

The Book of Revelation, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 14: The Rider on the White Horse; Satan Bound; the Thousand Years; the Last Judgment

Revelation 19:1-20:15

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This is the doctrinal hinge of the entire study, and the teacher should prepare to carry its weight. Revelation 20 is the single passage premillennialism and dispensationalism lean on, and almost everything in that system is built out of these six verses about a thousand years. The teacher's task is therefore twofold: to set out plainly and confidently what the amillennial, symbolic, Church-of-Christ reading actually is, and to dismantle the premillennial scheme gently from the rest of the New Testament. At stake: whether Christ reigns now or only later; whether Satan is already bound or still loose; whether there is one resurrection or two; one judgment or several; one return of Christ or two comings separated by a thousand years; whether the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ stands or whether a rebuilt temple could ever restart animal sacrifice. Get this lesson right and the whole book holds together; get it wrong and the gospel itself is muddled.

The positive case is clear and should be taught with confidence, not defensiveness. The thousand years is a symbol, ten cubed, the number of fullness and completeness, signifying the entire present age between the two comings of Christ. Satan was bound at Christ's first coming, decisively restrained from deceiving the nations and choking off the gospel (Matthew 12:28-29; Luke 10:18; John 12:31; Colossians 2:15), so that the gospel now runs to all the nations. The first resurrection is the believer's passage from spiritual death to life and the present reign of the redeemed, especially the faithful dead, with Christ. There is then one second coming, one general resurrection of just and unjust together, and one final judgment at the great white throne, after which comes the eternal state, the new heaven and new earth of the next lesson, not a millennial kingdom.

But this lesson is not finally about winning an argument, and the teacher must not let it become merely that. John gave these visions to comfort a hunted, dying church, and the doctrine here is pure comfort. The dragon is already bound. The martyrs are already reigning. The believer has already passed from death to life, and over him the second death has no power. The Lamb has already wed His bride. The teacher's pastoral aim is to move students from anxious chart-reading and date-setting to settled worship and faithful endurance, to make a tired, pressured believer lift his head and say: my King already reigns, my enemy is already chained, my place at the supper is already set, and I will be faithful unto death. Aim every doctrinal point at that transformation. The refutation of premillennialism is not the goal; a steadied, worshiping, enduring people is.

Question 1

Student Question:

Chapter 19 opens with a fourfold “Hallelujah” over fallen Babylon and then announces “the marriage of the Lamb” whose “Bride has made herself ready” in “fine linen, bright and pure,” which is “the righteous deeds of the saints” (19:7–8). Who is the Bride, what is the marriage supper of the Lamb, and how does this picture of the church as Christ’s bride shape the way the rest of the passage should be read?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter 19 opens with the only Hallelujahs in the New Testament, four of them, a great multitude in heaven roaring over the fall of Babylon and the vindication of the saints. Then the tone turns from a funeral over the harlot to a wedding for the bride: “Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready” (19:7). The teacher should let students feel the deliberate contrast: the false woman, Babylon, the seductive idolatrous world-system, has fallen, and the true woman, the Bride, the church, is revealed in glory. Two women run through Revelation, the harlot and the bride, and every reader belongs to one or the other.

The Bride is the church, the whole people of God, presented as the wife of the Lamb (Ephesians 5:25–32; 2 Corinthians 11:2). The marriage supper of the Lamb is the consummation of all God’s saving work, the eternal, joyful union of Christ with His redeemed people, anticipated now in the gospel and the Lord’s Supper and fulfilled at His coming. Jesus told parables of exactly this wedding feast (Matthew 22:1–14; 25:1–13), and the invitation still stands: “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (19:9).

Notice the Bride’s clothing: “it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints” (19:8). Hold both halves. The garment is granted, given by grace, and yet it is the righteous deeds of the saints, a real, lived faithfulness. This is the Church-of-Christ balance against both works-righteousness and cheap grace: salvation is God’s gift, and genuine faith works and endures. The bride is not passive; she “has made herself ready.”

