

The Millennial Reign of Christ

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn to Revelation chapter 20. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Sean, I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church. If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand.

We'd love to bring you a copy so that you can use it. You can actually take it home with you. We've been going through Revelation for most of this year, I believe, and we are right now in Revelation 20.

Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Father, we need your help to understand this passage.

It's the Word that you spoke. The Word that points us to the person and work of your Son, Jesus Christ.

The Word that is illuminated to our hearts by your Holy Spirit. So, Lord, help us. Fill us with a grand vision of your glory and power and sovereignty.

[1 : 1 6] And fill us with hope and perseverance as we wait for the return of our King, Jesus.

It's in His precious name we pray. Amen. If you are able, please stand and join me for the reading of God's Word from Revelation 20, verses 1 to 6.

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 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. 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 worshipped the beast or its image, and had not received its mark on their foreheads and their hands.

They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.

[2 : 5 3] 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.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated. As I mentioned last week, this is one of the most difficult passages, and one of the most hotly debated passages in the book of Revelation.

And so I took last Sunday to just kind of give you all the background for this. So if you missed that, I encourage you to go and listen to that. It'll help you to understand this week's sermon.

In politics, there is an expression called a lame duck. And it refers to a politician who is on his way out, whether it's due to electoral losses or something else.

It's already been determined that he, this politician, will be superseded by a different politician in the near future. And Revelation 20, 1 to 6, reminds us that Satan is a lame duck.

[4 : 05] And that his regime is about to be toppled on this earth. But that Christ is the true king who will soon establish his millennial reign on earth.

And so we're going to talk first about the jailing of Satan during the thousand years. And then secondly, we'll talk about the reign of Christ during the thousand years. He says in verse 1, Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain.

And so I don't normally use the slides this often, but because it's a difficult passage to follow, I'm going to be using the slides quite a bit so you guys can keep track. And so we're addressing the question of the abyss here.

So this is not the first time we've seen an angel holding the key to the bottomless pit. We saw it already in chapter 9, verses 1 to 2, where an angel that had fallen from heaven to earth, a fallen angel, received the key to the bottomless pit and then opened it and then released a horde of demonic locusts.

So that fallen angel's name was Abaddon or Apollyon in Greek, which both mean destroyer. So this is most likely in chapter 9 that was most likely referenced to Satan, whom we were told in Revelation 12 was cast down, thrown down from heaven to earth along with his angels.

[5 : 22] The bottomless pit in Greek is abousos, which is where we get the English word abyss. It is the realm of demons. This is not the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels that Jesus mentions in Matthew 25, 41, which is the lake of fire mentioned in Revelation 20, where the devil, the beast, and the false prophet, and as well as all those who follow them will all be in the end ultimately cast into.

Rather, this abyss, in contrast from the lake of fire, the abyss is the place of temporary incarceration in which evil spirits can be imprisoned and from which they can be released.

So in Luke 8, 30, 31, for example, many demons named Legion beg Jesus not to command them to depart into the abyss or to the bottomless pit.

So the difference, however, between Revelation 9 and Revelation 20 is that this time it's not a fallen angel that holds the key to the bottomless pit. It's an angel coming down from heaven.

And this angel is not only holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit, he's also holding a great chain, which must be great because it's going to be used to bind the great dragon.

[6 : 38] And it says in verses 2 to 3 that he sees the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years 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. Can you guys hear me okay? Am I ringing? No? Okay. The angel of the bottomless pit is now himself seized and bound and locked up in that bottomless pit.

Before he had the key to it, now he's bound and it's like he's under house arrest. And this highlights the sovereignty of God. In 9.1, this angel was given, if you remember, was given the key to the bottomless pit.

And where did he get the key from? Who gave him this key? This is the divine passive construction. He says that he was given the key. It's a divine passive construction that is trying to indicate that while God is never directly behind evil, that he's nonetheless completely sovereign over evil.

So we were told in Revelation 1, 17 to 18, who ultimately holds this key to death and Hades and even to the abyss. It's Jesus said, fear not, I am the first and the last and the living one.

