

# PROPHECY UNCUT

## *The Millennium – The Great Controversy Ended*

### **INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND**

Down through the ages there have been a number of different interpretations and understandings with regard to the concept of the millennium as recorded in Revelation chapter 20. The differences concern such questions as: Where are the saints during the millennium? Where are the wicked during the millennium? What constitutes the 'binding of Satan in Revelation 20? Is the millennium literally a thousand years in length, or is this a figurative number? What is the meaning of the first and second resurrections spoken of in Revelation 20? What is the purpose and significance of the millennium?

This study is an attempt to systematically allow Scripture to be its own interpreter in answering these very important questions.

### **DOES THE MILLENNIUM TAKE PLACE BEFORE OR AFTER JESUS RETURNS?**

**Revelation 20:6;**  
**1 Thessalonians 4:16;**  
**1 Corinthians 15:52**

The thousand year period – known as the millennium – begins with the resurrection of the saints (Rev 20:6). This resurrection takes place when Jesus returns the second time in glory (1 Thess 4:16; 1 Cor 15:52).

### **IS THE RESURRECTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE WICKED TWO SEPARATE EVENTS?**

**John 5:28-29; Revelation  
20:4-6**

The bible teaches that there will be two resurrections – the resurrection of life and the resurrection of damnation (John 5:29). This particular text does not give us the time interval between the two resurrections. However, according to Revelation 20:5, these two resurrections are separated by a time period of one thousand years (Rev 20:5)

Both the first and the second resurrections spoken of in Revelation 20 are literal bodily resurrections. This is indicated by the fact that the same Greek word is employed when speaking of each resurrection (*ezēsan*).<sup>1</sup>

### **WHERE WILL THE RIGHTEOUS BE DURING THE MILLENNIUM?**

**Revelation 20:4, 6;**  
**John 14:3**

The righteous who are alive when Jesus returns as well as those who are resurrected at His second advent will spend the millennium with Jesus in heaven (Rev 20:4, 6). It has always been the hope of the Christian, based on the promise of Jesus, that when Jesus returns He will take His saints to be with Him in heaven (John 14:3).

<sup>1</sup> M. J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 1216.



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Revelation 20:4 makes reference to ‘thrones’ that the saints sit upon. With the exception of three instances where the word ‘throne’ is used in the book of Revelation it references the divine throne in heaven. According to Revelation 3:21 those who overcome share the throne of Jesus in heaven with the Father. Revelation 20:4 clearly identifies those who sit on the thrones as overcomers. Thus the saints are reigning with Christ in heaven.<sup>2</sup>

### **WHERE WILL THE WICKED BE DURING THE MILLENNIUM?**

**Revelation 20:5;  
2 Thessalonians 1:7-8**

While Jesus’ return will result in resurrection of the dead saints and immortality for the living saints, this same event will result in death for the living wicked (2 Thess 1:7-8). The wicked, who will all be killed when Jesus returns, will remain dead for the duration of the thousand years (Rev 20:5).

### **WHAT CONDITION WILL THE EARTH BE IN DURING THE MILLENNIUM?**

**Jeremiah 4:23-26;  
Genesis 1:2;  
Revelation 16:18;  
Isaiah 24:19**

The prophet Jeremiah was given a picture of the condition the earth would be in after God had come to judge the nations. The earth is described as being ‘without form and void’ (Jer 4:23). This is exactly the same phrase that is used in Genesis 1:2 to describe the earth before God began His work of creation. In other words, after the second coming of Jesus this earth will be returned to a chaotic state akin to that state in which the earth was prior to creation. The earth will be an uninhabitable place in primordial chaos.

### **WHERE WILL THE DEVIL BE DURING THE MILLENNIUM?**

**Revelation 20:1-3**

The devil is ‘chained’ and cast into the bottomless pit during the thousand years (Rev 20:1-3).

**Romans 10:7;  
Luke 8:31;  
Genesis 1:2 [LXX]**

The Greek word used for ‘bottomless pit’ is ‘*abussos*’. This word literally refers to “a hole without a bottom”.<sup>3</sup> ‘*Abussos*’ is used in numerous other places throughout the Bible. In the Greek version of the Old Testament Scriptures, the word ‘*abussos*’ is employed with direct reference to the Earth in its pre-creation state (Gen 1:2). In the New Testament ‘*abussos*’ is used in numerous instances to describe the spiritual realm not in submission to the control and original order of the Creator God.

<sup>2</sup> N. R. Gulley, Christ Is Coming: A Christ-centered Approach to Last-Day Events, (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1998), 453.

<sup>3</sup> J. P. Louw, E. A. Nida, “*Abussos*”, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, Vol. 1, (Roggebaai, Cape Town: Bible Society of South Africa, 1993), 6.



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For instance in Romans 10:7 Paul speaks of the place of the dead as 'abussos'. In one instance when Jesus cast out demons they begged Him not to send them into the 'abussos' i.e. to confine them to the place of their own jurisdiction where they would have no one to tempt and harass.