This opening sets the lens for the whole passage. Before we meet the conquering Rider, the bound dragon, and the great white throne, John shows us the end of the story, the wedding. The believer reads the war that follows knowing the marriage is already announced. The teacher should press the comfort: whatever the dragon does in chapter 20, the Bride’s feast in chapter 19 is certain, and the only question that matters is whether each student is dressed for it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- The Bride is the church, the whole people of God, the wife of the Lamb (Ephesians 5:25–32; 2 Corinthians 11:2).
- The marriage supper is the consummate, eternal union of Christ with His redeemed, anticipated now and fulfilled at His coming (Matthew 22:1–14).

- Two women, harlot and bride, run through Revelation; every person belongs to one (Revelation 17:1–5; 21:9).
- The bride's linen is both granted by grace and the real righteous deeds of the saints, against both works-righteousness and cheap grace (Ephesians 2:8–10).
- The Bride "has made herself ready"; saving faith works and endures (Revelation 19:7–8).

Discussion Prompts

- Ask the class to contrast the harlot and the bride; what makes the church beautiful in God's eyes?
- Discuss how the linen can be both "granted" and "the righteous deeds of the saints" without collapsing into works-salvation or cheap grace.
- Invite each person to ask whether they are, in fact, dressed for the supper, and what readiness looks like this week.

Question 2

Student Question:

The Bride's fine linen is "the righteous deeds of the saints" (19:8), yet the garment is given to her. Where in your own life is your "wedding garment" looking soiled or unready, and what would it mean this week to let Christ clothe you while you actually walk in the righteous deeds He has prepared?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the doctrine of the bride into a personal examination. The fine linen is "granted" to the bride, yet it is "the righteous deeds of the saints" (19:8). The grace and the obedience are not rivals. Christ gives the garment, and the garment is a life actually lived in faithfulness. The believer who hides behind grace to excuse a soiled life has misread the verse, and so has the believer who tries to weave a garment of his own merit. The Lamb clothes His bride, and His bride walks in the works He prepared (Ephesians 2:10).

Jesus told of a man at the wedding feast with no wedding garment who was cast out (Matthew 22:11–13). The warning is sober: it is possible to be present at the church, near the feast, and still not be clothed. The teacher should help students examine where their garment is soiled, a secret sin nursed, a relationship left unreconciled, a compromise grown comfortable, and to see that putting it right is not earning the feast but dressing for the One who has already invited them.

Press for specificity and for both halves of the gospel response. Let Christ clothe you, confess, repent, return to Him for cleansing, and then actually walk in the righteous deeds He has prepared. The believer is neither passive nor self-saving. The teacher should send students toward one concrete area where the wedding garment needs attention this week, and toward the One who delights to make His bride ready.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- Grace and obedience are not rivals; Christ clothes the bride and she walks in the works He prepared (Ephesians 2:8–10).
- It is possible to be near the feast yet not clothed; readiness must be real (Matthew 22:11–13).
- Christians can let the garment grow soiled and must return to Christ for cleansing (1 John 1:7–9; Revelation 2:5).
- Readiness is not a one-time event but an ongoing walk in righteousness (Revelation 16:15).

Discussion Prompts

- Ask each person to name, privately or aloud, one area where their “wedding garment” looks soiled or unready.
- Discuss the difference between letting Christ clothe you and trying to clothe yourself.
- Consider: what is one concrete righteous deed you could walk in this week as part of getting ready?

Question 3

Student Question:

Heaven opens and a Rider comes forth on a white horse, called “Faithful and True” and “The Word of God” and “King of kings and Lord of lords,” who “judges and makes war” and strikes the nations with “a sharp sword” that comes “from his mouth” (19:11–16). Walk through these titles, and explain why the weapon proceeding from His mouth tells us how Christ actually conquers the nations in this present age.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Heaven itself opens and the conquering Christ rides out: “Behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war” (19:11). The teacher should walk slowly through the piled-up titles, because each one preaches. “Faithful and True” names His utter reliability, the One who keeps every promise to His pressured people. His eyes “like a flame of fire” see and judge all things. The “many diadems” declare sovereign rule far surpassing the seven crowns of the dragon and the ten of the beast. He bears “a name written that no one knows but himself,” His unsearchable divine majesty, and a name everyone can read, “The Word of God” (19:12–13), the eternal Word of John 1:1 by whom God speaks and acts.

