

27 “THE MILLENNIUM” LASTED FORTY YEARS—Revelation 20

Introduction: A sound principle of interpretation is to let scripture interpret scripture. Although Revelation 20 appears to be unique in the Bible, careful reading can lead us to quite a different understanding. We see that the constituent elements of Revelation 20 are found elsewhere in the New Testament and this guides and grounds our interpretation of this difficult text. We will see that the elements of Rev. 20 line up with our other studies in eschatology—that the war under consideration is the war that ended the Old Covenant—the Roman-Jewish War cast in cosmic archetypal images.

BEFORE WE GET STARTED: ESTABLISHED FACTS

A. There is no mention of a thousand year reign anywhere else in the Bible.

It is a poor hermeneutic to build an eschatological system on a single passage in a highly symbolic book.

B. We know the reign of Christ is forever, therefore it is not a thousand years.

- a) “He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. There will be no end to his Kingdom...” Luke 1:33
- b) “To Him be the glory in the assembly and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever...” Eph. 3:21
- c) “God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed...and it shall stand forever.” Dan. 2:44
- d) “Through an indestructible life, Jesus is a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” Heb. 7:17.
- e) “Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end... and on his kingdom to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from that time on, even forever.” Is. 9:7
- f) “The Kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ. He will reign forever and forever.” Rev.11:15

C. The text is silent on many popular beliefs associated with the “thousand years.” It says nothing about: a) bodily resurrection b) bodily reign of Christ on earth c) Jesus ruling from the Temple d) the Millennium” e) material rewards f) thousand year reign of Christ g) Christ ruling from Jerusalem

CORRESPONDENCE OF REVELATION 20 TO OTHER BIBLE TEXTS (YLT)

1. “He laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, who is devil and adversary, and did bind him a thousand years...” Rev. 20:2-3

Jesus bound adversarial forces during his earthly ministry.

- a.) “But if I, by the Spirit of God, do cast out the demons, then come already unto you did the reign of God. ‘Or how is one able to go into the house of the strong man, and to plunder his goods, if first he may not bind the strong man and then his house he will plunder.” Mt. 24:28-29
- b.) “[Jesus] said to them, ‘I was beholding the adversary, as lightning from the heaven having fallen.’” Lk. 10:18

2. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them, and the souls of those who have been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus, and because of the word of God...and they did live and reign with Christ the thousand years; and the rest of the dead did not live again till the thousand years may be finished; this [is] the first rising again. Rev. 20:4-5

John saw martyred souls on thrones, which signals that this was a heavenly scene. Despite the tragic appearance on earth, these martyrs were living and reigning with Christ.

- a.) “Who shall separate us from the love of the Christ? tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... but in all these we more than conquers, through him who loved us; for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, ...nor things present, nor things about to be... nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, that [is] in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom 8:35-39
- b.) “Verily, verily, I say to you — There cometh an hour, and it now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those having heard shall live. Jn. 5:25-26
- c) But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Eph. 2:4-6

3. Happy and holy [is] he who is having part in the first rising again; over these the second death hath not authority, but they shall be priests of God and of the Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. Rev. 20:6

Though they suffered the first (physical) death, they are free from the second (spiritual) death.

- a) “[Christ] did make us kings and priests to his God and Father, to him [is] the glory and the power to the ages of the ages! Amen.” Rev. 1:6
- b) Neither death, nor life, ...nor things present, nor things about to be... nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, that [is] in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom 8:35-39

4. *“And when the thousand years may be finished, the adversary shall be loosed out of his prison, and he shall go forth to lead the nations* astray, that are in the four corners of the earth — Gog and Magog — to gather them together to war, of whom the number [is] as the sand of the sea.” Rev. 20:7-8*

The nationalists of Israel cut ties with Yahweh and chose might, hate, & war instead of their Messiah.

(see #20 Man of Sin)

“And then shall be revealed the Lawless One, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the manifestation of his presence, [him,] whose presence is according to the working of the adversary, in all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and in all deceitfulness of the unrighteousness in those perishing, because the love of the truth they did not receive for their being saved, 11 and because of this shall God send to them a working of delusion, for their believing the lie, 12 that they may be judged — all who did not believe the truth, but were well pleased in the unrighteousness.” II These. 2:8-12

5 *“And they did go up over the breadth of the land, and did surround the camp of the saints, and the beloved city, and there came down fire from God out of the heaven, and devoured them.” Rev. 20:9*

John sees the threatened saints saved by God, who devoured the adversarial forces. The remnant are the “beloved city” and the rejectors of Messiah, the destroyed villains. This is symbolic archetypal imagery.

a) Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed those who declared before about the coming of the Righteous One, of whom now ye betrayers and murderers have become. Acts 7:52

b) “I will send to them prophets and apostles; and some of them they will kill and persecute, that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zachariah...’ Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation.” Lk 11:49-51

c) “Wo to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!... ye testify to yourselves, that ye are sons of them who did murder the prophets; 32 and ye — ye fill up the measure of your fathers. 33 ‘Serpents! brood of vipers! how may ye escape from the judgment of the Gehenna? “ Mt. 23:29-33 (see #10 Hell is not in the Bible)

d) “And then shall be revealed the Lawless One, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the manifestation of his presence.” II These. 2:8. (see #12 and #13 Olivet Discourse Fulfilled.)

6. *“And the devil, who is leading them astray, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where [are] the beast** and the false prophet, and they shall be tormented day and night...” Rev. 20:10. (See #4 BABYLON WAS FIRST CENTURY JERUSALEM)*

The destruction of those who plot against YHWH and his Christ is portrayed in severe apocalyptic images.

a.) “Because of this, lo, I send to you prophets, and wise men, and scribes, and of them ye will kill and crucify, and of them ye will scourge in your synagogues, and will pursue from city to city; 35 that on you may come all the righteous blood being poured out on the earth from the blood of Abel the righteous, unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias...36 verily I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation.” Mt. 23:34-36.

b.) “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that art killing the prophets, and stoning those sent unto thee... left desolate to you is your house; for I say to you, ye may not see me henceforth, till ye may say, Blessed [is] he who is coming in the name of the Lord.” Mt. 23:37-39

c.) “Ye are of a father -- the devil...” John 8:44 (YLT)

7. *“I saw a great white throne, and Him who is sitting upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven did flee away, and place was not found for them; and I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and scrolls were opened, and another scroll was opened, which is that of the life, and the dead were judged out of the things written in the scrolls.” Rev. 20:11-12*

Immediately after the temporal judgment, came the spiritual judgment of O.T. saints and sinners.

“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Dan. 12:2

CONCLUSION: In Rev. 20, John was focused on the 40 years from Jesus’s ministry to the end of the Old Covenant. Like an Old Testament prophet, John’s priority was articulating the final conclusion to the conflict. As we see in the Old Testament judgments, it is not truly the invading armies that destroy evil, but it is God Himself.

MARK OF THE BEAST: Apparent reference to Jewish Leadership cooperation with Rome (“We have no king but Caesar” Jn. 19:16) and exclusion of Christians from the synagogue (Jn. 9:22) losing livelihood and family, which impoverished them. (Paul took alms to Jerusalem Christians. Acts 24:17)

***THE NATIONS**—a reference to Israel. In the first century, under Roman rule, Palestine was divided into various regions, tetrarchs, governances.

****BEAST**— apparent reference to Nero, who demanded worship and accused Christians of the fires in Rome, torturing and killing them in horrific ways.

Further study: [The Millennium Past Present or Future](#) by Joseph Vincent (recommended by Don K. Preston), [Who is this Babylon](#), by Don K. Preston