[8 : 00] I died and behold, I am alive forevermore. And I have the keys of death and Hades. So as the resurrected Lord, Jesus holds the key of death and Hades.

And so even though Satan is king over his demonic minions, in relation to King Jesus, he is nothing more than a lackey, a slave, a prison warden.

Even this powerful angel who can seize the great dragon and bind him and throw him into the prison, he receives the key ultimately, his authority from Christ, who is the king of kings and the Lord of lords.

And so Satan is locked up in this bottomless pit in verse one, and then he's released again in verse seven, and only to be captured again and then thrown into his final destiny, which is the lake of fire or hell, in verse 10.

So this vaunted great dragon that whose fearsome description we saw in chapter 12 is treated, it's tossed around like a floppy rag doll in this passage.

[9 : 07] And if Christ can make easy work of Satan, our greatest enemy, even the most vicious persecutors of the church, even the most powerful dictators in the world, even the most intractable diseases in our lives, and the tragic disasters throughout the world, whatever it might be, no matter the highs and lows of life and the unexpected turns of life, we can rest assured that God Almighty is sovereign.

Now what exactly is the millennium? Is it a literal thousand years? I don't think the thousand years is a literal thousand years because nearly all of the numbers that we have seen so far in the book of Revelation have had symbolic significance.

A thousand years is an often used literary figure for a long time. So for example, it says in Psalm 90 verse four, for a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past.

First Chronicles 16.15, David exhorts the Israelites to remember God's covenant forever. The word that he commanded for a thousand generations.

So a thousand generations is parallel poetically to forever because it represents a really long time. So I don't think it's referring to a literal thousand generations or a thousand years here but to an indefinitely long period of time.

[10 : 35] And the multiples of thousands have already been used symbolically in the book of Revelation up to this point. And because post-millennialists and amillennialists and if you don't know what I'm talking about, I'm sorry.

I had to listen to the sermon last week. Post-millennialists believe that Jesus returns after the millennium and amillennialists believe that we're already in the millennium and there will be no future millennium.

They think that Christ's second coming is after the millennium and for that reason, they argue that Revelation 21 to 6 must be going back in time to describe the first coming of Jesus even though it comes after chapter 19 which describes the second coming of Jesus.

So this is a possibility because Revelation does employ progressive parallelism and I've talked to you about this. For example, how we saw the seven seals and the seven trumpets and the seven bowls of judgments are not occurring in linear chronological succession but actually are recapitulations or repeats and different angles of the same judgments in a parallel but also progressive way.

And so it is a possibility that this is doing the same thing in Revelation 21 to 6. However, I don't think that verses 1 to 6 is an instance of that because there are chronological markers in the text that suggest that the judgment of Babylon and of the beast and false prophet and finally the dragon happen in sequence.

[12 : 03] In 1920 when Christ, the king, returns on his white horse both the beast and the false prophet are captured and then thrown into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.

Then having dealt with the beast in 20 verses 2 to 3 the attention is paid to the dragon. The dragon is bound and locked up in prison so that he might not deceive the nations any longer and until the thousand years were ended.

After that he must be released for a little while so until after these are chronological markers. That means there was a period of time when Satan was deceiving the nations and then there's a period of time during the millennium when he cannot deceive the nations.

So and after that he is released again as we see in verse 7 and 8 and when the thousand years are ended Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations.

It's clearly happening in sequence. And it's after this final period of deception of the nations by the dragon after his release from the dungeon in Revelation 20 verse 10 he says that 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.

[13 : 17] I think that's the decisive clue. Verse 10 tells us that when the devil is finally thrown into the lake of fire the beast and the false prophet are already there. And the only time Revelation has spoken of the beast and the false prophet being thrown into the lake of fire was in chapter 19 verse 20 at the second coming of Jesus.

So this verse assumes that the event of chapter 20 are happening in sequence after the events of chapter 19 which describes the second coming of Jesus and his judgment of the beast. All that to say I don't think 1 to 6 is a recapitulation I think it's happening in sequence which means the millennium must occur after Christ's second coming.

Now one of the strongest amillennial objections to reading chapters 19 to 20 sequentially they don't want to read it sequentially is that according to 19, 11, 20 11 to 21 Christ has already vanquished his enemies.

