

# A Survey of Revelation

Week 11: The Return of Christ and the Millennial Kingdom  
Revelation 19:1-20:15

## A Brief Overview of the Book of Revelation

### A. Introduction to the Book (Revelation 1)

### B. Letters to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2-3)

### C. The End of the World As We Know It: God's Judgment Upon the World and Satan (Revelation 4-19:5)

1. The Vision of Heaven and the "Beginning of the End" (4:1-5:14)
2. The "Seal" Judgments and the Rapture (6:1-8:1)
3. The "Trumpet" Judgments (8:1-11:19)
4. The Conflict with the False Trinity (12:1-13:18)
5. The "Bowl" Judgments (14:1-16:21)
6. The Destruction of the Evil Empire (17:1-18:24)

### D. A Whole New World: The Return of Christ and the New Heavens and the New Earth (Revelation 19:1-22:21)

1. The Return of Christ and the Millennium Kingdom (19:1-20:15) } *This week, we are here!*
2. The New Heavens and the New Earth (21:1-22:11)
3. Epilogue to Revelation (22:12-21)

## Overview of Revelation 19:1-20:15

[1] John is given a vision of the return of Jesus to this earth, and the great "Skirmish" of Armageddon.  
[2] Following the "Skirmish" of Armageddon, John sees a 1,000 year reign of Jesus, which includes the binding of Satan. [3] After giving us the detail of Christ's millennial reign and the defeat of Satan, John then gives us a picture of the judgment of all unbelievers.

- [1] The Return of Jesus Christ as King (Revelation 19:1-21)
- [2] The Millennial Reign of Jesus (Revelation 20:1-10)
- [3] The Judgment of Unbelievers (Revelation 20:11-15)

## [1] Revelation 19:1-21 – The Return of Jesus Christ as King

John is given a vision of the return of Jesus to this earth, and the great “Skirmish’ of Armageddon.”

### An Opening Hymn

- Revelation 19 begins with some opening hymns of praise that are sung to God following the destruction of the final, evil, end-time world empire.
- This hymn can be divided into four segments:
  - **The Hymn of the Great Multitude (Rev. 19:1-3).** This hymn is also a part of Revelation 18, and is in response to the call for the “heavens” to rejoice over the fall of the final, evil, end-time world empire (Revelation 18:20). This hymn is the praise of the believers of heaven, praising God’s salvation and His righteous judgment of the evil done by the final empire.
  - **The Hymn of the 24 Elders and the Four Living Creatures (Rev. 19:4).** In response to the hymn of the redeemed (19:1-3), the 24 Elders (who I believe to be a special class of angels) and the four living creatures who surround God’s throne fall down and worship God.
  - **The Response of the Throne (Rev. 19:5).** In response to the worship of the elders and living creatures, a voice from the throne of heaven commands people to worship and respect/“fear” Him. Since the voice refers to “our God,” this is probably not God or Jesus speaking, but some angel that is near God.
  - **The Final Hymn of the Great Multitude (Rev. 19:6-8).** Finally, the redeemed of heaven sing another hymn to God. This hymn transitions to the event in the last half of this chapter, the return of Jesus to this earth and the reign of God that will be established through Him. The return of Jesus is depicted here as a “wedding,” signifying both a great celebration that will happen when Jesus returns, as well as the union that will occur between Christ (the groom) and His church (the bride).

### The Return of Jesus and the “Skirmish” of Armageddon (Revelation 19:11-16)

- The Return of Jesus (Revelation 19:11-16)

*<sup>11</sup> I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. <sup>13</sup> He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. <sup>14</sup> The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. <sup>15</sup> Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. <sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (Rev. 19:11-16 NIV)*

- Finally—**finally!**—we see Jesus return to this earth in Revelation 19:11-16.
- The description given to Jesus here is rich with imagery, some that we’ve come across before in Revelation, some of which is new:

