When the American President Abraham Lincoln was told that he was too lenient with his opponents and that his duty was to destroy his enemies, he answered: "Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?" The real Christian attitude is to seek to destroy enmity not by force but by the power of that love which won the victory of the cross.

William Barclay

REVELATION CHAPTER TWENTY

Handout #26

Prayer Study #425

First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, Georgia USA

Revelation 20

This chapter is the only chapter in the Bible that mentions the Millennium or thousand-year reign of Christ. From this chapter theologians argue three primary viewpoints. First, some argue *Postmillennialism.* Postmillennialists believe that Christ will come at the conclusion of the one thousand years. Man will bring in the kingdom by preaching the Gospel, and there will be a great worldwide turning to Christ as the world becomes converted during these thousand years. The thought was that the millennial was happening now. Again, Christ would come only after the thousand years. This was a very popular view at the turn of the century. Two world wars, a global depression, the rise of communism, the atomic bomb, and other calamities that pointed to a world that was becoming increasingly ungodly, and a world that has turned increasingly away from Christ. practically eliminated this doctrine.

The second viewpoint is *A-millennialism.* The A-millennialists believe the Millennial is going on right now in heaven in this present age. In fact, the Tribulation will be going on, on earth, during this Millennial period. This period in heaven will climax with the Second Coming of Christ to the earth. The Millennium, as well as all of Revelation, is spiritual. Jesus is presently reigning in heaven and will not have a literal 1000-year physical reign on earth. The 1000 years is just a symbolic number. The Millennial began at Pentecost, and the binding of Satan has already occurred. Many of the liturgical churches lean toward this view.

The *Pre-millennial* view believe that Christ will rapture the Church, either pre-tribulation or post-tribulation depending on one's point of theological viewpoint, then return after the Great Tribulation with His Church to set up a literal reign on the earth for a thousand years.

This chapter is one of the most widely disputed chapters in the Bible and has left us with many different viewpoints including pre-trib, mid-trib, post trib, a-millennialism, pre-millennialism, post millennialism. These all take different positions on when and if Jesus will return to physically reign on the earth for 1000 years.

J. Vernon McGee, who is a pre-millennialist and also a pre-tribulationist says there are five things that must happen before the millennial reign:

a. Satan must be removed from the earthly scene.
b. The curse of sin must be removed from physical earth.
c. The resurrection of the Old Testament saints must take place at the beginning of the thousand years.
d. The tribulation saints must also be resurrected with the Old
e. Testament saints, and they reign with Christ during the Millennium.
f. The Millennium is the final testing of man, under ideal conditions.

McGee concludes by saying, *"The Millennium is the answer to those who say there is nothing wrong in man which circumstances and conditions cannot change. Man is an incurable, an incorrigible sinner. Even at the end of the Millennium, he is still in rebellion against God. The rebellion in the human heart and the depraved nature of man are impossible for any man to comprehend. If you and I could see ourselves as God see us, we could not stand ourselves. But we think we are pretty good and that we are very nice people-do we not? The Millennium is the final testing of mankind before the beginning of the eternal state."*

20 *Then I saw an angel descending from heaven; he was holding the key of the Abyss (the bottomless pit) and a great chain was in his hand.*
2 *And he gripped and overpowered the dragon, that old serpent [of primeval times], who is the devil and Satan, and [securely] bound him for a thousand years.*
3 *Then he hurled him into the Abyss (the bottomless pit) and closed it and sealed it above him, so that he should no longer lead astray and deceive and seduce the nations until the thousand years were at an end. After that he must be liberated for a short time.*

These first 3 verses describe what is to precede the Millennium. Satan is bound and thrown into the Abyss. If you will remember the Gadarean Demoniac Story, you will remember that the demons begged Jesus not to send them to the Abyss, and he seems to allowed them instead to go into the herd of swine. Apparently the Abyss is a place that even demons dread. This Abyss is not the Lake of Fire. Can you imagine a world without Satan, without deception and seduction spirits? We can learn much about this coming Kingdom and the Millennial Reign of Christ by looking at Isaiah 11 and 12. These chapters give us the characteristics on earth at this time:

a. All animals will no longer eat each other or harm humans.
b. Children will no longer be afraid of wild animals.
c. There will be no accidents or death.
d. Jesus will the standard around which all nations shall gather.
e. All men will look to Christ for safety and deliverance.

f. That nations shall seek Jesus.
g. There will be universal peace.
h. His rest, which He shall give us, will be glorious.
i. He will recover His Jewish remnant.
j. He will gather the outcasts of Israel.
k. The envy and pride of Ephraim shall depart.
l. The enemies of Judah will be cut off.
m. There will be a highway of holiness.
n. The righteous shall praise Him.
o. The Gentiles will not only seek Jesus but also bless the Jewish people.
p. The righteous will be full of joy.
q. The inhabitants of Zion will sing and cry out and shout about the greatness of the Holy One of Israel.
r. His name shall be exalted over all the earth.

