

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

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All right, buckle up, everybody, because we are diving into some seriously wild stuff today. Yeah. Revelation chapter 20.

That's right. The Millennium, the Great White Throne Judgment, all that vivid, crazy imagery. It's a wild ride, for sure.

Yeah. So to guide us through all this, we've got Dr. Mathewson's lecture, Breaking It All Down. He really gets into some of the really complex symbolism, like that 1,000-year reign, the defeat of Satan, final judgment, the whole nine yards.

Oh, yeah. Yeah. And one thing that really caught my eye, you know, going into this is that Dr. Mathewson, he kind of throws a curveball.

He does. When it comes to that whole 1,000-year reign, the Millennium, like he's saying, it might not be what we think. Yeah, he's definitely challenging the traditional view there, arguing against a literal 1,000-year reign.

So what's he saying then? Well, he suggests it's more of a symbolic representation, something deeper, something more profound. Okay. I'm intrigued.

Unpack this for us. What does he think that 1,000 years actually symbolizes? He believes it represents the complete vindication of the saints, you know, those early Christians who were facing all kinds of persecution for their faith. So it's not about a literal timeframe.

Right. It's more about this complete triumph of good over evil. Exactly.

That ultimate victory of those who stayed true, those who remained faithful. Okay. That's starting to make sense.

And to really grasp this, you've got to look at how time is used throughout Revelation. It's all symbolic. You see these short periods, like 10 days of suffering or those three and a half years of the dragon's activity, and then you contrast that with this expansive 1,000 years of the saints' reign.

Oh, I see. It's like this deliberate contrast to emphasize the completeness of the saints' victory. Okay.

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. So this 1,000-year reign, this vindication of the saints, it's like this total reversal of all the suffering and persecution they were facing. Precisely.

It's this incredible image of hope. Powerful stuff. Yeah.

Instead of being persecuted in silence, they're raised to life, and they rule. Wow. What a message for those who are struggling to hold on to their faith in the face of all that adversity.

You know, we've got to talk about something that always trips me up: those two resurrections and two deaths. Yeah, it can get a little confusing. Yeah.

But Dr. Mathewson breaks it down in a way that makes it a lot easier to digest. Okay, good. First, we've got to distinguish between the two resurrections.

The first resurrection is tied to the raising of the saints, which is symbolized by that 1,000 year reign we were just discussing. Got it. So that's the first resurrection.

What about the second one? That comes later in the chapter, verses 11 through 15, and this one's all about the judgment of the unbelievers. Okay. So two distinct resurrections for two distinct purposes.

Right. Makes sense. But what about those two deaths? I get the second death, you know, being passed into that lake of fire.

Right. But what about that first death? Where's that? That's where Dr. Mathewson's insight is really helpful. Okay.

He knows that the first death is simply our good old-fashioned physical death. The one we all experience; particularly those martyrs who died for their faith, they experienced that first death, but they're spared the second death. Oh, wow.

That's a different way to look at it. So it's like this ultimate justice is being served. Right.

The saints, even though they suffered physical death, are ultimately vindicated and rewarded. Exactly. Yeah.

It really drives home the idea that those who stay faithful, even in the face of death, will be vindicated and enter into that eternal life. Okay. So now we can't talk about Revelation 20 without mentioning Satan.

Of course. And it's like, he doesn't go down without a fight. No, he doesn't.

He's got this dramatic final stand, this last hurrah. Right. He's released from the abyss, deceives the nations, leads them into this final epic battle against God's people.

It's kind of terrifying, but kind of exciting at the same time. It is. And I feel like I've read about this somewhere else, like that whole Gog and Magog thing.

You're right. It rings a bell. You're picking up on that Old Testament connection.

Okay. Dr. Mathewson points out how John's drawing on Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39. Okay.

Using these familiar figures to really hammer home the point that this final battle is symbolic of judgment, the ultimate defeat of all evil. And of course, we can't forget that imagery of fire consuming Satan and his followers. Oh no, that's some powerful stuff.

Talk about emphasizing finality. Right. Nothing stands against God's power, and ultimately evil is vanquished.

So then we get to this great white throne judgment, which sounds like it's for everyone, right? Right. But Dr. Mathewson says, hold on, not so fast. Right.

