

When I was a wee boy, one of my favourite television programmes was the Lone Ranger, who rode his white horse Silver and he always defeated the bad guys. Today we meet another Hero riding on a white horse, and He comes to defeat the ultimate bad guy. In our passage from Revelation, we find the triumphal redeemed saints in the heavenly procession with the King of Kings. Jesus comes to make war on satan and the worldly rulers of the earth, and when this war with satan is over; Jesus becomes the ultimate ruler of the universe.

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. (v11) This begins the description of our Lord's return as Jesus foretold in Matt 24:27: *For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.* Everybody will see this and it will occur immediately after the Great Tribulation. John saw a door in heaven open and this opening of heaven is not to go in, it's the door for Jesus and His followers to come out for door in heaven has been open for Christians to enter in. Now the door becomes an exit and an angel emerges riding a white horse.

We move onto **Chapter 20: 1 & 2.** *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.* Now is the time when satan will be taken, bound, and put into the bottomless pit and his influence will no longer have any effect on those who have followed Christ. Can you imagine a life where satan isn't around to tempt anyone? This thousand-year millennium will be a time of paradise when nothing bad will happen? Even the curse on the animals will be lifted and the wolf will lie down with the lamb and will live in peace.

No one will enter into the thousand-year millennium unless he or she is a believer in Jesus. We will be living in our glorified bodies given to us at our resurrection and people will live for the entire 1,000 years and will give birth to children. There will be a tremendous population explosion during those 1,000 years. There will be probably billions of people at the end. The children of those born during the millennium will still have to be taught about Jesus even though He will be with them constantly. And although Satan will not be there to tempt us, it's still possible that some may reject Jesus and choose not to believe in Him because God's judgement is still to come.

But back to the angel that emerges from heaven on a white horse: This angel is not Jesus, it is a ministering angel that Jesus has given authority to. The angel comes from heaven and Jesus has given the key to the bottomless pit over to this angel, who also carries a great chain which is to be used to bind Satan for 1000 years. But here is something I hadn't realised before: The angel didn't kill Satan but put him in a pit where he couldn't influence people anymore. The devil couldn't tempt people until 1000 year reign of Jesus is over.

Verse 3: He cast him into the bottomless pit and set a seal on him, so that he could not deceive the nations until the thousand years were over. But after these things he must be released for a little while. The seal indicates God's authority and guarantee that Satan will not be released until 1,000 years have passed. During this millennium, Satan will not be able to tempt or deceive the nations. Satan's demons or fallen angels are also imprisoned during this time. Jesus will reign on earth without opposition, and His kingdom will include righteousness, peace, and love.

Satan has been conquered but not killed, and after a 1000 years he will be released for a short time to deceive the nations. He will find many unsaved descendants of those who lived through the millennium for God's judgement on all people is still to come. We are told that the number of people who reject Jesus will be numerous, like the grains of sand of the seashore.

Verse 4: *And I saw thrones and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.* This refers to Christians who had been killed for their witness to Christ, the martyrs of the Christian faith who had refused to take the mark of the beast, which is the sign they had embraced satan and his ways. Christians from all generations will rule and reign with the Lord Jesus during those 1,000 years, but we will not be equal to Him in authority. We will reign but only as Christ's subordinates. And the thrones represent the administration of the kingdom. Jesus will rule through three classes of kingdom administrators:

First are the Old Testament saints who are to be resurrected. And the Old Testament prophecies to this event: **Isaiah 26:19.** *Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.* **Daniel 12:2.** *And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*

After the OT saints who are resurrected come the NT apostles and those who were faithful to Christ's church. **Matthew 19: 28 & 29.** *Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.*

And thirdly, only those who are alive and are believers in Jesus will enter the Millennium at its beginning.

Jesus said in **John 3:5**. *Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus asked; How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered: Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.* So, at the beginning of this 1000 year reign, the order of those taken into the kingdom are those Jews who obeyed God are first, then those who had died in the love of Christ, and third and last come Christians who are alive at the beginning of the thousand year reign.

After the Millennium, Jesus will deliver the kingdom to God the Father and Jesus will be appointed Ruler forever. **1st Corinthians. 15:24 to 26**: *Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.*

Back to Rev 20 verse 5. If we consider that faithful Jews and Christians both living and dead are taken into the kingdom for the thousand year reign, then what about the rest of the dead? Well, the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished, for this 1000 year reign was only the first resurrections, and the rest of the dead who were never saved will be raised in the second resurrection which is beyond the scope of today's reading and is described in verses 12 and 13. But rather than leave you hanging, what happens after the second resurrection is that God's judgement decides who is resurrected to eternal life, and who is resurrected to an eternal punishment in the lake of fire.

And in case this has you worried: **Verse 6 assures us that: *Blessed and holy are they who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*** We Christians are the blessed and the wicked dead have no part in this resurrection. We believers in Jesus are not subject to death because we were born again and will never die. This second death mentioned here is for the lost.

In closing: While Jesus will rule God's kingdom, some people born during those 1,000 years will eventually rebel and they will appear on the outside that they are His people, but inwardly they hate His authority over them. They join Satan at the end of the millennium kingdom.

I am sorry to say there will be people like them today who outwardly claim to be Christians but don't like what the Bible says about certain issues. They choose to rebel against God's word. Satan and his demons are roaming the earth today to lead many people astray.

John's Revelation is written for us to give us a warning of what's to come. It speaks of the joy of living in the God's Kingdom and next week we will consider that this means. But it also serves as a warning for those who don't have Jesus in their hearts, and it's a wake-up call for those who have allowed faith to become religion.

Let us all examine ourselves and ask ourselves if we have Jesus in our hearts? We don't know when the master will return or when this thousand year reign will start, so let us prepare ourselves, let us be ready! ***Amen***

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