

## REVELATION 19.11-20.15

### Act Seven: The Thousand Years and the last Battle:

*Review: The battle begins in Rev 12 with the thwarted attempt of the dragon to devour the child (Jesus) promised to Eve and now born of woman. Frustrated, the dragon attacks the woman's offspring (plural - God's people). The dragon brings forth a beast from the sea, representing the economic/political powers of this world aligned against the Lord and His church. He also uses a second beast from the land, a false prophet, who deceives the people into worshiping and serving the first beast. Finally, the harlot Babylon is seen. She is described as "seated on many waters" and as "sitting on a scarlet beast." She is also called "the great prostitute" who seduces the world and wins its devotion. In Rev 17.16-19.6 we witness the harlot's demise. Now in 19.11-20.15 we are shown in two visions the last battle, resulting in the defeat of the beasts and the destruction of the dragon.*

(19.11) Then I saw heaven opened,  
and behold, a white horse!  
The one sitting on it is called  
Faithful and  
True,  
and in righteousness he  
judges and  
makes war.

(12) His eyes are like a flame of fire,  
and on his head are many diadems,  
and he has a name written  
that no one knows but himself.

*Again, John sees heaven opened (4.1-2; 11.19; 15.5)*

*From heaven emerges Jesus riding upon a white horse*

*note: this is not the rider on a white horse in Rev 6 who rides forth to make war upon  
God's people - that rider is but another feeble imitation of Christ  
remember how throughout Revelation Satan feebly attempts to imitate Christ*

*The Rider on a white horse that John sees here in Revelation 19.11 is . . .*

*named "faithful and true" (to His covenant promises and purposes)  
described as righteous (His very Being defining what is and is not righteous)*

*He comes to judge and go to war against His and His people's enemies*

*many find the idea of God going to war offensive  
but - there can be no true mercy without true justice  
in Isaiah 63.4 the Lord speaks of both . . .*

*the day of vengeance*

*My year of redemption*

*His eyes "are like" a flame of fire - as was true of "the Son of man" in 1.14 and 2.18*

*On His head are many diadems (not seven or ten, as was true of the dragon and the first beast)*

*He has a name written (on His Head?) which no one knows but Himself*

*(Johnson): "The unrevealed name is usually explained as symbolizing 'the mystery of his person . . . that finite minds will never fully grasp' [Mounce]. The secrecy of Christ's name here somehow corresponds to the name he promises to bestow on the overcomers (2.17)."*

*it may well be that even in heaven, "there [will be] depths of his being which pass even [the glorified saints] comprehension" (Mounce)*

- (13) He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood,  
and the name by which he is called  
is The Word of God.
- (14) And the armies of heaven,  
arrayed in fine linen,  
white and pure,  
were following him on white horses.
- (15) From his mouth comes a sharp sword  
with which to strike down the nations,  
and he will rule them with a rod of iron.

He will tread the winepress  
of the fury  
of the wrath  
of God the Almighty.

- (16) On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written,  
King of kings and  
Lord of lords.

*Jesus' clothes are soaked with blood  
for He has tread the winepress  
of the fury  
of the wrath  
of God the Almighty  
remember the final reaping: Rev 14.19-20; Isa 63.1-6  
again, there can be no true mercy without true justice  
(Johnson): "Redemption for those who are God's friends by grace entails vengeance on  
those who stubbornly persist as God's enemies."*

*Note the four Names of the Rider on the white horse  
"faithful and true" (v 11) - He keeps His covenant promises and fulfills His covenant  
purposes*

*the Name known only to Him (v 12) - His transcendence  
the Word of God (v 13) - John 1.1-14  
King of kings and Lord of lords (v 16)  
the Conqueror in 17.14  
Eph 1.20-22; Php 2.9-11 (Isa 45.22-23)*

*He leads "the armies of heaven" into battle  
His army is clothed in fine, white, and pure linen  
are these angels? (Matt 16.27; 24.30-31; 2 Thess 1.7)  
perhaps, but note: the clothing of this army is the clothing of the glorified saints (Rev 6.11;  
7.9; 19.8)*

