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Anticipating Eternity

Series: Between a Rock and a Hard Place

October 3, 2021

Revelation 20.11-21.8

I. **Context**

A. Prologue

1. **Revelation 1:7-8** (NASB95) — 7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. 8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

B. **Theme**

1. **Jesus Christ is coming**
 - a. Tribes of earth will mourn over Him
 - b. Eschatological triumph of Christ over the anti-Christian forces of evil in the world and in the heavenly realms
2. **Purpose – encourage the churches under great pressure**
 - a. Series: Between Rock and a Hard Place

C. How is this purpose accomplished?

1. **Four visions**
 - a. **“In the Spirit”**
2. **Revelation 1:9-10**
 - a. First vision
 - (1) The glorified Christ
 - (2) The messages to the seven churches
3. **Revelation 4:1-2**
 - a. Second vision
 - (1) The heavenly vision
 - (2) The tribulation
4. **Revelation 17:1-3**
 - a. Third vision
 - (1) The mystery of Babylon
 - (2) Judgment of Babylon
 - (3) Final triumph and consummation
5. **Revelation 21:9-10**
 - a. Fourth vision
 - (1) The New Jerusalem

D. Third and fourth visions condense the events at the end of history

1. Unfolding of the divine victory
2. Negative aspect
 - a. Revealing the nature of Babylon – Chapter 17

- b. Judgment of Babylon – Chapter 18
- 3. Positive aspect
 - a. Coming of Christ
 - b. Victorious millennial reign
 - c. Establishing New Heavens and New Earth

II. **Events considered so far**

- A. **Chapters 17, 18 – Destruction of Great Harlot (Babylon)**
 - 1. Anti-God civilization
 - 2. Destroyed by the very governmental institution that depended on her
- B. **Chapter 19 – Coming of Christ**
 - 1. Rejoicing over the destruction of the Great Harlot
 - 2. Anticipation of the Marriage of the Lamb
 - 3. Coming of Christ
 - a. As judge, treading out the winepress of wrath
 - b. Accompanied by an army (saints?)
 - 4. Destruction of political enemies
 - a. Beast of the Sea
 - b. Kings of the earth allied with the beast
 - c. False Prophet (Beast of the Earth)
 - d. Beasts in the lake of fire
 - e. Kings and armies destroyed, eaten in Great Supper
- C. **Chapter 20 – Destruction of Satan**
 - 1. Millennium
 - a. Satan bound in abyss, unable to deceive nations
 - 2. Satan released after millennium for short time
 - a. Gathers hostile armies together, surround God's people
 - b. Fire consumes armies
 - 3. Satan thrown into Lake of Fire
- D. Most enemies thus defeated
 - 1. Great Harlot, Babylon
 - 2. Beast
 - 3. False Prophet
 - 4. Kings and armies allied with them
- E. Destiny of only groups left
 - 1. Only enemy left – ordinary unbelievers
 - 2. Believers – people of God

III. **Review the Millennium**

- A. **Revelation 20:1–6 (NASB95) —**
 - 1. 1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.
 - 2. 2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

3. 4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.
4. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.
5. 6 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.

B. **Millennial theologies**

1. Stridency of the debate
2. Commonalities
 - a. Fundamental doctrines
 - (1) Creation
 - (2) Christology
 - (3) Soteriology (justification by faith)
 - (4) Judgment
 - (5) Resurrection of the dead
 - (a) Eternal life
 - (b) Eternal destruction, suffering
 - (6) 2nd Coming
3. **Postmillennialism**
 - a. Christ will come after the Millennium
 - b. Millennium is golden age in which Christ establishes His reign by evangelism, missions
 - c. Binding of Satan in abyss has already happened
 - d. Kingdom of God advances incrementally
 - e. There will be a golden age of evangelism and missions such that the world will be substantially edified by Christianity
 - f. Future is optimistic – world will become more and more Christian; missions will be extraordinarily successful
 - g. Millennium ends with the 2nd Coming of Christ
 - h. People tend to be postmillennial during periods of revival
 - (1) Jonathan Edwards
4. **Amillennialism**
 - a. No literal Millennium
 - (1) Millennium is euphemism for the church age
 - (2) Better term: realized millennium
 - b. Millennium is the church age in which Christ reigns with martyred saints
 - (1) Started with the coming of Christ (1st Advent)
 - (2) Will end with the 2nd coming of Christ
 - c. Base position, not on spiritualizing the Millennium, but on explicit

