

# Millennium, Judgment and the Eternal State

## Studies in the Book of Revelation No. 7

*Please read Revelation chapters 20-22.*

The major portion of the Book of Revelation deals with future events. Chapters four and five tell the experiences of the saved, just after the Church is caught up into Heaven. Chapters six through sixteen tell of the terrible judgments which will fall upon the unsaved left here on the earth when Jesus comes. Chapters seventeen through nineteen tell about the Battle of Armageddon and the doom of the Antichrist as these judgments come to a close.

In Revelation 20 we come at last to that moment in history toward which everything in the Revelation has been pointing—the time when Satan will be completely conquered. In Revelation 20:1-3, Satan is bound and cast into the bottomless pit. And then at the close of the Millennium, he is let loose for a season and finally cast into the lake of fire, where he will be tormented forever and ever (Revelation 20:1-3, 7, 8a, 10).

We must keep in mind that the unseen world is just as real as the world that we can see, and that the same God who created angels, can design a method by which the angels can put the devil into a pit and lock him up and set a seal over his place of confinement. We don't know **how** it is going to be done. We don't understand why God created Satan in the first place, and when he sinned against heaven, we don't understand why God did not obliterate him immediately. It is too deep for the human mind. But one thing sure—the devil is going to be eliminated from earth, just like this chapter says he will be.

And then after Satan is locked up and chained in the bottomless pit, the Revelator describes the millennial reign of Christ, the Great White Throne Judgment, and the eternal state.

### **1. The Millennial Reign of Christ**

Men throughout the years have dreamed of a golden age on earth. They have talked of the time when all men will live together as brothers and the earth will be filled with righteousness and peace. This dream is found in the literature of the ancient Egyptians, in the writings of the Medes and Persians, and in the writings of the Greeks and Romans. We hear much about it today. When Neil Armstrong first landed on the moon (in the summer of 1969), he left there a stainless steel plaque with these words: "We came here in peace for all mankind." Science and education have long since promised to take us by the hand and lead us into the Golden Age. And yet (in every age) the rule of man has been characterized by greed and covetousness; by robbery, plunder, and rebellion; by confusion and poverty; by pestilence, disease, suffering, and sin.

Down through the years, men have tried to bring in the Golden Age (a period of lasting peace), and yet there have always been wars and rumors of wars. Jesus says they will continue until the end of the age. It is not that Jesus approves of wars. He simply predicted that human nature is so evil that men would fight wars in every generation. But at some future time this present evil world-system will pass away and Jesus himself will set up a kingdom of righteousness. Hatred and greed and injustice will be banished forever. Daniel the prophet said long ago (when he was describing some end-time kings that will arise): “And in the days of those kings, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:44).

Six times in Revelation 20 we are told that our Lord Jesus will reign on earth for “a thousand years.” Sometimes we call this thousand-year period “the Millennium.” The word “millennium” (not mentioned in the Bible) simply means a period of a thousand years. There are many things about the Golden Age that is going to come on the earth which we cannot understand, and there is no need that we try to comprehend every detail. But one thing sure—a Golden Age is coming. Many of the details are spelled out in such Old Testament passages as Isaiah 2 and Psalms 72 and Zechariah 14. For example, Jerusalem will be the capital of the millennial kingdom (Isaiah 2:3); wars will not exist and swords will be turned into plowshares (Isaiah 2:4); Christ will reign with absolute power over all the earth (Zechariah 14:9). The Kingdom Age will be a golden age. It will be a time of glory. Satan will be bound. Jesus will reign with an iron hand.

The Golden Age is going to be a time of glory for Jesus. He will not only be king over Israel, but over all the earth. At the birth of Jesus, the angel said to Mary: “And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:33). The millennial reign of Christ will eventually somehow merge into the eternal kingdom of God—and thus of His reign, there shall be no end.

The Golden Age is going to be a time of glory for the Church. When the Son of God rules here on earth, the saints are going to reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12). The world today looks down on Christian people, but in that day we will share with Christ in ruling the world. See Luke 19:17.