*From the mouth of Jesus comes a two-edged sword (Rev 1.16; 2.12; Matt 10.34)*

*His Word (Heb 4.12)  
with which He  
strikes down the nations  
and then rules them with a rod of iron - Isa 11.4, Psalm 2  
note that in Rev 2.27 this rod is given to those who conquer and keep His  
Word until the end (those who are part of the army in Rev 19.14?)*

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- (17) Then I saw an angel standing in the sun,  
 and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead,  
 "Come, gather for the great supper of God, (18) to eat  
 the flesh of kings,  
 the flesh of captains,  
 the flesh of mighty men,  
 the flesh of horses and their riders, and  
 the flesh of all men,  
 both free and slave,  
 both small and great."
- (19) And I saw  
 the beast and  
 the kings of the earth  
 with their armies gathered to make war  
 against him who was sitting on the horse and  
 against his army.
- (20) And the beast was captured,  
 and with it the false prophet  
 who in its presence had done the signs  
 by which he deceived  
 those who had received the mark of the beast and  
 those who worshiped its image.  
 These two were thrown alive  
 into the lake of fire  
 that burns with sulfur.
- (21) And the rest were slain  
 by the sword that came from the mouth  
 of him who was sitting on the horse,  
 and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

*Now an angel "standing in the sun" calls upon birds to gather to eat the flesh of all manner of people - free and slave, small and great  
 remember the angel of Rev 18.1, who makes the earth bright with his glory, announcing the fall of Babylon  
 Babylon has fallen; now it is the beast (v 20) and false prophet who will be punished  
 Ezekiel 38-39 describes the destruction of Gog (symbolizing those who oppose the Lord and His people)  
 these two chapters of Ezekiel tell the same story, recapitulating details of the same final battle depicted here in Rev 19  
 looking ahead, in Rev 20.8 the ones the dragon gathers together to attack the church are called Gog and Magog  
 Ezek 39.17-20 describes the gathering of birds to devour the flesh of the Lord's enemies (see also Deut 28.26)  
 likewise, here in Rev 19, the birds will consume the flesh of everyone except the faithful followers of the Lamb  
 Remember how in Rev 12.5 the Son born of woman was suddenly caught up to heaven*

Now here in Rev 19 we're told that in a moment of time, the enemies of God and His people are overcome and defeated

the beast and false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire

the rest (v 21)

the "earth-dwellers" . . .

who received the mark of the beast

who worshiped its image

are slain by the sword coming from the mouth of Jesus

are eaten by the birds

note, looking ahead, they are also described in 20.15 as being

thrown into the lake of fire (Matthew 13.40-43)

Now, as Dennis Johnson writes, "We have reached what are probably THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL six verses in Revelation." I agree with Dr Johnson's evaluation of the first six verses of Revelation 20, but I think it will be helpful for us to examine the first ten verses as a unit .

Dr Johnson offer this summary of these six verse (with my suggested editing): "John sees an angel descending from heaven, seizing, chaining, and locking the dragon into the abyss for a thousand years - in Latin, a MILLENNIUM - to keep the dragon from [deceiving the nations to gather for battle against the saints (20.8)]. Then he sees thrones, and the souls of martyrs who comes to life in 'THE FIRST RESURRECTION' and reign with Christ for the same period of time, one thousand years, [and are delivered from suffering "THE SECOND DEATH"]"

There are at least three approaches to these verses taken by Christian scholars who take seriously the authority of Scripture:

**PREMILLENNIALISM:** Jesus will physically return before ("pre") the millennium, which most view as a literal thousand years. During these thousand years Jesus will rule upon the earth, along with glorified believers. During these thousand years much, but not all, of the curse will be suppressed. For example, those who come to faith during these thousand years will still die, but only at a ripe old age (Isa 65.20-25). But at the end of these thousand years, Satan will be released and will gather a vast army of sinners to attack the saints. Most "pre-mils" believe this will be a literal attack upon the literal city of Jerusalem. Satan will be defeated and thrown into the lake of fire. Then the new heaven and the new earth will appear.

