

# **Dr. Dave Mathewson, Revelation, Session 26,**

## **Revelation 20: Binding of Satan, Millennium**

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All right, let's dive deep today. We're going to be tackling a pretty fascinating topic, Revelation chapter 20. And we're lucky enough to have- well, I say lucky enough- we sought out a fantastic expert on this.

Oh, thank you. So you might know this chapter for the millennium concept. And it's been the source of quite a lot of debate over the years.

We're not going to shy away from any of that. No, we're going to go beyond the millennium itself and try to see how this chapter fits into, well, Revelation's grand narrative. I always think of it kind of like a puzzle.

It is. Yeah. And it's fascinating because as we look at Revelation 20, we can't necessarily take everything in strict chronological order.

Oh, really? Mathewson points out that we have to look at it as snapshots, different angles, if you will, on the events surrounding Christ's second coming. So we're not looking at a strict timeline here. No, not necessarily.

It's more like a divine montage, I guess you could say. I like that. So where does this montage begin? Where do we start? Well, chapter 20 picks up right where 19 leaves off, and that is with judgment.

But the spotlight now shifts from the beast in the false prophet to Satan himself. Interesting. So how does this judgment play out? Does Satan, you know, get off easy? Not a chance.

In fact, his judgment's unique. Mathewson points out that it unfolds in two stages. First, Satan is bound in the abyss for a thousand years.

But then after that, he's released for a short time before facing final judgment. A two-stage judgment. That's interesting.

Now, that sounds familiar. Haven't I heard that somewhere before? You probably have. It echoes a pattern found in both the Old Testament and apocalyptic literature.

You think about Isaiah 24.21-22, it talks about how these evil beings are imprisoned before they face their ultimate judgment. Right. So it's like a cosmic holding cell.

You could say that. Yeah. But what's the point of that? Why not just skip to the final judgment? Well, that's where Mathewson's analysis gets really interesting.

He argues that this two-stage judgment actually serves to highlight the complete and utter vindication of God's people. So you're saying that while Satan is bound, unable to kind of wreak havoc, the saints get their moment. Exactly.

Revelation 20.4 describes these folks who were beheaded for their testimony, those who refuse to worship the beast. Right, right. They are vindicated, and they reign with Christ for a thousand years.

Okay. That's powerful. Yeah, it really is.

It's not just about punishing evil. It's about showcasing the ultimate triumph of good, right? Precisely. It's a complete reversal of power.

It's a dramatic shift from all the oppression and suffering that we saw in those earlier chapters. The tables have turned. So Satan's reign of terror ends and the faithful are finally exalted.

Got it. I can see why Mathewson calls this a vindication. But now we have to address the big question, the one that always comes up when we talk about Revelation 20.

Here we go. What about those thousand years? I mean, what does the millennium really mean? That's the million-dollar question. And of course, there's no single universally agreed-upon answer.

Christians throughout history have interpreted the millennium in different ways. Mathewson, in his work, outlines three main viewpoints, and it's important that he does it impartially, recognizing that sincere Christians have held all of these different positions. So let's hear them.

Break down those millennial viewpoints for us. All right. The first view is what we call premillennialism.

OK. And premillennialism holds that Christ will return before the millennium to establish a literal thousand-year reign on Earth. So Christ's return kind of kicks off this thousand-year period of peace and righteousness.

That's the idea. Then you have what's called postmillennialism. OK.

Now, postmillennialism proposes that the church's efforts will gradually lead to a golden age, kind of a millennium on Earth. And then Christ would return after that period. So in this view, the millennium is a result of human progress and kind of societal transformation.

That's the general idea. And then finally, you have what's called amillennialism. Now, this view understands the millennium symbolically.

OK. As a representation of the entire church age. Hmm.

With Christ reigning from heaven throughout history. So no literal thousand years on Earth. Yeah.

Just a symbolic representation of Christ's ongoing reign. You got it. Three very different perspectives on the millennium.

No wonder this topic has generated so much discussion. Right. But how does Matthewson himself approach this? Does he, you know, lean towards one of these viewpoints over the others? Well, he doesn't explicitly endorse one view over the other.

Instead, he offers some key observations to kind of guide our understanding. And these are where his own unique insights really kind of shine through. All right.

Let's have them. So what are Matthewson's kind of guiding principles for understanding this millennium? Well, first, he emphasizes that the thousand years should be understood symbolically. OK.

He's not fixated on a literal time frame. So it's about that symbolic significance. Yes.

Not necessarily the precise chronological duration. That's right. I'm starting to see where this is going.