The decisive detail is the weapon: “From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations” (19:15). Not a sword in His hand, a sword from His mouth. This is the same image John saw in chapter 1, where the sharp two-edged sword came from the mouth of the glorified Christ (1:16), and it is the Scripture’s settled picture of God’s word as a sword (Isaiah 11:4; Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:8). Christ conquers the nations not with literal cavalry and steel but with the proclaimed word, the gospel, going out into all the world.

The armies of heaven follow Him in fine linen and ride white horses, but no weapon is mentioned in their hands; the victory belongs entirely to the word of the King.

This is critical for the amillennial reading and for guarding against a militarized, political Christ. The Rider is not waiting to mount a future earthly war from Jerusalem. He is conquering now, throughout this age, as the gospel advances and the nations are brought under His feet by the word of His mouth, even as that same word will be the instrument of judgment at the last day. His robe is “dipped in blood” before any battle, His own blood, by which He has already won, and His name on robe and thigh settles all rivalry: “King of kings and Lord of lords” (19:16).

The teacher should help students feel the comfort and the call. The comfort: the One who fights for His church wields an unstoppable weapon, His word, and reigns over every earthly power. The call: the church advances Christ’s conquest not with the world’s weapons but by speaking His word, faithfully, lovingly, boldly. We do not need political power or force to win the nations; we need to preach the King who already reigns.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- “Faithful and True” and “The Word of God” identify the Rider as the reliable, eternal Christ, the Word of John 1:1 (Revelation 19:11–13).
- The sword from His mouth is the word of God; Christ conquers the nations by the gospel, not by literal warfare (Isaiah 11:4; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:8).
- The many diadems declare Christ’s sovereign rule now, surpassing the dragon’s and the beast’s counterfeit crowns (Revelation 19:12).
- “King of kings and Lord of lords” affirms Christ’s present universal reign, against any future-only kingship (Revelation 17:14; 1 Timothy 6:15).
- The church advances Christ’s conquest by proclaiming His word, not by force or political power (2 Corinthians 10:4).

Discussion Prompts

- Ask the class to list the Rider’s titles and say what each one means for a persecuted believer.
- Discuss why it matters that the sword comes from His mouth and not His hand.
- Consider: how does “Christ conquers by His word” reshape how the church should try to influence the nations?

Question 4

Student Question:

The Rider’s robe is “dipped in blood” before the battle even begins, and the supper to which the birds are summoned is grim (19:13, 17–18). Christ conquers not by shedding the blood of His enemies first but by His own shed blood. How does a King who wins by being slain reorder your idea of strength, victory, and how you are to live and witness?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

John says the Rider “is clothed in a robe dipped in blood” (19:13), and the striking thing is that the robe is already bloodied before any battle is described. This is not the blood of His enemies splashed on Him in combat; it is His own blood, the blood of the Lamb who was slain (5:9; 7:14). The conquering King of chapter 19 is the same slain Lamb of chapter 5. He goes to war already wearing the marks of the cross, because the cross is how He won. The teacher should hold this together with the grim supper of the birds (19:17–18): judgment on the unrepentant is real and terrible, but the King’s own victory was achieved by His being slain, not by His slaying.

This reorders everything we think we know about strength and victory. The world’s kings conquer by shedding others’ blood; the King of kings conquered by shedding His own. “The Lamb who was slain” is the one found worthy (5:12). Paul says God disarmed the powers and triumphed over them precisely at the cross (Colossians 2:15). The pattern of the kingdom is cross before crown, losing one’s life to find it (Mark 8:34–35), strength made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Press the application toward life and witness. If our King won by sacrificial love, then His people do not advance His cause by domination, retaliation, or worldly power, but by laying down our lives, loving enemies, bearing wrongs, and speaking the truth at cost. The teacher should help students name where they are still reaching for the world’s kind of strength, control, retaliation, self-protection, and call them to the cross-shaped victory of the bloodied King who wins by being slain and calls His people to follow.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- The conquering Rider is the slain Lamb; His robe is dipped in His own blood, by which He won (Revelation 5:9; 7:14).
- Christ triumphed over the powers at the cross, not by shedding His enemies’ blood (Colossians 2:15).
- The kingdom’s pattern is cross before crown; strength is made perfect in weakness (Mark 8:34–35; 2 Corinthians 12:9).
- The church follows by sacrificial love, not domination or retaliation (Romans 12:19–21).
- Final judgment on the unrepentant is nonetheless real and severe (Revelation 19:17–21).

