

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. Today we will introduce Revelation 20.

REVELATION CHAPTER 20 teaches **the curtailment of Satan on earth and the reign of Christians with Christ in heaven**. Part 7 of the book of Revelation consists of chapters 20-22.

First. Principles on which the explanation of Revelation 20 is based.

***One.** The explanation of Revelation 20:1-6 is not a prediction about life later in the future, but is a symbolic description about life now in the present. During a symbolic period of 1000 years Satan is bound on earth. And during that same period departed Christians are reigning with Christ in heaven. The number “1000 years” consists of the numbers 10x10x10 and is a symbol that represents *the period that begins with the binding of Satan and ends with the loosening of Satan just before the 2nd coming of Christ*. The number 3 represents God and the number 10 represents completeness or fullness. Thus the number “10x10x10” represents *a definite complete or full period of time during which the God of the Bible acts in human history*. Because the Bible teaches us that Satan was bound during the first coming of Jesus Christ, the “1000 years” period is a symbol for *the period between the 1st coming of Christ and the 2nd coming of Christ* during which God realises his plan of salvation of his Church and the judgement of the wicked.

***Two.** This explanation gives full credit to Christ’s accomplished work of salvation during his 1st coming, which includes the binding or curtailment of Satan, so that the gospel could be preached in all the nations of the world (Jn 12: 31-32).

***Three.** This explanation gives full credit to Christ’s victorious return at his 2nd coming to judge the wicked decisively and renew the earth completely. Christ will not need a thousand years after his return to overcome the godless and wicked, but destroy them in one single moment (20:9-10)!

***Four.** This explanation is based on the fact that the book of Revelation is an apocalyptic book, picturing very real and literal events in symbolic language, which includes visions, signs, symbols and numbers (1:1). Chapter 20 is the 7th parallel part of the book, in which each part describes God’s salvation history from the 1st to the 2nd coming of Christ.

***Five.** This explanation is based on the fact that the Bible teaches only one 2nd coming of Christ on the last day. Christ together with uncountable angels and the spirits of departed Christians will return *very visibly and audibly and not secretly* at all (19:11-16; Mt 24:30-31; 1 Thes 4:14-17). The second coming happens on the day of the Lord or the last day (1 Thes 5:2; 2 Pet 3:3-13).

***Six.** This explanation is based on the fact that the Bible teaches only one final battle on the last day. Christ will suddenly, irresistibly and irrevocably overcome his enemies (16:14-16; 18:8; 19:11-21; 20:7-10; 2 Thes 2:1-12). The final battle happens on the day of the Lord or last day (16:14). All the godless and wicked people will be physically destroyed immediately at the 2nd coming of Christ and will not survive on earth after his 2nd coming.

***Seven.** This explanation is based on the fact that the Bible teaches only one physical resurrection of all people on the last day. There will be no interim period between the resurrection of everyone and the last day (20:11-15; Jn 5:28-29; Hd 24:15). The resurrection happens on the day of the Lord or the last day (Jn 6:39-40; 11:24; 2 Thes 1:10).

***Eight.** This explanation is based on the fact that the Bible teaches only one final judgement of all people on the last day. There will be no interim period between the final judgement of everyone and the last day (20:11-15; Mt 25:31-46; Jn 5:28-29; Act 17:31; 2 Cor 5:10). The final judgement will happen on the day of the Lord or last day (Jn 12:48; Rom 2:16).

***Nine.** This explanation is based on the fact that the Bible teaches no long interim period between the 2nd coming of Christ and the renewal of the world. At his 2nd coming Christ will raise the physical bodies of the already departed Christians (1 Thes 4:14-17) and transform the physical bodies of the still living Christians (1 Cor 15:52). All Christians are then caught up into the clouds to meet (Mt 24:40-41; 1 Thes 4:17) and welcome (2 Thes 1:10) Christ. But all the godless and wicked people will witness the 2nd coming with indescribable terror (Rev 6:12-17; 1 Thes 5:2-3) and on that same last day they will be driven by angels to the final judgement before Christ’s throne of judgement in the sky (Mt 13:30,36-43; 25:31-46; Rev 20:11-15). Revelation 20:11 to 21:5 teaches clearly that there is no long interim period between the 2nd coming, the resurrection and the final judgement on the one hand and the renewal of the earth on the other hand. During the symbolic 1000 years in Revelation 20 there is no mention of Israel, or tamed animals, or a peaceful dwelling on this present earth. Revelation chapter 20 points to *a millennium of spiritual dimensions* and not to a millennium of physical dimensions.

