

St. Therese Catholic Church

Book of Revelation
Chapter 20

May 6, 2025

1



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Overview

- Rather than simply narrate the devil's end, Rev. 20 recounts Satan's story in the context of salvation history (as does Rev. 12).
- First the dragon is bound and confined; then comes the thousand-year reign of the martyrs and saints with Christ; then Satan is released to deceive and lead the nations in a final assault against God's people; finally, the serpent is destroyed forever (319).
- The concluding part of chapter 20, verses 11-15, depicts the final judgment. With Satan's defeat and the casting of Death and Hades into the lake of fire, all the adversaries of God and his people have met their end, and the way is clear for the full arrival of God's kingdom in chapters 21-22 (320).

2



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Angel

- The vision of Rev. 20:1-10 recapitulates the vision of Rev. 12:7-12 but changes the imagery and completes the story (320).
- In Rev. 12, Michael threw the dragon to earth, wherein the dragon eventually summons the two beasts (Rev 13), whom he uses to establish a rival kingdom and a deceptive ideology to persecute the Church (320).
- **Angel:** Rather than cast the dragon down to earth as in Rev. 12:9, the angel ties up the dragon for a thousand years and throws it into the abyss, a deep pit metaphorically located beneath the earth (320).

3



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Angel

- **Key locked...and sealed:** The angel locked and sealed the abyss over the serpent, symbolic language indicating the devil's secure restraint (320).
- **Lead the nations astray:** The purpose of imprisoning the dragon is so that it could no longer lead the nations astray. In Rev. 12:9, the devil was described as the one "who deceived" (same Greek word as "led astray") "the whole world" (320 – 321).
- **A thousand years:** The devil is no longer able to deceive the nations (Greek: *ta ethne* – "the Gentiles").

4



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Jesus Binds

- The decisive binding of Satan was done by Jesus. He announced in parable that he was the strong man who bound Beelzebul in Mark 3:27 and the binding was done on the Cross (McIlraith, 169).
- Satan's full range of names, first heard in 12:9, is given here: dragon, ancient serpent, devil, and Satan (McIlraith, 169).
- As the first enemy bringing an end to paradise, his power was released. Christ has now come to restore paradise (we can now eat from the tree of life) and so Satan's time is ended (McIlraith, 169).

5



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Judging on Thrones

- John presents a second vision in Rev. 20 that contains two incidents, the thousand-year reign (20:4-6) and the final assault of Satan and his consignment to the lake of fire (20:7-10) (McIlraith, 170).
- **Saw thrones:** Seats belonging to individuals exercising authority.
- **The Souls...been beheaded:** That is, Christian martyrs (mentioned in 6:9).
- **Not worshipped the beast:** Faithful Christians who died either by martyrdom or by a natural death (324).

6



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Millenium

- **Came to life and reigned with Christ:** The martyrs and other faithful Christian witnesses who have been raised to life anticipate the blessing promised to all God's people (324).
- **Thousand Years:** Although some interpreters take the thousand years of Satan's captivity literally, a figurative interpretation better fits the symbolism of the immediate context (key, abyss, heavy chain, dragon, etc.) and of the book as a whole (324).
- **Key:** The Old Testament also often uses the number "thousand" to indicate a very large number rather than a precise quantity (e.g., Deut. 7:9; Ps. 90:4) (324).

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Millenium

- There have been two interpretations of the thousand-year reign (millennium). One reads the thousand years literally and is happening at the end of time. The other interpretation sees it as a symbolic and happening right now. Those in the Early Church took it literally, but slowly its symbolic nature was recognized (McIlraith, 170).
- The New Jerusalem, essentially, is built of conquerors, and the idea of Jesus returning and doing things on earth physically – possibly rebuilding a physical Jerusalem- does not accord with this or with the witness of the rest of Scripture (McIlraith, 170).

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Millenium

- Eventually, St. Augustine gave an interpretation that satisfied the Church. The millennium, he claimed, is the symbol of the time period that runs from the time of the Incarnation to the time of Christ's Second Coming.
- Satan is contained during this time but is allowed some power. The martyrs – and the saints – reign with Christ even now. Jesus himself explained in the Gospels that his messianic kingdom consists of two parts.
- In his first coming, he established a Kingdom of God and bound Satan. In his final coming, he will set up his Kingdom in its final form. The Apocalypse tells us that this final form of the Kingdom consists of the Marriage of the Lamb and makes us his bride (McIlraith, 170-171).