Discussion Prompts

- Discuss: how does a King who wins by being slain overturn the world’s idea of strength?
- Ask where each person is tempted to reach for the world’s kind of power instead of the cross’s.
- Consider one concrete way to “conquer” a conflict this week by sacrificial love rather than retaliation.

Question 5

Student Question:

An angel binds “the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan,” with a great chain and throws him into the pit “so that he might not deceive the nations any longer” for “a thousand years” (20:1–3). In light of Jesus binding the strong man (Matthew 12:28–29), “I saw Satan fall like lightning” (Luke 10:18), “now will the ruler of this world be cast out” (John 12:31), and Colossians 2:15, explain when and how Satan was bound, what the binding does and does not mean, and why it is wrong to push this binding off into a future millennium.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here begins the heavy doctrinal core of the lesson, and the teacher must teach it with calm confidence. “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit... so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended” (20:1–3). The crucial question is when this binding happens and what it means, and the answer is not found by guessing but by listening to what Jesus and the apostles already told us about the binding of Satan.

Jesus Himself supplies the key image. Charged with casting out demons by Satan’s power, He answered, “If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can someone enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house” (Matthew 12:28–29). Jesus declares that He has bound the strong man, Satan, already, in His first coming, and is plundering his house, rescuing those Satan held. That is the same word, bound, that John uses in Revelation 20. The binding of the dragon is the work of Christ in His first coming, not a future event.

The New Testament says the same thing from every angle. Jesus said, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18) as the gospel went out through His disciples. He said, “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out” (John 12:31), pointing to His cross. Paul says that at the cross God “disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him” (Colossians 2:15). And Hebrews says Christ died “that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). The binding of Satan was accomplished through Christ’s death, resurrection, and the spread of the gospel, and it stands over this whole present age.

Now be precise about what the binding does and does not mean, because students will rightly observe that Satan is still active. The text states the specific purpose of the binding: “so that he might not deceive the nations any longer” (20:3). Before Christ, the nations sat in darkness, and the knowledge of the true God was largely confined to Israel; the Gentile world was held under deception. The binding does not mean Satan is inactive (Peter still warns of a roaring, prowling lion, 1 Peter 5:8, and Revelation itself shows him raging against the church). It means he is decisively restrained at one specific point: he can no longer hold the nations in blanket deception and choke off the gospel. The strong man is chained so that his house can be

plundered; the gospel now runs to every nation, and people from every tribe and tongue are being saved. That is the binding, a real, decisive restraint, not absolute inactivity.

Therefore it is simply wrong to push this binding off into a future millennium. To do so one must ignore Jesus' own words about binding the strong man, deny that the gospel is already going to the nations, and pretend Satan is presently unbound when Scripture says he was bound and judged at the cross. The teacher should let students feel the comfort of the true reading: the dragon who looms so large in Revelation is already chained at the decisive point. The gospel cannot be stopped. The nations are being gathered. We do not wait for Satan to be bound; we live and witness in the age in which he already is.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- Satan was bound at Christ's first coming through His death, resurrection, and the spread of the gospel, not in a future millennium (Matthew 12:28–29; Colossians 2:15).
- Jesus' binding of the strong man (Matthew 12:29) is the same binding John pictures in Revelation 20:1–3.
- The binding's specific purpose is that Satan can no longer deceive the nations and choke off the gospel (Revelation 20:3).
- The binding is a decisive restraint, not absolute inactivity; Satan still prowls and rages (1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:12).
- Christ cast down the ruler of this world at the cross (Luke 10:18; John 12:31; Hebrews 2:14).
- The gospel now runs freely to all nations because the strong man is bound and his house is being plundered (Matthew 12:29; Matthew 28:18–20).

Discussion Prompts

- Walk the class through Matthew 12:28–29 and ask how Jesus' own words settle when Satan was bound.
- Discuss: how can Satan be “bound” and yet still active as a prowling lion? What exactly is restrained?
- Ask why pushing the binding into a future millennium contradicts the rest of the New Testament.