**POSTMILLENNIALISM:** Jesus will physically return after ("post") the thousand years, which most believe to symbolically represent a long period of time. Many believe that the battle of Rev 19.11-19 was fulfilled in 70 AD with Rome's attack upon Jerusalem. Other believe that this battle represents Christ conquering the nations through the power of the Gospel. The world will be amazingly transformed. The FIRST RESURRECTION is the regeneration experienced by many, if not most. But then there will come a moment of intense rebellion. At that time Christ will return, raise and judge the dead, and bring to fruition a new heaven and a new earth.

**AMILLENNIALISM.** Jesus will physically return after the thousand years. But amillennialists believe the thousand years symbolically represent the time between Christ's first and final coming. They are called "a-mils" ("a" - no) because they believe the millennium of Rev 20 is unlike the millennium anticipated by pre-mils and post-mils. It might be more helpful to call a-mils "realized millennialists" - viewing the millennium of Rev 20 as encompassing the time between Christ's first and final coming. The binding of Satan, as I shall suggest, being a "realized millennialist," speaks of Satan being kept from stopping the spread of the Gospel into all the world, and, more specially, from assembling a world-wide army to attack the saints. The FIRST RESURRECTION speaks of

*those who have been saved, many of whom are already glorified. At the end of the thousand years, Satan is released and allowed to deceive the nations into gathering together to attack the saints. He and his followers are defeated, punished, and the Lord sets into place the new heaven and the new earth.*

- (20.1) Then I saw an angel  
 coming down from heaven,  
 holding in his hand  
 the key to the bottomless pit 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.

- (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 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.

*The first thing I want you to take note of is the symbolic nature of this prophecy  
 John sees*

*a key (Revelation 1.18; 3.7-9; Matthew 16.19)*

*a bottomless pit (Revelation 9.1-2 - the Satanic realm is under Christ's authority  
 [6.8; 20.1-3])*

*a great chain*

*a dragon - identified as the ancient serpent, who represents the devil and Satan  
 knowing the "dragon" is symbolic of Satan  
 we should likewise view the "key," the "bottomless pit," and the "great  
 chain" as symbolic*

*John speaks of seizing . . . binding (Matt 16.19; 12.28-29) . . . throwing . . . shutting . . .  
 sealing (Revelation 7.2-3) . . . releasing (Matt 16.19)*

*in keeping with the symbolic pattern, we should also view the angel's actions as symbolic*

*Now note the opening words of 20.1, "I saw," and of 20.4, "I saw"  
 such language in Revelation and throughout Scripture refers to a visionary experience  
 to interpret what John saw having a literal one-to-one correspondence seems unjustified  
 are we to imagine that Satan is literally a dragon?  
 or that the angel literally brings with him a key and a chain  
 or that the angel literally seizes, binds, and throws Satan into a literal bottomless  
 pit?  
 or that the angel literally binds and seals him with a great chain?  
 or that the angel literally turns a key in lock?*

*Now, if we recognize the symbolic nature of these verses, we must also acknowledge the symbolic  
 nature of the*

*MILLENNIUM*

*THE FIRST RESURRECTION*

*THE SECOND DEATH*

*So now we must attempt to answer the question: what was John, as well as his readers, to understand from all that he is shown in these verses?*

*John sees an angel descend from heaven*

*the angel holds the key to the abyss*

*remember that as the angel blows the fifth trumpet in Revelation 9.1*

*a star (identified in 9.11 as "the destroyer") falls from heaven*

*and is given the key to the bottomless pit*

*but the angel in Rev 20 comes to seize, bind, and imprison Satan*

*remember that in Rev 12.9, 13-17 Satan . . .*

*is thrown out of heaven to earth*

*is frustrated in his attempts to destroy the woman and her children*

*now in Rev 20 Satan is restrained*

*Now, also note that chronologically the events of Rev 20.1-10 must precede the battle of Rev 19.11-21*

*in Rev 19.19 Satan is doing what we are told he does in Rev 20.8*

*he is deceiving nations to gather them together to war against the saints*

*he is leading Gog and Magog into battle, to fight THE war*

*Rev 16.12-15, Armageddon - 16.14, THE war*

*Satan gathering the nations to fight THE battle against the saints is the aim of his thwarted attempts to deceive in 20.3, which are then achieved in 20.8*