Second. The symbolic picture in Revelation 20:1-3 is concerning the binding of Satan on earth.

The symbolic picture is of a mighty angel seizing the dragon, binding him with a great chain, throwing him into the Abyss, and locking and sealing the Abyss for a period of 1000 years. "The Abyss" is the name of *hell before the final judgement day*. It is pictured as a deep hole provided with a shaft and lid. It can be unlocked (9:1-2,11) and locked and even sealed securely (20:3). It is the dwelling place of all evil spirits or demons (Lk 8:31).

***One. Before the 1st coming of Christ**, throughout the Old Testament period, it was largely the Jews who were saved and the other nations dwelled in darkness and were under the thralldom of Satan (Dan 10:13,20-21), in the sense that God allowed the nations to go their own way (Act 14:16; Rom 3:25; 2 Cor 4:4). In this sense, Satan "deceived" the nations. But already during the Old Testament period, God promised to Christ that "the nations would be his inheritance and the ends of the earth his possession" (Gen 12:3; Ps 2:8; Isa 49:6). The spiritual darkness that covered the nations because Satan deceived them would not continue forever!

***Two. During the 1st coming of Christ**, Christ came with the purpose "to destroy Satan's work" (1 Jn 3:8). In Matthew 12:29 Jesus says, "How can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first *ties up (binds)* the strong man? Then he can rob his house." The same word "bind" is used here as in Revelation 20:2 and has the meaning of "curbing" "curtailing" or "limiting" his influence.

***Jesus began the binding of Satan** by triumphing over Satan's temptations in the desert (Mt 4:1-11) and by casting out evil spirits from demon-possessed people. He gave his workers authority to bind Satan and they also cast out evil spirits. Jesus describes this defeat of Satan in Luke 10:18 as follows, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority ... to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you." Jesus meant that while the disciples were casting out demons from people, Christ saw their master, Satan, fall from his position of power in the world. Satan's fall was "like lightning", sudden and startling, because the disciples had not expected this victory and perhaps even Satan had not anticipated his defeat. What began to happen at the first coming of Jesus Christ would continue until the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ, when Satan will be finally defeated in hell.

***Jesus completed the binding of Satan** by his death and resurrection, ascension and enthronement. In John 12:31-32, Jesus says, "Now is the time for judgement on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." Jesus refers to his crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and enthronement. This great event is on the one hand the judgement of the evil world that rejected Christ and on the other hand the driving out of Satan as the prince of this world. In Colossians 2:15 Paul says that by his death on the cross, Christ disarmed the powers and authorities against him and triumphed over them. In Revelation 12:5-12 Christ says that his resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven resulted in the defeat of Satan and his evil angels, and they were hurled out of heaven onto the earth. Thus, the "binding" of Satan, his "falling" or his being "hurled out" of heaven are all associated with the 1st coming of Jesus Christ!

***Three. Between the 1st and 2nd coming of Christ**, Christ draws people from all the nations in the world to himself. The drawing of people from all the nations in the world is at the same time the way in which Satan is driven out of his grip on these nations (Col 1:13)! As a result, through the preaching of the gospel to all the nations, Jesus Christ is drawing people from all the nations to himself! Throughout this gospel age, which extends from the 1st to almost the 2nd coming of Christ, *Satan's influence on earth is curtailed* so that he is unable to prevent the extension of the Church in every nation of the world! That is why Revelation 20:3 says, that Satan "is bound *in order to keep him from deceiving the nations*" during this period of 1000 years. He is not bound in the sense that he cannot have any evil influence in the world anymore, or in the sense that everyone in the world will become Christians, or in the sense that this present world will evolve towards a perfect society of peace. He is only bound in the sense that he can no longer deceive the nations and keep them away from hearing and responding to the gospel! Although Satan is already a beaten enemy in principle, it is clear that God has not yet removed him from the earthly scene. Revelation 20:7-15 teaches that Satan's complete removal will happen at the 2nd coming when Satan will be defeated in THE final battle and will be thrown in hell for ever (16:12-16; 19:11-21).

***Four. The 1000 years.** Because the 1000 years (20:1-6) is clearly the period *before* the 2nd coming, the final battle, the resurrection and the final judgement (20:7-15), the number "1000 years" is another symbol signifying *the gospel age, that is the period from the 1st coming of Christ to almost the 2nd coming of Christ*.

Third. The symbolic picture in Revelation 20:4-6 is concerning Christians reigning with Christ for a thousand years in heaven.