He emphasizes that this judgment is specifically for unbelievers. Okay. The saints, they've already been judged and vindicated.

They don't have to go through this final reckoning. So what's the purpose then? It's about accountability. Okay.

It's about revealing the consequences of rejecting God. Okay. And the imagery is fascinating.

These books are open, symbolizing the recording of everyone's deeds. And then there's the book of life. Right.

But the names of the unbelievers, they're not there. It's like divine justice on full display. It all points back to this idea of divine justice and the eternal consequences of rejecting God's offer of salvation.

It feels almost like a courtroom scene. Yes. You know, this grand spectacle where the fate of humanity is being decided.

You're picking up on that imagery. Okay. Dr. Mathewson highlights how this scene really echoes Daniel chapter seven.

Okay. Which also portrays that courtroom setting where judgment is being passed. This is layered.

It is. And it's not just people being judged. It's like creation itself is on trial here.

This is where things get really interesting. Yeah. John uses this striking image of the earth and sky fleeing from God's presence.

Wow. That's intense. It is.

What does that mean? Dr. Mathewson suggests it symbolizes the removal of that entire sphere of Satan's influence. Oh, okay. In Revelation, the earth is depicted as this place where God's people were harmed, where evil reigned.

Right. So its removal signifies this complete cleansing, wiping away of all that's corrupt and broken. So it's not necessarily about physical destruction.

It's more like a symbolic cleansing and making way for something entirely new and pure. You got it. And that's something new.

That's what we'll explore next. Ooh, I can't wait. As we delve into that description of the new creation in Revelation chapters 21 and 22.

Okay. This is the culmination of everything we've been talking about. The ultimate realization of God's plan for humanity and for the cosmos.

I'm so ready to get into this. Yeah. We've journeyed through the fall of Babylon, the judgment of Satan, the vindication of the saints, and now it's time to see what awaits those who have remained faithful.

It's going to be epic. I'm excited. All right.

Before we jump into all that, what stood out to you most in our exploration of Revelation 20 so far? Well, what really strikes me is how comprehensive this judgment is. Oh, yeah. It's not just about individuals being judged for their actions, but it's about entire systems of power, the very structures that have perpetuated evil throughout history.

It's like God's justice is addressing the root causes of suffering. Precisely, not just the symptoms. Now, that's a thought-provoking point.

Yeah. And it raises an interesting question. If even creation itself is subject to this judgment and renewal, what does that say about the new creation? Is it completely new or a transformation of the existing one? Ooh, that's a great question.

It really makes you think about the relationship between this world and the world to come. It does. Are they separate, or is there some kind of continuity? It's a question that has been debated for centuries, and Dr. Mathewson doesn't give a definitive answer, but he does highlight the symbolism of the earth and sky fleeing from a gruff presence, suggesting this radical break from the old order, a purging of all that's tainted by evil.

So again, it's not necessarily about physical destruction, but more about this symbolic cleansing, this making way for something entirely new and pure. Exactly. And that's something new.

That's what we'll explore next as we delve into the description of that new creation in Revelation 21 and 22. This is the culmination of everything we've been talking about, the ultimate realization of God's plan for humanity and for the cosmos. All right.

I am so ready. Paint us a picture. What does this new creation look like? Well, as Dr. Mathewson describes it, drawing from John's vision, it's a place of breathtaking beauty, unimaginable bliss.

It's a place where God dwells directly with his people, where sorrow and pain are no more, and where the very presence of God illuminates and transforms everything. It sounds like paradise. It does.

And I find it interesting that Dr. Mathewson argues this new creation isn't just a reward for the saints. It's also God's new home. Yes.

He emphasizes this point by highlighting how in Revelation 21 and 22, God chooses to dwell directly with his people on earth, something he hasn't done since Genesis 1 and 2. Wow. So it's not about us going to heaven. It's about heaven coming to earth.

This is like a restoration of that original intimacy we see in the Garden of Eden. That's a powerful way to put it. The separation that's existed between humanity and God since the fall is finally overcome.

Wow. And God's presence is fully restored within creation. It's a reminder that salvation isn't just about saving individual souls.

