

Dr. David Mathewson, Revelation, Session 27, Revelation 20: Millennium, Great White Throne Judgment

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mathewson, Revelation, Session 27, Revelation 20: Millennium, Great White Throne Judgment, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Dave Mathewson's lecture on Revelation 20 interprets the Millennium symbolically as the **vindication of the saints**, contrasting their reign with Satan's rule. He views the thousand years not as a literal timeframe but as a representation of this **complete reversal**. The lecture also **explains the Great White Throne Judgment** as a separate event, judging the unbelieving dead, and clarifies the two resurrections and two deaths described in the text. Finally, it positions the Millennium as a **prelude to the new creation** detailed in Revelation 21 and 22, which represents the ultimate restoration of God's relationship with humanity.

**2. 30 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 27 – Double click icon to
play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (New Testament → Revelation).**



**Mathewson_Revela
tion_Session27.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. Mathewson's lecture on Revelation 20, focusing on the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment:

Briefing Document: Dr. Dave Mathewson on Revelation 20

Overall Focus: This lecture provides an interpretation of Revelation 20, particularly verses 4-6 (the Millennium) and verses 11-15 (the Great White Throne Judgment). Dr. Mathewson emphasizes a symbolic reading of the text and argues that chapter 20 serves primarily to highlight the judgment of Satan and the vindication of the saints, rather than establishing a strict chronological timeline. He stresses that the main focus of Revelation is the new creation described in chapters 21 and 22.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. **Symbolic Interpretation of the Millennium (Revelation 20:4-6):**
 - **Not Literal Time:** The "thousand years" should be taken symbolically, not as a literal period of time. It could refer to any period, the number 1000 being symbolic. "...the thousand years, whatever we think it refers to temporally, should be taken as symbolically."
 - **Vindication of the Saints:** The Millennium primarily symbolizes the vindication of the saints who were persecuted by Satan and the beasts. It represents a reversal of their suffering. "In my opinion, the millennial reference in Revelation 20 is primarily to be taken simply as symbolic of the vindication of the saints."
 - **Contrast with Satan's Reign:** The 1000 years is used in contrast to shorter periods (e.g., "ten days," "three and a half years") associated with Satan's reign, emphasizing the complete and full vindication of God's people and making Satan's reign seem insignificant. "So the point is to draw a contrast between the limited period of time...that Satan reigned and the period of time that the saints reigned, a thousand years."
 - **Reigning with Christ:** The saints' resurrection and reign during the millennium symbolizes their vindication. They come to life and reign in direct contrast to how they were treated at the hands of the beast who reigned. "The saints who were put to death, they come to life... In contrast to Satan, who ruled, the saints rule."

- **Not the Focus of Revelation:** The Millennium is not the main point of Revelation. It serves to set the stage for the new creation described in chapters 21 and 22. "...our interpretation needs to reflect the role that chapter 20 plays within Revelation, that it is not the most significant feature. It is not the primary goal and point of Revelation, the new creation is."

1. **Judgment of Satan:**

- **Final Verdict:** Chapter 20 is primarily about the final judgment of Satan. His judgment includes the vindication of those he persecuted. "... the primary function of chapter 20 is this is the judgment on Satan." "...part of Satan's judgment is also to show the vindication of those he has accused and those he has harmed and persecuted."
- **Removed and Judged:** Like the beasts in chapter 19, Satan is ultimately judged and thrown into the lake of fire, completing the removal of the "unholy trinity." "...the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown."
- **Satan Released, Then Judged:** The temporary release of Satan after being bound is not a separate event but is to show how Satan's judgment has been set and he cannot overturn the vindication of the saints. "Anyone who reads this text in light of that apocalyptic motif would understand Satan being set free so he can go into judgment." "... the reason John re-narrates the end time battle again... is simply to demonstrate once more that the verdict on God's people in chapter 20:4 through 6... cannot be overturned."
- **Symbolism of Gog and Magog:** Gog and Magog are not literal nations, but symbolize all nations of the earth in opposition to God and his people. "... John is using Gog and Magog in allusion to the battle in Ezekiel 38. Now, John sees Gog and Magog as symbols for all the nations of the entire earth."

1. **The Two Resurrections:**

- **First Resurrection:** The first resurrection (Revelation 20:4) is the resurrection of the saints who reign with Christ during the "thousand years" symbolizing their vindication. "The first resurrection is clearly in verse four, the resurrection of the saints symbolized by the thousand years."

