

Our passage this morning in Revelation 20 is the most important passage in the entire book of Revelation. The way that you interpret this section and especially the way that you interpret the 1,000 year reign of Jesus determines how you interpret the rest of the book and all of your eschatology. Not only is it the most significant part of the book. It is also the most contested and most debated. Some of the earliest Christian writings outside of the Bible about Revelation admit that there are a lot of different opinions on how we're supposed to understand this.

This morning, we are not gonna go over all of them. I will talk a little bit about other options and interpretations. But I am going to try and keep us focused on the big picture where all of us can agree. And I'm also gonna give you my interpretation. If you wanna get into the weeds more and see some of the other interpretations, you can come on Wednesday or listen to the recording later or come pull me aside and we can get together and talk about it.

But the main thing we need to keep as we look at it we're gonna try to focus on the essentials and we're gonna have humility when people might disagree with us.

I. Satan will be restrained (v. 1-3)

This is the big idea.

Jesus is going to stop Satan's work.

At the very least, some of what Satan does in the world will be limited.

This is the big principle everyone can agree on.

Even if we disagree on how much and when.

Verse 1, **"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain."**

And it actually begins with an angel

God does not do it Himself at first.

It is just an angel that restrains Satan.

Is important for us to see.

Because spiritual warfare is real.

We see Satan act and move in our world.

And it can discourage us.

But we need to remember that Satan is not an equal with God.

He is not God's opposite or on God's level.

Satan can be taken care of by a simple angel.

The angel holds a key and a chain.

I want you to picture a dog collar.

This great dragon and great beast and serpent and leviathan is gonna be put in a kennel like a dog.

Verse two, **"And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,"**

Notice that Satan can't really put up a fight.

He is seized bound thrown, shut and sealed.

He is captured.

He shut up and he is locked in this pit.

He doesn't have the key. He doesn't have a way to get out. He is gonna stay in there.

Verse three, **"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."**

So again it seems that Satan is restrained and a very serious way for 1000 years.

So the big picture what everyone can agree on is that God will at a particular point in time limit Satan's power.

The question in the disagreement comes in how much is God restraining Satan?

And when is this restraining place?

I'll briefly give you the main idea ideas.

Everyone is going to fall into one of these three big tents.

And the central question and disagreement is when will these things take place.

When will this 1,000 year reign of Christ be? when will Satan be restrained? Post-millennialism believes that the world is slowly progressing towards this kingdom. The world will become more Christian and we have more Christian leaders and Christian government the world will be ruled by Christ and then He will return at the end.

Amillennialism, which believes these 1,000 year events are happening right now and then Jesus will return sometime in the future after everything fulfilled.

Pre-millennialism, which is what I believe and probably many if not most of you.

Premillennialism believes Jesus will return then literally rule on the earth and do these things in the future.

That is the flyover view of these ideas.

I'll go into more detail on them on Wednesday.

But for the most part I will just briefly throw them out as other options.

So, some see this as happening right now.

They say Satan has been locked in the pit and is being restrained.

They say it is not total, but Satan's ability to deceive is what has been taking away.

Before he could keep the nations from following God, but now after Pentecost, the gentiles and nations are coming to faith.

No, there's some problems with that.

The main problem for me as I read this message is that it seems like it is not just Satan's deceptive power that's being restrained, but it seems like all of him.

It seems as if Satan is locked in a cage, and he has a collar on and he's not getting up to do anything certainly not to deceive the nations.

I certainly think Satan is still deceiving the nations.

It seems to me that we are still waiting for Jesus to do this.

And so I think that this restraining is going to take place in the future. I think that there will be a period of time where Satan will be removed from the Earth and he will not be able to do anything.

Now when it comes to 1000 years, I don't think it necessarily has to be exactly 1000 years.

I do think that this is an actual moment in time in the future.

But I don't think that we have to be rigidly dogmatic or overly literal to say it better not be one second over or under 1,000 years.

God will restrain and remove Satan from the earth.

Now again, let's let's go a big picture. What difference does it make?

The only power that Satan has is because God allows it.

God can and does and will limit Satan's power.

Whether now or in the future.

God is more powerful than Satan.