*the binding of Satan in 20.2 is for the purpose of keeping him from deceiving the nations into gathering together for THE war until the Lord permits it to happen*

*this is THE battle being fought in Rev 19.11-21 (note 16.14, the sixth bowl also refers to THE battle)*

*therefore, the battle of Rev 19.11-21 precedes the events being symbolically shown to John in Rev 20.1-6*

*and therefore, Rev 20.7-10 is a recapitulation of Rev 19.11-21*

*In Rev 19.11-21, Satan's army is decimated*

*19.18, "all men, free and slave, small and great"*

*(White): "It makes no sense to speak of protecting the nations from deception by Satan in 20.1-3 AFTER they have just been both deceived by Satan and destroyed by Christ at his return in 19.11-21."*

*three times in Revelation we see the Lord restrain the dragon from fulfilling his desire to destroy the church*

*during the time of the two witnesses in Rev 11*

*during the time of the woman and her children in Rev 12*

*and now, here in Rev 20, Satan is bound to keep him from deceiving the nations from gathering together to attack the saints (20.3, 20.8)*

*Therefore, the visions of Rev 20*

*do not chronologically follow THE battle of Rev 19.11-21*

*but instead, Rev 20.7-10 speaks of this same battle*

*Satan is bound to keep him from deceiving the nations*

*to prevent him from stopping the spread of the Gospel to all nations*

*Acts 17.30-31, Paul tells the philosophers gathered at the Areopagus in Athens, "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising [Jesus] from the dead."*

*to prevent him from gathering the nations to fight THE war against the saints (20.8)*

*Now, when Satan is released "to pull together his evil conspiracy, it will seem as if all is lost - the witnesses slain and the godless world celebrating (11.7-9), the camp of the saints surrounded by a countless army that fills the breadth of the earth (20.8-9). But even in that dire moment, the church's divine Protector will defend and vindicate his own." (Johnson)*

*and note how in Rev 20.3 when Satan is released to carry out "his evil conspiracy" it will be but for "a little while"*

*So why a thousand years?*

*because all the troubles of this world are "merely the beginning of birth pains." (Mark 13.7-8)*

*(Johnson): "Paradoxically, the time until the second coming will prove to be shorter than it now seems [three and a half years] and longer than we may have expected [a thousand years]."*

*the thousand years is not to be taken literally - it represents the period of time between Christ's first and second coming, the duration of which is known only to the Lord*

*2 Peter 3.1-4, 8-10; Acts 17.30-31*  
*the "thousand years" speaks loudly to the church reminding them "despite their experience of persecution and the traumas that had shaken the Roman Empire in the first century, such seemingly world-shaking troubles do not necessarily mean that 'the last battle' is imminent." (Johnson)*

*(Johnson) "On the one hand, God does not needlessly delay (2 Peter 3.8-9) but rather hastens to the relief of his saints (Luke 18.7-8; Mark 13.20). On the other, suffering saints were not to assume that 'the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately' (Luke 19.11), but rather they must endure patiently and alertly, even if their Master seems to delay (Luke 12.35-40)."*

*Now, in verses 4-6 John sees a second vision concerning the millennium*  
*Again, John begins with "I saw"*

*John sees thrones set up in heaven (Daniel 7.9-10, 22)*

*seated on these thrones are those to whom authority is given to judge*  
*in Dan 7.22 we are told that*

*"judgment was given for the saints"*

*"the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom"*

*now we see judgment being rendered (love that verb) in favor of the saints and against their adversaries*

*John also sees*

*the SOULS of those who were beheaded for the sake of*  
*Jesus*  
*word of God*

*those beheaded represent those who were martyred*

*but it is not simply those who died for the faith, for John also sees (AND, v 4) those who have not worshiped the beast or received his mark*

*In Rev 6.9-11 the martyrs had asked, "How long?" - that question about to be answered*

But first, note that we are told the rest of the dead – unbelievers – had not yet come to life that is, they have not experienced the FIRST RESURRECTION  
 the adjective FIRST in Revelation is applied to present realities (for example: “the first heaven and the first earth will pass away, Rev 21.1)  
 this FIRST RESURRECTION is not the BODILY resurrection that John will speak of in Rev 20.13  
 at a visionary level John sees a resurrection, that is, “a coming to life” (v 4)  
 this FIRST RESURRECTION is REGENERATION which delivers believers from spiritual death to eternal life  
 Eph 2.4-6, “God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and RAISED US UP with him and SEATED US with him in HEAVENLY PLACES in Christ Jesus.”

