

The Soon Coming End – Part 15

2 Peter 3:9-13

Revelation 20:1-10

1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things, he must be released for a short time. 4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. 7 When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, 8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. 9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:1-10 (NASB))

This is a very special and mysterious portion of scripture, one that reveals a very unique period of time within the history of mankind, a 1000-year period, known to us as the “Millennium”.

And as I said to you at the close of last week’s message, for the most part of my years as a Christian, I have had a very limited understanding of why, after the “Great Tribulation” and the “Battle of Armageddon”, God did not just close the book on man’s earthly existence, why He would just seem to “tack on” another 1000 years has been a mystery to me.

Thankfully, over these past few weeks, after studying long on these scriptures and on the comments of several trusted commentators, especially John MacArthur, and after

recalling the words in 2 Peter that tell us that God does not desire for any to perish, I believe I have come to at least some reasonable understanding of the “why” behind these words.

Part of my confusion about the Millennium, as well as a confusion regarding some of the other mysterious events that are described here in the Book of Revelations is that many of the Bible teachers that I have listened to over the years, have had very differing views about what the events described here really are all about. And those differences seem most to be concerned with whether some, if not most, of these prophetic words given to us here are really “literal”, or if they are instead intended to be taken as only being figurative, symbolic, allegorical, good “object lessons”, but not really real events in history, similar in some ways to the parables that Jesus gave?

As for myself and my personal understanding regarding these scriptures, I am fully convinced that while, yes, some of these words might possibly be figurative and allegorical, such is the exception. And unless God’s Spirit clearly reveals particular words and events to be only figurative, I must first and always receive their meaning as “real” and “literal”.

May I say that another way. Yes, there are lots of metaphors and symbolic wordings and “parables” in the scriptures. And they serve good purposes and they help us to understand many of God’s truths and concepts. But unless those words or incidents are obviously intended to be figurative or metaphorical, we should almost always consider them to be just as they are being presented to us, “actual” and “literal”.

Why do I bring this up at this point in our study of these words here in the Book of Revelations? It is because there are a goodly number of believers, many of them far more learned in these scriptures than I am, who believe and teach that most of these words and incidents given to us here in this Book of Revelations are not literal, but are instead figurative and metaphorical; that while, yes, some events might be real and actual, those references are not to future events, but are rather speaking about events that have already taken place at earlier times, such as, in the 1st century, in the days when Christ suffered and died on the cross, and when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70AD, and on and on.

And that form of understanding of these words that we are reading here today, and especially regarding the “Millennium”, is relatively common among some of our Presbyterian brethren and is called “Amillennialism”. Many of them sincerely believe that most of these words and events that I have been preaching as being actual events which will take place in the coming days ahead, are really only figurative language and

not actual future events, or perhaps they are events that have already taken place at some time in the past; and especially, that the 1000 years is not an actual number of years, but is rather a figurative span of time, the time that we are actually living within today, the “Church Age”, and that right now, during these days, satan is figuratively “bound” and not able to be as bad as he could be.

Again, my understanding of these scriptures is not such as that, but rather that these words and the events described here are to be understood “literally”, that these words we have been studying here in this Book of Revelations are actual and in a general time frame order, that just as we are reading here in chapter 20, immediately following the great “Battle of Armageddon”, satan and his fellow demons will actually be thrown into the “bottomless pit” and bound there for 1000 years, completely unable to tempt and influence the people of the earth for 1000 years. But when that 1000 years is complete, he will be released from that “pit”, and for a little while, once again be able to work his evil wiles upon the people of the earth, turning many of them away from Christ. But in the end, bringing about his own final and eternal destruction.

This understanding that I have come to believe and have now for several weeks been teaching to you has been named by bible theologians, “The Premillennialist View”, that we are now, currently in a “pre-millennial” period of time, that the “Millennium” is a “literal” 1000 years and is yet to take place.

I hope that I have not confused you with these explanations. If I have, please do come to me later and we can talk more about them.

