

ALREADY, BUT NOT YET

Revelation 20

Sooke Baptist Church

Sunday, November 14, 2021

9:30 am, in-person, also on Facebook and YouTube

Revelation 20:1-8

Coffee/Question:
What are you
eagerly anticipating?

03:00



Six times in this chapter the phrase “a thousand years” is used.



v.2 - ...[Satan is seized and bound] for a thousand years.

v.3 - ...[Satan is thrown into the Abyss]...to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended.

v.4 - ...[Jesus’ followers...came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

v.5 – The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.

v.6 – The second death has no power over [those who share in the first resurrection], but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

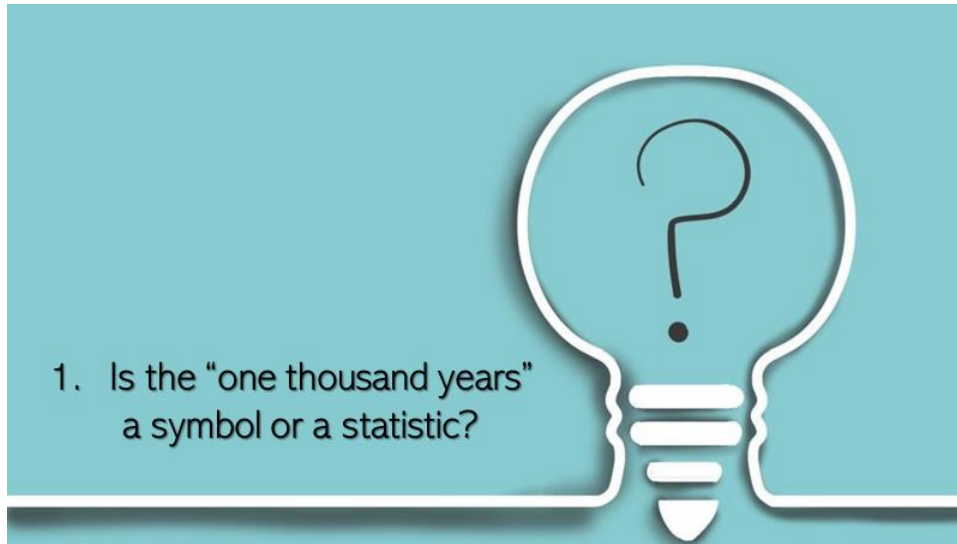
v.7 – When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth – Gog and Magog – and to gather them for battle.

Revelation 20 is the only place in the Bible that speaks of Jesus reigning with his followers for a thousand years, and of Satan being bound for a thousand years before being released to deceive the nations.

How are we to make sense of this chapter?

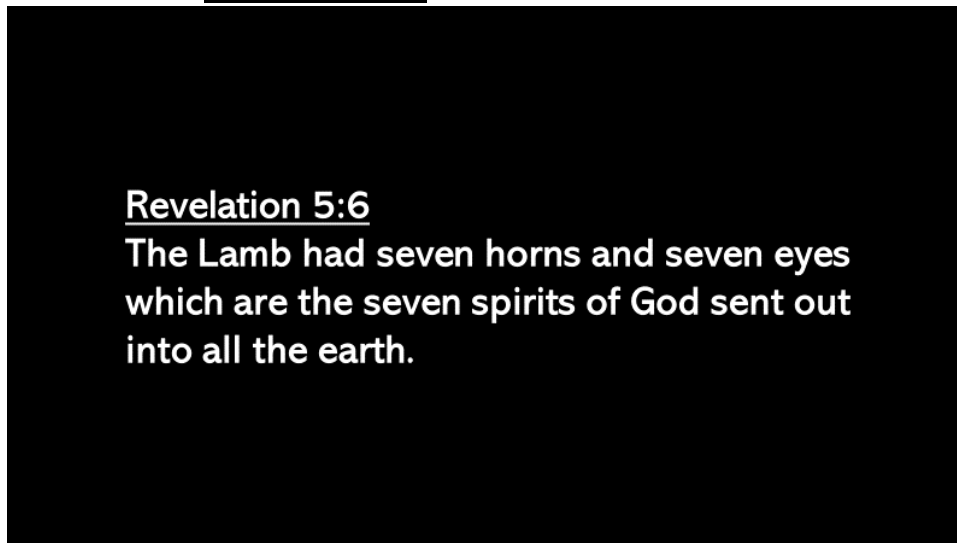
It is of the utmost important that our understanding be faithful to the text, because... this chapter will influence how we live and how we pray and how we speak the gospel of Jesus in this present time.