- **Second Resurrection:** The second resurrection (implied in 20:5 and depicted in 20:11-15) is the resurrection of the unbelieving dead for final judgment.
"Probably, it is verse five, the first part of verse five. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended." "I think verses 11 and 15 are the second resurrection, where now all of the dead... were judged..."
- **First Death & Second Death:** The "first death" is physical death, particularly the death of the martyred saints. The "second death" is the lake of fire and eternal separation from God, reserved for the unfaithful and unbelievers. "Christians suffer the first death, that is, physical death and harm at the hands of Satan and the beast, but they will not experience the second death, which is being thrown into the lake of fire." "The lake of fire is the second death."

1. **The Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15):**

- **Judgment of Unbelievers:** This scene primarily depicts the judgment of the unbelieving dead who did not participate in the first resurrection. "In my opinion, this is a judgment for the unbelieving dead. This is a judgment for unbelievers."
"So, I don't see Revelation 15 as the judgment of all people, some to eternal life and some to eternal judgment. I think 11 through 15 is solely a judgment of unbelievers."
- **Not Chronological:** It's not necessarily a chronological event after all that's described in chapter 20. It's another way to depict what happens at the second coming of Christ. "...probably, verses 11 through 15 don't necessarily happen chronologically after the other events."
- **Books of Judgment:** The books opened are symbolic of a record of their works, which serve as the basis for their judgment. The Book of Life emphasizes that their names were not found in it. "Here, the works function as a basis for judgment... The Book of Life is here simply because, to emphasize, I think that their names were not found in it."
- **Removal of Evil:** The purpose of the judgment is to remove all evil from creation in preparation for the new creation. "All of evil has been removed...all of those who followed the beast and worshipped his image... now have been removed in a series of judgment scenes..."

- **Symbolic Lake of Fire:** The lake of fire is not a literal place, but a symbol of eternal separation from God's presence and God's judgment. "...the lake of fire also is not meant to be taken literally... but probably simply a symbol of judgment. That is a symbol of complete removal from God's presence."

1. **Transition to the New Creation (Revelation 21 & 22):**

- **Focus of Revelation:** The main point of Revelation is not the Millennium or the judgment but the arrival of the new creation in chapters 21 and 22. All of chapter 20 is setting the stage for this. "...the main goal of the book, which is chapter 21 and 22 that we'll get to in a moment."
- **Comprehensive Judgment:** Chapters 19 and 20 depict the comprehensive judgment and removal of all evil, paving the way for a new creation. "...in a comprehensive judgment scene, all evil has been removed...Even creation itself has been judged."
- **God's New Home:** The new creation is not only our new home, but it's also God's new home because now, as in the time of Genesis 1 and 2, God will dwell with his people. "...Revelation 21 and 22 are also about God getting a new home? God comes down from heaven and now God's throne and his dwelling is now with his people on a new earth."

Key Quotes:

- "The thousand years, whatever we think it refers to temporally, should be taken as symbolically."
- "In my opinion, the millennial reference in Revelation 20 is primarily to be taken simply as symbolic of the vindication of the saints."
- "...our interpretation needs to reflect the role that chapter 20 plays within Revelation, that it is not the most significant feature. It is not the primary goal and point of Revelation, the new creation is."
- "So the point is to draw a contrast between the limited period of time...that Satan reigned and the period of time that the saints reigned, a thousand years."
- "The lake of fire is the second death."
- "...the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown."

- "I think verses 11 and 15 are the second resurrection, where now all of the dead... were judged..."
- "In my opinion, this is a judgment for the unbelieving dead. This is a judgment for unbelievers."
- "...the lake of fire also is not meant to be taken literally... but probably simply a symbol of judgment. That is a symbol of complete removal from God's presence."
- "...Revelation 21 and 22 are also about God getting a new home? God comes down from heaven and now God's throne and his dwelling is now with his people on a new earth."

Conclusion:

Dr. Mathewson presents a symbolic interpretation of Revelation 20, arguing that the chapter's main purpose is to highlight the judgment of Satan and the vindication of God's people. He places the chapter within the larger context of the book of Revelation, which ultimately focuses on the new creation in chapters 21 and 22. He emphasizes the importance of understanding that the Millennium is not a literal time period, but a symbol of the saints' victory and the complete defeat of evil, which sets the stage for the new heavens and new earth.

4. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 27, Revelation 20: Millennium, Great White Throne Judgment

Revelation 20 Study Guide

Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Dr. Mathewson, how should the thousand years in Revelation 20 be interpreted?
2. What is the primary function of the millennial reference in Revelation 20, according to Mathewson?
3. How does the reign of the saints contrast with the reign of Satan, as described in the lecture?
4. What does Mathewson suggest about the first and second resurrections in Revelation 20?
5. According to Mathewson, what is the "second death" mentioned in Revelation 20?
6. What does Mathewson identify as the main theme of Revelation 20, and how does the vindication of the saints fit within that theme?
7. How does the battle described in Revelation 20:7-10 relate to other battles described earlier in Revelation, according to Mathewson?
8. What is the significance of Gog and Magog in Revelation 20, according to Mathewson?
9. Who is judged at the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20:11-15, according to Mathewson?
10. According to Mathewson, what is the symbolic meaning of the lake of fire?