The Golden Age is going to be a time of glory for Israel. The Jew will go back to Jerusalem, and rebuild his temple, and he will be safe from the outrages committed against him down through the centuries. Jeremiah tells how Jesus will be King over the earth, and he says, “In his days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely” (Jeremiah 23:6; Jeremiah 33:16).

It is going to be a time of glory for the Gentile nations. Isaiah says, “And many people shall say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord . . . and he shall judge among the nations . . . and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2). See also Micah 4:1-2.

It is going to be a time of glory for the whole universe. The curse will at least partially be lifted and Isaiah says, “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid . . . and the lion shall eat straw like an ox” (Isaiah 11).

For many years God’s people have prayed, “Thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” In that great day when Jesus reigns on the earth—this prayer will be fully answered. His kingdom will come; His will shall be done in the earth. By eliminating the devil as a factor in world affairs, God will establish an era of peace (a golden age on the earth).

Some say, “But why the Millennium? What is the purpose of the Golden Age anyhow?” If earth’s history would end with the Battle of Armageddon and would be destroyed immediately afterward—up to the very end, there would be hatred and war and it would seem like Satan was the conqueror! But the fact is—Christ will be victorious, and He will demonstrate His victory for a thousand years!

## **2. The White Throne Judgment**

After the Millennium and after Satan’s final consignment into the lake of fire, John sees God seated upon “a great white throne.” The word “great” speaks of the vastness of the scene. The word “white” is a witness to the purity of the Judge. The word “throne” symbolizes God’s unlimited majesty and authority. The description of the final Day of Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) is one of the most solemn passages in all the Bible.

It is not always easy to distinguish between the various judgments described in the Bible, but one thing is sure—every person is going to be judged. The writer of Hebrews says, “It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). There is nothing more certain than death, and neither is there anything more certain than judgment. No one is going to escape it or avoid it or run from it. All of us will face it.

The Scriptures describe a number of resurrections and also a number of judgments. In the early part of Revelation 20, John describes the resurrection of the saved, and then in Revelation 20:5, he says, “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished . . . blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection.” The first resurrection will occur at **the beginning** of the Millennium and has to do with the resurrection of the righteous. The second resurrection will occur at **the end** of the Millennium and has to do with the resurrection of the wicked. Somewhere, someday, sometime—all of us will experience the power of God when He raises our bodies from the dead. As surely as we die, we are going to be raised again—and as surely as we are raised, we are going to stand before God.

There are a number of judgments described in the Bible. There is a “judgment seat of Christ.” At Calvary, judgment took place for the believer’s sins. There is going to be a judgment “of nations.” And in our lesson we read of the Great White Throne Judgment. There is a day marked on the

calendar of heaven when God shall judge the secrets of men (Romans 2:16). At this time the wicked dead will be raised from their graves (and the underworld will give up its spirits), and those spirits will stand before God, will be judged according to their works, and will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

The basis of God's judgment will be twofold: The "books" in which man's deeds are recorded, and the "book of life" which contains the names of the saved. We might forget some of our misdeeds, but in the mind of God there is a continuous record of all that takes place on the earth. He knows every dishonest trick, every filthy thought, every bitter feeling, and every idle word—and these must be accounted for. Those who have not received the salvation that God offers through faith in Jesus Christ (and thus **do not benefit from** His imputed righteousness)—must pay the awful penalty themselves. The Bible admonishes that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. If you want to escape the terrible penalty that you deserve because of your sins, then you must open the door of your heart to Jesus Christ and become a disciple of His.

### 3. The Eternal State

The eternal state is characterized by a new heaven and a new earth. When John says that the first heaven and the first earth passed away, the Apostle is not saying that they become extinct, but that they will be changed from one condition to another. The old heaven and earth are completely renovated and recreated by fire. The present earth is mostly covered with water, but the new earth will have the oceans eliminated. The new heaven is partially described as "a city." That is, the New Jerusalem will be a kind of capital city in the realms of Heaven and the foundations of the heavenly city will rest upon the new earth (Revelation 21:1-3).

