

## INTRODUCTION

The events of Revelation are paralleled in Ezekiel, just before the first fall of Israel, Daniel, after the fall, and then described again by Jesus as the second, and final fall of ancient Israel is about to come. The events of Revelation are rooted in history.

In Chapter 20 we are in the Millennium, or the thousand years reign on earth of the Messiah. At this point in the apocalyptic timeline, modern Christianity has all kinds of interpretations. In one view; the saints are taken away or “raptured” before the outpouring of God’s wrath we refer to as “the tribulation.” Others believe it is midway through. And yet others, at the end of “the tribulation.” All these views have their points and all of them are debatable.

But the reality is: Christ will return when He will return, and He will take us when He will take us. What isn't debatable is; He will take us. In fact, that is the cornerstone of the Christian faith:

1 Thess 4

14. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

16. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17. **Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

18. Therefore comfort one another with these words.



## QUESTIONS:

### WHAT IS THE MAIN MESSAGE OF 1 THESS 4?

- The real question isn't so much when as who?

John's vision of the Millennial age starts like this:

Rev 20

4. Then I saw thrones, and sitting on them were those who had been given the right to judge. And I saw the **souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony about Jesus**, for proclaiming the Word of God, and who had not worshiped the **Creature or his statue**, nor **accepted his mark** on their foreheads or their hands. They had come to life again and now they **reigned with Christ for a thousand years**.

5. This is the **First Resurrection**. (The **rest of the dead did not come back to life until the thousand years had ended**.)

6. Blessed and holy are those who share in the First Resurrection. For them **the Second Death holds no terrors**, for they will be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

There are different views here as well. Some think that all Christians are raised here, but the end of the chapter negates that idea. It is more accurate to say, a special class of God's people are raised at the First Resurrection. We could call them, "the heroes of heaven."

**So who are the citizens of this kingdom?** There are two things to consider here:

- 1) John is writing to those who will suffer under the "beast" of Rome. Rome had various forms of execution. But the one considered the basest form, was beheading by axe. That is what John is talking about.
- 2) Secondly, last week we looked at the literal meaning of the Greek word **testimony**. It is; the evidence of; or proof. These people didn't simply believe in Christ, they had **become "little Christs."** They were the proof of Christ, and since evil couldn't stand the sight of them, they suffered the worst kind of deaths.

These folks are the real deal! They **suffered in ways that were completely unjust**. They suffered the same injustice as their Lord, for their Lord. ...Now let's cut to the present time.



## QUESTIONS:

**WHO DO YOU THINK IS RAISED IN THE FIRST RESURRECTION?**

**HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE SECOND DEATH?**

We live in a culture of celebrity worship. And in honesty; that mentality doesn't stop outside the church doors. For example: At a big Christian conference, I saw a number of people rush up to one of the featured speakers. They were so excited to get his autograph. That man, heralded in Christian circles, was obviously, a celebrity to them.

I can understand that. That's the way our minds work. But I think we're going to be surprised who the real heroes of heaven are going to be, *in God's eyes*. Let me show you a little video from "[Voice of the Martyrs](#)."

The point here, isn't to give a plug for "Voice of the Martyrs," although they're a worthy organization to support. There are **two facts** I would like us to consider:

- 1) **The heroes God sees are people we may never know** in this life; an obscure boy or an old woman in some part of the world of which we've never heard. They may well be invisible nobodies in this world.
- 2) John is speaking of those who have stood up against the beast of Pagan Rome, and those who will face the beast of the end days. **But there is a beast out there right now**, and people are giving up their lives right now because they won't accept the mark of Islam or communism, or some other form of "anti-Christ."

**So what is the reward for these people?** It is the first resurrection, it is the right to judge, it is to be the priests, the direct representatives of the returned Christ. And it is to never have fear of the real death, the second death.

That's really something to wrap your mind around. Especially those of us who have lost a loved one; **we see death as so final**. What God tells us is mind-blowing; **don't worry about physical death because it is temporary**. Be concerned with the second one; that one is eternal.



## QUESTIONS:

### GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF SOMEONE WHO WOULD BE A "HERO OF HEAVEN"?

Then in line with ancient Jewish beliefs, this thousand year reign on earth comes to an end. It might be a literal thousand years, and it may not. That is also, debatable. What isn't debatable is the reality **God will move things to the next stage:**

Rev 20

7. When the **thousand years end, Satan will be let out of his prison.**

8. **He will go out to deceive the nations** of the world and gather them together, with **Gog and Magog, for battle--a mighty host, numberless as sand along the shore.**

**Satan will go out to do what?** "-To deceive"

In the original Greek *planao* (plan-ah'-o) it means; to *go astray, to roam from safety, truth or virtue, seduce, wander, be out of the way.*

There is a distinct element of **freewill** in this. To be seduced is to be lured in such a way; you go willingly. To go astray isn't to be dragged away; it is to willingly go in the wrong direction; one step at a time. The bottom line is; when God's judgment comes, we won't have any excuses. We won't be able to simply blame it on Satan. Good or bad, we will deserve the consequences.