So the great supper of God remember when he offered the flesh of kings to the carrion birds that's already taken place in chapter 19. So well if Christ has already defeated and punished the nations then what nations are there left for Satan to deceive in verse 3?

So the amill argument is that Satan being bound that he might not deceive the nations any longer cannot be occurring after the second coming that is described in chapter 19 but it must be going back to Christ's first coming.

[14 : 44] However when you look closely at the text I don't think that argument is as strong as it initially seems. In 1919 it tells us exactly the identity of those who were being struck down by Christ it's the beast and the false prophet and the kings of the earth with their armies it's those among the nations who follow the lead of the beast and the kings of the earth to make war against Christ after his return that are destroyed by Christ in chapter 19 not all of the nations.

In fact it says in 1915 from his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron.

Jesus strikes down the nations but apparently there's still nations left over whom he will rule with the rod of iron future tense as Revelation 12 verse 5 said Jesus is the one who is to rule all the nations with the rod of iron.

Jesus doesn't rule over his own people with a rod of iron. He rules over the nations with a rod of iron and that takes place during the millennial reign and when Satan is released from his prison after the millennium in verses 7 and 10 he will come out to deceive the nations and gather them for war against Christ in the city of Jerusalem and it is at that point that all the nations who had opposed Christ are finally judged before the great white throne and then thrown into the lake of fire.

Now this understanding of Revelation 20 makes good sense in light of Revelation 2 26 where Christ promised the one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end to him I will give authority over the nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron as when earth and pots are broken in pieces even as I myself have received authority from my father.

[16 : 37] So God's people who endure who conquer and who endure to the end faith are supposed to at some point rule over the nations with the rod of iron joining in Christ's rule. When does that happen in the book of Revelation?

Are the saints right now in heaven reigning over the nations with the rod of iron? It doesn't seem that way. If there is no millennial reign after Christ's second coming this rule that was promised in Revelation 2 26 never takes place.

So the timeline I am suggesting is confirmed also by Zechariah 14 which describes it's a prophecy of Christ's return and the war that takes place with the kings after his return and it says in 14 16 that everyone who survives of all the nations shall go up year after year to worship the king the lord of hosts and to keep the feast of booths.

So it sounds like there are survivors after the war among the nations and this seems to be describing the millennial reign of Christ. So then when is a thousand years? I think it's after Christ's second coming which is I am a historic pre-millennialist who believes that Christ will return pre-millennium before the thousand years.

Now let's turn to another interpretive issue that has bearings on this question. By the way I cut six single pages out of my sermon for this and so I'm gonna just either I didn't have a chance to print it out but I'll share that with you as a PDF form on our church slack so if you are actually familiar with some of these arguments and want to know how more extensive interaction with the Amel positions I'd encourage you to read that for the sake of not boring you to death and also actually sharing something that's encouraging I'm gonna I abbreviate a lot of the details so bear with me I know this is kind of hard to follow.

[18 : 27] Where was I? What does it mean that Satan is bound? So Amel and Postmill people cite Matthew 12 28 to 29 as evidence that the millennium begins with the first coming of Christ and I think that's actually one of their strongest arguments.

In Matthew 12 Jesus is casting out demons and his detractors argue that he's using the power of the prince of demons the Beelzebul in order to cast out these little demons demons but Jesus exposes their folly by telling them well if Satan casts out Satan then he is divided against himself how then will his kingdom stand?

Instead he tells them that he's casting out demons by the spirit of God and then he adds this how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man then indeed he may plunder his house.

So that word bind is the exact same word that's used in Revelation 20 verse 2 when it says an angel bound Satan for a thousand years. So Jesus has bound Satan the strong man in his first coming which is why he is able to plunder his house and cast out demons and bring salvation to all nations.

At his death and resurrection Jesus defeated Satan and secured the gift of the spirit for all of his people and this is a fulfillment of the prophecy in Psalm 82 when he said that God himself will come to dispossess the so-called gods of the nations and inherit all nations to himself.