Simply stated, it would seem that the 'abussos' or 'bottomless pit' is not a reference to some mystical place. It is simply a description of this Earth with the presence of God fully withdrawn – a place which will be a mass grave for the wicked, the habitation of the devil and his legions, and without the order of creation.

### **WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SATAN BEING 'BOUND' FOR A THOUSAND YEARS?**

#### **Ephesians 6:11-12**

When trying to understand the meaning of the 'key' and the 'chain' spoken of in Revelation 20:1 it will help to remember that the devil and his legions are referred to by Paul as spiritual beings. It would thus make sense to regard the key and chain that bind the devil as also being spiritual in nature. As such, "they symbolize those circumstances that immobilize his powers at the beginning of the 1,000 years, making it impossible for him to deceive the nations."<sup>4</sup>

#### **Matthew 12:29; Luke 10:18; John 12:31; Revelation 12:7-12**

The casting out of Satan has been a progressive work as the plan of salvation has unfolded phase-by-phase. At the second coming of Jesus the fullest 'binding' of Satan is accomplished prior to his actual destruction.

We have already learned that the righteous will be in heaven with Jesus while the wicked remain dead on Earth. Thus, Scripture reveals that there will be no living human beings on Earth for the duration of the millennium. When we put the various pieces of the puzzle together a picture is formed of the devil being bound for a thousand years by the chain of circumstances resulting from the return of Jesus which removed the righteous from this earth, destroyed all the wicked, and left the planet in a state of primordial chaos. The devil is confined or 'bound' to this earth with no one to tempt or harass. For one thousand years Satan has nothing to do except consider the final results of the rebellion

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<sup>4</sup> E. C. Webster, "The Millennium", *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 929.



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which he started in heaven millennia previously. Satan always wanted to take the place of the true Creator God to rule the earth. For one thousand years God gives it to him without form and void having no life on it and without the divine presence – just as it was before creation. It is almost as if the Lord is saying, ‘Let’s see if you really can take the place of the Creator.’ This will not be holiday in paradise for the devil. The earth will be a hostile environment – a fitting prison for the archenemy of souls for one thousand years.

### **WHAT ARE THE RIGHTEOUS DOING DURING THE MILLENNIUM?**

**Revelation 20:4;  
1 Corinthians 6:3**

The righteous will be engaged in the work of judgment (Rev 20:4). God gives a period of one thousand years to a special work that is done by the saints. This work could be referred to as a judgment of verification. Although when Jesus returns the decision regarding the fate of every human soul is already sealed, the saints have the opportunity to go through the heavenly record books to ascertain for themselves the accuracy and the truthfulness of God’s completed judgment. It will be understood most clearly by the saints that God has left no stone unturned in His attempt to save the lost. Moreover, they will be satisfied beyond even the smallest factor of doubt that those who are lost are receiving their just reward. If God did not provide this period of verification, questions may have remained with regard to why certain individuals, who on earth seemed pious and devoted, were excluded from the reward of eternal life while others who, to human eyes, seemed utterly reprobate were permitted to enter in through the gates into the holy city.

### **WHAT HAPPENS AT THE END OF THE MILLENNIUM?**

**Revelation 21:2**

The end of the millennium is marked by a third coming of Jesus to planet earth. At this time Jesus brings with Him all His saints as well as the New Jerusalem, or heaven (Rev 21:2; 20:9). God will move the capital of the universe – the city of God – from wherever it is at present to this planet where He will make his permanent abode with humanity. It is this planet where the great controversy between Christ and Satan played itself out. It is this planet where the victory was gained. It is this planet from which the saved were redeemed. It is this planet that God chooses to make the memorial of His saving grace by making it the new centre of the universe. However, the battle is not quite yet over at the time when the New Jerusalem is brought to planet



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Earth...

### **Revelation 20:7-15**

The devil is released from the bottomless pit and the wicked dead are resurrected (Rev 20:7, 13). “God does not unfasten a literal chain or open the door of a literal prison; rather, the resurrection of the wicked makes it again possible for Satan to have subjects with whom he can work.”<sup>5</sup> Under the authority and lordship of Satan, the resurrected wicked launch an offensive upon the New Jerusalem which houses Jesus and the saints (Rev 20:8, 9). This final rebellious attempt to overthrow the government of God is met with the fires of hell which consume sin and sinners once and for all (Rev 20:9, 10, 15). It is at this time that Satan will also be finally destroyed (Rev 20:10). Prior to the destruction of sin and sinners, the wicked are arraigned before God’s throne where they meet their life’s record (Rev 20:12, 13). They are judged on the basis of the evidence contained in the books. This is not an arbitrary judgment (Rev 20:12, 13). Prior to their final destruction God gives them an opportunity to understand exactly why they are going to meet their end. God’s justice and compassion is seen even in His dealings with those who are finally lost.

### **Revelation 21:1**

After the earth has been cleansed by the fires of hell from sin and sinners, the Lord will recreate this planet and restore it to its Edenic glory (Rev 21:1).

