in the fifth chapter of the Gospel of John it would be Him.

Books are opened. One is the Bible; Jesus once said, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day."¹

Another book is the Lambs "Book of Life." It has written in it the names of all those who receive Jesus as their Savior. We've discussed it before. I believe it is, as an alternate translation renders it, the Book of the Living. Everyone ever conceived has their name listed in it. Those who die having rejected Jesus and His offer of eternal life, who have thus blasphemed the Holy Spirit, have their name removed from the Book. Their names are blotted out.

A third book is a book containing the works of men. I take this to mean the good works they thought they could perform to work their way into Heaven on their own merit. God keeps a careful record of your works if you are not a believer.

In the end He will review them. They will prove woefully insufficient to get you into Heaven.

You can avoid the judgment of your works. The only "work" that can get you into Heaven is what Jesus described in John 6:29,

[John 6:29](#) Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

¹ John 12:48

The “sea,” “death,” and “Hades” all “give up” their dead:

- The “sea” and “death” probably refer to the location of the physical bodies of the nonbelieving dead. The “sea” is mentioned so you will understand that no matter the physical location or disintegration of a body God can raise it up again in the end.
- “Hades” is the location of their souls.

“Death” is the result of sin, and it is gone. “Hades” is the result of death, and it is gone.

The Lake of Fire is the final place of eternal torment for nonbelievers. God sends no one to the Lake of Fire. It is their choice to go there.

Jesus is the Savior of all men - especially those who believe (First Timothy 4:10). Those who refuse His offer of salvation by rejecting His Son will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

We all know Second Death Millennials. Many of them are folks we love - family, friends, co-workers, fellow students.

Some of them, if we are honest, we tend to despise, on account of what they do to us, or the very heinousness of their sin.

They are all going to get what they deserve based on their decision to reject Jesus Christ.

John Bradford was imprisoned in the Tower of London for alleged crimes against Mary Tudor. He was burned at the stake on July 1st, 1555.

During his ministry, on seeing evil-doers taken to the place of execution, he would exclaim, "But for the grace of God there goes John Bradford."

That is how a First Resurrection Millennial sees a Second Death Millennial.

We deserve to be at the Second Death, but somehow someone got the Gospel to us.

They may have shared it directly... Or given of their time or talent or treasure serving the Lord in prayer, or by giving, or in a ministry, so that someone else could share the Gospel with us.

Whether behind the scenes, or on the front lines, **Be someone's someone.**