We also see at the very end it says then after the thousand years.

God will allow Satan out. It is not a jailbreak.

It is not Satan escaping because of his brilliance or his might

The main thing we must understand is that God is greater than Satan and

God is stronger than Satan and God can chain the dragon whenever He

wants and one day He will.

Now they can raise questions for us about God's sovereignty and his providence and his power over the universe.

It can make us wonder how does that tie with free will and why does God allow bad things to happen?

Those are good questions to ask they are worth wrestling with.

Even if we have different ideas of how to bring it all together.

But we need to see as believers is that God is in control.

We might not understand the reasons.

We might not know why he doesn't always restrain Satan and why he lets him out later.

But we can take comfort in that the world is not broken because we're on our own.

God is strong enough and He will stop Satan.

II. Jesus Christ will reign on the earth (v. 4-6)

We see here that Jesus will reign on the Earth.

This is one of our essential beliefs in our foundational hopes as Christians.

We can disagree about specifics, but again the big picture idea is that we hope one day Jesus will actually be here.

He will not just be on His throne up in heaven but on the earth.

We won't have to debate theology anymore.

Jesus will be here and He will answer.

Verse four, **"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."**

This is a big verse.

See first that there were those who are on thrones who get to judge.

This is something that Jesus promise his apostles and disciples that they would get to sit on thrones and judge the nations.

It is not just the Jesus will reign, but we can reign with Jesus.

I don't think we are deciding who goes to heaven and hell.

Or what punishments and rewards are.

The main idea is that we get to reign and rule alongside Jesus.

And I think that this is not just limited to the elders who were before the throne or the apostles or those who have been martyred with 144,000 or the especially righteous.

To me it seems like this is all those who have put their faith in Jesus.

Everyone who is truly a believer who is truly trusted in the gospel will get to reign with Jesus one day

We see there's a special promise for those who followed Jesus despite opposition.

Those who have been beheaded and killed.

I don't think this just means literally only the people who have been beheaded as martyrs get to experience this blessing.

I think John is just emphasizing the humiliating nature of their deaths.

And all those who have been faithful in the midst of the tribulation who have died for their faith in Jesus, will receive a blessing.

And that primary blessing as they get to reign with Jesus.

But we see what comes because Jesus is here.

And what comes as resurrection.

They are raised from the dead given their glorified bodies and get to be reigning with Jesus for 1000 years.

Again, this is our discussion when does this take place.

Those who are amillennial or postmillennial will say that Jesus reigns now
And then when he was raised from the dead, he brought resurrection with him.

So with this interpretation, the resurrection that John is talking about is not a physical resurrection, but as the spiritual resurrection.

The resurrection from spiritual death to eternal life.

Verse 5, **"The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection."**

If you're not seeing how tricky this is yet you're about to.

Because they appear to be two different resurrection.

There is the first resurrection of those who come to life and reign with Christ.

That is one group and they experience the first resurrection.

There is then a second group who is the rest of the dead who does not experience resurrection until after the thousand years.

Now the challenge is, who are these groups of people and what are these resurrections.

The symbolic or amillennial interpretation says 1000 years is right now it's the age of the church on the Earth.

And the first resurrection is the resurrection from spiritual death and the spirit

It is a spiritual resurrection that all believers experience.

And then the second resurrection for the rest of the dead those who are spiritually dead, who will not come to life until after Jesus returns again for them will be after the symbolic period of 1000 years.

So then, the first resurrection is a spiritual resurrection, and the second resurrection for the rest of the dead as a physical resurrection where they are resurrected, and then sent to judgment.

And I would put my cards on the table a little bit.

This verse right here is one of the passages that I have wrestled with more than any other in Revelation.

I really don't like premillennialism. I don't love the idea that revelation is fulfilled in the future.

There is so much of amillennialism and the more allegorical interpretations of the book that I found convincing and I wanted to hold to, but this verse right here just destroyed me.

And a lot of why I didn't want to interpret revelation as being in the future is because the millennium especially is just weird.

I don't want there to be 2 resurrections.

But I just studied this verse and say this passage and read it over and over I had to mentally admit it seems like this is what it teaches even though I don't like it.

Now the other interpretation and where I am personally.