statements of Jesus about the kingdom of God being real and present now

- d. See good and evil developing alongside each other
 - (1) Church is growing, expanding
 - (2) Ungodliness is growing
- e. Tend to see this position during mixture of good and evil
 - (1) Augustine
 - (2) Calvin and many reformers

5. **Premillennialism**

- a. Christ will return to establish kingdom
- b. Resurrection of saints to reign with Christ
- c. Two forms
 - (1) **Dispensationalism**
 - (a) Clear distinction between Israel and Church
 - (b) Christians have already been raptured before the tribulation
 - i) Pre-trib rapture
 - ii) Hal Lindsey, *Late, Great Planet Earth*
 - iii) *Left Behind* series (Tim Lahaye)
 - (c) Purpose of the millennium is to fulfill prophecies to a literal, national Israel
 - (d) Began middle of 19th Century
 - (2) **Historic Premillennialism**
 - (a) Essential identification between Israel and Church
 - (b) Christians (both Jew and Gentile) participate in the first resurrection and reign with Christ
 - (c) Predominant eschatology of the early church fathers

C. **The Resurrection and the Millennium**

- 1. Position on Millennium turns on resurrection
- 2. "Came to life" = ezesan (resurrected)
- 3. Two uses – vv 4 and 5
 - a. V 4 – martyrs and other believers came to life to reign for 1,000 years
 - b. V 5 – rest of dead did not come to life until the end of 1,000 years
- 4. Postmil and Amil see only one literal resurrection
 - a. After the Millennium for Postmil
 - b. After the church age for Amil
 - c. First coming to life is said to be spiritual (regeneration)
 - d. Ezesan is used both ways in NT (literal and spiritual)
- 5. Here, however, the same word is used with no contextual clues that the two mean something different
- 6. Believers and unbelievers and the resurrections
 - a. First resurrection = no second death
 - b. Second resurrection (implied) = second death (Lake of Fire)
- 7. Conclusion

- a. Literal period of time called the Millennium
 - b. Literal resurrection at beginning of believers
 - (1) No second death
 - c. Literal resurrection at the end of the rest (unbelievers)
 - (1) Second death
 - d. Christ's coming is thus Premillennial
- D. See how this works
- 1. Thrones
 - a. Saints to reign with Christ
 - b. Revelation 2:26 (NASB95) — 26 'He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS...
 - c. Revelation 3:21 (NASB95) — 21 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.
 - 2. Souls of those beheaded
 - a. Martyrs identified as part of that group
 - b. They had died rather than participate in worship of beast
 - 3. They came to life and reigned
 - a. Ezesan ("came to life")
 - b. All believers
 - 4. Rest of the dead
 - a. = unbelievers
 - b. Didn't come to life until after
 - 5. First resurrection
 - a. Looks back to v 4 – resurrection of believers
 - b. Not involved in the second death
 - 6. Priests of God, reign
 - a. Immediate access to Father
 - b. To be part of the kingdom means more than just being a subject; it means to participate in ruling

IV. The Judgment

- A. Revelation 20:11–15 (NASB95) —
 - 1. 11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.
 - 2. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.
 - 3. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.
 - 4. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.
 - 5. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was