[20 : 00] This is why in the Old Testament the movement of salvation is centripetal. It goes toward the center toward the people of God in Jerusalem. But in the New Testament the movement of salvation is centrifugal.

It goes out from Jerusalem to all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth to bear witness to the nations. In the Old Covenant salvation was restricted mostly to the Jews though there were some Gentiles.

But in the New Covenant salvation comes upon the Gentiles. So this is all true and biblical which is why I think this is one of their most compelling arguments. However, I don't think Revelation 20 verse 2 has in view that binding for several reasons.

First, it's interesting that all of the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke contain that passage about the binding of the strong man. The only Gospel that does not contain that passage is the Gospel of John which happens to be written by the same author as Revelation.

The language that John uses to describe the defeat of Satan is not one of binding but of being cast out. John 12 31, now is the judgment of this world, now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

[21 : 16] And where is Satan cast out of? Not out of this world. John writes elsewhere in 1 John 5 19, we know that we are from God and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

Does it sound like he's cast out of the world? 2 Corinthians 4, 3-4, and even if the Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ.

Does that sound like Satan being cast out of this world and being unable to deceive? 1 Peter 5, 8 says, be sober minded, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Is Satan bound with chains in the abyss or prowling around like a roaring lion? Is he no longer deceiving the nations or is he blinding the minds of the unbelievers?

What John is describing in John 12, 31, is not Satan being cast out from the earth to the abyss. No, he's describing Satan being cast out from heaven to earth.

[22 : 27] Isn't that what Jesus said in Luke 10, 18, 19? I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. This is what we saw described in Revelation 12 when after Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension on earth, from earth, Satan is defeated by Archangel Michael in heaven and it said in Revelation 12, 8-9, but the dragon was defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.

And the great dragon was thrown down, the ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth and his angels were thrown down with him.

That word thrown down is a variation of the same Greek word that John used in John 12, 31 when he said this ruler of this world is cast out. So people who claim that Revelation 20, 1-6 is this description of the first coming of Christ argue that it's a recapitulation or repeat of what happened in Revelation 12 that I was just talking about.

But there are key differences. I can highlight that for you. In 12, 8-9, Satan is thrown down to the earth from heaven. But in 20, verse 3, Satan is thrown down into the bottomless pit from earth.

That's why the angel in chapter 20, verse 1, comes down from heaven to earth in order to seize, bind, and imprison Satan. In 12, 12-13, 18, the result of Satan being thrown down to the earth, the deceiver of the whole world, is that he becomes furious and makes war against the saints.

[23 : 58] And then he makes the beast and the false prophet rise forth from the abyss and he makes them deceive the nations. He's called the deceiver of the whole world in 12, 9.

He deceives those who dwell on earth. Through the beast and the false prophet in chapter 13, verse 14. He deceives the nations through Babylon sorcery in 1823. Again and again, we're told throughout the Revelation that in the church age, Satan and his minions are deceiving the nations, which is exactly what verse 3 tells us Satan cannot do while he's bound in the pit, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were ended.

So which is it? Is Satan furious on earth, wreaking havoc as the deceiver of the world with authority over the nations, or is Satan bound and unable to deceive the nations?

The immediate context of the book of Revelation, which is the most important biblical context for us to consider in interpreting this, suggests that these two chapters are not referring to the same events, Revelation 12 and Revelation 20.

Revelation 12 is describing the first coming of Christ. Revelation 20 is describing the second coming of Christ. In Revelation 9, Satan was given the key to the bottomless pit and he opened the shaft of the bottomless pit to release the demonic locusts.

[25 : 19] In Revelation 20, Satan is locked in this bottomless pit. These two things cannot be referring to the same event. Revelation 11, 7 and 17, 8 says that the beast rises from the bottomless pit and makes war on the saints.

So are they rising from the bottomless pit or are they bound in the bottomless pit? They're not referring to the same events. So now why does all of this matter? The point of chapter 20 verses 1 to 3 isn't to tell us Satan is bound and can no longer deceive.

So the advance of the gospel all over the world is unstoppable and the triumph of the gospel throughout human society is inevitable. So go boldly and change the world. The tide has turned, momentum is on your side.