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Historic Premillennialism

Interpretation	Meaning
Historic Premillennialism	A literal thousand-year period of an earthly paradise when Christ and the saints would rule the nations and biblical prophecies about a transformed creation would be fulfilled in history.
	A common idea was that history would follow the pattern of creation. After the first six days (each a thousand years in accord with Ps. 90:4), a sabbath of one thousand years of Messianic earthly reign would precede the eternal kingdom.

~Williamson, 329

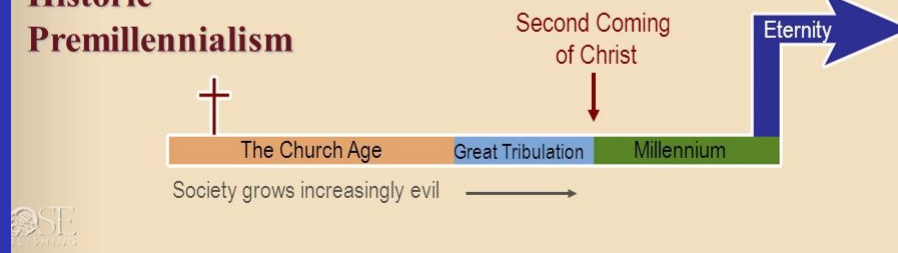
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Historic Premillennialism

Historic Premillennialism



Historic Premillennialism: Jesus will return to earth before the millennium described in Revelation 20, after a time of tribulation. Christians endure the time of tribulation.
~Jones, End Times Prophecy, 68

Source: <https://slideplayer.com/slide/3482860/>

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Amillennialism

Interpretation	Meaning
Amillennialism (St. Augustine)	The thousand-year reign of Christ and the saints began with Christ's first coming and continues in the Church until Christ's second coming.
Dominant interpretation through the Middle Ages and beyond	The first resurrection is spiritual and occurs in baptism; the second resurrection is the general physical resurrection of the just and unjust at the end of history.
This is the Catholic view.	The thousand-year reign, then, is not a future, earthly reign. Instead, it symbolizes the present ongoing reign of Jesus with his people in his Church.

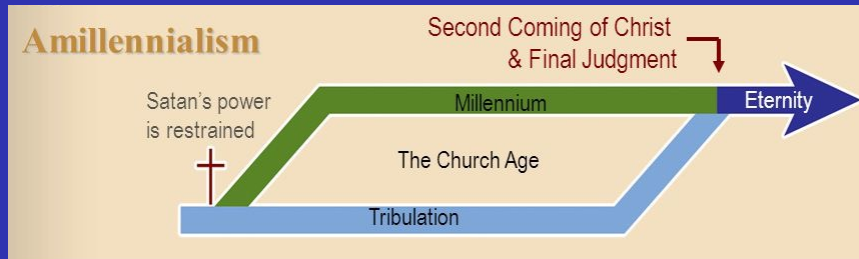
~Williamson, 329

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Amillennialism



A-Millennial: The thousand years is not a future, earthly reign. Instead, it symbolizes the present ongoing reign of Jesus with his people.

It is a spiritual reign that extends from the Ascension of Jesus to his glorious return.
~Jones, End Times Prophecy, 68.

Source: <https://slideplayer.com/slide/3482860/>

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Postmillennialism

Interpretation	Meaning
Postmillennialism	The millennial kingdom will come gradually as the Church fulfills its mission, culminating in Christ's return.
	For example, the Kingdom of God will be inaugurated through outpourings of the spirit, or the "social gospel" is realized (e.g., end of slavery, a temporal time of peace, etc.).
	Key: Jesus will return after a millennium (1,000 years or "era of gospel peace") when an overwhelming number of people embrace the gospel.

~Williamson, 329

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Post-Millennialism



Post-millennialism: "After the millennium" – Jesus will return after a millennium (1,000 years or "era of gospel peace") when the overwhelming majority or persons throughout the world embrace the gospel.

Christ will reign spiritually through the spread of his gospel around the globe.
~Jones, End Times Prophecy, 68.

Source: <https://slideplayer.com/slide/3482860/>

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Dispensational Premillennialism

Interpretation	Meaning
Dispensational premillennialism	Christ will return before the great tribulation, raise believers who have died, and rapture – snatch up – all true Christians to heaven.
Fundamentalists and some Evangelical Christians today	After seven years of tribulation, Christ will return with the Church and defeat the beast, false prophet, and their armies.
	Then the Church will reign with Christ for a thousand years on a transformed earth, fulfilling Is. 65:18-25, in a time of universal peace, prosperity, long life, and prevailing righteousness.