Jesus in Revelation 19:11-16	
Description	Interpretation
<i>“Faithful and true” (v. 11)</i>	this builds on the image of Jesus in Revelation 1 as the “faithful” witness, the one who both IS truth, and also was true to His Father’s calling
<i>“With justice He judges and wages war” (v. 11)</i>	Jesus is just in all of his judgments and He is righteous in everything that he does, including the “war” he will wage against the sinful inhabitants of this earth
<i>“his eyes are like blazing fire” (v. 12)</i>	this repeats the description of Jesus in Rev. 1:14; 2:18 and reminds us of Daniel 10:6. It stresses the penetrating vision and insight that Jesus has
<i>“on his head are many crowns” (v. 12)</i>	Jesus wears many crowns (the word here is specifically the word of the crowns kings wore) because He is the “King of kings” and “Lord of lords” (see Rev 19:6)
<i>he has a “name written on him that no one knows but He Himself” (v. 12)</i>	this is a reference to Revelation 2:17 and Isaiah 62:2; Jesus has some name that is hidden until the end of time. There is a hint that when Jesus appears, we will get to see what it is
<i>“He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood” (v. 13)</i>	this could either be a reference to Jesus’ own blood shed on the cross which brings about the forgiveness of sins, or it could be a reference to the blood of the martyrs who Jesus has come to avenge
<i>“His name is the Word of God” (v. 13)</i>	this is a clear reference to John 1:1, 14; as Jesus is the one who reveals the Father, He is truly the “word” of God
<i>He is followed by the “armies of heaven” (v. 14)</i>	Jesus in this scene is coming to wage war against the inhabitants of this earth and Satan, and He brings an army with Him. The army is either composed of angels (the idea behind the “Lord of Hosts” in the Old Testament) or believers
<i>“Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations” / “He will rule them with an iron scepter” / “He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty”</i>	all of these images point to the “divine warrior” nature of Jesus; though in Jesus’ first coming He came as a suffering servant, in His return He will come as a King ready to wage war
<i>“On His robe and on His thigh He has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS”</i>	this likely refers to one location: the spot on his robe at thigh level. This is where the sword would rest and the title indicates that Jesus IS the sovereign Lord over all

**The cumulative effect of this description of Jesus is that He is THE DIVINE WARRIOR, who has come to judge and punish the enemies of God’s people for what they have done. In His first coming, Jesus came as a suffering servant; in His second coming, Jesus will come as a King ready to wage war.**

- The “Skirmish” of Armageddon (Revelation 11:17-21)

- As Jesus returns to this earth, His return is accompanied by an angel proclaiming,

*“Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small.” (Rev. 19:17-18 NIV)*

- The image is of an angel calling together birds to feast on the victims of the war that Jesus will wage against His enemies. The image is drawn from Ezekiel 39:17-20.
- This leads then to the “skirmish” of Armageddon (Rev. 19:19-21):

*<sup>19</sup> Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army. <sup>20</sup> But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. <sup>21</sup> The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh. (Rev. 19:19-21 NIV)*

- This battle was first introduced back in Revelation 16:12-16, where we are told that the waters of the Euphrates River is dried up to allow for the “Kings from the East” to gather together in a place called “Armageddon” (Rev. 16:16) for the “battle on the great day of God Almighty” (Rev. 16:14). This is that battle.

- “Armageddon” is Hebrew for “the Hill of Megiddo.” It was an ancient city that was located along the main highway from Egypt to Syria, and was the key sight of many battles in the Old Testament. Taken literally, the Anti-Christ, the 10 “kings” who gave him power (Rev. 17:12-13) and their followers (including demons) will gather in this location to wage war against Christ when He returns.



*The Hill of Megiddo--the possible location of "Armageddon"*

- Ultimately, however, any “battle” that Satan and his forces try to wage war against Jesus is pathetic, at best. Swiftly, Jesus takes care of them and throws the Anti-Christ (the beast) and the false prophet into the “fiery lake of burning sulfur” (v. 20). All the rest who followed the beast were killed without fight by Jesus (v. 21).

*“The armies of Christ seemingly take no part in the fighting, because there is no fighting! It is over even before it begins...the Warrior Messiah...single-handedly decimates the enemy.”*

*- Grant Osborne, Revelation Verse by Verse*

## [2] Revelation 20:1-10 – The Millennial Reign of Jesus

Following the “‘Skirmish’ of Armageddon,” John sees a 1,000 year reign of Jesus, which includes the binding of Satan.

