Revelation 20English Standard Version (ESV)

The Thousand Years

**20**Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit[a] and a great chain. **2**And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, **3**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.

**4**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. **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 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.

The Defeat of Satan

**7**And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison **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. **9**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[b] and consumed them, **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.

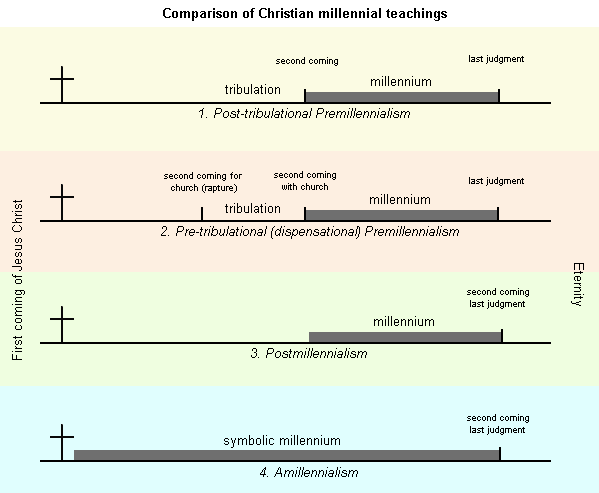
Judgment Before the Great White Throne

**A thousand years interpretations:**

1. Pre-millennialism- Jesus comes back before the millennium
   * + Literal understanding
     + Jesus returns and strips Satan of his power - Satan bound
     + Christian dead resurrected
     + Jesus sets up “ the kingdom of the saints” on earth - rule with Jesus for 1000 years
     + Satan released at the end of 1000 years and tries to destroy the saints again but fails
     + Those who are left brought before throne of judgement - either brought into heaven or thrown into the lake of fire
     + The new creation begins
2. a-millennialism- Jesus reigning right now - 1000 years is only a symbol for the church age
   * + Symbolic understanding
     + The church age is already representing the present kingdom of Jesus on earth
     + Satan was defeated and bound at Jesus’ first coming
     + Satan released for a final battle and Jesus’ second coming and the new creation begins
3. post-millennialism- Jesus comes back after the millennium
   * + Literal understanding
     + Church age and the work of believers by preaching the gospel transforms society
     + Matt 13: the kingdom comes slowly upon the power of the gospel (i.e. leaven, mustard seed)
     + Satan released at the end of 1000 years and is defeated
     + Jesus’ second coming and new creation begins

1000 years: statistic or symbolic?

* If you all remember, the previous numbers such as 7 and 10, 12, 144,000 used in the rest of Revelations were symbolic numbers. Here Johnson claims that the number 1000 is a really complete number as it is comprised of 10 x 10 indicating that this period will ultimately be a complete length of time determined by God

Jesus: King or becoming King?

* This is quite obvious and I assume we already are confident about this but just reaffirming that Jesus is already King and for us to regard him as such.
* Matthew 18:18- he has all authority given to him by the father
* Acts 2:36- Jesus is already made Lord and Christ
* Ephesians 1:20-22- Jesus seated at the right hand of God
* Revelations 1:5- Jesus is the ruler of the kings the earth

The gospel is powerful!

* Though we may not all be post-millennialists, we can certainly agree that the gospel is a force for change here and around the world. Where might have you experienced the power of the gospel this week?

The things we have “to be ok” with as a mystery

1. The timing of the 1000 year period
2. The possible 7 year period
3. The fact that none of the three models are “perfect”

The order of battles

* In Revelations 19:11-21 they talk about a battle where Jesus shows up on a white horse but the battle doesn’t actually happen. Again in Revelations 20: 8-10 there is another mention of a battle when Satan is released to gather the nations for war. Is this two separate battles or one? Johnson makes the claim that there is simply one battle. Though Revelations 20:1-7 talks about the 1000 years, the book of Revelations is written from the perspective of what John “sees” and not what actually happens “step by step”. (ie Revelations 12 woman, child and dragon scene is out of place)
* Revelations 20:1-2 mentions an angel descending from heaven. Whenever John mentions angels descending or ascending there is a “going back in time”
* In Revelations 6 and 7 the information presented to us is that the Lamb unseals the seven-fold sealed scroll of history (6) and then an angel ascends from the rising sun to seal the 144,000 saints (7). In reality however the sealing of the saints happens before the unsealing of the scroll (Beale, *The Book of Revelations*, 975)

**Observations**

* The 1000 years happens before the final battle
* The reign of Jesus has started since his birth- “you say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world” (John 18:37)
* Satan was bound in the events of Jesus’ earthly life and ministry- Jesus already won the battle when he was tempted in the wilderness. Mark shows Jesus performing miracles; possible only because Satan’s power has been restricted.
* Jesus already reigns as King
* We have already “come to life” - “he who hears my word, believes him who sent me, has eternal life” (John 5:24)
* We are already reigning with Jesus- “Even when we are dead in our transgressions, God made us alive together with him and raised us up with him, and seated us with Christ in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 2:5-6)

Final Accounting - Opening of the books

The scene opens with many books that illustrate the life of every person standing before the throne. There is also the “book of life” in which the people whose names are written in can enter into heaven. The people whose names are not in the book are tossed into the fiery lake of fire (where the dragon and the two beasts already are Rev 19).

