

Eutopia

REVELATION: YOUR STORY IN GOD'S STORY, Week 29

Revelation 20:1-10 (NIV)

I. The _____ of the _____ at Christ's Return

¹ And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. ² He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³ 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.

II. The Resurrection and _____ of the _____

⁴ 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. 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 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.

III. The Final _____ and Defeat of _____

⁷ When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ 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. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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.

The Bottom Line

_____ that one day _____ will _____ with Christ on the _____

...by understanding that God's kingdom comes in _____—with the millennium _____.

...by expecting God to keep his _____ of restoration to _____.

...by _____ now as someone who will one day _____ Christ.

Appendix 1: Defining the End-Time Term "The Millennium"

- *Definition:* A thousand-year reign of Christ on Earth
- *Key Passage:* Revelation 20:1-10
- *Views:* Christians disagree whether this is literal or figurative, and on the timing.
 - *Amillennial:* This position sees the thousand years in Revelation 20 as symbolic, usually of the church age. There will be no literal thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. This is the majority Christian view.
 - *Post-millennial:* This position sees the thousand years in Revelation 20 as a golden age of peace and gospel success that must take place before Christ can return. This is now a rare Christian view.
 - *Pre-millennial:* This position takes the thousand years in Revelation 20 as literal, and holds that Jesus will indeed return to earth and rule on earth for a thousand years before the next stage of restoration. This is a well-represented view in early Christianity and now. This is our church's view.

Appendix 2: More Support for a Literal Millennium (The “Pre-Millennial” View)

- During this time many of the Old Testament promises to Israel can be fulfilled:
Psalm 2; 45; Isa 24; 60-63; Ezek 38-39; Dan 2, 7, 11-12; Zech 12-14
Luke 21:24; Acts 1:6-8; Acts 3:17-21; Rom 11:25-27
- An intermediate kingdom on an earth that is not yet fully remade matches some Old Testament prophecies where God’s Kingdom is present on earth, yet existence is not yet perfect:
Isa 65:17-21; Isa 11; Psalm 72
- Some Jewish sources show a belief in a kind of intermediate messianic kingdom:
4 Ezra 7:26-44; 1 Enoch 91:12-17; 2 Baruch 29:1-30:5
- In the early church some Christians interpreted the Millennium of Revelation 20 literally:
Fragments of Papias, 3.12; 7.7; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 80-81; Irenaeus, *Against Heresy*, 5.36.3; Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 3.25

Appendix 3: How Can a Loving God Send People to Hell?

(from Tim Keller, *The Reason for God*, 70-86)

Misconception #1: “A God of judgment simply can’t exist.”
(See last week’s message)

Misconception #2: “A God of judgment can’t be a God of love.”

I always start my response by pointing out that all loving persons are sometimes filled with wrath, not just despite of but because of their love. If you love a person and you see someone ruining them—even they themselves—you get angry. As Becky Pippert puts it in her book *Hope Has Its Reasons*:

Think how we feel when we someone we love is ravaged by unwise actions or relationships. Do we respond with benign tolerance as we might toward strangers? Far from it.... Anger isn’t the opposite of love. Hate is, and the final form of hate is indifference.... God’s wrath is not a cranky explosion, but his settled opposition to the cancer... which is eating out the insides of the human race he loves with his whole being.

The Bible says God’s wrath flows from his love and delight in his creation. He is angry at evil and injustice because it is destroying its peace and integrity. “The Lord is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made.... The Lord watches over those who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy” (Psalm 145:17-20).

It is at this point that many people complain that those who believe in a God of judgment will not approach enemies with a desire to reconcile with them. If you believe in a God who smites evildoers, you may think it perfectly justified to do some of the smiting yourself. Yale Theologian, Miroslav Volf, a Croatian who has seen the violence in the Balkans, does not see the doctrine of God’s judgment that way. He writes:

If God were not angry at injustice and deception and did not make a final end to violence—that God would not be worthy of worship.... The only means of prohibiting all recourse to violence by ourselves is to insist that violence is legitimate only when it comes from God....

....Only if I am sure that there’s a God who will right all wrongs and settle all accounts perfectly do I have the power to refrain.

Czeslaw Milosz, the Nobel Prize-winning Polish poet, wrote the remarkable essay “The Discreet Charms of Nihilism.” In it he remembers how Marx had called religion “the opiate of the people” because of the promise of an afterlife (Marx said) led the poor and the working class to put up with unjust social conditions. But, Milosz continued:

And now we are witnessing a transformation. A true opium of the people is a belief in nothingness after death—the huge solace of thinking that our betrayals, greed, cowardice, murders are not going to be judged... [but] all religions recognize that our deeds are imperishable.

Many people complain that belief in a God of judgment will lead to a more brutal society. Milosz had personally seen, in both Nazism and Communism, that a loss of belief in a God of judgment can lead to brutality. If we are free to shape life and morals any way we choose without ultimate accountability, it can lead to violence. Volf and Milosz argue that the doctrine of God’s final judgment is a necessary undergirding for human practices of love and peacemaking.