- thrown into the lake of fire.
- B. **Who?**
1. Probably not believers
 - a. Judgment seat of Christ
 - b. **2 Corinthians 5:10** (NASB95) — 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.
 2. Most likely unbelievers
- C. **Great White Throne**
1. Speak of glory, majesty and holiness of judge
- D. Him who sat upon it
1. Probably God the Father (cf Ch 4)
- E. Earth and sky fled away from His presence
1. Reminiscent of 6th Seal
 2. Old order, all of creation, is done away to prepare for new order
- F. Dead, great and small, standing before throne
1. Implies the 2nd resurrection
 2. Status makes no difference in judgment
- G. **Books opened**
1. **Daniel 7:9–10** (NASB95) —
 - a. 9 “I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, Its wheels were a burning fire.
 - b. 10 “A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened.”
 2. Books having recorded deeds
 - a. No arbitrary judgment
 - b. Dead judged according to what they had done
- H. Another book – **Book of Life**
- I. Sea, death, Hades gave up the dead
1. Hades – intermediate state of the dead awaiting judgment
 2. All people, however they died, will be included in judgment
- J. Death and Hades in Lake of Fire
1. No one saved according to books of deeds
 2. Second death
- K. Book of Life necessary to avoid the Lake of Fire
1. Only by Christ can anyone be saved
- V. **The New Heaven and the New Earth**
- A. **Revelation 21:1–8** (NASB95) —
1. 1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

2. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.
 3. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, 4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."
 4. 5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."
 5. 6 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.
 6. 7 "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.
 7. 8 "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."
- B. New heaven and new earth
1. Ultimate destiny will be on earth, not heaven
 2. But new, redeemed earth
- C. **First heaven and first earth** passed away
1. To prepare for new order
- D. **No longer any sea**
1. Fundamentally different on new earth
 2. Sea source of great fear to Jew, in context of small, unsophisticated ships
 - a. Biblical literature suggest that
 - (1) **Isaiah 57:20** (NASB95) — 20 But the wicked are like the tossing sea, For it cannot be quiet, And its waters toss up refuse and mud.
 - (2) **Psalms 107:25–28** (NASB95) — 25 For He spoke and raised up a stormy wind, Which lifted up the waves of the sea. 26 They rose up to the heavens, they went down to the depths; Their soul melted away in their misery. 27 They reeled and staggered like a drunken man, And were at their wits' end. 28 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, And He brought them out of their distresses.
 - (3) **Ezekiel 28:8** (NASB95) — 8 'They will bring you down to the pit, And you will die the death of those who are slain In the heart of the seas.'
 - b. Source of the dark, mysterious, treacherous
- E. **Holy city, New Jerusalem**
1. From heaven
 2. Beautifully adorned as bride
 3. Redeemed church!

- F. **Tabernacle of God** is among men (dwelling place of God)
 - 1. Direct, immediate fellowship with God
 - 2. Unimaginable in our present state
 - 3. Beatific vision
 - a. **1 John 3:2** (NASB95) — 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.
 - G. **Suffering done away**
 - 1. Wipe away every tear
 - 2. No longer death
 - 3. No longer mourning
 - 4. No longer crying
 - 5. No longer pain
 - H. All things new
 - 1. First things have passed away
 - 2. That's the basis for this wonderful state of affairs
 - I. He who sits on the throne said
 - 1. **Makes all things new**
 - 2. What started as our own redemption spiritually is now consummated
 - 3. Creation groans in expectation of the sons of God to be revealed — **Romans 8.18-21**
 - a. Redemption of whole creation is the goal
 - 4. Certainty – God's voice
 - J. It is done – Alpha and Omega
 - 1. Finished
 - 2. Drink from spring of water of life
 - 3. Overcomer is the inheritor
 - K. **Contrast with unbelievers fate – Lake of Fire**
 - 1. Cowardly
 - 2. Unbelieving
 - 3. Abominable
 - 4. Murderers
 - 5. Immoral persons
 - 6. Sorcerers
 - 7. Idolaters
 - 8. Liars
 - 9. All natural acts of fundamentally evil humanity
- VI. **Completion of Divine Victory**
- A. Removal of enemies
 - 1. Great Harlot – Anti-God civilization
 - 2. Beast – evil government
 - 3. False prophet – evil religion
 - 4. Kings associated with them
 - 5. Satan bound

- B. Establishment of millennial kingdom
 - 1. Reign of Christ
 - 2. Return of Satan to demonstrate clearly the true nature of humanity and redemption
- C. Final judgment
 - 1. Satan
 - 2. Unbelievers
- D. New heavens and earth
 - 1. Redemption of creation