Answer Key

1. Dr. Mathewson argues the thousand years should be taken symbolically, not literally, representing a period of time of virtually any length. It primarily symbolizes the vindication and reign of the saints, not a specific chronological period.

2. The primary function of the millennial reference is to symbolize the vindication of the saints and their reversal of fortune in contrast to Satan and the beast's reign of oppression and persecution. It's about their victory and being raised to life to reign.
3. Satan's reign is portrayed as one of death and persecution of Christians, while the reign of the saints is the opposite: they are raised to life, vindicated, and reign with Christ, symbolizing their victory and full reversal of fortunes.
4. Mathewson explains that the first resurrection is the raising of the saints (v.4) symbolized by the thousand-year reign and the second resurrection is the raising of the unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (v.5,11-15), for judgment.
5. The "second death," according to Mathewson, is being thrown into the lake of fire. This is not a physical death, but a symbolic depiction of eternal separation from God's presence, reserved for the unfaithful.
6. The main theme of Revelation 20 is the judgment of Satan. The vindication of the saints is a crucial aspect of Satan's judgment, showing the reversal of his unjust treatment of God's people and the validation of their witness.
7. Mathewson suggests that the battle in Revelation 20:7-10 is the same end-time battle depicted in various ways throughout Revelation. This includes the battle in 19, Armageddon in chapter 16, and the depiction in chapter 17, emphasizing it is a symbolic judgment scene.
8. Gog and Magog are not literal nations, but symbolic of all the nations of the entire earth, led by Satan in final opposition to God and his people. They represent universal rebellion against God.
9. At the Great White Throne Judgment, only the unbelieving dead are judged. Mathewson asserts that the saints have already been judged and vindicated at the first resurrection and will not be judged in the second.
10. The lake of fire is not a literal place, but a symbol of complete and eternal separation from God's presence. It represents the final judgment for the wicked and those who rejected God.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the symbolic nature of numbers in Revelation 20, focusing on the meaning of the thousand years and its contrast with other numbers used for the reign of Satan. Discuss how understanding these numbers symbolically impacts the overall interpretation of the chapter.
2. Compare and contrast the different interpretations of the first and second resurrections in Revelation 20. Based on Mathewson's analysis, how does understanding the different resurrections impact the interpretation of the Millennium and the final judgment?
3. Discuss the relationship between the judgment of Satan and the vindication of the saints as depicted in Revelation 20. How does Mathewson argue that these two aspects are intertwined, and what is the significance of this relationship for understanding the chapter's message?
4. Examine Mathewson's interpretation of the battle in Revelation 20:7-10, and how it relates to other descriptions of conflict in Revelation. What does Mathewson mean when he says it is "primarily a judgment scene" rather than a literal battle?
5. Explain Mathewson's interpretation of the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20:11-15, and the relationship between the books of deeds and the Book of Life. Why does Mathewson believe this scene primarily applies to unbelievers and how does this interpretative framework affect our understanding of final judgment?

Glossary of Key Terms

Millennium: In the context of Revelation 20, this refers to the symbolically interpreted “thousand-year” reign of Christ and the saints, understood by Mathewson not as a literal time period but as a representation of the saints' vindication and victory.

Vindication of the Saints: The act of God proving the righteousness of believers, reversing the injustices they suffered at the hands of Satan and the beast. In Revelation 20, it is symbolized by their resurrection and reign with Christ.

First Resurrection: According to Mathewson, this refers to the resurrection of the saints (v. 4) who are raised to life and reign with Christ. It is distinct from the resurrection of the unbelieving dead.

Second Resurrection: Mathewson interprets this as the resurrection of the rest of the dead (v. 5), described more fully in verses 11-15. This is the raising of the unbelieving dead to be judged at the Great White Throne.

Second Death: Refers to being cast into the lake of fire, a symbolic representation of eternal separation from God. It is the fate of those who are not part of the first resurrection.

Great White Throne Judgment: Described in Revelation 20:11-15, this is the final judgment scene where the unbelieving dead are judged, based on their actions and whether their names are found in the Book of Life.

Lake of Fire: A symbolic image representing the eternal separation of the wicked from God's presence, described as the final destiny of Satan, the beast, and those whose names are not in the Book of Life. It is not a literal place but a metaphor for eternal judgment.