Right. It's about the restoration of all things. Exactly.

It's cosmic in scope. Wow. It's about the renewal of creation itself, a homecoming, where God's original intention for humanity and the world is finally realized.

And this connects to another point that Dr. Mathewson brings up: the idea of heaven and earth merging in this new creation. He talks about how God's throne and dwelling in heaven now become coextensive with the new creation. This really challenges that traditional understanding of heaven as some separate ethereal realm.

It suggests this complete integration of the divine and the earthly in this new order. So it's not about escaping this world. Right.

It's about this world being transformed by the presence of God. That's the beauty of it. It's a beautiful and hopeful vision.

It is. It speaks to that transformative power of God's love and grace. Yeah.

A power that can redeem and renew even the most broken and fallen aspects of creation. Okay. So we've established that this new creation is amazing, but I'm curious about the specifics.

What are some of the details John highlights in his vision? What does this new Jerusalem actually look like? John paints this vivid picture using symbolic language that draws heavily on Old Testament imagery and prophetic visions. Okay. He describes a city of dazzling beauty with walls made of jasper, streets paved with gold, and gates guarded by angels.

Sounds like something out of a fantasy novel. It's definitely a vision that captures the imagination, but remember, these descriptions are meant to convey the unimaginable splendor, the perfection of this new creation, rather than give us a literal blueprint. So it's more about evoking a sense of awe and wonder, a reality that transcends our earthly experience.

Exactly. And now one detail really jumped out at me. Okay.

There's no temple in this new Jerusalem. Right. That's surprising considering how central the temple was to Jewish faith and worship.

It is. And Dr. Mathewson suggests that this signifies a profound shift in the relationship between God and humanity. How so? Well, in the old order, God's presence was localized in the temple.

But in this new creation, God's presence permeates everything. Oh, wow. There's no need for a specific building because the entire city becomes a sanctuary.

Okay. A place where God's glory is fully manifest. It's like those old barriers between the sacred and the secular are totally dissolved.

They are. That's amazing. But what about those who aren't part of this new creation? What happens to them? John doesn't shy away from that question.

He describes those whose names are not written in the book of life as being outside the city. Okay. Eternally separated from God's presence.

It's a sobering reminder. It is. That there are consequences to rejecting God's offer of grace and salvation.

Yes. And it reinforces the idea that this new creation isn't just this automatic happy ending for everyone. Right.

It's reserved for those who have chosen to follow God. This makes me think about those who may not have even had the opportunity to make that choice. Okay.

What about those who lived and died before Christ? That's a profound question and one that John doesn't explicitly address in his vision. But it's important to remember that God's justice is always tempered by his mercy and compassion. We can trust that God, in his infinite wisdom and love, will ensure that all are given a fair opportunity to experience his grace.

That's a comforting thought. Yeah. It reminds us that even in the midst of judgment, there's always hope.

There is. Okay. So we've covered some of the key features of this new creation.

We have. But I'm eager to hear more about the symbolism and deeper meaning behind these descriptions. What are some of the things Dr. Mathewson highlights? One of the things he focuses on is the abundance of light imagery.

In John's vision, the new Jerusalem is described as being illuminated by God's glory with no need for the sun or the moon. So it's a world bathed in this internal light. Exactly.

And this light symbolizes the very presence of God, the source of all truth, goodness, and beauty. It's a powerful image. It is.

Of a reality where darkness has been completely vanquished. Right. Where God's love and grace shine forth unimpeded.

Precisely. And it connects back to that idea that this new creation is a place of perfect wholeness and healing. Okay.

Where the brokenness and suffering of the old order have been eradicated. Light's clearly a key symbol. What else should we be paying attention to? Dr. Mathewson also draws attention to the tree of life.

Okay. Which appears several times in the vision. The tree of life.

Yeah. We first encounter that way back in Genesis in the Garden of Eden, right? You're exactly right. And its presence here in this new creation points to a return to that original state of paradise.

Okay. A restoration of what was lost through sin. So it's not just about going to heaven.

It's about heaven being restored to earth. Yes. Bringing us full circle back to that original harmony between God, humanity, and creation.

Exactly. And the tree of life represents more than just a return to Eden. It represents that source of eternal life.