Let’s ask some questions and make some clarifying statements.



The numbers in the book of Revelation are consistently used as symbols. Let me give you two examples.

Remember - **Revelation 5:6**



The number seven is a symbol of perfection.

A horn is a picture of strength – seven horns, perfect strength. In this verse the eyes of the Lamb are described as being what?

The seven spirits of God is another way of speaking of God the Spirit. The Holy Spirit perfectly sees and knows all things.

Revelation 5:6

The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

perfectly wise and strong

“This vision of the Lamb who has seven eyes and seven horns visually communicates that our Lord Jesus is perfectly strong and wise.” DJ, p.147

Remember - Revelation 7:4

Revelation 7:4

Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

The number 144,000 is a symbol.

Revelation 7:4

Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

12x12x10x10x10

12x12 represents – the 12 tribes of Israel, and the 12 disciples of Jesus – the people of God in the OT and in the NT.

12x12 communicates that God redeems a people for himself from every nation, tribe, and language.

The number 10 is a symbol of completeness.

10x10x10 communicates that God completely knows the number of his people. With the Holy Spirit he has marked every single one of them as his own.

The number of those to be rescued and sealed... will show the wisdom, the mercy, the sufficiency of grace and the greatness of God's saving power.

Revelation 2:10

Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.

The number ten is a symbol of completeness.

In this vision Jesus communicated to his church that their suffering would be caused by the devil, but that the length of it, and the results of it would be completely under the sovereignty of God.

The things that would touch their lives would first pass through the hands of God.

Revelation 20

...a thousand years...

Let me say it again... 10 is a symbol of completeness.

1000

10 x 10 x 10

The number 1000 – 10x10x10 - is a symbol that assures the reader that the purposes of God for this present time will be completely realized, and in no way be frustrated by the devil, nor sidelined, derailed or compromised by the antichrist or the false prophet.

Just as Jesus was born in Bethlehem in God's fulness of time (see Galatians 4:4), so he will return to the earth, in God's fulness of time.

The number 1000 – 10x10x10... is a symbol that describes this present time, between, the ascension and return of Jesus Christ.

Based on this, our next question may seem redundant, but we need to see how the structure of the book confirms this.

2. When does the "one thousand year" reign begin?



The book of Revelation communicates what John saw next, not what happened next.

This is why John ...throughout the book, repeatedly wrote, "I saw..."

There is a clear example of this in Revelation 12.

John saw a vision of a woman giving birth to a child... who was the cause of the dragon, Satan, being thrown down from heaven. DJ, p341.

When did this throwing down of Satan happen?

It began the moment Mary gave birth to Jesus.

What this means is that the vision of Revelation 12 took place before the visions seen by John in chapters 1-11.

Being mindful of this pattern, let me ask again: does the 1000 year reign happen after the events of Revelation 19, when the kings of the earth and their armies, along with the antichrist and the false prophet, gather to war against God and are defeated simply by the appearance of Jesus?

This same scene of war against God, in Revelation 19 and 20 has already been shown to John two other times in the book.

This too is a reminder to the reader that the book of Revelation is not a timeline.

Let's look at these two scenes.

In chapter six, at the appearing of Jesus, look at the response of the kings of the earth and their armies when they see Jesus... in all of his glory.

They are gripped by terror.

Revelation 6:15-17

Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains.

They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?"

In chapter 16, at the pouring out of the sixth bowl, look at what three fallen angels are permitted by God to do.

Revelation 16:13-15

...three impure spirits...go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

In response to what sinful humanity does, look at what Jesus said...

