

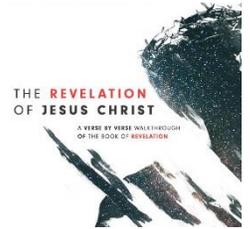
Title: Revelation, Part 27: The Majors of the Millennium

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Passage: Rev. 20:1-15

Big Idea: What awaits Christ-followers will

Memory verse of the month: Rev 21:4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.



We've been in this study on the book of Revelation for quite some time now, and as we reach its climactic conclusion of sorts, we are stepping into one of the most difficult passages to understand, as well as the most glorious encouragements to be found in the book.

Today we'll be working through Revelation 20:1-15, which describes the Millennium, the binding and destruction of Satan/The Devil, and the Judgement of the world - so pretty hefty stuff.

So, as we get started - let's watch this video from the Bible Project that sets up the passage that we are looking at today.
Video: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/revelation-1-11/> 7:33-9:47

So today, we are going to look at understanding the Majors of this section - not all the nuance, but the Main things.

Big Idea: Revelation 20 reminds us to major on the *Majors* as we look to understand Revelation.

So, I'm going to give us the Majors we are going to look at here.

The Majors:

- Jesus will return bodily
- Jesus will defeat Satan & Death
- Jesus will Reign as King forever

To try and parse this out from 2000 years removed from a figurative book of prophecy and apocalypse is too difficult to hold complete certainty in - if you are certain of your position on this, praise God, if you're unsure, that's okay - but let us all hold to this with a closed hand on the majors - and an open hand on the minors.

These theological issues that flow from Revelation 20 do not need to be a dividing line in the unity of the church globally, or to be a dividing line inside of church fellowships.

Revelation 20:1-15

¹ And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain.

Then/and - issue

- This is obvious that it is in reference to chapter 19:11-21 - but it may not be that it is sequential of a new event taking place
 - One of the things that happens in the writing style throughout Revelation is that John retells the visions in parts from different perspectives. Revelation 20 could be a recapitulation/retelling and more explained version of Revelation 19:11-21.
 - What is clear is that this is an angel, not Jesus as Jesus has come already on his white Horse in Revelation 19:11.
 - The Angel has been given the key to the abyss, and has a great chain, meant to bind the enemy - Satan - who has already been cast down to earth - Revelation 12, but now is being bound and sealed.

² He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³ He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

He, being the angel, seized the dragon, that ancient serpent from Genesis 3, the devil (accuser), Satan, and bound him for 1000 years

The nature of this 1,000 years is the most controversial part of Revelation - and we'll get into that a little bit.

The angel threw the devil into the abyss and sealed it (one of John's favourite images in Revelation) - until he is let loose on a loosened leash.

The nature of his being set free for a short time seems to indicate that the devil will have a purpose as the "prince of the air", but I think this speaks more to judgement of the devil as we'll see from vs 7-10.

The Devil will be let loose to gather the enemies of God against God's people.

Now what of this 1000 Years?

Christians who love Jesus deeply have disagreed on this point for hundreds and hundreds of years.

Here are three most prominent views taking short time to explain.

PreMill



Pre-Mill - views the 1,000-year reign as literal physical earthly reign. but holds that Christ's second coming initiates his 1,000-year reign, and that his reign occurs, before the final removal of Satan.

To hold this view means most believe in a literal 1,000 years of Jesus physically and bodily reigning as king over the world for that time period but you do not have to hold to a literal 1,000 years to fit into a pre mill position.

2 strands of PreMill

- i. Historical Pre-Mill - held by some of the early church fathers, meaning that Jesus' literal coming as being a 1,000-year literal earthly reign before judgement.
- ii. Dispensational Pre-Mill popular in the western world, but not so much as a global thought and this position is very closely aligned to the nation of Israel, and that Jesus will physically rule and reign in Israel and Israel as Gods people will have a very special and significant role in this - a secret Rapture 7 years before.

PostMill



1. Post Millennialism looks for a literal 1,000-year period of peace/prosperity and growing goodness on earth ushered in by the church. At the end of the 1,000 years, satan will be unleashed once more to this largely Christian world, but then Christ will return to defeat him and reign forever. Christ's second coming will not occur until after the 1,000-year period.