That's not the point of Revelation 20, 1 to 6. That is the argument of the postmillennialists. However, the point of Revelation 20, 1 to 3 is to cultivate Christian triumphalism.

It's intended to cultivate Christian hope and endurance. Christ did not send us out as lions among wolves. He sent us out as sheep among wolves.

[26 : 32] to follow in the footsteps of the lamb who was slain by enduring suffering and even death for the sake of Christ. Right now, Satan is at large prowling around like a roaring lion.

Right now, he is making war against the saints and conquering us and killing us, God's people. Right now, he is deceiving the nations and blinding the minds of the unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the glory of the gospel of Christ.

Don't we all know that frustration? We've seen it. But we go bear witness anyway. Because blessed are you when people persecute and revile you and say all kinds of false things about you on the economy.

Because in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. For rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. Don't lose hope.

Persevere. Because Satan is a lame duck whose regime is about to be toppled. His days are numbered. The timer is ticking down. Christ is coming soon.

[27 : 39] So pledge your allegiance, loyalty to Christ the King who will reign during the millennium and forevermore. That's the point of Revelation 20 verses 1 to 3. Now that we've looked at the jailing of Satan during the thousand years, let's look at the reign of Christ during the thousand years in verses 4 to 6.

He says in verse 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 worshipped 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. People who subscribe to amillennialism argue that these thrones are a picture of deceased saints reigning with Christ in heaven, like the 24 thrones and the 24 elders that were in heaven around the throne of God that we saw in Revelation 4 and 11.

However, I think it's more likely that John is seeing those heavenly thrones now appearing on earth because verse 1 already narrated the transition of the scene from heaven to earth.

He saw an angel coming down from heaven, which means the angel is on earth now. And that means the subsequent events described in verses 1 to 6 are happening on earth and not in heaven.

[28 : 57] He said in verse 3 that the purpose of the jailing of Satan for a thousand years was so that he might not deceive the nations any longer. And where are these nations? There are no nations in heaven that do not yet know God.

There are no nations to be deceived in heaven. The events of Revelation verse 6 are happening on earth. These thrones and those who are seated on them with the authority to judge might be the 24 elders, representatives of the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles of the Lamb, since we've seen them sitting on thrones before.

And if that is the case, this is the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to his apostles in Matthew 19, 28. In the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel.

The Greek word translated the new world is rendered by the NIV and the CSB as the renewal of all things. This is not speaking of the apostles presently reigning in Christ in heaven while our fallen world groans under the weight, in pains of child birth, under the weight of sin.

It's speaking of the time when the apostles will reign over and judge the world at the time of Christ's return, at the renewal rule of all things in the new world. But it's not only the 24 elders who will be ruling and judging the world.

[30 : 21] In addition to those who are seated on the thrones, it says in verse 4, 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 worshipped the beast or its image and had not received this mark on their foreheads or their hands.

They came to life and reign with Christ for a thousand years. So these are the souls of those who had been beheaded for bearing witness to Jesus. But not only the martyrs, not only those who were killed for their faith, but also all those who did not bow down to the beast and its image.

All believers, that means. Not only the apostles will get to partake in the reigning and judging of Christ in the millennial kingdom. I think this is what 1 Corinthians 6, 2 spoke of.

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? This is a fulfillment of Revelation 5, 9 to 10, that Jesus had made, that Jesus made his people a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.

Remember, note that. It says that they'll reign on the earth as kingdom and priests to our God, and that matches chapter 20, verse 6, which clarifies that we'll be priests of God and reign with Christ.

[31 : 35] On the earth today, we Christians are on the dock. In the court of public opinion, as Bible-believing Christians, we are often objects of the world's judgment and ridicule and condemnation.

How many times have you heard your peers at school or your co-workers or media pundits make snide remarks about our theological or ethical beliefs? The world stands in judgment over us.

But remember this. Do you know that in the millennium, the saints will judge the world? And if the saints' reign will take place on the earth, as it says in Revelation 5, then verse 4 cannot be speaking of a spiritual resurrection and reign of the saints in heaven.

So then the first resurrection in view in verse 4 has to be a physical resurrection. That's what we're going to talk about next. It says in verse 4, I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus.