Revelation 16:13-15

...three impure spirits...go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

“Look, I come like a thief!”

The appearing of our Lord Jesus will be sudden and unexpected. When he appears, Jesus will speak and the victory of the cross will completely overwhelm and defeat sinful humanity who gather to try and dethrone the triune God.

In chapter 19 this same scene is shown yet again.

Revelation 19:19

Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army.

And in chapter 20, at the end of “the thousand years,” one more time, the reader is shown this same scene.

Revelation 20:8

...[Satan] will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth – Gog and Magog – and gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore.

(See also Ezekiel 38-39)

Why did God reveal these things again and again to his church?

- He does so for the purpose of building the faith of his people in his sovereign rule.
Because he reigns, all will be well.
- God does so to confirm the testimony of Scripture that Jesus’ is the name above all names... and that his will, will be done on the earth as it is in heaven.



3. Does Jesus reign now or will he begin to reign when he returns?

The answer given in the book of Revelation is confirmed by other Scripture. After his resurrection and before his ascension Jesus said...

Matthew 28:18-20

All authority in heaven and on earth **has** been given to me...

Please note the verb tense.

Matthew 28:18-20

All authority in heaven and on earth **has** been given to me...

Acts 2:36

...God **has** made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.

When Peter preached to the great crowd of people on the day of Pentecost, Jesus was... not would be... but already was... Lord and Christ.

Ephesians 1:20-22

...[God] **raised** Christ from the dead
and **seated** him at his right hand
in the heavenly realms,
far above all rule and authority,
power and dominion,
and every name that is invoked,
not only in the present age,
but also in the one to come.

Look at the verb tense.

When was Jesus seated?

After his ascension.

What is the scope of Jesus' reign?

He is far above all rule and authority, power and dominion.

What is the duration of Jesus' reign?

He reigns in this present age.... and.... in the one to come.

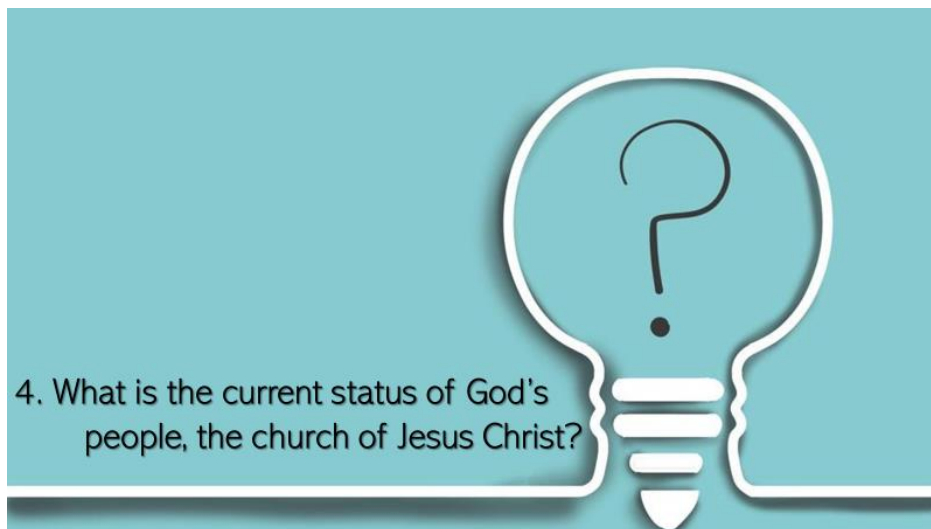
Look at the testimony of John in his greeting to the churches at the beginning of the Revelation.

Revelation 1:5

...Jesus Christ, who **is**
the faithful witness,
the firstborn from the dead, and
the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Again, look at the verb tense.

Jesus is... not will be, but is... the ruler.... of all the kings of the earth.
Right now.... from heaven... Jesus reigns.