Oh, wow. The fruit of which grants immortality. So it symbolizes that abundance and fullness of life that God intends for his people.

Yes. A life that extends beyond our earthly limitations. Precisely.

This new creation isn't just some static state of bliss. Okay. It's a place of ongoing growth, flourishing, and joy where we'll experience life in its fullest and most glorious form.

This is incredible, but it makes me think about those who have suffered greatly in this life. Yeah. How does this vision of a new creation speak to their pain and loss? Does it offer any comfort or hope? That's a really important question.

And it's comforting to know that John's vision doesn't shy away from the reality of suffering. Okay. In fact, he specifically states that in this new creation, God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Wow. That's a powerful image of comfort and healing. Yes.

It suggests that even the deepest wounds of this life will be fully healed in the presence of God. Exactly. Yeah.

It highlights that this new creation isn't just about abstract concepts like justice and righteousness. Okay. But about the very real and personal experience of God's love and compassion.

It offers this profound sense of hope to those who've endured unimaginable pain and trauma, a promise that their suffering isn't in vain, and that there's a future where all things will be made right. Absolutely. It reminds us that even in the midst of the darkest trials, God is with us.

Yeah. Offering comfort, strength, and the promise of a future where all pain and sorrow will be overcome. This vision of the new creation is so rich and complex.

It is. It's like peeling back layers of an onion, revealing deeper and deeper levels of meaning. It is.

But before we get too lost in the symbolism, I'd love to hear what stands out to you most in this description. What resonates with you personally? What really resonates with me is that sense of peace and wholeness that permeates John's vision. It's a world where all the conflicts and divisions that plague our current reality have been resolved.

Wow. A place where harmony and unity reign supreme. It's like a glimpse into the world God intended all along.

It is. A world where love and justice prevail without the brokenness and pain we experience now. Exactly.

And while we know we'll never fully achieve this kind of perfection on this side of eternity, it gives us something to strive for. It sets a high bar for how we live and interact with one another. It reminds us that our ultimate hope lies not in this world, but in the world to come.

Right. A world transformed by God's love and grace. Absolutely.

It's a hope that can sustain us through those difficult times. Yeah. A beacon pointing us towards that final destination of our faith journey.

Okay, so we've explored the fall of Babylon, the judgment of Satan, the vindication of the saints, and now this incredible vision of the new creation. We have. But there's one piece of the puzzle I'm still curious about.

Yeah. What happens after the new creation is established? What does eternity look like in this new order? Well, John doesn't give us this detailed roadmap, but he offers some intriguing hints about the nature of life in the new creation. Okay.

One thing he emphasizes is the ongoing reign of the saints. So it's not just sitting on clouds and playing harps? Not at all. John portrays this dynamic and vibrant existence.

Okay. Where the saints participate in the very work of God, ruling and reigning alongside him for all eternity. This makes me think about those early Christians who were persecuted for their faith.

Their reward isn't just a place of rest. Right. It's a position of authority and responsibility in God's kingdom.

Yes. It's like their faithfulness is being honored and amplified. Precisely.

It underscores the idea that our struggles and sacrifices in this life have eternal significance. They're not in vain. Wow.

They contribute to something much larger than ourselves. So it's not about escaping from the world. It's about transforming it.

Yes. About bringing God's love and justice to bear on every aspect of creation. Yeah.

It's about partnering with God in that ongoing work of renewal and restoration. Okay. Participating in the unfolding of his eternal purposes.

That's incredible. So the saints reign with God. What else does John reveal about life in the new creation? He describes a world where death, sorrow, and pain are no more.

The river of life flows freely, offering healing and sustenance. And the tree of life bears fruit every month, providing nourishment for all who partake of it. It sounds like a place of perfect peace and abundance.

It does. Where all our needs are met, and we're free to experience true joy. It certainly does.

And it speaks to that inexhaustible nature of God's love and grace. It flows freely and abundantly to all who are part of this new creation. It's a vision that can sustain us through the toughest times, reminding us that there's a future where all our wounds will be healed, our needs will be met, and our sorrows will be turned to joy.