### **Revelation 21:6**

At the close of the millennium sin will have been dealt with once and for all. Never again will sin and rebellion be found in God’s universe.

### **SUMMARY & APPEAL**

The teaching of a thousand year period between the return of Jesus and the final destruction of sin along with the final restoration of this earth reveals a lot about the character of God.

This period is provided by God out of His character of love, justice, and mercy for His redeemed saints to have the opportunity to independently verify His judgments regarding angels and human beings. The judgment of verification that the saints participate in is evidence that God’s government is transparent, having nothing to hide. It is God’s desire that through this opportunity there will be absolutely no doubt left regarding His character.

After the events of the millennium that God’s people will spend with Him in heaven, Jesus will bring the New Jerusalem down to earth where the final executive judgment will be carried out

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<sup>5</sup> Webster, 933.



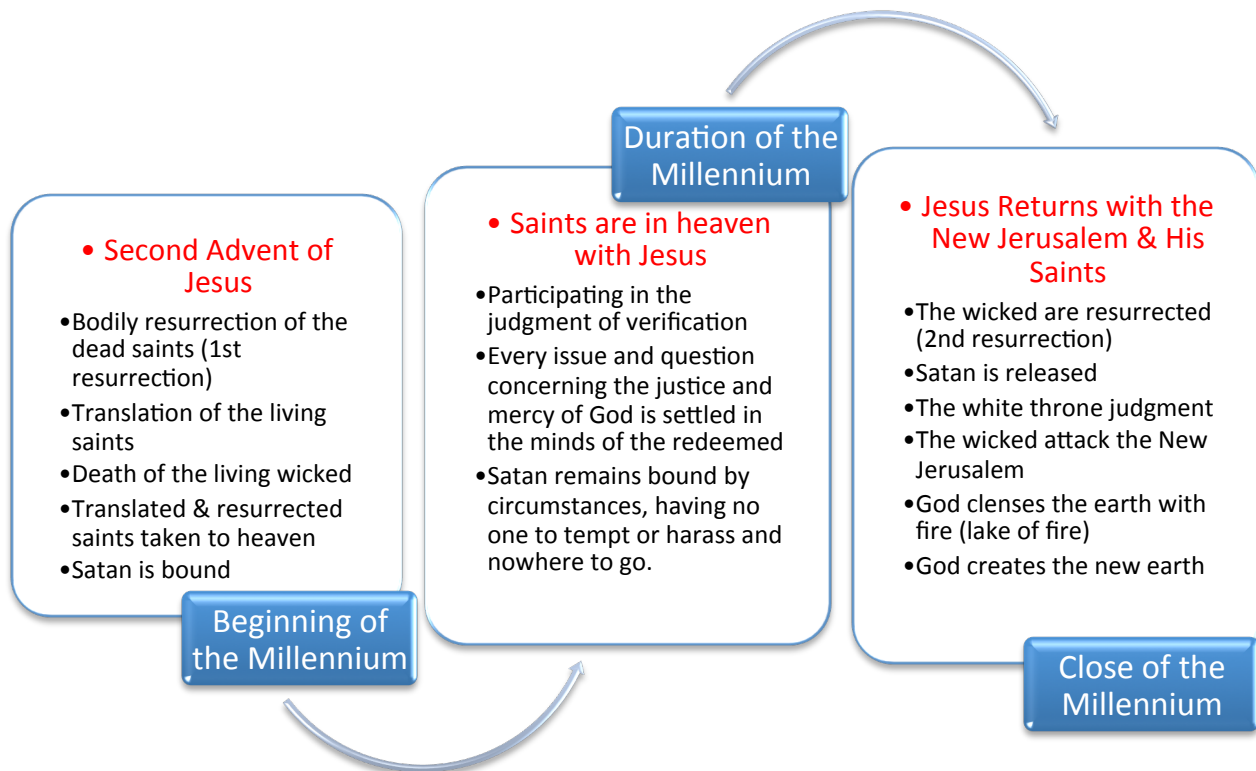
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against the devil and his followers. Again God's kindness and justice is seen as He affords the wicked an opportunity to review their life's record and understand that their exclusion from the reward of eternal life is indeed fair. They too will understand – as did the saints – that their impending final judgment has not been arbitrary but has been based on the records contained in the books of heaven.

Yet, having reviewed all this evidence, the stubborn character of rebellion ingrained in the wicked will be seen as they attempt to launch one final offensive against God. This act will confirm that God's judgment against them is indeed just and righteous. Finally, God's patience will come to climactic end as he causes the fires of hell to consume all trace of sin and sinners – including Satan and all who have chosen him as master.

Finally, God will recreate this earth in its Edenic beauty and will make His permanent abode here. This planet will become the centre of God's cleansed universe. This planet will forever be a memorial of God's redeeming love and the victory of righteousness over evil.



Jesus is coming soon! Do you want to be ready when Jesus returns? Will you surrender your life to Him by confessing your sin and trusting in His saving grace? Why not invite the Saviour into your life today?



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