

Revelation 20: The 1,000 Years

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When reading the 20th chapter of Revelation, we note that a period of a thousand years is mentioned seven times. It is mentioned (in this context) nowhere else in the entire Bible. In theological terms, the 1,000 Year reign of Jesus is called “the Millennium” (which simply means 1,000 years). Those who believe that the period of time describes Jesus’ kingdom yet to come believe we live before those 1,000 years; they are described as “Pre-millennial”. Those who hold that the 1,000 years are not literal and are the present age are called “A-millennial”. To understand the proper mind towards the kingdom in this chapter we need to break down the chapter.

First, What Began the 1,000 Years?

According to the first verse, an Angel *“laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years”*. The binding of Satan is referenced multiple times in the New Testament. Jesus said *“if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house”* (Matthew 12:28-29). Jesus referred to His binding of Satan in John 12:30-33 (see too 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 2:2) and John 16:8-10 (see Acts 2:1-4). Ultimately in Hebrews 2:14-15 we are told that the binding of Satan refers to his power over death over those who seek God; this power was removed through the cross. Therefore, since the 1,000 years began with the binding of Satan, and we know that Jesus bound Satan at Calvary, the 1,000 years began at the cross in AD 33.

Second, What Describes the 1,000 Years?

John describes this time as follows: *“Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years”* (vs 6). Note the expression that the priests of God will reign with Jesus. How do the Saints reign with Christ? We are told in chapter 1:5-6 that God has made us (in the present) kings and priests. This is not an uncommon expression. Peter used it in 1 Peter 2:9. It describes the service of Saints to God. Therefore, the 1,000 years describe the Christian life in service to God (Romans 12:1).

Third, What Will End the 1,000 Years?

Satan’s release for a brief time is likely figurative of his constant power (since it is not the case his power of death over the believer would be returned to him). The 1,000 years ends with Satan *“cast into the lake of fire and brimstone”*. Then we see the dead raised before God, death and hades having delivered them up, and the dead being judged by their deeds. This compares with 1 Corinthians 15:24-26, which tells us that when the end (of time) comes, Jesus will return, end the power of death entirely by raising all, and then judgment (John 5:28-29). Thus we can clearly say that the 1,000 years will end with the (2nd) resurrection, which is the end of ALL THINGS (2 Peter 3:10).

Fourth, Why is it Called 1,000 Years?

The number “1,000” is used figuratively in the OT: Joshua 23:10, 1 Chronicles 16:15, Job 9:3, 33:23, Psalm 50:10, 84:10, 105:8. In these cases it is symbolic of a great amount that need not be measured. We also might consider 2 Peter 3:8-12, where we are told that 1,000 years is not a meaningful time to God. Therefore, 1,000 years is not an actual measurement, but instead represents a great amount of time. Thus we can say that the “1,000” has lasted nearly 2000 years, and may continue on for an indefinite time.

Fifth, What About the Second Resurrection?

In Revelation 20 it speaks about two deaths and two resurrections. The First Death is our death because of sin (Ephesians 2:1). The second death is our eternal condemnation in Hell (Revelation 20:14). The first resurrection refers to baptism, in which we join Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Colossians 2:12). The second resurrection speaks to the final time we are raised in our bodies to stand before God (Philippians 3:11). Therefore: *Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection (BAPTISM). Over such the second death (HELL) has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.* Revelation 20:6