Would see Revelation 19, and Jesus on the white horse as a figurative coming before his true coming, as the gospel goes out to the world, and the ministry of the gospel preached means the world gets better before his coming in this “golden age of the church”.

I can't see how to get there as the proving stands with them as to why Jesus' return in glory is not his actual 2nd coming.

Amillennialism



AMill- understand the 1,000-year period to be a symbolic one not a literal 1000 years, between Christ's Resurrection/Ascension and his return.

This 1,000 years is the reign of Christ in the hearts of the believing church. This it is another way of referring to the church age. This period will end with the second coming of Christ.

One of the Big important ideas in this view is what's called the Already Not Yet - that we as the church are already Saved and part of the Eternal Kingdom because of Jesus' finished work and are reigning with him symbolically now because we are united to him in salvation.

- i. The term Amillennialism is a bad title because Amill would mean no millennium, but a better term would be 'realized millennium' - the Bible is clear in Revelation 20, that Jesus will reign for 1,000 years. Amill argue that this means that Jesus has been reigning for 1,000 years as symbolic of his eternal reign in and through the church, both here and now, and in eternity.
- ii. The 2nd coming of Jesus, and the Last Judgement happen at the same time or at least in short sequence.
- iii. AMill would argue that Revelation 20 is a not a continuation of events from chapter 19, but is a retelling or a recapitulation, of the events of chapter 19:11-21

Okay - so with all that said - what is the right position to hold? What is the absolute right position?

I don't know

Today - I think... I think... I hold to an Amillennial perspective, but I have gone back and forth between the Amill position, and the Historic PreMill position.

But I believe the major implications of the Millennium are best summarized and clarified by the Amillennial view as I think that to try and separate the Coming of Jesus from his judgement of the world seems inconsistent with what we have here.

I am just not as convinced of the historic pre mill position at this time to separate the events of Jesus' 2nd coming from the judgement and re-creation of the world.

ESV commentary - gives a great insight to where I believe I fall which says –
Hebrews–Revelation (Section Overview) in Scripture the final resurrection, final judgement, victory over death, arrival of the new creation, and second coming of Christ are part of a total package

Moving on now. Back to revelation 20.

⁴ I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Thrones where the elders/martyrs were (earlier in Revelation we are given an insight into this “throne room” or judgement room,

And John sees the souls of those who had been “martyred”, because of their belief in Jesus as the exclusive saviour of the world, and proclamation of the Gospel - the word of God.

- These souls had not worshipped the beast (satan/and his plans to destroy God’s work in the world), and had not given their allegiance to him, even though they would be killed.

⁵ (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

The rest of the dead here must either mean, Christians who were not martyred, or nonbelieving humanity.

The problem is that the notion of the overcomers in Christ throughout the book of Revelation speaks not only to those who have been physically martyred/beheaded, but the whole of Christ’s people, the church. why this specific resurrection only now for the martyrs?

What of the first resurrection and 2nd death?

The First Resurrection and the Second Death

The First Resurrection

- The first resurrection could be the idea of those who are martyred Christians who experience a real and lasting 1,000-year physical reign with Jesus as he resurrects them with their new glorified bodies.
- The first resurrection could be the idea of those who have been given new life in Christ as a result of the regeneration work of God the Holy Spirit resurrecting a dead heart - to believe, trust and worship Jesus alone for salvation.

The Second Death

- Seems to indicate here from later on, that this second death is the permanent, consummation of judgement on those who reject Christ’s lordship and rule/reign, and who are cast knowingly out of his presence and are apart from his love forever.

Interestingly there is no mention of a 2nd Resurrection nor is there a mention of a 1st death.

- The first death is to be seen as the physical global death, the death of all humanity, that all of us who live in a broken world due to sin will die physically.
- The 2nd death again being the final judgement and captivity of the enemies of God, and those who reject Christ’s Kingly rule and reign.

But what of the lack of mention for no 2nd resurrection?