They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The word beheaded clearly speaks of physical death, which means that the souls is a reference to disembodied souls.

[32 : 52] So what does it mean that disembodied souls came to life? The only thing that it can mean is that they were physically resurrected because these souls were not dead to begin with.

The Bible teaches that it does teach the immortality of the soul. And for that reason, when it speaks of the soul of deceased believers being translated into heaven in the intermediate state between the first and second coming of Christ, between physical death and physical resurrection, it never speaks of the soul coming to life.

It never uses the language of resurrection. For example, it says in Philippians 1, 21 to 23, for to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, yet which I shall choose I cannot tell.

I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. So here Paul speaks of remaining physically alive in order to minister.

But he talks also of dying physically so that he can depart and be with Christ. He doesn't say that his soul will come to life or be resurrected. He says that his soul will be departing to be with Christ.

[34 : 15] Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 5, 8, Paul writes, we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. Once again, Paul uses the language of travel rather than of resurrection.

Away home, from home, depart. And that makes good sense because the soul never dies. So it is nonsensical to speak of a soul being raised to life.

Even in the book of Revelation, when John speaks of souls in the intermediate state in heaven, for example, Revelation 6, 9, 11, and 14, 13, it uses the word rest to describe their state.

It never uses the language of resurrection. The Greek word that is translated resurrection here in Revelation 20 appears 41 times in the New Testament. And it refers to a physical resurrection all of those times except for one.

It's Luke 2, 34. And in Luke 2, 34, the word is used figuratively to refer to the fall and rising of many. Similar to how we say that somebody's career was resurrected.

[35 : 18] It's being used figuratively in Luke 2, 34. So then, apart from that one instance where the word is not even being used literally, all instances of the word resurrection refers to the physical resurrection of people in the New Testament.

So then, there must be compelling, contextual evidence in Revelation 20 itself for us to not understand this word as referring to a physical resurrection. But in this case, no such compelling evidence exists.

In Revelation 2, verse 8, which is a very close parallel, Jesus says the words of the first and the last who died and came to life. Exact same Greek word in the exact same tense as the one in Revelation 24 to 5 and refers to Christ's physical resurrection.

Similarly, it refers to the beast's physical resurrection using the same language in Revelation 13, 14. Furthermore, the nature of the second resurrection that we see here gives us a clue for understanding the nature of the first resurrection.

It says in verse 5, the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. The believing dead come to life at the beginning of the millennium, but the unbelieving dead come to life after the millennium.

[36 : 42] This is what Jesus talks about in John 5, 28 to 29. Do not marvel at this for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out.

Those who have done good to the resurrection of life, those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. It's interesting that Jesus distinguishes those two resurrections, the resurrection of life and the resurrection of judgment.

And here it's clearly a physical resurrection. They come out from the tombs. For this reason, among all the millennial positions, there is almost universal agreement that the second resurrection in view here is a physical resurrection.

And if the second resurrection is physical, then in all likelihood, the first resurrection is also physical. The first resurrection, the believing dead come to life.

And in the second resurrection, the unbelieving dead come to life. The exact same words are used to describe these two resurrections in the span of two verses. Verse 5 says that the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.

[37 : 51] That implies that the other dead, because rest of the dead implies rest of the dead. So that means the other dead, the believing dead, already came to life in the same way that the unbelieving dead will come to life after the millennium.

Namely, physically. And this is not the only place where the Bible speaks of two resurrections. We already saw how Jesus distinguished the resurrection of life from the resurrection of judgment in John 5.

Similarly, Paul describes the order of the resurrections in 1 Corinthians 15, 22, to 25. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive, but each in his own order.

Christ the first fruits, then at his coming, those who belong to Christ, then comes the end when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is the death. So you see the three resurrections there. Revelation 20 follows this precise order.

[38 : 55] First, Christ is resurrected. Second, saints are resurrected at his second coming. And apparently that is not the end. Because third, and it says in Revelation 20, 13 to 14, 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.

There's another resurrection there. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. So the order is first, Christ's resurrection. Second, the first resurrection of the saints at the second coming.

