THEY WILL REIGN WITH CHRIST

Revelation 20:1-10

Key Verse: 20:6

“Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.”

In the last lesson we thought of the returning Messiah and his glorious victory over the beast and the kings of the earth. He comes as King of kings and Lord of lords, the unbeatable conqueror, with many crowns on his head, blazing fire-like eyes and a sharp sword of God’s word coming out of his mouth. He comes to judge and make war. He is called Faithful and True, so his coming is more than sure since he promised to come throughout the Scriptures. May we have this vision of his coming and glorious victory in our hearts and live as his people, different from the people of the world who cannot have such glorious hope.

Today’s passage is about Satan being bound and Christ reigning on the earth along with his saints for a thousand years. Indeed, the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of Christ. Christ’s reign with his saints and Satan being removed in the world is an amazing thing in human history! This is the dream of all the saints in the Old Testament and the glorious hope of all believers in Christ Jesus.

**First, the removal of Satan (1-3).** Verses 1-3 say, “And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended…” Satan was the very one who appeared in the Garden of Eden in the form of the serpent and tempted the first mankind to sin against God. Since then he began to rule the world. According to Jesus, he was the prince of this world. He said in John 13:31-32, predicting his death, “Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” Then the author commented in verse 33, “He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.” And he said in 14:30, “I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming.” And then he said in 16:11, “in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.” Through Jesus’ death and resurrection, the prince of this world was condemned and his head was crushed. That’s the moment the doom of Satan, the prince of this world, was determined with his power being greatly limited. Then Paul said in Romans 16:20, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”

In Revelation, it is written in 12:7-9, “And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.” Since then, he knew that his time was short and worked powerfully getting two beasts, the Antichrist and the false prophet, as his colleagues, to turn away the inhabitants of the earth from God and let them worship the beast, ultimately Satan. And 13:7-8 say, “He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast…” Then at the coming of Christ the beast and the false prophet were captured and thrown alive into the finery lake of burning sulfur (19:20). Now Satan was seized and bound and thrown into the Abyss and incarcerated for a thousand years. We can infer that the whole system of Satan is bound with no minions of the devil. In chapter 9, a demonic horde of locusts tormented people and the torment was like that of a sting of scorpion. And 200 million demons were released to kill one third of mankind. But there would be no more such work of demons as Satan was bound and incarcerated in the Abyss. We see that Satan is completely under God’s control.

It is written at the end of verse 3, “After that, he must be set free for a short time.” This is a very significant description. We will think of it in the final section.

**Second, the reign of Christ (4-6).** Now verse 4 says, “I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge.” Who are they? Jesus said to his disciples in Matthew 19:28, “I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” He also said to his disciples at the Last Supper in Luke 22:28-30, “You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” In Revelation, Jesus promised to the church in Thyatira in 2:26-27, “To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—just as I have received authority from my Father.” He also promised to the church in Laodicea in 3:21, “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.” So here, those who had been given authority to judge and were seated on the thrones are the New Testaments saints who were raptured.

Then verse 4 continues, “And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded, because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands.” In light of Revelation, they are tribulation saints. It is interesting to trace the worship of the beast and receiving his mark. The first occurrence is written in 13:16-18, “He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast and the number of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man’s number. His number is 666.” And in 14:9-12, “A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.’ This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.” And in 15:2 it is written, “And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name.” And in 16:2, “The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.” And 19:20, “…he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.” Now here are those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands.” They are those who were victorious to the point of being martyred because of their faith in Jesus. They are tribulation saints. Their souls were in heaven.

Then verse 4 ends with these words, “They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” Wow! Here we can think of Christ’s reigning in his kingdom. Now indeed the kingdom of the world has become the king of our Lord of his Christ as spoken in 11:15. In many occasions, the prophets in the Old Testament spoke of this. In Psalm 2:6-9, “I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill. I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.” Isaiah 9:6-7 says, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.”