Well this is an illusive idea as we aren’t told, but we do have here following Revelation 20, the consummation of God’s kingdom, the reconciliation of God’s people to Christ for eternity, and the wedding feast of the lamb in Revelation 21-22.

So, the 2nd Resurrection being the spiritual Resurrection into the new kingdom of the new creation, this seems to fit for our understanding.

Tim Chester has helped me understand this to a greater degree but in a simple way looks like this:

1st Resurrection = Spiritual / 2nd Resurrection = Physical

1st Death = Physical / 2nd Death = Spiritual/Literal

⁷ When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. ⁹ They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

vs 7 When the 1,000 years - either that literal 1,000 years, or the figurative time of the church age before the coming of Christ, Satan will be released from the abyss - meaning that he will have a loosened leash - but I think this is the case for a purpose.

Released is literally - “to be free”.

- the purpose of this free-ing is seen in what he goes to do,
- he goes to deceive the “nations” literally *greek* ethne/ethnos - which can mean - gentiles (in its base form). - which again would be the indication of those who are apart from God’s covenant union in Christ.
- and the devil is going to do so from the four corners of the earth. retrieving for himself these interesting names Gog and Magog -

vs 8 - Gog and Magog, is a reference out of Ezekiel which describes the nations coming against God’s people Israel. John shares this same phraseology, to help us understand the situation of the Devil being released from bondage specifically to try and make war with his minions, and those who reject Christ. This idea comes from Ezekiel 38/39, where the nations of Gog and Magog are told of their defeat at God’s own word.

In this, the Lord is saying something significant.

vs 9 They - the Devil, and the evil nations of the world who reject Christ, are there to attack God’s city, God’s people - or I would argue his church.

But God consumes them in his holiness with Fire from Heaven.

The enemies of my church will NOT touch a single one - I will defend them at the last day - I will fight for them - I will win the Victory.

¹⁰ And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

And then we get to the next revealing of the vision John saw about the Return of Jesus - his great white Throne.

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.

John sees the judgement throne - primarily the word throne, used 39 times in Revelation, reflects God’s sovereign rule/reign. He had seen the throne room, he had seen the one seated on the throne who looked like a slain lamb, but now he is seeing in this vision the other side of the throne - not only is Jesus’ throne a safe place for his people, it is a place of terrible glory to those who reject him as King - here Jesus does not sit on the throne only as a slain lamb, but as a conquering King, and the Judge.

Earth and sky: literally - heavens

Presence = face,

but there was no where to go –

I would argue that this is explaining that the old creation has gone - earth and heaven have given way at the judgement of God over the world to what he is about to Create in the new heavens and new earth.

Jesus' all-consuming presence sees and knows everything at the judgement - there will be nowhere to hide - except for those who are in Jesus

¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. Those who had died both the great person (person of earthly importance), and the small "lowly person" and books were opened to judge their works.

These books are the works of men. These are the acts of people throughout their lives, and John symbolizes them by what he sees in this vision as books; the record of each and everyone's lives regardless of their position, all will be judged by God.

Again, this seems to go against our regular view of God's judgement that only the really evil will be judged, and that it won't be based on works of faith?

This commentary gave some great input into this.

Hebrews–Revelation (Comment)

Scripture repeatedly says that judgement will be according to works (Ps. 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; Rev. 2:23; 22:12). Judgement according to works is not merely an OT theme but is also prominent in the NT.

But then God has another book, the lamb's book of life and if your name was written in the book of life, it's as if the other book is closed or is less important than the book of life.

¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.

vs 13 the "sea" here is not a literal body of water, but a picture to the untamed world of chaos and destruction. So, after the grave and death itself gives up all those who had died before the coming of Jesus - once that is done - God does the most amazing thing. He sends Death, and the Grave to the lake of fire as well so that not only are those in the book of life protected. There will never be another judgement for them, death will never come looking for them again, the grave cannot ever consume them again.

vs 14 for the early church and certainly the persecuted Christians of that time and those who endure heinous persecution now would find this passage of vs 14.

Look at this passage From Isaiah for how God was always working out removing sin/death

Isaiah 25:8 he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.

Oh, that we would treasure the justice of God as he wipes evil all of kinds from creation - and bind it in the lake of fire so that it will never again enter the New Creation.