### Revelation 20:1-10

<sup>1</sup>And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. <sup>2</sup>He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>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 about Jesus and because of the word of God. They 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 a thousand years. <sup>5</sup>(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup>Blessed and holy are those who share 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. <sup>7</sup>When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison <sup>8</sup>and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth-- Gog and Magog-- and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. <sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>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. (Rev. 20:1-10 NIV)

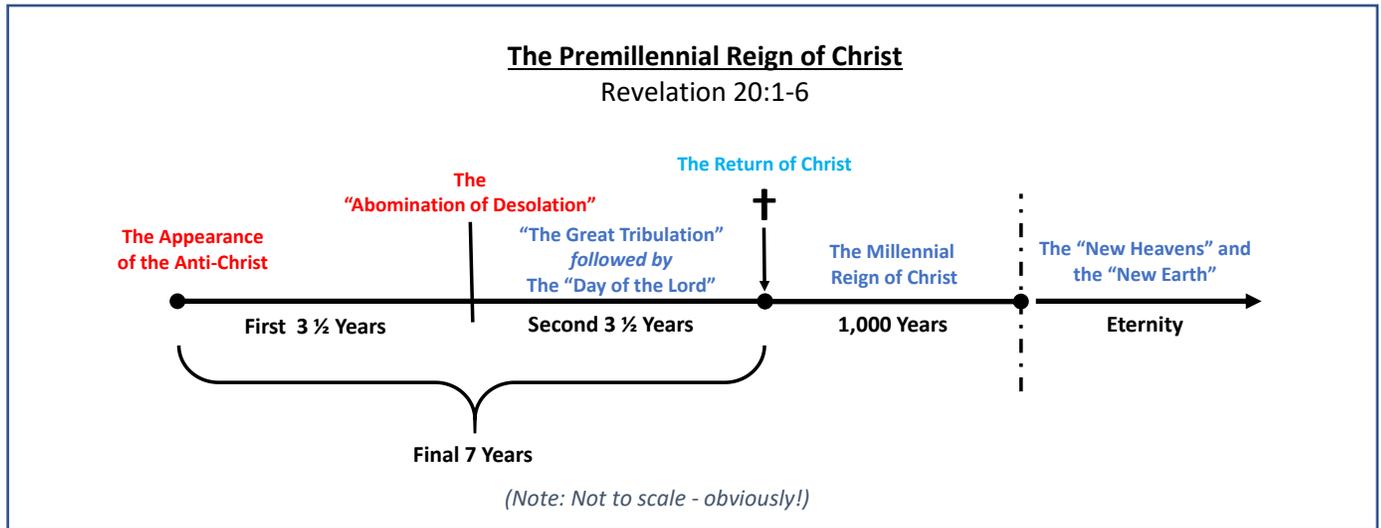
### Interpretation

- Revelation 20:1-6 is one of the most hotly debated passages in the book of Revelation.
- When interpreted in a straightforward, literal, manner, we get the impression that three things will happen after Jesus returns to this earth.
  - ① An angel will take Satan and “bind” him in the “Abyss” (Hell) for 1,000 years (vv. 1-3). During this time, Satan will not be able to have any power over any of the inhabitants of this earth.
  - ② Jesus will set up a throne on this earth. Along with other Christians, He will reign as King for 1,000 years (vv. 4-6).

**Note:** In this view, Jesus’ reign will take place on *this current earth*, and will come *before* the creation of the new heavens and the new earth, described in Revelation 21. This reign will usher in a new type of “existence” on this earth, free from some of the consequences of sin—the closest thing that earth will get to experiencing what it would have been like if Adam and Eve had not sinned. People will still get married, however, have kids, etc. And “death” will still be a part of this earth, though rarely experienced (see Isaiah 65:20).

- 3 Following Jesus' 1,000 year reign, Satan will be released again and, along with any human willing to join him, will wage one final war against Jesus. Satan will ultimately fail, and be cast into the Lake of Fire for eternity (vv. 7-10). This will then lead to the creation of a "new heavens" and a "new earth" (discussed next week).