Note that those John sees in heaven are described as “souls”  
 their souls have been delivered from all that threatened them on earth  
 (Johnson) “They enjoy the rest from enemies promised to those blessed by God, with the assurance that their deeds of faith and faithfulness accompanied them (Rev 14.13)”  
 the SECOND DEATH (20.6) has no power over them  
 the SECOND DEATH being the final judgment of unbelievers  
 they are BLESSED (the fifth benediction of Revelation)  
 for they share in the FIRST RESURRECTION  
 they serve in heaven as priests of God and Christ (even as we do now)  
 and they reign with Him throughout the duration of the millennium

Note: Pre-mils interpret the FIRST RESURRECTION as occurring at the beginning of the millennium, concluding that those John sees in vs 4-6 are reigning with Christ here on earth for a thousand years. But this interpretation locates those John sees as being on earth and not in heaven (contra Dan 7), and requires at least a second return of Christ at the end of the thousand years, and a second resurrection of the dead in Rev 20.13 – a resurrection that would have to include those who came to faith during the thousand years as well as a resurrection of unbelievers.

Now, let's consider vs 7-10

The thousand years have ended

Satan is released from his prison

he deceives the nations (Gog and Magog, Ezek 38-39) into gathering for THE battle against the camp of the saints

the beloved city

the number of those with Satan

come from the four corners of the earth

are like the sand of the sea – remember the beast arose from the sea and stood upon the sand (Rev 12.17)

again, a parody of Christ, whose promised descendants of Abraham would be as numberless as the sands of the sea (Gen 22.17)

*(Johnson) "As we have seen, the vision of the sixth bowl - deceiving demons going out from the dragon, beast, and false prophet to gather the kings for THE WAR (Rev 16.13-16) - and the vision of the rider on the white horse and his defeat of the beast and its followers, who had been gathered for THE WAR (Rev 19.11-21), portrays the same history-ending battle."*

*But the devil and those he deceives are thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown and here they are tormented day and night forever and ever*

*note:*

*Ezek 39.6, "I will send fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands, and they shall know that I am the Lord."*

*KNOW - but not savingly know the Lord*

*Ezek 38.22, "I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstone, fire and sulfur."*

*Rev 14.9-11, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark . . . he will be tormented with fire and sulfur . . . and the smoke of their torment [will go] up forever and ever."*

*(Johnson) "Jesus will consume with fire those who attack his bride not only to demonstrate the justice of his wrath but also to express his passionate love for his own."*

(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.

*Now comes the day of final judgment*

*Rev 11.18, "The time came for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and the saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."*

*Again, John tells us "I saw"*

*He sees*

*a great white throne and the One seated upon it  
from His presence (for it is the Lord seated upon the throne)  
earth and sky flee away*

*Rev 6.14, "The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place."*

*Rev 16.20, "Every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found."*

*Heb 12.26-27, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens . . . that the things that cannot be shaken may remain."*

*2 Peter 3.10, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed."*

*and no place was found for them  
for who?*

*Daniel 2.34-35, "A stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image . . . [and it] became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a grain of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."*

*John sees standing before the throne the dead,  
great and small*

*in Revelation these terms describe God's faithful followers (11.18; 19.5)  
but these terms also describe God's enemies (13.16, 19.18)*

*the sea (those who oppose God) gives up its dead  
as does Death and Hades - fallen angels aligned with Satan*

*Books are opened*

*one book contains the deeds of the wicked  
by their deeds they are judged and condemned*

*but there is a second book - the book of life*

*those not found in the book of life now experience the SECOND DEATH - they are  
thrown into the lake of fire*

*and what about those whose names are written in the book of life?*

*Rev 21-22!*