4 *Then I saw thrones and sitting on them were those to whom authority to act as judges and to pass sentence was entrusted. Also, I saw the souls of those who had been slain with axes [beheaded] for their witnessing to Jesus and [for preaching and testifying] for the Word of God, and who had refused to pay homage to the beast or his statue and had not accepted his mark or permitted it to be stamped on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived again and ruled with Christ (the Messiah) a thousand years.*
5 *The remainder of the dead were not restored to life again until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.*
6 *Blessed (happy, to be envied) and holy (spiritually whole, of unimpaired innocence and proved virtue) is the person who takes part (shares) in the first resurrection! Over them the second death exerts no power or authority, but they shall be ministers of God and of Christ (the Messiah), and they shall rule along with Him a thousand years.*

The Tribulation period is going to be hell on earth for genuine believers, and many will be brutally martyred. We know all too well that the favored way of murder for the Islamists is the cutting off of the head. Yet the good news in all this is that these tribulation saints will be trading a few years of tribulation for 1000 years of reigning with Christ.

7 And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his place of confinement,
8 *And he will go forth to deceive and seduce and lead astray the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth—Gog and Magog—to muster them for war; their number is like the sand of the sea.*
9 *And they swarmed up over the broad plain of the earth and encircled the fortress*

(camp) of God's people (the saints) and the beloved city; but fire descended from heaven and consumed them.

This, to me, is one of the most tragic times for mankind. Those who have lived on earth during the Millennial Reign of Christ are so quickly deceived and seduced and led astray by Satan, when he is released for a short time. This group of rebels was consumed with the fire of God. (Gog and Magog have been traditionally associated with the modern country of Russia.)

10 *Then the devil who had led them astray [deceiving and seducing them] was hurled into the fiery lake of burning brimstone, where the beast and false prophet were; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (through the ages of the ages).*

Satan is finally brought to permanent justice. Hell is a place and not just a state of being. J. Vernon McGee says that this verse contradicts at least two wrong notions that we are taught. The truth is:

a. Satan is *not* in hell today. He is the prince of this world but has been somewhat limited by God in our day. During the Great Tribulation he will have full reign.
b. Satan is not the first to be cast into hell. The beast and the false prophet will have been there a thousand years before Satan is cast into hell.

11 *Then I saw a great white throne and the One Who was seated upon it, from Whose presence and from the sight of Whose face earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.*
12 *I [also] saw the dead, great and small; they stood before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is [the Book] of Life. And the dead were judged (sentenced) by what they had done [their whole way of feeling and acting, their aims and endeavors] in accordance with what was recorded in the books.*
13 *And the sea delivered up the dead who were in it, death and Hades (the state of death or disembodied existence) surrendered the dead in them, and all were tried and their cases determined by what they had done [according to their motives, aims, and works].*
14 *Then death and Hades (the state of death or disembodied existence) 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 recorded in the Book of Life, he was hurled into the lake of fire.*

The Great White Throne is a place where all nonbelievers will be judged. The first resurrection was for the believers who were judged at the Bema Seat of Christ for what they had done for Jesus on earth. This passage of scripture refers to those of the second

resurrection or those who never accepted Christ and are lost. They will be judged on the basis of their sins. The White Throne was so holy and righteous that earth and sky could not look on. The One seated on the throne is Jesus Christ. (John 5:22: ***For the Father judges no one but has committed all judgment to the Son.***) These who stand before the Great White Throne will see their whole lives played before them. Alas, they are all lost, for their names had not been written in the Book of Life. Hades or Sheol is the place where the dead went before the atonement, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. It was divided into two compartments, paradise, or the place of torment (Luke 16:19-31). Paradise was emptied when Christ took the Old Testament believers with Him at His ascension (Ephesians 4:8-10). This verse 14 shows us that Hades is cast into the lake of fire. The second death means eternal separation from God.