

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 7/7/10 Wednesday Evening

Series: *A Walk through the Book of Revelation*

Revelation 20:1-6 "The Thousand Year Rule"

This evening we're going to see something amazing, something very different from the world as we know it. We are going to see a portrait of the world as it one day will be, under the rule of the Sovereign Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ.

Where in the world is it all heading? If all we did was read the newspaper and watch Headline News, it would be easy to become overwhelmed with despair.

But the fact is, there is a God in heaven whose Son is king. And God has a plan. He is at work reclaiming this world, and restoring His kingdom--the one Adam forfeited in the garden. God's plan is certain, so certain that He tells us ahead of time what He's going to do.

Many centuries before it happened, God foretold of the cross (Psalm 22) and the empty tomb (Psalm 16). During His ministry Jesus revealed--before it happened--that He was going to be rejected and crucified, and then raised to new life on the third day.

It ought not surprise us, then, that God would tell us ahead of time what He was going to do in the end times. Revelation 20 is an amazing chapter. In it God tells us about the time when He will reverse the curse and restore what Adam forfeited in Genesis 3. The *NIV Study Bible* rightly points out (p. 1946), "These last three chapters reflect many of the subjects and themes of the first three chapters of Genesis."

In Revelation 20, God tells us about the period of time often referred to as the millennium (the thousand year reign of Christ). What is going to happen during the millennium? We find out in Revelation 20.

The Context:

--Revelation 6-17, a description of God's future judgment upon the world during the period of time known as the "tribulation" period

--Revelation 18 depicts the fall of Babylon

--Revelation 19 presents the response of heaven to the fall of Babylon

--Revelation 19 concludes with a description of the final battle of the tribulation period, when the Lord will return from heaven to destroy the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies. The beast and false prophet are captured and thrown into the lake of fire, and the rest are killed by the sword that came out of the Lord's mouth.

Then what will happen? Read Revelation 20...

In his vision John saw two events connected with the millennium which he describes in verses 1-6 (note that three times he says "I saw"--verses 1, 4, 4b).

I. John saw what happened to the devil (1-3).

A. An angel came from heaven (1).

Q: What angel? We're not told here.

Q: What did the angel possess? Two things...

1. *He had a key.*

Q: What kind of key? A key to what? The "Abyss" (or "the bottomless pit," KJV). We've seen references to the Abyss before, back in Rev 9:1-2. The Greek word means "very deep" or "bottomless." Seven of the eight NT occurrences of the word are in Revelation.

2. *He had a great chain.*

Q: What are chains used for? In this case, to bind someone (2).

B. The angel seized the devil (2-3).

Note the four names/titles of the devil given here. What are they? The "dragon," the "ancient serpent," the "devil," and "Satan." We were introduced to the dragon back in chapter 12 and learned he is the energizing force behind the beast.

So the angel seized the devil. Then what?

1. *He bound him.*

2. *He threw him into the Abyss (bottomless pit).*

Q: For how long? The order in the text is somewhat confusing. Did he bind him for 1,000 years and

then throw him into the Abyss? More likely, he bound him and then threw him into the pit for 1,000 years. Then what?

3. *He locked and sealed it.*

Why?

4. *He prevented the devil from deceiving the nations.*

Note: John explains what will happen at the end of the millennium (3b).

Q: What's going to happen at the end of the millennium? The text says the devil "must be set free for a short time."

Q: For how long? A *short* time

Q: Why will he be set free? To do what? Read verses 7-8

This is interesting. Satan will be bound during the millennial reign of Christ. Afterwards he will be loosed for a time. Then what will he do? Verse 8 indicates he will "deceive the nations" again.

That raises a question. *Who?* Who is Satan going to deceive? After 1,000 years of paradise in which Christ rules the world, you wouldn't expect there to be anyone who would follow the devil. But there will be as we'll see in our next study.

Who? There will be children born during the Millennial kingdom, children born in a perfect environment. Yet they too are descendants of Adam, and as such what do they have? Depraved hearts. They, too, will need to trust in the atonement of Christ.

But apparently, some will refuse to do so. And some will follow the devil when he is released.

Think about it: Why do we sin? A popular notion is, "The devil made me do it." The truth is, not always.

The devil is a deceiver. He deceives us, but often we sin, not because we are deceived, but because we *want to*. We go our own way because that's what sinners do--go their *own way*.

II. John saw thrones (4-6).

A. What's significant about thrones?

A throne is where a ruler sits. And notice it's plural, "thrones."

Key: This reminds me of Genesis 2. What was Adam given in Genesis 2? Dominion. God created him to rule the world as God's vice-regent, as a king.

1. *Adam was created to rule, but forfeited his position.*

2. *Here God restores what Adam lost.*

With that background and perspective, look at verse 4...

B. Who will be on the thrones (4)?

1. *John saw those given authority to judge.*

2. *John saw those who had been beheaded.*

Q: Are these two groups or one? In other words, twice John says, "And I saw" in verse 4. First he says he saw thrones and on them individuals who were given authority to judge. And then he says he saw those who had been beheaded. Are these two groups of people or one and the same?

We're told two things about the martyrs...

- They stood for Christ in life.

Q: For what specifically were they killed? For two reasons. The first is what they did--they stood for the testimony of Jesus and the word of God. The second is what they refused to do--worship the beast and receive his mark. As a result they were killed.

But because they stood for Christ, what will happen?

- They will reign with Christ in the millennium (see the end of verse 4).

C. Who will *not* be on the thrones (5)?

The "rest of the dead" will not be. Who is that? Is this saying that only tribulation martyrs will be

raised and reign in the millennial kingdom? Who are "the rest of the dead?" I see it as a reference to the ungodly. They will not have a part in the "first resurrection," but will be judged at the end of the millennial kingdom (13). Then they will be cast into the lake of fire, and experience the second death (14).

Verse 5 concludes, "This is the first resurrection." What does that indicate? There will be more than one resurrection.

D. What are the privileges of those who participate in the first resurrection (6)?

Verse 6 begins, "Blessed and holy are." It's a beatitude, the fifth in the book of Revelation.

1. *They're not affected by the second death.*

Q: What's the "second death?" Again, see verse 14--it's the lake of fire.

2. *They'll be priests of God.*

Q: What does a priest do? He has direct access to God. Here is another connection with Genesis 2. In addition to having the position of "king," what did Adam have before he sinned? He was a *priest*. He enjoyed direct, unhindered access to God. But he forfeited it in Genesis 3, and since then all humans are born cut off from God.

But that's reversed in Revelation 20. For those who participate in the first resurrection, there is direct access once again. They will be priests of God. What else?

3. *They'll reign for 1,000 years.*

As priests and kings.

Discuss: How does this promise affect you?

Implications:

1. What do we learn about Jesus from this chapter that stands out to you?
2. What do we learn about the devil from this, and why is it important to know it?
3. What effect does this chapter have on you as you think about its message?