The symbolic picture is of thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge and of *souls* of Christians, who had died, but *came alive* and *reigned* with Christ a thousand years.

***One. Where does their thousand year reign take place?** It takes place where the thrones are. In the entire book of Revelation, the thrones of God and Christ and of his people are always *in heaven* (4:2,4; 5:6,7,13; 7:9,10,11,15; 12:5; 15:5 and 16:17; 20:4,11). It takes place where Jesus Christ is. According to the entire book of Revelation, Christ reigns

over the universe from God's throne *in heaven* (Rev ch. 5, 12). And it takes place where the disembodied "souls" of the martyrs are. According to Revelation 6:9 this is also *in heaven*.

*Two. What is the nature of the thousand year reign? According to the book of Revelation itself, the ransomed souls *sing* before the throne in heaven and *praise* the One on the throne for his true and just judgements (14:3; 15:2-4). They *serve* him day and night (7:15). And they sit with Christ on his throne (3:21) and participate in the *reign* of Christ (20:6). How they do all these things, is not specified.

*Three. Who participate in the thousand year reign? All the *souls of the martyred Christians*, who were beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus Christ, and also the *souls of all faithful Christians*, who had not worshipped the beast or received the mark of the beast, but had died holding on to their Christian faith (1 Thes 4:13-14), will reign with Christ. Out of all people who die on earth, only Christians will "come to life" and "reign" with Christ. Only they will share in "the 1st resurrection" and will never share in "the 2nd death". "The rest" of all the people that die on earth do "not come to life" until the thousand years were ended. Out of all the people on earth, only non-Christians will share in the 2nd death and will never share in the 1st resurrection.

*Four. The 1st resurrection and the 2nd death imply a 1st death and a 2nd resurrection.

*The souls came to life. Revelation 20:4 says, "Their *souls* ... came to life" and not "their bodies came to life". "The argument that the words "they became alive" can only refer to the physical resurrection (2:8; Rom 14:9a), does not hold, because the same word is used in the book of Revelation in the sense of "being alive" in a spiritual sense (3:1; 4:9-10; 7:2; 15:7). According to John 5:25, the spiritually dead will hear the voice of Christ and become *spiritually alive*! This is spiritual rebirth. And according to Luke 20:38, God is not the God of the dead, but of "*the spiritual living*". This is a reference to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as *living souls* in heaven before the physical resurrection of the dead!

*The 1st resurrection and the 2nd death. The Bible teaches that there will only be *one physical death* (Heb 9:27) and *one physical resurrection* from the dead, when the bodies of both believers and unbelievers will be resurrected from the dead at the same time (Dan 12:2; Jn 5:28-29; Acts 24:15). The Bible also clearly teaches that the *souls* of the physical dead believers are immediately *translated into heaven* (Eccl 12:7; Jn 11:25; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:21,23; 1 Thes 5:10; 2 Tim 4:18), while the souls of the physical dead non-believers are immediately translated to hell (cf. Lk 16:22-24). The symbols mean the following: *"The 1st death" is *the physical death* of both believers and non-believers. *And "the 1st resurrection" is *the spiritual resurrection* or translation of the souls of only believers into heaven. *"The 2nd resurrection" is *the physical resurrection* of both believers and non-believers (Jn 5:28-29; Act 24:15). *And "the 2nd death" is *the spiritual or eternal death* of the souls and bodies of only non-believers (21:8). *Therefore the words "the 1st resurrection" do not refer to a 1st physical resurrection in contrast to a 2nd physical resurrection, but to *the translation of the souls of only believers into heaven*, that is, from this sinful earth to God's holy heaven. And therefore the words "the 2nd death" also do not refer to a 2nd physical death after the 1st physical death on earth, but to *the throwing of the souls and bodies of only non-believers into hell* on the final judgement day (cf. Mt 3:12; 10:28; 13:41-42; 25:41,46). The paradox is that although all people die physically, only believers in Christ are translated into heaven into Christ's presence! And the paradox is that although all people are physically resurrected, only people who did not believe in Jesus Christ will be cast body and soul into the fiery lake of burning sulphur.

*Five. The reign of Christians in the present heaven and the future new earth. Christians that have died, now reign with Christ in heaven as "souls" without bodies. But after the 2nd coming and resurrection from the dead (1 Thes 4:14; 1 Cor 15:44-46), their souls will be reunited with their bodies. Then they will reign with Christ, not only for a symbolic period of 1000 years in heaven, but they will reign with Christ forever and ever on the new earth (Rev 22:5)!