So then, at the risk of repeating myself for a third time, may I say again, that over these past many weeks, the words that I have been preaching to you from these first nineteen chapters of the Book of Revelations, are from the firm belief that each event within the tribulation will actually and literally take place, exactly as each is prophesied, and that all the events up through chapter 19 will occur just prior to when this “Millennium” period begins.

And that is where we are here in chapter 20. The next event to take place will be the 1000 years of the “Millennium”. Those words beginning here in verse 4, right after satan has been bound and thrown into the abyss for the next 1000 years. Listen, verse 4,

4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their

hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4-6 (NASB))

Here at this point, satan and his fellow demons are gone from the earth, bound and confined in the abyss. Christ and is now reigning on the throne of David, in Jerusalem, in His Millennium Kingdom. And reigning with Him and “judging” the people of the earth will be many of the saints who have been resurrected to life. Among them will be the twenty-four elders, also the twelve disciples. And then, seated with those heroes of the faith, there will also be saints who suffered and were martyred for Christ’s sake during the great tribulation. And then lastly, on those thrones will possibly be some of us. We are told that we also will reign with Christ over His Millennium Kingdom. What a joy that will be!

But the question quickly comes to mind, if we are to reign with Christ, “who” will be the people that we will reign over?

We find that answer when we read about all the many, many people who will remain on the earth after Christ vanquishes satan and his armies in the Battle of Armageddon. Those who remain are the “nations in the four corners of the earth” spoken about in verse 8. These are said by the bible commentators to be survivors of the great tribulation, people who had apparently been able to avoid the antichrist and his demands to take the 666. We understand that to be so, because in chapter 19, it is said that those who did take the “mark of the beast” all died.

So then, the “Millennial Kingdom” is in place and it will reign for 1000 years. It is not quite “heaven”, but it seems to be really close to what heaven will be like.

There will be 1000 years of joyful living. We, the resurrected saints will certainly be joyous because in our glorified state, we will be completely free from the possibility of temptation and sin. And with Christ reigning with great love, but also with His “rod of iron”, and satan not around to tempt the nations of people, there will be no wars, very little strife, very little suffering.

One of my most trusted commentators, John MacArthur has this to say about the Millennial Kingdom of Christ on the earth. MacArthur tells us that,

We don't know exactly what it will be like. It could be a time with no prisons, no hospitals, no mental institutions, no barracks, no saloons, no houses of ill repute, no gambling dens, no homes for the aged and the infirmed. The bloom of youth is on everyone's cheek. Cemeteries are crumbling relics of the past. And tears are infrequent. The wolf and the lamb, the calf and the lion, the cow and the bear, the child and the scorpion are all at peace. Jesus is come. The golden age has dawned. The earth is filled with the knowledge of God. Jesus is Lord. He rules the nations with a rod of iron. His reign is righteous and the nations obey. Sin is visited with swift and certain judgment. It's everything that you could never even imagine beyond your wildest dreams.

Isn't this a wonderful time to look forward too! Christ on His throne ruling the nations, and us reigning with Him, overseeing and governing the people of the nations of the world.

And the people of the world will have the most gracious opportunity to enjoy life as no other generation in human history has ever experienced, completely free from satan's influence and temptations. If ever a generation of people could be expected to make the freewill choice to receive Christ, it would be these folks. But as we see next, many do not.

After a blissful and happy existence of 1000 years, God does the thing that I still have very little understanding about, He releases satan to once more do what satan does, deceive and tempt and lead people astray. Listen again,

7 When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, 8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. 9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:7-10 (NASB))

Satan is released and his temptation of the nations is successful. He rallies some of his most powerful demons to help him, Gog and Magog, and according to these words, many, many people, said here to number as the sands of seashore, turn away and follow after satan. How sad! How very, very sad!

But their rebellion will be to no avail. Jesus will again quickly defeat satan and his armies. Verse 9

9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:9-10 (NASB))

It is all finally over. Satan has been defeated for the last time.

Then next following the defeat of satan, Jesus will begin to judge all the people of the earth, and we will begin to study those truths next week. May we pray.