Question 6

Student Question:

If Satan's power to deceive the nations and choke off the gospel has already been decisively restrained so that the nations can now hear and be saved, where in your life are you still living as though the dragon were on the loose and undefeated, fearful, silent, or paralyzed, and what changes when you believe the strong man is already bound?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses the truth of the bound dragon into daily life. If Satan has already been decisively restrained at the cross, then much of our fear and silence is living below our privileges, as if the strong man were still free to roam unchecked. Many believers are paralyzed, afraid to speak the gospel, convinced the darkness is winning, intimidated by a culture that seems hostile. The text says the dragon is chained precisely so the nations can hear. Our timidity often forgets this.

The teacher should help students name where they are living as though Satan were undefeated. Where is fear keeping them silent about Christ? Where has a sense of inevitable defeat made them stop praying, stop inviting, stop expecting God to save anyone? Where does the devil's accusation still hold them down, as though Christ had not already silenced the accuser (Revelation 12:10–11)? The doctrine of the bound dragon is meant to put courage into the church.

Apply it concretely. Because the strong man is bound, the gospel cannot finally be stopped, and so the believer can speak, invite, pray, and resist with confidence. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7); “the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). The teacher should send each student toward one specific place, fearful silence, a stalled witness, a defeated prayer life, where believing that the strong man is already bound would change their behavior this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- Believers often live in fear as though Satan were unbound; the doctrine of the bound dragon is meant to give courage (Revelation 20:1–3).
- The accuser has already been silenced by the blood of the Lamb; his accusations need not paralyze us (Revelation 12:10–11).
- Resisting the devil is possible and effective because Christ has already conquered (James 4:7; 1 John 4:4).
- The gospel cannot finally be stopped; timidity forgets the strong man is bound (Matthew 28:18–20).

Discussion Prompts

- Ask each person where they are living as though the dragon were still on the loose, fearful, silent, or defeated.
- Discuss what changes in your witness when you truly believe the strong man is already bound.
- Consider one concrete step of courage, a conversation, an invitation, a prayer, to take this week.

Question 7

Student Question:

John sees thrones and “the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus,” and they “came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years,” which John calls “the first resurrection,” and over those who share in it “the second death has no power” (20:4–6). Explain why “the first resurrection” and this reign describe the present reign of the redeemed with Christ (especially the faithful dead), the believer’s passage from spiritual death to spiritual life, and not a bodily resurrection that begins an earthly thousand-year kingdom.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Now comes “the first resurrection,” another phrase that has launched whole timelines, and the teacher must read it carefully in its own context. “Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God... They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years... This is the first resurrection” (20:4–5). Notice first what John actually sees: not bodies coming out of graves, but souls, the souls of the martyrs. This is a scene in heaven, of departed faithful ones, and they are said to live and reign with Christ.

Two truths stand together here. First, the believer’s passage from spiritual death to spiritual life. Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life... has passed from death to life” (John 5:24), and “an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live” (John 5:25). Paul says God “made us alive together with Christ” while we were dead in trespasses, and “raised us up with him” (Ephesians 2:5–6; Colossians 3:1). To be in Christ is already to have been raised, the first resurrection, the spiritual resurrection from the death of sin to newness of life, pictured in baptism (Romans 6:4–5). Second, the present reign of the redeemed, especially the faithful dead, with Christ. The martyrs whose blood cried out under the altar (6:9–10) are now seen enthroned and reigning. The dead in Christ are not annihilated and not asleep in defeat; they live and reign with their Lord now.

This is emphatically not a bodily resurrection beginning an earthly thousand-year kingdom. John sees souls, not raised bodies; the scene is in heaven, not on a restored earth; and “the first resurrection” is contrasted with “the second death,” not with a second bodily resurrection. The structure is two deaths and two resurrections held together: the first resurrection (spiritual, from sin to life in Christ now) corresponds to escaping the second death (final condemnation), while physical death corresponds to the one bodily resurrection at the last day. “Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power” (20:6). The one who has been spiritually raised with Christ need not fear final, eternal death.

The teacher should resist the premillennial reading that makes 20:4 a literal bodily resurrection of martyrs to reign on earth for a thousand years before the rest are raised. That reading collides head-on with Jesus’ clear teaching of one hour in which all the dead, good and evil, come out of the tombs together (John 5:28–29), which the next question will press. It also

misreads what John plainly saw: souls reigning in heaven, not bodies ruling a restored Jerusalem.