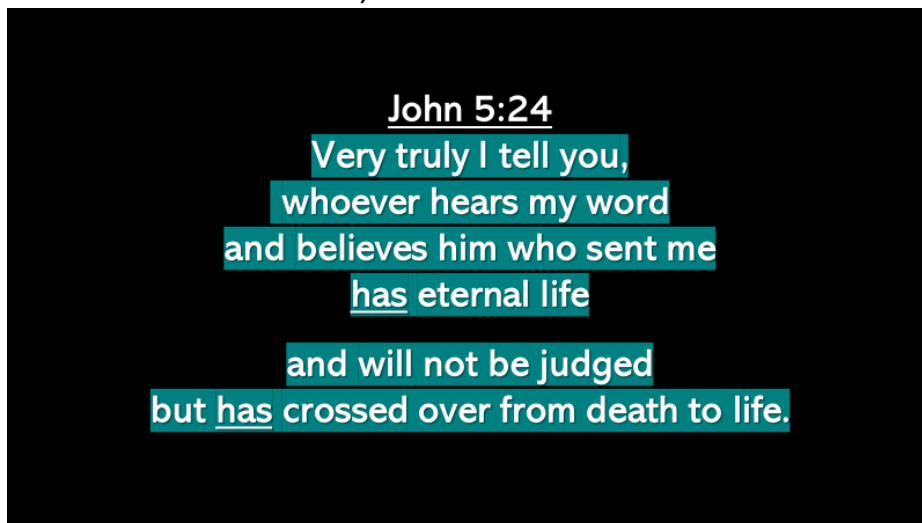
Let me explain what I mean by this question.

According to v.4, when do we come to life?

According to v.5, when do we experience the first resurrection?

The teaching of the NT is that Jesus' followers... have already... experienced... by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone ...the first resurrection – our dead souls have been raised to life when we were born of the Spirit.

Look at what Jesus said, John 5:24.



Follower of Jesus you already... have... eternal life.

You already... have.... passed over from death to life.

This is why for the follower of Jesus... the sting of death has been removed.
See 1 Corinthians 15:56=57

According to v.6, when do we become priests of God and of Christ... and reign with Christ?

The teaching of Scripture is that this is a present reality.

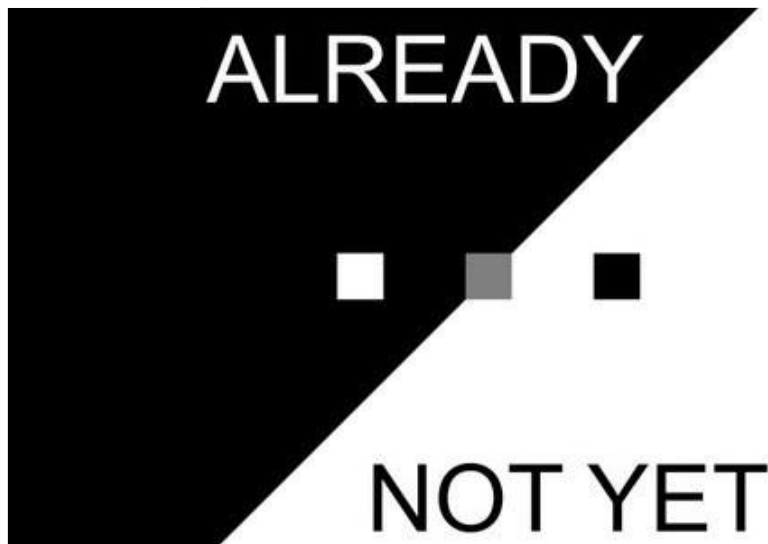
Revelation 1:5b-6
To him who loves us
and has freed us
from our sins by his blood,
and has made us to be
a kingdom and priests
to serve his God and Father...

Just as we have already been freed... from our sins by the blood of Jesus, so...we have already been made... to be a kingdom and priests who serve God.

Ephesians 2:5-6 corroborates this truth.

Ephesians 2:5-6
...God who is rich in mercy,
made us alive with Christ
even when we were dead in transgressions—
it is by grace you have been saved.
And God raised us up with Christ
and seated us with him
in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus...