- When represented in a timeline, it would look something like this:



- This view is commonly called the **pre-millennial view of the end of time**. This is because Christ will come *before or prior to* ("pre-") a 1,000 year reign on this earth ("millennial").
- But despite the fact that this seems to be the plainest reading of the text, not everyone agrees with it. There have been two other main interpretations that have been given throughout time, both of which believe Revelation 20:1-6 should be interpreted symbolically, not literally.
  - o The **amillennial view** holds that this passage should not be taken literally.<sup>1</sup> Instead, it says that this passage is symbolic of the church age—the current age we are in. This view says that Jesus' "reign" and the "binding" of Satan began with Jesus' ascension into heaven, and will end when Jesus returns to this earth and ushers in the "new heavens" and the "new earth."
  - o The **post-millennial view** also holds to a somewhat symbolic interpretation of this passage. It believes that at some point, the church will enter into a "golden age" that is marked by the conversion of most all of the inhabitants on this earth and the eradication of many social ills. Jesus will return at the end of this "golden age" to bring in the "new heavens" and the "new earth."
- The **post-millennial view** was especially popular during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries; it fell out of favor, however, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century because of the pessimism associated with World War I and World War II.

<sup>1</sup> "Amillennial" means "no millennium."

- The **amillennial view**, however, is still very popular and held by a large number of Christians today, most notably those of the “Reformed” tradition of faith.<sup>2</sup>

### So, Which One Is Right?

- It’s important to note that **Jesus-loving, Bible-believing Christians believe all three views**. This is one of those “secondary-matters” of the faith, and not a central doctrine that should divide us.
- That being said, I think that the evidence favors the **pre-millennial view** (no surprise there!) for the following reasons:
  1. It is the most natural and literal reading of the text: Revelation 20:1-10 comes at the end of the destruction of the world as we know it (remember “It is done!” in Revelation 16:17) and the return of Jesus, which Jesus predicted Himself would be an event that would be impossible for people to miss (see Matt. 24:30).
  2. It’s the oldest view; every indication is that the early church believed in a 1,000 year reign of Christ. It wasn’t until Augustine in the 5th century that a symbolic interpretation of this passage was proposed.
  3. It’s hard to see, given the current evils we see in the world, how in any way Satan can be considered “bound” and unable to “deceive” (Rev. 20:3).
  4. It is the view that best allows for God’s promises to Israel to be fulfilled, including the promise of Land (Ezekiel 48), the central role that God promises Israel will have in this world (Isaiah 60:3), and the reunification of Israel under a single King (Ezek. 37:16-22). If those promises are meant to be fulfilled literally (and we are never given indication they are not), then the millennial reign of Christ is the best place for that to happen.
  5. It is also the view that allows some odd passages in the Old Testament to be fulfilled, passages which clearly don’t describe the current earth, but also don’t describe what we know eternity will be like:

*“Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.”  
(Isa. 65:20 NIV)*

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<sup>2</sup> For a somewhat scholarly resource that looks at the particulars of these three views, pick up *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, edited by Darrell L. Bock

6. It fits with the sequence of events outlined in 1 Corinthians 15:23-24:

*<sup>23</sup> But each [will be resurrected] in order: Christ, the firstfruits; afterward, at His coming, those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when He abolishes all rule and all authority and power. (1 Cor. 15:23-24 CSB)*

- Thus Jesus will reign for 1,000 years on this earth, sitting in the throne of David, and presiding over a time of peace and prosperity for the people of this earth.

### **The Final, “Final” Skirmish (Revelation 20:7-10)**

- When the 1,000 are over, there will be one “final” skirmish between Satan and God.
- The participants in this battle are those who lived during this millennial period, and yet never truly pledged allegiance to Christ’s rule.
  - o We get the impression that Jesus killed those who fought in the great battle against him when He returned to this earth (Rev. 19:19), but there may have been inhabitants of this earth that had pledged allegiance to Satan but never fought in that battle.
  - o Further, there may have been some who converted to Jesus after the rapture that were still around when Jesus returned; they may have married, had kids, who had kids, and so on. While some of these may have decided to serve Jesus, others did not.
  - o When Satan is released some will show their allegiance to him and join him for battle.
  - o **Thus this shows the permanence of evil. The people who hate Jesus will always hate Him. And Jesus is right then in judging them.**
- Just like Armageddon, this one is another pathetic battle; Satan gathers people from all of the corners of the earth (“Gog” and “Magog”, a reference to Ezek 38:2-39:16, where enemies of God’s people come to wage war against Israel) to fight against Jesus.
- But “fire” comes down from heaven and ends the battle in a single moment (Rev. 20:9).
- This city takes place in Jerusalem, the “city that God loves” (20:9). This is a change from Revelation 11:8, where Jerusalem was talked about disparagingly; this reveals a change in Jerusalem following Jesus’ reign there during the millennium.
- Following this battle, Satan is finally judged, thrown into the “Lake of Fire” where he is “judged forever and ever.” **Note: The “Lake of Fire” is not ruled over by Satan as popular thought would indicate. Satan *himself* is experiencing the eternal judgment of God in the “Lake of Fire.”**
- This will then be followed by the judgment of unbelievers.