Let the comfort land, for this is among the most comforting truths in the book. Every faithful believer who has died is right now alive and reigning with Christ. The grandmother who held to Christ, the brother who died in the faith, the martyrs of every age, they reign. And you, baptized into Christ and walking in newness of life, already share in the first resurrection, and over you the second death has no power. The teacher should help students feel that they are not waiting to begin reigning; in Christ they already do.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- John sees “souls,” not raised bodies; the scene is in heaven, the present reign of the faithful dead with Christ (Revelation 20:4; 6:9–10).
- The “first resurrection” is the believer’s passage from spiritual death to life in Christ, pictured in baptism (John 5:24–25; Ephesians 2:5–6; Romans 6:4–5).
- Two deaths and two resurrections frame the passage: spiritual resurrection now answers the second death; physical death answers the one bodily resurrection at the last day.
- Over those in the first resurrection “the second death has no power”; the spiritually raised need not fear final condemnation (Revelation 20:6).
- This is not a bodily resurrection beginning an earthly millennium; that reading collides with John 5:28–29.
- The departed faithful reign with Christ now; believers already share in that reign (Colossians 3:1–4).

Discussion Prompts

- Ask the class what John actually sees in 20:4 (souls, in heaven) and how that guides the meaning of “first resurrection.”
- Connect John 5:24–25 and Romans 6:4–5: how is the believer already “raised” now?
- Discuss the comfort that faithful loved ones who have died are already reigning with Christ.

Question 8

Student Question:

The martyrs reign with Christ now, and “the second death has no power” over those in the first resurrection (20:6). If the faithful dead are already reigning with the Lord and you, baptized into Christ, have already passed from death to life, how should that present reign change the way you face suffering, the fear of dying, and the small daily choice to remain faithful?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the present reign of the redeemed into daily endurance. If the faithful dead are already reigning with Christ, and if you, baptized into Him, have already passed from death to life, then the whole emotional weight of suffering and dying shifts. The believer is not a victim

waiting to lose; he is a co-regent already reigning with his Lord, even while the world counts him as nothing. "If we endure, we will also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:12).

Consider what this does to the fear of death. For the one in the first resurrection, physical death is not the end of life but the entrance into open, conscious reigning with Christ; "the second death has no power" over him (20:6). "To live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21); to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). The martyrs John saw did not lose; they were promoted. The teacher should help students feel how this drains the terror out of dying and frees them to be faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10).

Apply it to the small, daily choice to remain faithful. Because we already reign with Christ, the unseen acts of faithfulness, refusing a sin, telling the truth, persevering in a hard marriage or a thankless duty, are not the desperate efforts of people hoping to win something later, but the fitting conduct of people who already belong to the reigning Lord. The teacher should send each student toward one place, a fear of dying, a temptation to quit, a suffering being borne, where living as one who already reigns with Christ would change everything.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- Believers already reign with Christ; endurance now is the conduct of co-regents, not desperate victims (2 Timothy 2:12).
- For those in the first resurrection, death is gain and the second death has no power; the fear of dying is broken (Philippians 1:21; 2 Corinthians 5:8).
- Faithfulness unto death is the call, and it is borne up by the certainty of reigning with Christ (Revelation 2:10).
- Present reigning gives meaning to small, hidden acts of daily faithfulness (Colossians 3:1–4).

Discussion Prompts

- Ask: how does knowing you already reign with Christ change the way you face suffering?
- Discuss what it would mean to lose the fear of death because "the second death has no power" over you.
- Consider one small, hidden act of faithfulness this week that flows from already belonging to the reigning Lord.