¹⁵ Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Meaning those whose names are in the book of life, are saved, spared, and gain entrance into the new Jerusalem - the new Creation.

But for those who have not been sealed by Christ, saved by his grace, reconciled to God, ransomed by the blood of the lamb, who have rejected Christ's Right and kingly rule, and Jesus' dominion, they too will join Death, Hades, Satan, the beast, the dragon, and the false prophet.

Explanation/Western Mindset of Judgement and Justice

In the West - we have a hard time understanding God's righteous rule to disperse all evil and evil people in our world because we don't find ourselves to be all that bad. We compare ourselves to our own western moral compass and so for God to judge anyone apart from Christ as guilty seems excessive to our western ears and hearts.

But in the majority of the world, especially for Christians who are persecuted, this vindication of God's justice against sin, is right and true.

As Christians we should be wary of any theology that suggest that God's justice and wrath against sin is too heavy or is too strong. Indeed, in our context, our understanding is not strong enough.

Remember why Revelation was Written - To Encourage Persecuted Believers of the Coming kingdom of Jesus, and his eternal Rule and Reign of love and Peace, so different than their world of persecution and death.

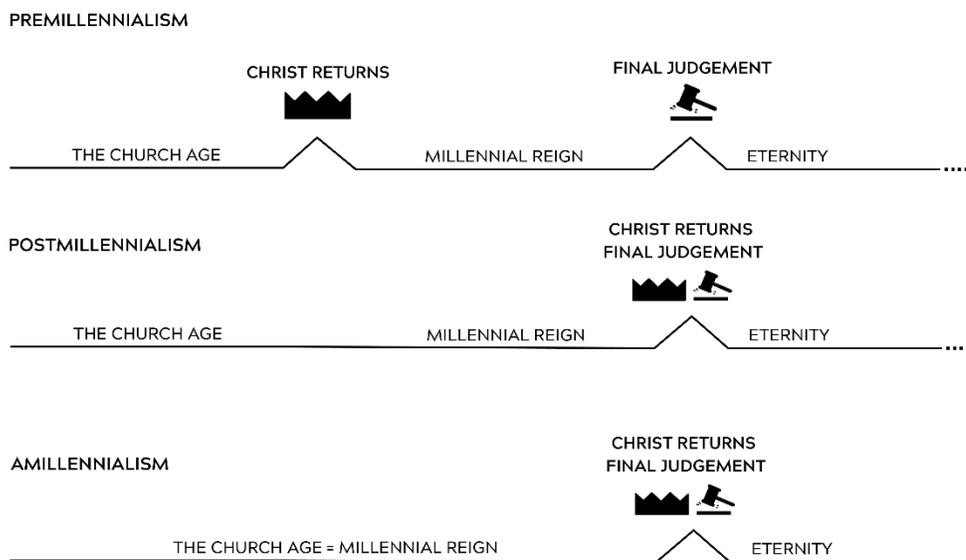
So what does all this tell us - thoroughly confused yet??

Here is what we have Studied:

1. Revelation 20 is the telling or retelling of Jesus' 2nd coming (Revelation 19), His ultimate Victory over Satan, the Beast, the Dragon, the false prophet, the Enemies of God's people, the grave, Hades, and Death itself.
2. The Minor's while they are important (the literal 1,000 years, or a symbolic one) and interesting should never supersede the importance of Jesus' victory and his love for this people.
3. While we do not know the exact time and cannot wisely be certain of exactly the flow and playing out of these Prophetic/Apocalyptic visions that John sees, these visions are given to us to persevere, to know that Jesus wins, and that in faithful obedience and Faith/United with Christ we will be vindicated as God's beloved city - his people.

And so, we remain looking at Revelation for encouragement and to a call for perseverance in the same ways that these Christians hearing this for the first time were encouraged to stay the course.

And so, let us keep our eyes on Jesus as we major on the majors



The Majors

Jesus will return bodily - Revelation 19:11

Jesus will defeat Satan & Death - Revelation 20:10-11, 14

Jesus will Reign as King forever – Revelation 20:11-15