Absolutely. It's a hope that anchors our souls, a vision that guides our steps, and a promise that empowers us to live lives of faith and courage, even when facing adversity. This whole conversation has been incredible.

It has. We've gone from the depths of despair to the heights of glory, from the fall of Babylon to the rise of the New Jerusalem. It's quite a journey.

It's a story that speaks to our deepest human longings. It does. For justice, for healing, for wholeness, and ultimately for union with God.

A story that transcends time and culture. A timeless message of hope and redemption for everyone who seeks it. And before we wrap things up, I want to leave our listeners with a final thought to ponder.

Dr. Matthewson makes this compelling case that this new creation isn't just some far-off event, but something that begins right here, right now. I like that. What if it starts with the choices we make, the relationships we cultivate, and the ways we seek to embody God's love and justice in the world? That's a powerful challenge, and one that lies at the heart of John's vision.

Yeah. We aren't just passive recipients of God's grace. We're active participants in his ongoing work of renewal and restoration.

So let's go out and be agents of that renewal, bringing hope and healing to a broken world and creating glimpses of the new creation right here, right now. Beautifully said. May we all be inspired to live lives that reflect the beauty and glory of the new creation, even as we await its full arrival.

Until next time, keep seeking, keep questioning, and keep diving deep. Absolutely. And we'll see you in Part 2, where we'll continue this amazing journey through Revelation Chapter 20.

What really resonates with me is that sense of peace and wholeness that permeates John's vision. It's like this world where all the conflicts and divisions that just plague our current reality have been resolved. It's a place where harmony and unity just reign supreme.

It's like a glimpse into the world God intended all along. A world where love and justice prevail without all the brokenness and pain. Exactly.

And while we know we'll never fully achieve this kind of perfection here on this side of eternity, it still gives us something to strive for. Totally. It sets a high bar for how we live and interact with one another.

It reminds us that our ultimate hope is not in this world. It's in the world to come, a world transformed by God's love and grace. Absolutely.

It's a hope that sustains us through those tough times, a beacon pointing us toward that final destination. Okay, so we've explored the fall of Babylon, the judgment of Satan, the vindication of the saints. We have.

And now this incredible vision of the new creation. It's mind-blowing. It is, but there's one piece of the puzzle I'm still kind of wrestling with.

What happens after the new creation is established? What does eternity actually look like in this new order? That's a great question. And John doesn't give us a detailed roadmap. But he offers some really intriguing hints about the nature of life in this new creation.

And one thing he emphasizes is the ongoing reign of the saints. So it's not just sitting on clouds playing harps? No, not at all. John portrays this dynamic and vibrant existence where the saints actually participate in the very work of God, ruling and reigning alongside him for all eternity.

This makes me think about those early Christians who were persecuted for their faith. You know, their reward isn't just a place of rest. It's a position of authority and responsibility in God's kingdom.

Their faithfulness is being honored and amplified. It underscores the idea that our struggles and sacrifices in this life have eternal significance. They're not in vain.

They contribute to something much larger than ourselves. So it's not about escaping from the world. Right.

It's about transforming it. Yes. About bringing God's love and justice to bear on every aspect of creation.

It's about partnering with God in that ongoing work of renewal and restoration, participating in the unfolding of his eternal purposes. That's incredible. So the saints reign with God.

What else does John reveal about life in this new creation? He describes a world where death, sorrow, and pain are no more. Wow. The river of life flows freely, offering healing and sustenance.

And the tree of life bears fruit every month, providing nourishment for all who partake of it. It sounds like a place of perfect peace and abundance. It does.

Where all our needs are met and we're free to experience true joy. It certainly does. And it speaks to that inexhaustible nature of God's love and grace.

Yeah. It flows freely and abundantly to all who are part of this new creation. It's a vision that can sustain us through the toughest times, reminding us that there's a future where all our wounds will be healed, our needs will be met, and our sorrows will be turned to joy.

Absolutely. It's a hope that anchors our souls, a vision that guides our steps, and a promise that empowers us to live lives of faith and courage, even when facing adversity. This whole conversation has been incredible.

It has. We've gone from the depths of despair to the heights of glory, from the fall of Babylon to the rise of the New Jerusalem. It's quite a journey.