And building on that, he suggests that the events of Chapter 20 likely occur at the Second Coming, tying back to the themes that we see in Chapter 19. So the millennium isn't some standalone event happening before or after the Second Coming. Yeah.

It's all part of the same kind of grand picture. Right. And he also points out that Chapters 19 and 20 may not be strictly chronological, but rather offer different perspectives on the same event, much like we talked about earlier with this kind of montage idea.

Interesting. The order of events might not be as linear as it initially appears. So we need to be careful about assuming a strict timeline when we're reading Revelation.

Matthewson seems to be emphasizing the symbolic and kind of thematic connections more than a literal sequence of events. Yeah. That's a great observation.

So what else does he say? What else does Matthewson say? He makes one more, I think, crucial observation about the millennium. And that is, he suggests that the reason it's described so briefly is that it's ultimately a prelude to the full revelation of the new creation, which unfolds in Chapters 21 and 22. So in a sense, the millennium is just the appetizer before the main course.

You got it. Yeah. It sets the stage for something even greater.

A very insightful analogy. Yeah. Yes.

The millennium points us towards the ultimate hope of this transformed world that we see described in the final chapters of Revelation. Now I'm even more curious to see where this deep dive takes us. Right.

But before we move on, I have to ask: what does this understanding of the millennium as this prelude to the new creation- I mean, what does it mean for us as Christians today? Why should we care about this? Why should our listeners care about this? That's a great question. Yeah. And one that we'll explore further in part two.

Oh, okay. Because understanding the millennium isn't just about deciphering ancient prophecies. It directly impacts how we live our lives in the present and what hope we cling to for the future.

All right. Listeners, you heard it here first. Stay tuned.

Stay tuned for part two, where we're going to unpack those implications of Revelation 20 for our lives today. This is just the beginning. Absolutely.

I'm excited. Me too. Welcome back.

You ready to keep going? Let's do it. I hope you are, because we're picking up right where we left off, exploring these mysteries of Revelation chapter 20, the whole concept of the millennium. Yeah.

And it's crucial to remember, as we were talking about those different viewpoints- premillennialism, post-millennialism, and amillennialism- sincere Christians have held all of these views. Right. And Matthewson, I mean, he really emphasized approaching this topic with humility.

He did. Recognizing that there's room for, you know, different opinions, diversity of thought within Christianity. Absolutely.

But remember, he offered some key insights to kind of guide our interpretation. Yes. Those really resonated with me.

His point about the thousand years being symbolic, rather than a literal time frame. Oh, yes. That was, I mean, that was a real eye-opener.

It challenges us to look beyond just a strictly chronological reading, you know? Right. And consider the deeper meaning behind those numbers. And then that idea of the millennium being so intricately connected to the second coming.

Yeah. It's all part of that grand tapestry of Christ's return, woven together in a way that might not be perfectly linear. Right.

But in a way, it's more like a divine mosaic. Oh, I like that. With all these different pieces coming together to form this stunning picture.

And then, of course, there's the most, you know, thought-provoking point of all. The millennium is this kind of prelude to the full revelation of the new creation. That's the part I really want to dig into.

Okay, let's go. Because if the millennium is just a taste of what's to come, what does that mean for us as Christians living in the here and now? I mean, what hope does that give us? That's the question, isn't it? Matthew Singh argues that understanding the millennium this way, as a prelude, has some really profound implications for our lives today. Okay.

I'm all ears. Lay it on me. How does this impact, you know, our Christian walk, so to speak? Well, for starters, it frees us from this pressure of trying to create a perfect world here and now.

Some Christians have gotten so caught up in, you know, trying to usher in the millennium through social or political action, thinking that's their primary mission. Right. But if we see the millennium as just a taste of what's to come, a kind of foreshadowing of this new creation, then our focus shifts, doesn't it? So instead of being kind of, I don't know, bogged down and trying to force God's hand, so to speak, and create this perfect society, we can live with more of a sense of, I don't know, joyful anticipation, knowing that our true home, the fulfillment of all things, is yet to come.

You got it. But here's the thing. Right.

Recognizing that our true hope lies in the future doesn't mean we just sit back and do nothing in the present. Right. We can't just kind of check out and wait for heaven.

Exactly. So how do we live in this in-between time, this already but not yet reality of the kingdom? Mathewson would say we live as citizens of heaven, even as we journey through this earthly realm. We work for justice and righteousness.

We love our neighbors. We share the good news of God's kingdom, not to, you know, bring about the millennium ourselves, but because these are the values of the kingdom that we already belong to. So it's about living out the ethics of the kingdom now, even as we long for its full arrival.

You got it. We live in this tension of the already and the not yet. It's a bit like being engaged, you know.