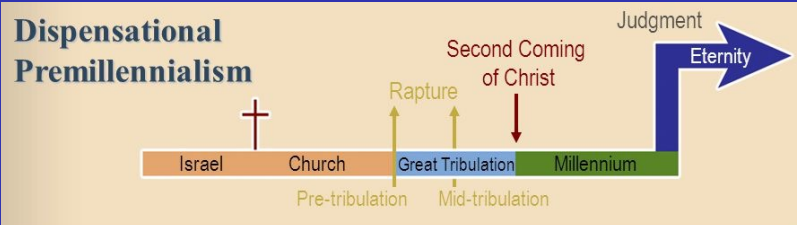
~Williamson, 330

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Dispensational Premillennialism



Dispensational Premillennialism: Christ will return to rapture the righteous, then seven years of "tribulation" will affect the earth. Subsequently, Jesus will return before the millennium and establish his millennial kingdom.

Most premillennialists believe that the Christians will be "raptured" before the tribulation. Some believe this will happen partway through the tribulation.
~Jones, End Times Prophecy, 68

Source: <https://slideplayer.com/slide/3482860/>

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- Scripture is unclear whether cats will participate in the rapture.
- It's more likely they will have to endure the tribulation with the rest of us (or cause it).



<https://memegenerator.net/instance/60221837/farting-cat-rapture-cat-away>

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Catholic Church's View

- The Catholic Church rejects millennialism and interpretations like dispensationalism that expect a visible earthly reign of Christ before the final judgment.
- The Church also rejects the view that Christ's kingdom will come to pass through a human political program, through a "secular messianism" (Catechism 676), or even through the "progressive ascendancy" of the Church (Catechism 677) (social gospel as postmillennialism).
- Rather, the kingdom will come "only by God's victory over "the final unleashing of evil." and the descent of the new Jerusalem from heaven (Catechism 677) (331).

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First Resurrection

- **First resurrection:** While St. Augustine gave a spiritual interpretation of the first resurrection as baptism, the simplest solution is that the first resurrection refers to life with Christ in heaven that the blessed, including martyrs, experience immediately after death (326).
- **Second death:** Eternal separation from God, later explained as the "pool of fire" (20:14; 21:8).

First Death: Physical death	Second Death: Eternal separation
First resurrection: Soul's life with Christ in heaven in the particular judgment (immediate or delayed)	Second resurrection: Bodily resurrection united with soul in the final judgment (greater glory/shame)

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Judgement of the Devil

- **His prison:** The devil's power has been severely curtailed but not completely eliminated. While Jesus binds the devil, the binding does not prevent the devil from continuing to oppose Jesus and his disciples (332).
- **For battle:** The Greek uses the definite article – Satan gathers them for *the* battle, referring to the last battle foretold by the prophets (especially Ezekiel 38-39) and by Rev. 16:14-16, the battle at Armageddon, and already recounted in Rev. 19:17-21 (332).
- **Gog and Magog:** In Ezekiel's vision (Ezek. 38-39), Gog, king of Magog, gathers the nations to fight against Israel (332).

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Judgement of the Devil

- Gog and Magog represent all those from the whole world who have been led astray into idolatry by Satan. Only the nations are led astray. All those in the camp/city [of the holy ones – Rev. 20:9] are safe from this deception (McIlraith, 172).
- The Apocalypse is full of the “coming” of Jesus and now we are faced with the loosing and going forth of Satan to continue the war we first heard of in 11:7 (McIlraith, 172).
- It was kicked off by the beast, but it was always the dragon's war. He gathers Gog and Magog and they “go up” over the broad earth. In this book, the beasts are said to “go up” so this is a demon inspired attack. They surround the Church described as a camp of the saints and the Holy City (McIlraith, 172).

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Judgement of the Devil

- **Fire came down from heaven:** John echoes descriptions of God's fiery judgment against Gog and Magog (Ezek. 38:22; 39:6) (333).
- This is not a literal description but rather imagery that depicts divine destruction of those who seek to destroy God's people (333).
- In several places Revelation foretells an extraordinary unleashing of evil in an attack on the Church before history's end (333).

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Attack on the Church

Scripture	Description
11:7	Power is granted to the beast to conquer and kill the two witnesses when their powerful testimony is completed.
13:7	The beast is allowed to wage war against the holy ones and conquer them.
16:13-16	The sixth bowl is poured out and the kings of the whole world are assembled at Armageddon.
17:12-14	The ten kings join the beast to make war on the Lamb
19:17-21	The beast, the kings, and their armies are gathered to fight the white rider and his army.