The saints have always looked forward to such a city. Abraham looked for a city having foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:10). The writer of Hebrews says, "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Hebrews 13:14). The Bible says that the great city let down out of heaven is made of real materials. Why would God tell us of streets of gold and gates of pearls if it were not a real city? Heaven will be a real place. It is not going to be a cloudy, hazy mixture of nothing.

The city will be enormous in size. John saw an angel measure the city and learned that it will be 1500 miles long and 1500 miles wide and 1500 miles high. It will be a place of great magnitude—and without knowing all the details, we can be sure that the City will be large enough to accommodate all who are destined to live there.

The city will be God's home. Revelation 22:4 says, "And they shall see his face." There will be no need for a temple because the inhabitants of Heaven will have direct access to God the Father and God the Son. There will not be any need for lights because the radiant glory of God will illuminate the City. There will be no night. God himself will be there and His radiant glory will light the City at all times.

The city will be indescribably beautiful. The walls are jasper; the gates are pearl; each of the twelve foundations is a gem of unusual brilliance. The city will be beautiful beyond words. Chalcedon will be a sky blue; emerald will be a bright green; sardonyx will be red and white; chrysolyte will be a transparent stone with a golden hue.

The city will be free from tears and sorrow. Revelation 21:4 says, "And God shall wipe away all tears." Human hands are poor at drying tears. Neighbors and friends can try and sympathize and bring comfort, but only God can stop the fountain of tears. Every tear that has been shed on earth will be wiped away and forgotten in Heaven.

Furthermore, there shall be no more death. In the circle of every family—a mother, or wife, or a husband, or a son, or a friend—has been taken by death. Every home has its vacant chair. But over in Heaven death will be a thing of the past.

Revelation 22:1-5 tell us that the curse is going to be removed. Something happened in the Garden of Eden that blighted the entire human race, and as a result of the curse pronounced upon Adam and Eve in the Garden, there have been broken homes and hungry children down through the years. But over in Heaven the curse will be removed. The "river of life" will flow down through the middle of the City and the tree of life will be large enough to span both sides of it. The vocabulary of man is not capable of depicting what God has prepared for those who love Him.

A magazine article a few years ago described life here on earth ten years hence. The writer depicted a thirty-hour work-week, a five-hour trip from New York to Paris, a ribbon of highway across the United States without a single stoplight, and a radio designed to fit into the palm of one's hand. He entitled the article, "Look What's Ahead." And surely these are marvelous achievements of science and engineering, but they pale into the background when compared with the wonders which God has prepared for His people. The hymnwriter says,

"I will sing you a song of that beautiful land,  
the far away home of the soul;  
where no storms ever beat on the glittering strand,  
while the years of eternity roll."

Revelation 22:18-19 warn against tampering with the Word of God, and then the final message to the Church in Revelation 22:20 is that our Lord Jesus will come back again. John (representing the Church) calls out with a keen desire, "Even so come, Lord Jesus." Each Christian can echo the same words. We are anxious to see an end to sin and sorrow and suffering. We want to see Jesus—and be like Him—and live with Him forever.

The last verses of the Bible are an invitation calling for men and women to come and believe the message of the Gospel. The choice is entirely up to each individual. If you refuse the Saviour now,

you will go to the Lake of Fire to be punished forever. If you follow Jesus Christ on earth, you will be privileged to live with Him in eternity.

There are many differing views about the Book of Revelation. We don't understand all that the Book of Revelation teaches. But all of us can be absolutely sure of several things that it **does** teach:

(1) God is in control of history and He will ultimately triumph. We don't read this Book and get the impression that the devil is going to win out.

(2) The end of the age is going to be preceded by much evil and suffering.

(3) A glorious future awaits God's people, for whom the best is yet to be.

The end of the age may very well soon be upon us. It is extremely risky for any one of us to delay preparation for our trip to the eternal world. If you have never accepted Jesus Christ, won't you do it today?

-Harold S. Martin

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#### **BIBLE HELPS**

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