The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Chapter 20

The Millennium and the Great White Throne

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Chapter 20 — The Thousand Years and Final Judgment

The symbol of power for judgment in chapter 19 is the horse. There, summary judgment is executed. In chapter 20 we find 'thrones', and finally the 'great white throne', symbols of sessional judgment. The saints are not connected with this last as it is Christ alone Who officiates there.

Chap. 20:1-3

An angel possessing power (key), in administrative responsibility to God, lays hold on Satan, binding him with a great chain and casting him into the abyss. For a thousand years man is to be tested with no devil to tempt him and in the presence of the Lord's good and righteous reign of peace.

Chap. 20:4 — Three Groups of Saints

First, those who followed the Lord out of heaven (19:14), i.e. all those who were caught up at the rapture, are seated on thrones, associated with Christ in the judgment of the world (1 Cor. 6:2-3). Second, those martyred before the Beast is manifested, 'beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God' (see 6:9-11). Third, those 'which had not worshipped the Beast' (JND translation makes this clear). John sees these last two groups in a disembodied state and as he looks 'they lived'. Killed during the tribulation, they would lose part in the kingdom if left in death. The Lord graciously completes the 'first resurrection' by raising them at this time. They reign with the other heavenly saints — 'more than conquerors'. The first resurrection includes Christ and all the saints. The first resurrection is the resurrection of the just, a class of persons, not a point in time merely.

Chap. 20:5

Only the unsaved dead remain in their graves during the thousand year reign of Christ and His saints.

Chap. 20:6

The saints, all raised in the first resurrection, are (1) blessed, (2) holy, (3) exempt from the second death's power, (4) priests, and (5) kings. They reign for one thousand years. This period of time is mentioned six times in this chapter emphasizing that it is a literal and not a figurative period.

Chap. 20:7-8

One more test must be applied to man — Satan is let loose once more. This is at the end of Christ's benevolent reign (read Psa. 72). Satan deceives the 'nations which are in the four quarters of the earth'. He does not deceive Israel nor the believing Gentiles, 'the camp of the saints'. All the believers are seen together in 'the camp of the saints, and the beloved city' (Psalm 78:68). This last passage is interesting in that it indicates that Israel will be in the land and not in the 'four quarters of the earth' where Satan deceives. The reference to 'Gog and Magog' in this verse must not be confounded with Ezek. 38 and 39, as that takes place before the millennium, whereas this is after that period. We quote JND on Rev. 20:8 — 'Gog and Magog — countless hordes from the four quarters of the earth. Repetition on a larger scale of Ezek. 38.'

Chap. 20:10

Satan's final and unending doom in the fire prepared for the devil and his angels. How sad that men will be there also!

Chap. 20:11

It is the Lord Jesus Who sits on this throne of purity (John 5:22,26,27).

Chap. 20:12

The wicked dead, with spirit, soul and body reunited, stand for judgment before 'the throne' (not before God as in the text — see JND translation). It is Christ as such on the throne Who judges. Man judged (alas as many desired) on the ground of his works, is lost! Even now he is weighed in the balances and found wanting, and so shall it also be then.

Chap. 20:13-15

Even the sea will not hide from judgment. In the eternal state 'death and hades' will have no work to do, so they are banished to that place where all traces of sin are consigned forever.