You're committed. You're living in light of that promise of marriage. Right.

But the wedding day itself is still to come. I love that analogy. So we don't need to create the kingdom ourselves, but we can live as though it's already, you know, breaking into this world through our words and actions.

Precisely. And that brings us back to Revelation 20. Remember, it's not just about the millennium.

Right. The chapter also depicts the final judgment of Satan. Oh, right.

We talked about how it unfolds in those two stages. He's bound. Then after the thousand years, he's released for a short time.

Yeah. But why the release? Why not just keep him locked up? Well, it might seem counterintuitive, but Mathewson suggests that this temporary release actually serves a crucial purpose in the narrative. Okay.

I'm intrigued. What purpose does it serve? Remember those ancient and apocalyptic texts that we mentioned earlier? The ones that describe these evil beings being imprisoned before their final judgment? Like Isaiah and the Book of Enoch. Exactly.

So this release of Satan kind of echoes that pattern. It's like a temporary reprieve. A final opportunity for him to deceive the nations, gather them for this final battle against God's people.

So it's not a chance for him to regain power, but it's more of a setup for his ultimate defeat. He's given enough rope to hang himself, so to speak. You could say that.

And as you might expect, this final rebellion doesn't go well for Satan. Fire comes down from heaven and devours his armies, and Satan himself is thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet in eternal torment. Wow.

Talk about a cosmic showdown. It is. Yeah.

So all the forces of evil are finally vanquished. But what about everybody else? I mean, what happens to the rest of humanity? That's where the final scene of judgment in Chapter 20 comes in. It's called the Great White Throne Judgment.

Okay. I remember this. I mean, from, you know, my own reading of Revelation, it's a pretty intense picture.

Oh, yeah. John describes this scene of awe-inspiring grandeur. A great white throne appears, and before it, the earth and sky flee away.

And all the dead, both great and small, stand before this throne to be judged according to their deeds. So this is like the final accounting, the ultimate judgment for all humanity. It's a sobering reminder that our choices have consequences, and that ultimately we all stand accountable before God.

I have to admit, all this talk about judgment can be, you know, a little heavy. Yeah. It's good.

It's a good reminder that we need to take our faith seriously. But it also makes me wonder, is that all there is? I mean, is Revelation just this book about, you know, doom and gloom? That's a valid question. Yeah.

And one that a lot of people have asked. But remember, judgment is not the final word in Revelation. As we move into Chapters 21 and 22, the focus shifts dramatically.

We go from judgment to this glorious hope of the new creation. Ah, yes. The grand finale we've been kind of hinting at, the part where everything gets made right.

Everything. Tell me more about that. What can we expect when we get to Chapters 21 and 22? Well, in those chapters, John paints this picture of unimaginable beauty and restoration.

He sees these new heavens and a new earth, this dazzling new Jerusalem descending from heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband. So it's like all the brokenness and pain of this world is wiped away and replaced by something completely new and perfect. Exactly.

And the most beautiful part: God himself dwells with his people. He wipes away every tear, and there's no more death or mourning or crying or pain. It's hard to even wrap my mind around that.

I know. No more suffering, no more brokenness. It sounds almost too good to be true.

I know. It's a lot to take in. But that's the beauty of Revelation.

It gives us this glimpse of a future that is so glorious, so utterly transformative, that it redefines our whole understanding of hope. And remember what we were talking about earlier, all those Old Testament images and prophecies that some people expect to be fulfilled during the millennium. Where do they fit into this picture of the new creation? It's fascinating, isn't it? Because all those images- the lion lying down with the lamb, the wolf dwelling with the sheep, the desert blossoming like a rose- are all found in chapters 21 and 22.

Not in the description of the millennium. So they find their ultimate fulfillment not in some temporary earthly kingdom, but in the eternal new creation. Yeah.

I mean, it's a pretty big shift in perspective. It is. And Matthewson would argue that that is precisely the point.

The millennium, while important, ultimately points us toward this even greater hope, this glorious consummation of all things. It's like a doorway leading into an even grander hall. It makes me think of that C.S. Lewis quote, Aim at heaven and you'll get earth thrown in.

Aim at earth, and you'll get neither. Such a powerful reminder. Yeah.

Our ultimate destination, the true fulfillment of our deepest longings, lies in that eternal embrace of God. So after this deep dive into Revelation 20, peeking into those glorious final chapters, what's the takeaway for our listeners? What do we do with all this? I think the biggest takeaway is this. Don't get so caught up in trying to create the perfect world here and now that you miss the true hope that lies beyond.