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Dr. Mathewson makes this compelling case that this new creation isn't just some far-off event, but something that begins right here, right now. What if it starts with the choices we make, the relationships we cultivate, and the ways we seek to embody God's love and justice in the world? That's a powerful challenge, and one that lies at the heart of John's vision. We aren't just passive recipients of God's grace.

We're active participants in His ongoing work of renewal and restoration. So let's go out and be agents of that renewal, bringing hope and healing to a broken world, and creating glimpses of the new creation right here, right now. Beautifully said.

May we all be inspired to live lives that reflect the beauty and glory of the new creation, even as we await its full arrival until next time. Keep seeking, keep questioning, and keep diving deep. It's like this image, you know, of a world where we're not just passively enjoying paradise.

Right. But we're actively engaged. We're working alongside God.

Wow. So we're not just kicking back and relaxing. I mean, there's definitely an element of that peace and rest.

Sure. But John's vision is not about idleness. It's about this active participation.

So it's more about this ongoing, dynamic relationship with God. Exactly. It's about growth, discovery, and using our God-given gifts.

Okay. So we're not just lounging around. What kind of activities are we talking about here? Well, John doesn't give us a specific list, you know.

Right. But he uses this really interesting phrase: they will reign forever and ever. Okay.

And that suggests a level of authority and responsibility. Interesting. It's like we're partners with God in governing this new creation.

Wow. So it's not just about personal enjoyment. It's about serving alongside God.

Precisely. It's about contributing to the flourishing of this new world order. So it's more about stewardship than just pure bliss.

Yeah. I think that's a good way to put it. We're entrusted with caring for this incredible gift.

Okay. So we're reigning with God. What else does John reveal about life in this new creation? Well, he talks about the absence of those things that cause us so much pain and sorrow.

Like what? There's no more death, no more mourning, no more crying, no more pain. Wow. That's powerful.

It paints this picture of a reality where those things that weigh us down in this life, they're completely gone. So it's a complete healing, a complete restoration. Yes.

And to top it off, he describes this river of the water of life. Okay. The river of life.

Flowing from the throne of God, and the tree of life is there too. Oh. Bearing fruit every month.

It's like this image of constant abundance and nourishment. It is. It's like this never-ending source of life and vitality.

This is all so hopeful. It really does offer this incredible vision of the future. It does.

And it's not just about the future. It's about how we live now. What do you mean? Well, this vision of the new creation, it can shape our values, our priorities.

Yeah. It can motivate us to live lives that are marked by love, justice, compassion. Yeah.

Like, even though we haven't reached that perfect reality yet. Right. We can still strive to embody those qualities in our lives now.

Exactly. We can be agents of healing and reconciliation in a world that desperately needs it. That's a powerful thought.

It is. And it's a reminder that our actions, they have significance. They matter.

So it's not just about waiting for heaven. It's about bringing a little bit of heaven down to earth. I love that.

Well, this has been an incredible journey. It has. We've explored the depths of despair to the heights of glory, from the fall of Babylon to the rise of the new Jerusalem.

It's been quite a ride. It has. And through it all, we've seen the story that speaks to those deep human longings.

Yeah. You know, for justice, for healing, for wholeness, and ultimately for that union with God. It's a story that resonates across time and culture.

And one that offers this timeless message of hope and redemption. Absolutely. Well, on that note, I want to leave our listeners with this final thought to chew on.

What? What if this new creation isn't just some far-off event? Okay. What if it's something that begins right here, right now? I like that. You know, what if it starts with the choices we make, the relationships we build, and the ways we seek to embody God's love and justice in this world? That's a powerful challenge.

And it really gets to the heart of John's vision. You know, we're not just passive recipients of God's grace. We're active participants in his ongoing work of renewal and restoration.

So let's go out and be agents of that renewal, bringing hope and healing to a world that desperately needs it. You know, creating glimpses of that new creation right here, right now. Beautifully said.

I think that's a perfect note to end on. I agree. Thanks for joining us on this deep dive into Revelation 20.

It's been an incredible exploration of hope, judgment, and ultimately the promise of a new creation. It has been my pleasure. And until next time, keep seeking, keep questioning, and keep diving deep.