

Detailed Study of Revelation Chapter 20

Revelation 20 is a crucial chapter in the Book of Revelation, dealing with the **millennial reign** of Christ, the **final judgment**, and the **eternal state**. This chapter presents some of the most debated and significant theological concepts, particularly the **millennium**, the **final defeat of Satan**, and the **eternal destiny** of all people. From a **hermeneutical** and **dispensational** perspective, Revelation 20 is central to understanding **prophetic events** that will unfold in the future, particularly during the **millennial kingdom** of Christ and the **Great White Throne Judgment**.

In this study, we will explore the important Greek verbs, words, and phrases, delve into the historical and cultural context, explain John's understanding of the images and experiences in this chapter, and reflect on its significance for today's Christian audience.

Exegetical Breakdown of Revelation 20:1-15

1. The Binding of Satan (Revelation 20:1-3)

Revelation 20:1-3 (ESV): *"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while."*

- **Greek Word Study:**
 - **"Key"** (Greek: *kleis*) – This word refers to the **instrument of control** or **authority**. The key in this context represents the angel's authority to imprison Satan and prevent his influence during the millennium.
 - **"Bottomless pit"** (Greek: *abussos*) – This term refers to a **place of deep confinement** or **the abyss**, often associated with the **realm of evil**. It signifies a place of total **confinement and imprisonment** where Satan will be incapacitated for a period of time.
 - **"Bound"** (Greek: *deo*) – This verb refers to **binding** or **restraining**. Satan is bound, preventing him from influencing the nations, which has significant implications for the future world order.
 - **Theological Insight:** The **binding of Satan** symbolizes a period of **restraint** in which his power to deceive and influence the nations is temporarily halted. This event occurs just before the **millennial reign of Christ** and serves as an essential prerequisite for the establishment of Christ's rule of peace and righteousness on earth. The imagery of **chains** and the **bottomless pit** reflects the **complete restriction** placed on Satan.
 - **Cultural and Historical Context:** In ancient thought, the concept of **binding** was used to describe both physical and spiritual restriction. The early Christians would have understood this action as a **temporary limitation** of Satan's influence, allowing for the reign of Christ.
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2. The Millennial Reign of Christ and the Saints (Revelation 20:4-6)

Revelation 20:4-6 (ESV): *"Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years."*

- **Greek Word Study:**
 - **"Reigned" (Greek: *basileuō*)** – This verb means **to rule or govern**. The saints who are resurrected and live during the **millennium** are depicted as **co-rulers** with Christ, sharing in His authority and kingdom.
 - **"First resurrection" (Greek: *anastasis prōtē*)** – This refers to the **resurrection of the righteous** that occurs at the start of the millennium. The term “first resurrection” contrasts with the **second resurrection**, which involves the wicked (Revelation 20:11-15).
 - **"Second death" (Greek: *deuteros thanatos*)** – This term refers to the **eternal separation from God** experienced by the wicked, those who are not part of the first resurrection.
 - **Theological Insight:** The **millennium** is a literal 1,000-year period in which Christ reigns on earth with His saints. This period is characterized by **peace, righteousness, and justice**, and it fulfills many Old Testament promises of a future kingdom of God. The saints who participate in the **first resurrection** are **blessed** because they are spared from the **second death**, which is eternal separation from God.
 - **Cultural and Historical Context:** The idea of a **1,000-year reign** was **anticipated in Jewish thought**, where a future **Davidic kingdom** was expected. Early Christians, particularly those in the **first century** facing persecution, would have found this vision of a peaceful and righteous reign comforting, anticipating the fulfillment of God’s promises.
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3. The Release of Satan and the Final Battle (Revelation 20:7-10)

Revelation 20:7-10 (ESV): *"And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them. And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."*

- **Greek Word Study:**
 - **"Deceived" (Greek: *planao*)** – This verb means **to mislead** or **to lead astray**. Satan, once released, will again use his **deceptive powers** to lead the nations into **rebellion** against Christ and His saints.
 - **"Lake of fire" (Greek: *līmnē pyros*)** – A powerful image of **eternal punishment and separation from God**. The lake of fire is the final **destination of Satan**, the Beast, and the False Prophet, signifying **eternal damnation**.
- **Theological Insight:** Even after 1,000 years of peace under Christ’s rule, **Satan’s final rebellion** demonstrates the depth of human depravity. **Satan’s release** and the subsequent **battle** show that even in an ideal world, apart from God’s grace, people can

still **choose to rebel**. The **lake of fire** is a **symbol of eternal judgment** for Satan and all who follow him.

4. The Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15)

Revelation 20:11-15 (ESV): *"Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."*

- **Greek Word Study:**
 - **"Books"** (Greek: *biblia*) – The **books** represent the **record of deeds**, indicating the **justice** of God. The Book of Life, on the other hand, contains the **names of the redeemed**.
 - **"Judged"** (Greek: *krinō*) – This verb signifies a **judicial decision**. The judgment at the Great White Throne is **final**, based on the deeds recorded in the books.
- **Theological Insight:** The **Great White Throne Judgment** marks the **final judgment** of all the dead, where the **unrighteous** are judged and sentenced to eternal separation from God. This is the **second death**, and those who are not found in the **Book of Life** face eternal **damnation**. The presence of **Death** and **Hades** being cast into the lake of fire symbolizes the **end of death and separation**, as all things are made new.

Application Questions for Today's Christian Audience

1. **How does the image of Christ reigning for a thousand years shape our understanding of God's sovereignty?** What does the **millennium** reveal about the **peace** and **justice** that Christ will bring to the earth in the future?
2. **What significance does the first resurrection have for our lives today?** How can Christians live in light of the promise that **they will reign with Christ** and be spared from the **second death**?
3. **What lessons can we learn from the final defeat of Satan and his ultimate judgment?** How does this encourage Christians to resist the temptation to compromise with evil in the world?
4. **How does the Great White Throne Judgment influence the way we view evangelism and our responsibility to share the Gospel?** Considering the **finality of judgment**, what should be our motivation for **sharing the Gospel** with others?

Conclusion

Revelation 20 is a chapter filled with profound theological significance, depicting the ultimate triumph of **Christ over evil**, the establishment of **His millennial reign**, and the final **judgment** of all people. For today's Christians, it offers a powerful vision of **hope, justice, and accountability**, reminding us that God's ultimate purpose for history is to bring about the **triumph of righteousness** and the **eternal reign of Christ**. As believers, we are called to live with **anticipation** of Christ's return, to embrace our role in His kingdom, and to carry out the **mission of the Church** with a sense of urgency, knowing that the final judgment is real and imminent.