The phrase, “already, but not yet” describes how the people of God live in this present time.



We already have... passed from death to life.

But our bodies have not yet... been raised from the dead and transformed into immortal, incorruptible bodies like that of Jesus, when he walked out of the tomb.

We already have been... seated with Christ and reign with him....by faith.

But there is a future reality, yet to be realized –when we judge the world and angels.

1 Corinthians 6:2-4 confirms this.

1 Corinthians 6:2-4

...do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world?

And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?

Do you not know that we will judge angels?

How much more the things of this life!

Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church?

I like what Darrell Johnson says,

“This reality – already, but not yet – means that the church is not a helpless victim on the stormy stage of history.” P.338

In the church of Jesus, the first fruits of new creation are already present, because God is really among us and with us.

This is as far as we will go today in interacting with the passage.

Next week we will pick up where we left off, for there are more questions to be asked.

But let me leave you with several life connections.

In light of the truth which the scripture has revealed, we know...



What was true of Jesus' birth and what will be true of Jesus' return, is also true in how God deals with his dearly loved people.

- This truth change how we live – God is never late.
- This truth changes how we pray – our prayers matter and are used by God in the carrying out of his will on the earth.
- This truth changes how we speak the gospel – the news we make known is the power of God to save.

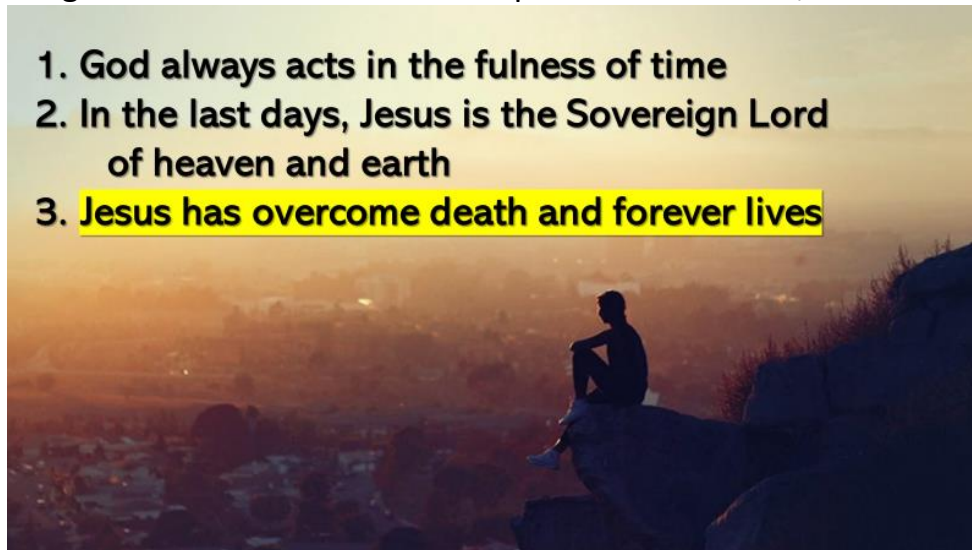
In light of the truth which the scripture has revealed, we know...



1. God always acts in the fulness of time
2. In the last days, Jesus is the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth

- This truth change how we live – we tenaciously focus on him and live with courage.
- This truth changes how we pray – not timidly, but with his authority.
- This truth changes how we speak the gospel – with grace and truth.

In light of the truth which the scripture has revealed, we know...



1. God always acts in the fulness of time
2. In the last days, Jesus is the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth
3. Jesus has overcome death and forever lives

- This truth change how we live – we extravagantly give of ourselves to and for the cause of Christ, because we are no longer a slave to fear.
- This truth changes how we pray – there is nothing that our God cannot do.
- This truth changes how we speak the gospel – the blood of Jesus given in sacrifice is forever sufficient to cover the sin of all who come to him in faith.

03:00

Life Connection Question:

Where does today's passage connect with you?

- Does it encourage you? In what way?
- Does it give you hope? Explain.
- Does it persuade you to live differently? How?
- Does it raise questions about God? Explain.