Is that Jesus returns to reign and resurrects all believers.

Only the believers who get to experience this resurrection.

They reign with Christ on the earth physically.

Then after the 1,000 years, unbelievers are resurrected to judgment.

And I'll be honest I don't like there being two different resurrections. It seems cleaner and I would like to just be Jesus comes back, and everyone is raised and either reigns with Christ or is judged. But it seems like there are two different stages of this physical resurrection. And the reason for that is the word resurrection is used really close together. Words, especially Greek and Hebrew words can have different meanings. They aren't rigid they can mean more than one thing, especially as the context changes.

But it's really hard for a word to change meanings and change context one verse after another. I have a hard time saying that it is a spiritual resurrection for believers and then a physical resurrection right after that for unbelievers. Because it's using very similar words.

Both verse four and verse five say came to life. It is using the same exact word and phrase. And when it's talking about the believers that are coming to life, it emphasizes their violent physical death. It emphasizes that they were beheaded. It seems to be not a spiritual resurrection of coming to faith in Jesus and being freed from sin, but being delivered from having a body that was slinging to a glorified body.

It honestly was it for me this is the turning point that began to push me towards. I think this is being fulfilled in the future. I just don't see how this can be anything other than a two different physical resurrections just based on this passage. Also, if this is not the resurrection Jesus promises to bring, then the entire book of Revelation never shows one. I don't like it, but it seems like both these resurrections are physical.

So to try and be clear.

It seems that this reign of Jesus is in the future, where he will literally come.

And part of what happens when Jesus returns is that all those who are dead in Christ will rise.

Those who have been in heaven with Jesus will come down with him, and they two will be resurrected in physical glorified bodies.

Jesus will reign for 1000 years and at the end unbelievers will be raised and put in physical bodies and sent to judgment.

Verse six, **"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."**

Is again tries to get us on track a little.

Does this that blessed and holy are those who get to experience the first resurrection.

Those who get to experience the resurrection that Jesus brings when he physically returns to the year and will be raised in glorified bodies are blessed.

And they are blessed because the second death has no power over them.

Here are the second death is eternal judgment.

It is the opposite of eternal life.

Those who have been raised with Jesus have no more to fear of death have no more to fear of hell.

They will get to be with Jesus forever.

And there's greater blessings they will get to be priests of God in Jesus.

Adam and Eve were placed in the garden of Eden and meant to be priests who walked with God who served him.

Israel was meant to be a nation of priests.

And now, when the restoration of Jesus is going to bring, we all get to be servant of our God.

And we get to reign with him for the thousand years.

I think part of what John is trying to do is to help us see the true blessing.

It is to be with Jesus.

We had to actually get to walk with Jesus in the cool of the day.

You need to be resurrected with Jesus and we get to serve Jesus.

I think the questions about this time are important and significant.

The way you understand this passage helps you understand the book.

But our central hope and the essential thing that we have to understand

and we need to look forward to is that one day we will get to be with

Jesus.

One day he is in charge and we had to be with him.

At the end of the day, the other stuff is just details will work out.

And in some ways, it might be like asking Jesus about what his tax policy will be.

Imagine approaching and thinking about the reign of Jesus on the Earth and wanting to know if you're still gonna have to pay income tax or not.

"Jesus, I just wanted to talk to you a little bit about the bill of rights that we have here in America especially private property. Just think that's important. I just wanna make sure this isn't gonna be like communism or something.

We wanna talk to Jesus and make sure that we can still have our flag or our country song or we want to talk about what with the national language in the kingdom of God is gonna be because hopefully it's gonna be that's what I speak.

When Jesus is in charge, none of that stuff will matter.

When Jesus is in charge, he's making the best choice.

When Jesus is in charge, you're not gonna have to watch on the news or read about any government shut down and try and pass through who's telling the truth and who's not telling the truth and what is the right decision and what's not the right decision.

It's just Jesus.

Jesus is in charge and everything's gonna be how Jesus wants it.

And there's no opposition because the dragon is locked up in the pit.

We can all have our own different ideas of government and how our Christian faith informs that the best ways that thing should and shouldn't run, but one day our theory is just gonna be yes Jesus

Because we don't have to read our Bible and guess what it is that he wants he'll just tell us to our face and we do it.