And it is written in Zechariah 14:9, “The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name.” We remember that God sent the angel Gabriel to Mary to deliver the message concerning the child she was going to have, “He will great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” (Lk. 1:32-33). And Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is heaven…” (Mt. 6:10)

What is the kingdom like? It is written in Isaiah 5-10, “Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.” What a beautiful prophecy! The world of the survival of the fittest ends even in the animal world. There will be world of true peace with no war and no fighting at all under Christ’s ruling. Apostle Paul saw this future glory and said in Romans 8:22-24, “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time…We ourselves…groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for…the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved…” Isaiah wrote further concerning this kingdom in 65:20-25, “Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountains,’ says the LORD.” It will be the land of health and blessing and peace under Christ’s reigning. This is like paradise in Eden regained.

In that kingdom, I believe that there will be no supreme court or judging system because the LORD, whose eyes are like blazing fire, will see everything and judge himself everything. Out of his mouth comes the sword of the truth of God’s word, which is living and active, and shaper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” Or the Lord will raise his faithful and righteous judges on the courts. All the government officials will serve in the fear of the LORD. If there are hospitals, all the doctors will be kind and compassionate under the rule of the Lord. Surely, there will no more homeless people. Certainly, there will be no such a thing as abortion. As I shared with you, since the abortion was legalized in the US in 1973, 64 million unborn babies were killed, that is double the population of Canada. As we shared, the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. This will be the society of loving God and loving neighbours.

It will be also the messianic feast. As we thought of above, Jesus said to his disciples at the Last Supper, “…so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Lk. 22:30). Isaiah 25:9 says, “On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines.” And Jesus said in Matthew 8:11, “I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” It is also written in Luke 13:29, “People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.” This messianic feast is related to the wedding supper of the Lamb written in Revelation 19:9.

We get a glimpse of the beauty of this kingdom in Jesus’ life and ministry on earth. He preached the good news to the poor. He was the eyes to the blind and comforter to the sorrowful and the broken-hearted. His heart was well shown in Matthew 12:20-21, “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. In his name, the nations will put their hope.” We also see the glimpse of this glory of the kingdom when he was transfigured at a high mountain. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light (Mt. 17:2). Moses and Elijah, the representative of the Old Testament saints, appeared in glorious splendour (Lk. 9:30). And it was in view of Peter, James and John, the representative of the New Covenant saints.

Then verse 5-6 says, “(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them…” The first resurrection is the resurrection of believers. The resurrection of the rest of the dead is written in 20:12, “And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne...” Daniel 12:2-3 says, “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.” And the book of Daniel ends with these words, “As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.” Here the end of days is the end of the seven years of tribulation, and at that time the Old Testament saints are raised and glorified and possess the kingdom and also reign with Christ (Da. 7:22). Jesus said in John 5:28, “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.” Jesus also talked about two resurrections, the resurrection of believers and that of unbelievers.

The first resurrection is the resurrection of saints, the resurrection of believers or the resurrection of the righteous. Jesus said in Luke 14:14, “and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” And Jesus said in Luke 20:35-36, “But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like angels. They are God’s children, since they are children of the resurrection. Apostle Paul said in Acts 24:15, “and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.” Hebrews 11:35 says, “Women received back their dead, raise to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection.” The first resurrection is referred to a better resurrection. Jesus said in 1 Corinthians 15:23, “But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes , those who belong to him.” According to Jesus, the resurrection of believers takes place according to each one’s own turn of those who belong to him. The resurrection starts with the resurrection of Christ and then comes to the resurrection of the church, then the resurrection of the Old Testament saints and the tribulation saints. But these are all the first resurrection. This is the first resurrection that happens prior to the resurrection of the unbelievers, the unrighteous or the ungodly.

The second death is the lake of fire, as clearly written in 20:14, “The lake of fire is the second death.” Jesus promised to the church in Smyrna in 2:10, “He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.” Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. They will be occupants in the Holy City, the New Jerusalem.