Because even the best we can achieve in this life will always pale in comparison to the glory that awaits us in the new creation. Exactly. But that doesn't mean we just sit back and do nothing, right? Right.

We live as citizens of heaven, even as we journey through this earthly realm. We work for justice. We love mercy.

We walk humbly with our God, reflecting the values of that kingdom that we already belong to. It's about living out our faith in the present, even as we long for the future. It's about holding on to hope, even when the world seems dark.

Beautifully said. And remember, the story doesn't end with Chapter 20. There's so much more to explore in those final chapters of Revelation.

So to everyone listening, I mean, we encourage you to keep diving deep, unpack those verses, delve into that rich symbolism, and let that vision of the new creation inspire your

hearts, you know? Yeah. Shape your lives. And as always, remember, there's always more to discover.

Until next time, keep exploring. Okay, we're back, and I am so ready to dig into this. Me too.

The new creation, Chapters 21 and 22. This is where we finally get to see what's on the other side of all this judgment and everything. Right.

I'm practically bursting with anticipation after all this talk about the millennium being, you know, like the prelude to something even greater. Well, get ready. Yeah.

Because what John describes in these chapters is just breathtaking. Okay, lay it on me. Paint me a picture.

Okay. What does this new creation look like? Imagine this: new heavens and a new earth, radiant, dazzling, replacing the old broken world that we know. So it's not just about fixing what's already here.

It's a complete, like, do-over, fresh start. Exactly. And at the center of this new creation is the new Jerusalem.

This city of unimaginable beauty, descending from heaven, like a bride adorned for her husband. Wow. That's some serious imagery.

But what's- I mean, what's life like in this new Jerusalem? What do people do? Well, think about all those things that we long for, you know, but can never fully achieve in this world. Yeah. I know exactly what you mean.

Peace, joy, perfect love, unbroken fellowship with God. It's all there. It's there in abundance.

So it's like all the best parts of human experience, but just like amplified, perfected. Absolutely. But the most incredible part, the thing that truly sets the new creation apart from anything we can imagine, is this.

God himself dwells with his people. Now that's a game changer. Right.

I mean, God's presence, not just, you know, distant or hidden, but right there in the midst of everything. Right. And because of that, everything is different.

There's no more death, no more mourning or crying or pain. Even the curse of sin is completely undone. It's hard to wrap my mind around that.

I mean, really hard. I know. No more suffering, no more brokenness.

I mean, it just, it sounds too good to be true. I know it's a lot to take in, but that's the beauty of revelation. It gives us this glimpse of a future that is so glorious, so utterly transformative that it redefines our whole understanding of hope.

And you know, we keep coming back to this, but what about all those Old Testament images and prophecies that some people, you know, expect to be fulfilled during the millennium? Right. Right. I mean, where do they fit into all this? Well, it's really fascinating because those

images, you know, the lion lying down with the lamb, the wolf dwelling with the sheep, the desert blossoming like a rose, they're all found in chapters 21 and 22, not in the description of the millennium.

So they find their ultimate fulfillment, not in some temporary earthly kingdom, but in the eternal new creation. I mean, that's a huge shift in perspective. It is.

And Matthewson would argue that that is precisely the point. The millennium, while important, ultimately points us toward this even greater hope, this glorious consummation of all things. It's like a doorway leading into an even grander hall.

It is. It makes me think of that C.S. Lewis quote: aim at heaven, and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth, and you will get neither.

Such a powerful reminder. Yeah. Our ultimate destination, the true fulfillment of our deepest longings, lies in that eternal embrace of God.

So after this deep dive, all this exploring of Revelation 20 and those last chapters, the new creation, I mean, what's the takeaway here for our listeners? I mean, what are we supposed to do with all this? What do we do with all this? I think the biggest takeaway is this. Don't get so caught up in trying to create the perfect world here and now that you miss the true hope that lies beyond. Because even the best that we can achieve in this life will always pale in comparison to what awaits us.

Absolutely. But that doesn't mean we just sit back and do nothing. Right.

We live as citizens of heaven, even as we journey through this earthly realm. We work for justice. We love mercy.

We walk humbly with our God, reflecting the values of the kingdom that we already belong to. It's about living out our faith now in the present, even as we long for that future. It's about holding on to hope, even when the world around us seems so dark.

Beautifully said. And remember, the story doesn't end with chapter 20. There is so much more to discover, so much more to explore in those final chapters of Revelation.

Keep diving deep, everyone. Unpack those verses, you know, explore the symbolism, and let that vision of the new creation inspire your hearts. Let it shape your lives.

That's what it's all about. It is. Thanks for joining us.

We'll see you next time.