### [3] Revelation 20:11-15 - The Judgment of Unbelievers

**After giving us the detail of Christ's millennial reign and the defeat of Satan, John then gives us a picture of the judgment of all unbelievers.**

*<sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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 they had done. <sup>14</sup> Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. <sup>15</sup> Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:11-15 NIV)*

- The passage ends with the fate of those who had not put their faith in Jesus—those “whose name was not found written in the book of life” (v. 15).
- At the end of time, “the earth and the heavens” will be completely dissolved, and all those who had not put their faith in Jesus will stand before the throne of Jesus, and judged according to their wicked deeds.
- Their ultimate fate is clear: they will be thrown into the same “Lake of Fire” that Satan, the anti-Christ and the false prophet was thrown into, to be tormented forever and ever. This is the “second death” that they will face.
- But those who *have* put their faith in Jesus will get a much better fate: they will get to live eternally in a new heavens and new earth, which we will talk about next week!

## Application: Living as a Post-Millennial in a Pre-Millennial World

- Though I believe that the pre-millennial view is the one that best explained Revelation 20, I like the post-millennial view because of its optimism and the challenge that it gives us: to create a “better world.”
  - o One of the dangers of the pre-millennial view is that it can lead to an attitude which says, “This world won’t be right until Jesus returns—so I might as well sit back and let things get worse and just ‘hold on’ until Jesus comes back.
  - o But the Bible tells us that we are never to just hold on: we are to fight for the principles of Scripture wherever we are:

***“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” (Gal. 6:9 NIV)***

- Though the evils of this world are plentiful, and it may seem impossible to reap any real change, we would do well to remember the call to “Do for one what you wish you could do for many.”
- We can’t impact everybody’s lives all at once. But we can impact one person’s life right now.

***What can you do for “one” this week that you wish you could do for “all”?***

Who do you know that needs compassion this week?

Who do you know that needs generosity this week?

Who needs a kind word?

Who needs to know that someone is in their corner?

**Do for one what you wish you could do for everyone!**

**Don’t forget to email questions!**

***Homework for next week: Read Revelation 21-22 at least twice this week.***

## Discussion Questions

1. Re-read the return of Jesus in Revelation 19:11-16. What description of Jesus stands out the most to you and why? What thoughts and feelings come to your mind as you think about Jesus finally returning to this earth?
2. We saw that the so-called “Battle of Armageddon” is not really a battle at all. Satan is ultimately no match for God. In talking about this, we said that *though we need to be aware of Satan, we don't need to fear him*. What do you think about this statement? What would it look like in your daily life to be aware of Satan, but to not ultimately fear him?
3. Answer the following questions on the “millennium” and Revelation 20:1-10:
  - a. Have you ever been introduced to the different views before on the “millennium” and Revelation 20:1-10? What have you been taught before on these things?
  - b. Which one have you believed and why?
  - c. As a result of today's discussion, are there any changes in your views on the millennium?
  - d. Of the six reasons given for why the pre-millennial view is the most satisfying interpretation of Scripture, which seemed the weakest to you and why? Which was the strongest? Why?
4. At the end of time, Satan will try one more time to defeat God (Revelation 20:7-10). What does that teach us about the nature of evil and his work?
5. Re-read Revelation 20:11-15. What stands out to you about the judgment of unbelievers? How might that motivate us to want to share Jesus with others?
6. What can you do for “one” this week that you wish you could do for everyone?