Fourth. The symbolic picture in Revelation 20:7-10 is concerning the release of Satan and the final battle.

The symbolic picture is that just before the 2nd coming of Christ, Satan will be released for a very short period and he will again go out to deceive the nations in the whole world. Satan together with his helpers, the political antichrist, the religious false prophet and the godless nations of the world will surround the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire from heaven will devour them and Satan will be thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, to be tormented forever.

*One. Gog and Magog" are symbols of *the godless and wicked nations* (Ezek 38-39). They gather for THE battle, which is mentioned in parts 5,6 and 7 of the book of Revelation, and refers to the final battle just before the 2nd coming of Christ (16:14,16; 19:19 and 20:8).

*Two. "The camp" of God during the desert journey and "the city" of Jerusalem (Heb 13:14; 11:10; 12:22) are Old Testament symbols that represent *the Church in the New Testament*.

*Three. The final battle in the history of this world is not described, but the outcome is! Satan and his helpers attack the Church, but Satan is thrown in hell, where his helpers were also thrown.

Fifth. The symbolic picture in Revelation 20:11-15 is concerning the final judgement day.

The symbolic picture is of a great white throne. The present earth and sky fled from the presence of the One sitting on the throne. All people who have ever lived and died are given up by death and Hades and stand before the throne. The books are opened and everyone was judged according to what he had done as was recorded in the books. The names in “the book of life” determine who has eternal life and who will be thrown in the lake of burning sulphur. Only *at the end of the symbolic thousand year period* the 2nd coming will take place. At the 2nd coming of Christ, three important events will happen:

***One. The physical resurrection of the dead.** The Bible teaches *only one general physical resurrection* of all the dead bodies. In John 5:28-29, Jesus says, “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out - those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned (cf. Dan 12:2; Acts 24:15)” The one and only physical resurrection of the dead will take place on *the last day* (Jn 6:39-40; 11:24). Thus, at the *one and only 2nd coming* of Christ, there will be *only one general resurrection of the bodies* of all the dead. All people who have ever lived on earth and died are given up by death and Hades, that is, they are resurrected together. “Death” is a symbol of *the separation of body and soul*. “Hades” is a symbol of *the state of separation of body and soul or a symbol of the place where the dead bodies lie, that is, the grave*, wherever it may be on earth or in the sea. Both death and Hades will cease to function and will be thrown in the lake of burning sulphur.

***Two. The final judgement day.** The Bible teaches *only one general final judgement day* for all people who have ever lived. God the Father has entrusted all judgement to the Son (Jn 5:22-23), and therefore the One seated on “the great white throne” is Jesus Christ (14:14; Mt 25:31). Acts 17:31 says, “For God has set *a day* when he will judge the world with justice *by the man* he has appointed.” The one and only judgement day will take place on *the last day*, thus on the same day as the 2nd coming and the physical resurrection of the dead (Jn 12:48). Thus at the *one and only 2nd coming of Christ*, there will be only one final judgement of all people who have ever lived. Daniel 12:2 says that at the one and only resurrection, some people will go to everlasting life, while others will go to everlasting contempt. Likewise, Matthew 25:31-46 teaches that all people, both believers and unbelievers, are *judged at the same judgement*. They are judged according to what they have done as is recorded in the books (Eccl 12:14; 2 Cor 5:10). The function of “the book of life”, which is opened on the final judgement day, is to reveal publicly who are believers and who are not. Only those whose names are recorded in the book of life will inherit the new heaven and new earth (Lk 10:20), but the rest will be thrown in the lake of fire (20:15).

***Three. The creation of the new heaven and new earth.** The present “earth and heaven flee away”. This does not mean that they are destroyed or even annihilated. Matthew 24:29 says that on “the Day of the Lord”, that is, “the last day”, “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken”. The elements will be dissolved in fire and everything will be laid bare (2 Pet 3:10). It will be the renewal of all things (Mt 19:28), the restoration of everything (Act 3:21), the liberation of creation from its bondage to decay (Rom 8:21) and no longer will the creation be subjected to frustration (Rom 8:20). The Old Testament not only records the creation of the present heaven and earth, but also prophesies the creation of new heavens and a new earth (Isa 65:17; 66:22). And according to 2 Peter 3:13, throughout the New Testament, Christians are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

ASSIGNMENT.

First. Read Revelation 21-22. Tomorrow we will introduce Revelation 21-22.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and preach God’s Kingdom” and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to “Discipleship training on the air”.