**11**Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. **12**And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. **13**And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. **14**Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. **15**And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

A. The image of the throne (v.11)

1. Rev 4:1-5:14- a door standing open and God sitting on the throne surrounded by rainbows. The Lamb sits in the middle of the throne. Elders surrounding the throne, four living creatures everyone in worship
2. Rev 7:9-17- a great multitude from different nations and tribes standing before the throne and the Lamb
3. Rev 8:1-4- silence in heaven where the prayers of the saints ascend to the throne
4. Rev 11:15-18- 24 elders fall on their faces and give thanks
5. Rev 16:17-19:5- “it is done” called out from the voice on the throne and we see the fall of Babylon the Harlot, the Mother of Harlots, and voices singing “Hallelujah”
6. Rev 20:11-15- the throne is the only thing mentioned in the image - no more rainbows, or elders, or other thrones, animals…etc Here the throne occupies the whole scene > a giant white throne

B. The one seated on the throne (v. 11)

Interestingly enough, in this scene in Rev 20, it is clear that Jesus himself is on the throne as opposed to previous inquiries we had in previous scenes ie Rev 16-19. As mentioned in Acts 17:31, 2 Corinthians 5:10, John 5:21-22; Jesus has all ability to execute judgement

C. Earth and Heaven flee (v.11)

Fleeing from the throne because they are corrupted by human sins and darkness; they flee to make room for the new heaven and the new earth

D. Great and small before the throne (v.12)

Everyone is accounted for in the final judgement. The slave and the kings (19:18) are brought before the throne

E. Books were opened (v.12)

Daniel 7 references the same image. Our deeds are recorded in heaven’s ledger books. Everything will be revealed-stop. Think about it, how do you feel about this image?

The dead were also judged (v.12)- note that this does not mean our salvation is by works (it is by faith!) but just that we will be held accountable to whatever we have done in our life- how we choose to live every moment of everyday.

*“The one who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; the one who sows with blessings shall also reap with blessings”* - 2 Cor. 9:6

John is emphasizing the fact that our deeds are the most reliable indicators of where our faith lies. How you use your money, time, attention, priorities is the best indicator of how much we value our relationship with Jesus.

F. The book of life (v.12)

the names written in this book will indicate who gets to go into heaven to be with Jesus forever. These names are written long before any of us believed in the gospel. Choice vs predestination? Are you feeling queasy that your name might not be there?

G. The lake of fire (v.13)

This lake is “fiery” but I think the scariest part is that you will be with the dragon and the beasts in this lake. It’s the people and environment that make it such a horrid place

H. Second death (v.14)

John only uses the term second death (2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8) and the first resurrection (20:5,6) but never mentions a first death or a second resurrection.

Interesting.

The first death: physical death that we all die

The first resurrection; what happens after believers die the first death. We come “back to life” with Jesus after we die and depart from this earth.

The second death: what happens to those who do not repent and eternal separation from God- thrown into the lake of fire to be with the dragon and the beasts

The second resurrection: happens to believers after going through the judgement scene - b/c we are written in the book of life. Our bodies will be transformed into the “conformity with the body of his glory” - Philippians 3:21

**Applications**

What do your books look like?

In the scene, there are many many many books in the throne room and many many people. Though these books record our sins and deeds we have done in our lifetime, it also contains a lot of white out- every sin that you confess and surrender to Jesus, there is white out, actually better maybe like those Frixion erase pens where you can’t even tell you made a mistake! Instead Jesus cleanses us from all unrighteousness and because of his blood, he washes away our sins.

There is also the Book of Life

This carries the names of people that will go through the second resurrection and enter through the gates of heaven. However this book also carries the deeds of the Lamb- the deeds that Jesus has done for us! (excerpt from Isaiah 53)

Imagine standing on judgement day and when you nervously open up your books that carry so many confessions and white out and messiness, Jesus comes over and places the book of life on top.

How do you respond to that image even in your position now- as a student, as a son or daughter, a friend, how might that change the way you think about your life?