That's the essential part we need to remember.

III. Satan will be defeated once and for all (v. 7-10).

This is the big picture.

However, you define or you understand the restraint of Satan or this thousand years or how many resurrections the main idea here in these verses is that one day Satan's done.

One day, Satan just won't be locked up somewhere he will be thrown into hell.

So look at verse seven, **"And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison"**

Satan is released and let out of jail.

Whatever the restraining that God is or will do to him is finished.

We just about all whether you think this is an actual thousand years or do you think this is the time right now it is in the future.

Verse 8, **"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."**

He will once more deceive the nations to fight God.

People will try and identify who these nations Gog and Magog are.

I don't think we should do that. I don't think we're meant to do that.

They're really just supposed to be symbolic of all of God's enemies one last time we coming for a final battle.

The antichrist lost the battle of Armageddon but here maybe one more time they can get it done.
And so they all rise to fight Jesus still.

We might wonder who these people are?
Who are the people who even after 1,000 years of Christ on the earth try to fight and resist.

And this is something I have struggled with. It's one of the reasons that I didn't like reading Revelation in the future because this seems weird and strange.

But we need to be sure we're not making the Bible conform to what we think.

We have to adjust our theories and interpretations to the Bible.
Even if it makes us say what we don't want.

So there's a couple different ways to understand other options we have.
Some say that those who are deceived, and who are fighting, are the children of believers.

They are the people who grow up in the reign of Jesus.
They are born after His return.

Or they will say this could be the children of those who survived the tribulation, but still were unbelievers and they get to begin to repopulate the Earth.

Some say believers lose their salvation and abandon Jesus.

And maybe there's something to that in some ways it's a recapitulation of Eden.

Or even though God was there in the garden, his people still rejected him
Even though Jesus has physically there, and Satan isn't there, they will still be something in the human heart that rejects Jesus.

That could be true I don't think so.

Many of these options are why people are just amillennial and say this isn't literal.

Because it creates real problems we have to try and solve.

To me, I think this is the rest of the dead.

Because verse five tells us that after the thousand years of the rest of the unbelievers are brought back to life.

And at that same moment, Satan is released.

And so I think he deceives all of those who were dead.

I know you just were suffering and judgment, but maybe you can get away.

This is your chance to beat God and overthrow him.

Instead of you admitting that God was right, and you deserved to be punished for your wickedness maybe we can kill all of his people.

That to me makes more sense.

But ultimately the focus at least in the passage, here is not on who the people are but is on the defeat of Satan and evil.

Verse nine, **"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."**

This great evil army whoever it is comes to surround God's people to try and fight them and kill them.

And fire just comes down from heaven to burn them all up.

Jesus doesn't even need to show up for this last battle.

Hope you see all the battles in revelation are very anticlimactic if you like action.

There's no struggle there's no back-and-forth. It's just far from heaven Jesus.

Verse 10, **"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."**

Satan is finally fully defeated and he is thrown in the same place where the antichrist and the false prophet are, and he has locked in hell to be tortured forever.

Many other modern world have problems with hell and eternal tournament. None of us should have a problem with Satan himself being tortured this way.

The one who is responsible for deceiving Eve and bringing sin and death and brokenness into our world.

The one who destroys lies who deceive and mislead children.

The one who torments and causes people to go insane.

The demons who fill peoples bodies to make them harm themselves and to make them blessing God.

One day, he is defeated.

Again, and I myself can, we can get distracted by some of these details, which are super fascinating and tough to untangle.

But the essential spiritual truth that we need to see however you're going to interpret this book and however you're gonna interpret this chapter is that Jesus will win and one day Satan will be no more.

One day it is not just that the Tempter will be removed, but it is that all sin will be removed from the world.

There will no longer be an enemy who hates you and who is looking to kill you.

There will no longer be people in the world that you have to be afraid of.

No longer, you have to worry about letting your children just run around outside by themselves

The evil one will be done.

That is our hoping that is what we were looking forward to and that's what we're trusting that Jesus will do one day.

One day, he will defeat evil once and for all.

And what a day that will be.