

## “Two Resurrections (Chap. 20)”

### INTRODUCTION

In chapter 20 we find the focus of more controversy than any other section of Revelation (cf. Views of “The Millennium” below). But in this section are descriptions of three incredibly important events (which the whole Bible has been preparing us for): the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgement.

### VIEWS OF “THE MILLENNIUM”

1. The “millennium” is a thousand year period described in 20:1-6. The meaning of this period is hotly debated in the church, particularly among evangelicals and fundamentalists. There are three main views regarding the millennium:
2. **PREMILLENNIALISM** - At some point in the future, persecution and temptation of Christians will intensify into a Great Tribulation in which the events described in Revelation 6-19 occur. After which, Christ up will gather the faithful martyrs and survivors of the Tribulation and he will reign with them for one thousand years of peace and righteousness. After the millennium, the dead will be raised and judged, the earth will come to an end, and the eternal kingdom will be initiated. This is called pre-millennialism because the Tribulation occurs before the return of Christ and the thousand year period.
3. **POSTMILLENNIALISM** - The church will grow and spread until eventually the whole world will be Christianized. A long period of peace and prosperity, the millennium, will then precede the Coming of Christ, which will usher in the resurrection, last judgement, and the eternal kingdom.
4. **AMILLENNIALISM** - There will be no special section of history called the millennium. The “resurrection” has already occurred in the believer’s new birth and rising to life after being dead to sin. The millennium is symbolic of the present reign of souls of deceased believers in heaven. The present order will be followed by Christ’s return, the resurrection, the final judgement, and Christ’s reign over the new earth.

### NOTES ON CHAPS. 20

1. Many Jews of John’s time expected an earthly reign of the Messiah, but the length varied. Some said that, just as the earth was created in 6 days and God rested on the seventh, human history would take place over 6,000 years, followed by a thousand years of Sabbath-rest in the millennial kingdom. After that would be the “eighth” day, the eternal Kingdom.
2. The “**dragon/ancient serpent**” is the sign introduced in 12:3. This chapter reveals that the dragon is a symbol for Satan, the ultimate evil power and opponent of God and His church.
3. “**They came to life and reigned...**”: it is not clear who exactly the participants of the “first resurrection” are. Are they the martyrs of the period of tribulation described in earlier chapters? Are the faithful of all generations? It is also not clear whether “those

who came to life and reigned” are the same as those on the thrones “who had been given authority to judge.”

4. **Satan's unleashing** in vss.7-10 suggests a brief reign of evil in the world after the millennium. However, some interpreters say that the battle on 20:7-10 is the same one as 19:17-21 because the unbelieving nations are said to be slain once and for all. Others say that in the thousand year period, generations will grow up in the age of peace who are not committed to Christ and are still under the corruptive power of human nature. Human sin is still a powerful force, and many will succumb to it despite the devil's absence.
5. Ezekiel 38:12-39:29 describes an attack by “**Gog and the land of Magog**” upon the restored nation of Israel. In Revelation, Gog and Magog symbolize the nations in the four corners of the earth, who gather to destroy the messianic kingdom.
6. Notice how the **destruction of Satan** and those who follow him is as total and swift as the destruction of the beast and his followers in 19:19-21.
7. As we learn in the Apostle's Creed, **Christ's second coming and the final judgement** are closely linked. There are two sets of books. The first set was the record of the deeds of all people who had died. The final judgement of the dead was based on the record in this set of books. The second set is one book called “the book of life.” Based on 3:5, this book contains the ones Jesus Christ “acknowledges” before God - those whose sins had died to forgive and who received that forgiveness (cf. 21:27).

#### QUESTIONS:

1. In what sense are the following true now, and in what sense are they not yet fulfilled?
  - a. Satan is bound
  - b. Satan is unable to deceive the nations
  - c. The witnesses of Christ reign and are unmolested.
2. On what basis are the dead judged? Does this include those who have put their faith in Christ (cf. Romans 2:6-8, 2 Corinthians 5:10, and 1 Peter 1:17)? Why is this important for you to know?

#### FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Read about Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38-39. Observe what happens before their battle (chaps. 36-37) and after it (chaps. 40-48).
2. What do these passages suggest to you about the identity of those who sit on the thrones to judge and/or those who are raised to life and reign: Matthew 19:28, Luke 22:30, 1 Corinthians 6:3, Revelation 5:10, 20:4.