Gog and Magog: In Revelation 20, these are symbols, not literal nations, representing all the nations of the earth deceived by Satan in the final battle against God and his people.

Book of Life: A symbolic book containing the names of those who are saved, representing those who belong to God. In the Great White Throne scene, it is used to determine who is spared from the second death.

Symbolic Interpretation: An approach to reading scripture, particularly apocalyptic literature like Revelation, that emphasizes the figurative and metaphorical meanings of words and images over their literal or historical interpretations.

5. FAQs on Mathewson, Revelation, Session 27, Revelation 20: Millennium, Great White Throne Judgment, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Revelation 20 and the New Creation

1. **How should we understand the 1000-year period (the Millennium) mentioned in Revelation 20?**
2. The 1000 years should be understood symbolically, not literally, representing the complete vindication of the saints, rather than a specific extended period of time. It is not necessarily a chronological sequence after Christ's return but rather it symbolizes the complete victory of the saints and their reign with Christ in contrast to the reign of Satan and the beasts who persecuted them. The number 1000 is likely chosen to highlight the fullness and completeness of their victory, as opposed to the limited periods of persecution.
3. **What is the significance of the "first resurrection" and the "second resurrection" mentioned in Revelation 20?**
4. The "first resurrection" refers to the raising and vindication of the saints, the faithful followers of Christ, at the second coming. It symbolizes their victory and reign with Christ. The "second resurrection" refers to the raising of all the remaining dead, primarily unbelievers, for the final judgment at the Great White Throne. It is important to note that these are not two separate events in time but rather a symbolic way to emphasize the reward of the saints and the final judgment of the unrighteous. The first resurrection is to life and vindication, and the second resurrection is to judgment.
5. **What is the "second death," and how does it relate to the first and second resurrections?**
6. The "second death" is explicitly identified as being thrown into the lake of fire. It is the final judgment and eternal separation from God's presence for those who are not part of the first resurrection. The "first death" refers to the physical death that the saints experienced as part of their witness and persecution, while the first resurrection is the raising to life and vindication that spares the saints from the second death. The second resurrection is to judgment and the second death.
7. **What role does the judgment of Satan and the beasts play in Revelation 20?**

8. The judgment of Satan and the beasts, as well as the other persecutors of the saints, is a core element of the chapter, with the Millennium serving as a symbolic counterpoint and result of this judgment. The judgment is a declaration that their reign was unjust and that their actions against God's people were wrong. The vindication of the saints—their raising and reign—is directly linked to Satan's judgment because it demonstrates that his accusations and treatment of the faithful were invalid. The judgment of Satan also is necessary to demonstrate the ultimate defeat of evil.
9. **What is the purpose of the battle with Gog and Magog described in Revelation 20?**
10. The battle with Gog and Magog is not a literal, final battle. Instead, it is a symbolic representation of the final conflict between the forces of evil, led by Satan, and the people of God. The battle, like many other battles described in the Book of Revelation, is essentially a scene of judgment. Gog and Magog are symbolic of all the nations of the earth in final opposition to God. This episode is included to emphasize the absolute security of the saints and that no attack by evil can ever overturn their vindication. It also reinforces the finality of God's judgment.
11. **What is the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20, and who is being judged?**
12. The Great White Throne Judgment is the final judgment scene. It is not a separate event in time after all other judgments, but rather another way of depicting the final judgment that takes place at the second coming of Christ. It is primarily the judgment of the unbelieving dead. The faithful saints are already raised and vindicated during the symbolic “first resurrection”. The unbelievers are judged based on their works, as detailed in the “books” that are opened, as well as the absence of their names from the “Book of Life.” This judgment results in them being cast into the lake of fire, the second death.
13. **What does the “lake of fire” symbolize in Revelation 20?**
14. The lake of fire should be understood symbolically, not literally. It is not a literal lake of burning sulfur, but rather it represents eternal separation from God's presence. The lake of fire represents a permanent state of exclusion from God and the ultimate destiny of the unrighteous and of evil. It is the opposite of the new creation where God will dwell with his people.

15. How does Revelation 20 connect to the new creation described in Revelation 21 and 22?

16. Revelation 20 acts as a pivotal transition from the destruction of evil to the arrival of the new creation. The judgment of Satan, the beasts, and the unrighteous in chapter 20 is necessary to clear the way for the new heavens and the new earth in chapter 21. It sets the stage for the complete removal of evil. This removal and judgment allow for God to fully establish a new order where He will dwell with his people on earth, fulfilling the purpose of creation. Revelation 21 and 22 can be seen as the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise of a renewed creation that the rest of the Bible points to and where God dwells with his people.