**Gog and Magog will gather to battle against God**, and they will be numberless. We can't find Magog on a world map so what nation is that? Once again, it goes deep into Jewish roots.

Magog goes back to the time of Noah:

Genesis 10

1. Now this is the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And sons were born to them after the flood.

2. The sons of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

Magog is the general name that was given to **the northern nations** of Japheth's descendants. Here is a map showing the area. When Israel was about to fall the first time, this is what the prophet Ezekiel said:

## Ezekiel 38

2. "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Over time, the words came to mean; *those who are "lofty" or "elevated" against God.* In short, all the peoples puffed up with self-pride will follow Satan. They will be seduced by his thinking, which undoubtedly, will appeal to their conceit. And it will be most of the world.

Question: ***How are we conceited now, intellectually?*** Some of humanity feels we have moved beyond God, we are our own Gods. All the serious answers are in our science or philosophy. We have spiritual conceit; there are even branches of Christianity that molds God into an image that appeals more to our "enlightened" minds.

St. Augustine Gog and Magog like this:

For John marks that they are spread over the whole earth, when he says, "The nations which are in the four corners of the earth," and he added that these are Gog and Magog. The meaning of these names we find to be, Gog, (a roof), Magog, (from a roof) - a house, as it were, and he who comes out of the house. They are therefore the nations in which we found that the devil was shut up as in an abyss, and the devil himself coming out from them and going forth, so that they are the roof, he from the roof.

"Magog is in the making all around us. Previously we talked about the imagery of the winepress; there is no contest between the trampler and the grapes. The same theme plays here:

9. They will go up across the broad plain of the earth and surround God's people and the beloved city of Jerusalem on every side. But fire from **God in heaven will flash down on the attacking armies and consume them.**

10. Then the **devil who had betrayed them** will again be thrown into the **Lake of Fire burning with sulphur** where the Creature and False Prophet are, and they will be **tormented day and night forever and ever.**

Here is yet, another point that is debated. It sounds pretty nasty to torment people *forever*, so perhaps it means God sends them into oblivion forever. I looked into the original Greek and it does in fact mean; *in conscious pain forever.*



## QUESTIONS:

**IN WHAT WAYS ARE WE CONCEITED: AS A CULTURE? AS THE CHURCH?**

**WHAT DO YOU THINK THE PURPOSE OF THE MILLENNIUM IS?**

**HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE GOG AND MAGOG?**

## CONCLUSION

- ***So what practical principles can we take with us today?***

All of this seems so far off, or at least, far removed from the reality in which we live.

**Allow me to share two truths that affect us at this very moment:**

- 1) ***This chapter of Revelation is rooted in 4000 years of history.*** In it lies the reality of the past, present and future. Have you ever thought of it this way: we are living somewhere along the timeline of this revelation!
- 2) ***Secondly, it should challenge the quality of our faith.*** I would hope never to be tortured or martyred for my faith, but I have to ask myself: ***If my faith brought me no further good fortune in this world; nothing but my relationship with God; is the heart of that relationship pure enough to endure?***

We live in a church culture of padded pews and entertaining programs. People leave churches for the smallest offences; we put God on the backburner for all kinds of earthly distractions.

Not to be harsh; but often our kids can't seem to make it through a 30 minute message without running out to the bathroom! ***Is our faith made of the kind of stuff that can endure?*** We need to ask ourselves: ***Is that quality of faith, even a goal of ours?***

For all the literature that explains the Book of Revelation, I have a growing suspicion: We (*that is most of the church*); are missing the point. The point isn't knowing the exact sequence of every event; it is realizing there has been, and will be great challenges to face. And the challenges are ***more than a test; they are the process of our refinement.*** Our response is the proof of what we've really decided towards God.

Everything we've studied tells us: Lukewarm belief or halfway commitment simply won't cut it. Here's today's message in a single sentence: ***Citizenship in God's Kingdom demands quality; are you striving toward that goal?***

## **QUESTIONS**

**WHAT CAN WE DO TO ENSURE THE QUALITY OF OUR CONNECTION WITH GOD?**

**HOW ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT GOAL?**