~Williamson, 333

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Judgement of the Devil

- **Thrown into the pool of fire and sulfur:** The ancient serpent who incited the original rebellion against God is punished, joining the beast and false prophet in the pool of fire.
- **Key:** All three – the devil, beast, and false prophet – end up in the same place.
- The terrible fate of the diabolical trinity is not annihilation; rather, they will be tormented day and night forever. Since Satan and his agents are spiritual beings that do not have bodies, the torment of the lake of fire and sulfur is imagery that refers to extraordinary suffering (334).

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God's Beloved

- In contrast to the devil, the beast, and the false prophet, Revelation will present God's saints as those conquering, the Wife.
- God prepares his Wife, his "Beloved." He has prepared his Beloved Wife throughout the Book of Revelation.
- Jesus is the one loving us. His love has created, preserved, challenged, and now protects his espoused Wife. It is the love of Jesus and his Wife's nuptial love to him (always given by him) that makes the community impregnable (McIlraith, 172).

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God's Throne

- In verses 11-15, John sees another vision of the final judgment, this one focusing on the judgment of the dead (336).
- An earlier vision of the final judgment, that of the harvest of the earth (14:14-20), focused on the judgment of those living on the earth at the end of history (337).
- **Throne:** In the Apocalypse, everything revolves about the throne. The throne is "great" and "white," and it symbolizes the ultimate sovereignty of the Father, the Creator (McIlraith, 173).
- God "sitting" on his throne symbolizes his divine presence.

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Final Judgment

- **Earth and sky fled:** Before this awesome presence, earth and sky flee. The first creation ceases to exist. But the New Creation has already begun and will take the place of the first creation. (McIlraith, 173).
- **Scrolls were opened:** The scrolls, or "books," represent the divine record of the acts of human beings, whether good or bad (337).
- **Key:** Although St. Paul stresses that human beings are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8-9), he also firmly teaches that we will be judged by our works: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive recompense, according to what he did in the body, whether good or evil" (337).

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Final Judgment

- **Book of life:** This scroll contains the names of those who have accepted God's gift of eternal life. This register names the citizens of the new Jerusalem (338).
- At this final judgment, we have two books. One contains the "works" of each individual and that person will be judged on these (McIlraith, 175).
- The other book, which has appeared a few times up to now, is the "book of life of the Lamb." It contains all who belong to the New Jerusalem (21:27). This is the Lamb's bridal roll (McIlraith, 175).

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Final Judgment

- Michaelangelo's Last Judgment is in the Sistine Chapel.
- He has angels blowing trumpets with all their might and two books.
- Book of life for the souls ascending to heaven.
- Book of the damned for the soul descending into hell.



- The book of life is *much* smaller.

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Final Judgment

- Who is written in the book of life? Jesus tells the Church of Sardis in Rev. 3:5 that “He who conquers, shall be be clad thus in white garments and I shall not blot his name out of the book of life” (McIlraith, 175).
- We have seen that those who conquer are those who respond to Jesus’ love with their love, faith, service, and endurance (McIlraith, 175).
- As long as they continue to conquer, they shall stay in that book. Those conquering, now the prepared Wife, are written in the Lamb’s book of life and will not be thrown into the lake of fire (McIlraith, 176).

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Final Judgment

- **Death and Hades:** They were the first enemies mentioned in Revelation 1:18 and are last to be defeated (338).
- The “fiery pool burning with sulfur” was mentioned in 19:20 as the final destination of the beast and the false prophet, and in 20:10 as the final destination of the devil himself (338).
- It is fitting that death, the devil’s tool (Wis. 2:24; Heb. 2:14-15), should share the fate of the one who wielded it (338).
- **Pool of Fire:** Tragically, the lake of fire also becomes the final destination of human beings who, despite many warnings, refused to repent of their evildoing (2:21-22; 9:20-21) (339).

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Great Suspense

- After this scene, we are in a moment of great suspense. Babylon is gone, so are all God's enemies (e.g., dragon, beast, false prophet, etc.).
- Even the first creation (*ta prota*) is gone. What is left is those conquering, the prepared Wife.
- The situation is similar to that described by Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:2, "I have betrothed you to Christ, to present you as a pure virgin to her one husband." We are now at the end of the betrothal period. We are about to see the end of this nuptial journey (McIlraith, 176).

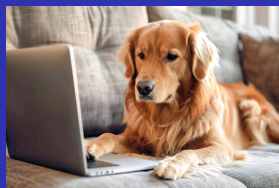
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Next Time

- Tuesday, May 20th



Revelation 21

The New Heaven and the New Earth	21:1 – 8
The New Jerusalem	21:9 – 27

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