Verse 5 says continually, “but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.” What a hope! In John’s vision, “they came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” This vision will come true in history. Those who have part in the first resurrection will reign with Christ as priests of God and of Christ. In the new song, the twenty-four elders sang as it is written in 5:10, “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.” Of course, they lived as a royal priesthood while they were in the world as Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 2:9. However, they will serve God more and more as priests of God in the millennial kingdom with Christ. One example is the parable of minas in Like 19:11-27 – each of ten servants who received one mina gave an account to the king who returned. The first one came and said, “Sir, your mina has earned the more.” The king, his master replied, “Well done, my good servant! Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.” The second one came and said, “Sir, your mina has earned fire move.” His master replied, “You take charge of five cities.” Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:11-12, “Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him.” With the vision of reigning with Christ in his kingdom, may we serve him in this world as his faithful servants, dying with him and enduring personal hardships for his kingdom.

**Third, the release of Satan (7-10).** Verses 7-9 say, “When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number, they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves....” Here what are Gog and Magog? Magog was the second son of Japheth, so the grandson of Noah (Gen. 10:2; 1 Chr. 1:5). Magog founded a great kingdom around north of the Black and Caspian Sea. In ancient times, it was known as Scythia; in modern times, it is known as Russia. And according to Ezekiel 38:2, Gog seems to be the leader of the Magog power, the great nation, this great group of people to the north. That’s all we know. However, we are not looking at history but at prophecy that in the future Gog and Magog are going to appear.

Here, a serious question that arises in our hearts is “How come such a great rebellion incited by Satan after the millennial kingdom?” It teaches us a deep truth, the depravity of men. Verse 3 says, “After that, he must be set free for a short time.” Why is it a must? Through Satan, the latent rebellion in man’s heart was manifested. After a thousand years of incarceration, Satan did not become better, maybe worse. Sin was still in man. Sinners loved sin. They did not like Christ’s righteous loving rule. Satan and sinners were cohesive and formed such a great rebellion group to kill Christ and destroy his kingdom.

We know that those who entered the millennium kingdom of Christ are all believers. We can imagine that for the thousand years many generations will have come and gone. Children are born, not from the resurrected and gloried saints. Even though they have believing parents, their children are not guaranteed to be believers. For the sinful nature is still there in the heart. Each one has to put his or her personal faith in Christ Jesus. This is as John wrote in John 1:12, 13, “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children God—children born not of natural descents, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.” Even Christ’s perfect ruling with no Satan cannot change men’s depraved hearts and make them believers. What can be a better environment than Christ’s ruling with love and peace and righteousness! And there is no temptation of Satan. Such a perfect environment cannot produce Christians. It is only through one’s repentance and faith in the gospel of Christ’s death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins and new life. Those who repent of their sins before the cross of Jesus and put their faith in him here and now are truly blessed people. What a marvelous work of God it is that at his first coming Christ died on the cross for man’s sins before ruling the world at his second coming! We are eternally grateful for this wonderful grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the great love of God the Father that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Those who believe in Christ are sanctified and finally glorified after death. So truly blessed are the died who died in the Lord as written in Revelation 14:13. He appeared the first time to do away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. 9:26). Then he will appear a second time to bring complete salvation (Heb. 9:28) and reign on earth with his glorified saints. Praise God for his marvelous wisdom and enterprise!

In verse 9, “But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.” Since their latent rebellion was exposed instigated by Satan, this quick judgment of God is a righteous one. In verse 10, “And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” Now all three of the counterfeit trinity were thrown into the lake of burning sulfur and all were gone eternally. They will be tormented day and night, meaning no moment when they are not tormented. They will be tormented without relief forever. This is a horrible statement and an absolutely astounding thought.

In this study, we thank and praise God for Christ’s kingdom to come and his saints reigning with Christ on earth for a thousand years. With this amazing hope may we love our God and cherish the cross and serve the gospel work as priests of God and of Christ while we live in this world.