Then third, the second resurrection of unbelievers after the millennium. And then the final judgment and the second death in which death itself will be destroyed. The center for the study of global Christianity based in Gordon-Conwell's theological seminary estimates that 70 million Christians have been martyred for their faith over the last 2,000 years.

70 million. Open Door's ministry estimates that 5,621 Christians were murdered because of their faith this past year.

And all that seems so final, doesn't it? What can be done about their lost days? What can be done about their lost lives?

[40 : 14] Do we just tell them, well, hey, be happy that, you know, at least your souls are alive in heaven? No. We have a greater hope than that. The victory of Christ is not total and the vindication of the saints is not complete until death, our last enemy, is vanquished.

Though the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet make war against the saints and conquer them, all the damage that they do, including death itself, will be finally and irrevocably reversed.

Our great hope, brothers and sisters, is not in the immortality of the soul, but the resurrection of the body.

But then why doesn't God just bring about the final consummation and a new heaven and a new earth depicted in Revelation 21 right away, along with the second coming and the resurrection of the saints?

What is the purpose of this intervening millennial reign of Christ on earth? In this present world, we walk by faith and not by sight.

[41 : 31] We don't get to see the reign of Christ on earth today. But in the millennial kingdom, the reign of Christ, which is at present invisible, will find its visible expression in history so that all might see.

Have you ever felt aggrieved, pained, injured, and wronged by the reality that Christ's name is blasphemed and that the word of God is trampled upon by sinful men?

Have you ever lamented the sinful leaders of our world and how different it would be if Christ the king were to reign physically here over the earth? In the millennium, we will get to see that.

The people of heaven for millennia, we had to, the Christians for millennia, had to endure living in a sinful world that is under the tyrannical regime of the dragon, being persecuted and harassed by the beast, the false prophet, and the Babylon.

So there is symmetrical justice and vindication when the people of earth have to live in the millennium where the dragon is imprisoned and Christ is reigning from the throne where he belongs.

[42 : 53] In the millennium, we will see the nations of the world give Christ finally the honor and the glory that is due to his name that we have longed to see but have failed to see here in our own life.

That's the intended effect of this passage, to fill us with hope that enables us to endure because Satan is a lame duck and a glorious regime change is coming.

He says in verse 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.

Do you fret now that unbelieving sinners live to ripe old age while some faithful Christians are persecuted and killed for being witnesses of Jesus?

Does it seem unfair to you that the true king goes unrecognized and that his servants are disrespected? Fret not because though the dragon and the beast make war against doesn't kill us.

[43 : 58] That's only the first death. Though Christians might be the first to die, we will get to share in the first resurrection. And over those, the second death has no power.

Jesus has removed the sting of death on our behalf so that it no longer has power over those who have put their trust in him. A killer bee sting can be very painful and deadly if there's more than one.

But if a bee sting, if the bee sting gets wedged inside your skin, when the killer bee tries to run away, its sting is ripped away along with part of its abdomen and the internal organs so that it dies from disembowelment in several minutes.

That's what Jesus has done to death itself when he died on the cross for our sins. He bore our punishment and the wrath that we deserved on the cross.

Death stung him. It killed him. But because Jesus was the sinless and blameless son of God, death could not hold him down. And in his resurrection from the dead, Jesus de-stung death.

[45 : 16] He disemboweled death itself so that the day when death and Hades itself will be thrown into the lake of fire is surely coming. Death is swallowed up in victory.

Oh, death, where is your victory? Oh, death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's why we need not fear death. Saints of Christ, remember that our defeat and death are temporary. Our eternal destiny is resurrection and rule.

Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Oh, Father, please help us to look past the nitty-gritty exegetical details of this passage and to be able to grasp this blessed hope.

Enlarge our understanding, our vision of our destiny, what you want for us in Christ, our future resurrection and reign with him, so that we are captivated by that reality and we walk daily in light of that reality by faith and not by sight.

[46 : 45] Oh, but Lord, we long for that day when our faith will be turned to sight, when we will see your reign over all the earth, over all the nations. Come, Lord Jesus.

In your precious name we pray. Amen.