Question 9

Student Question:

After the thousand years Satan is loosed for "a little while," gathers the nations, and is destroyed; then comes a single "great white throne," earth and sky flee, and "the dead, great and small," are judged "by what they had done," and anyone not found "in the book of life" is thrown into the lake of fire (20:7–15). From the whole New Testament (John 5:28–29; Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:22–26; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17), explain why there is one second coming, one general resurrection of the just and the unjust together, and one final judgment, and then show specifically why the premillennial and dispensational scheme (a secret rapture, a

rebuilt temple, restored animal sacrifices, a literal seven-year tribulation, and a thousand-year political reign from Jerusalem) cannot be reconciled with Scripture.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest and most important question in the entire study, the place where the whole premillennial and dispensational system stands or falls, and the teacher should give it the most time and the steadiest confidence. The passage moves swiftly from the loosing of Satan “for a little while” and his final gathering of the nations (Gog and Magog, symbolic of all the world’s hostility), to fire from heaven that devours them, to the devil cast into the lake of fire forever, and then to one scene that ends history: “Then I saw a great white throne... And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened... And the dead were judged by what they had done... And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (20:11–15). One throne. One judgment. All the dead, great and small, together. This is the end.

Now lay the rest of the New Testament alongside it, because Scripture interprets Scripture, and the apostles are not vague. Jesus said, “An hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28–29). One hour, all the tombs, both groups together, the just and the unjust raised at the same time. Paul confessed the same hope, “that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15). Paul tells the order in 1 Corinthians 15:22–26: Christ the firstfruits, then those who belong to Him at His coming, then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God, having destroyed every rule and authority, and the last enemy destroyed is death, exactly what Revelation 20:14 shows when Death is thrown into the lake of fire. And the great resurrection chapter of comfort, 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17, describes one coming of the Lord with a cry and a trumpet, at which the dead in Christ rise and the living are caught up together to meet Him, one event, openly, gloriously, not a secret. There is one second coming, one general resurrection of just and unjust together, and one final judgment. Revelation 20:11–15 is that single judgment, not the second of two.

With that anchor fixed, the premillennial and dispensational scheme can be gently but firmly dismantled, piece by piece, from Scripture. Consider first the secret rapture, the idea that Christ will quietly snatch believers away years before His public return. The Bible knows no secret coming. Every description of Christ’s return is loud and visible: “every eye will see him” (Revelation 1:7); He comes “with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16); the catching up in that very passage happens at the last trumpet, at the one coming, not seven years early. There are not two comings of Christ but one. To split His return into a secret rapture and a later public appearing is to invent a second coming the Scriptures never teach.

Consider next the rebuilt temple with restored animal sacrifices, the heart of the dispensational millennium, in which a temple is rebuilt in Jerusalem and the sacrificial system resumes. Here

the scheme does not merely add to Scripture; it strikes at the gospel itself. The book of Hebrews labors to show that the old sacrifices are forever finished because Christ offered Himself once for all: “he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Hebrews 9:26); “we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10); and “where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin” (Hebrews 10:18). To restart animal sacrifices, even as memorials, would be to reerect what Christ tore down and to imply His one sacrifice was insufficient. The veil is torn; the temple’s work is done in Christ, who is Himself the temple (John 2:19–21) and whose body, the church, is now God’s temple (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:19–22). A future literal temple is a step backward from Christ into shadows.

Consider finally the literal seven-year tribulation and the thousand-year political reign from Jerusalem. The seven years is stitched together from a misreading of Daniel’s seventy weeks, severed from its fulfillment in Christ, and there is no New Testament teaching of a future seven-year timetable; Jesus forbade exactly this kind of calendar, “concerning that day and hour no one knows” (Matthew 24:36), and “it is not for you to know times or seasons” (Acts 1:7). The thousand-year reign is read as a literal future political kingdom, but the kingdom of God is not of this world (John 18:36), it does not come “with observation” (Luke 17:20–21), it was established when the church began (Daniel 2:44; Mark 9:1; Acts 2; Colossians 1:13), and Christ already reigns now from the right hand of the Father and must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet (1 Corinthians 15:25; Acts 2:29–36; Ephesians 1:20–23). The thousand years is ten cubed, a symbol of fullness and completeness, the present age of Christ’s reign, not a future earthly political kingdom. And there is no separate program for national Israel, for in Christ there is one people of God from every nation (Galatians 3:28–29; Ephesians 2:14–16). The whole dispensational system is a structure built on reading symbols as a literal calendar, and it collapses the moment Revelation 20 is read alongside the plain teaching of Christ and the apostles.

The teacher should close not in argument but in worship and assurance, for that is the point of the great white throne. There is one return, one resurrection, one judgment, and one book that matters. The faithful do not need charts, dates, rebuilt temples, or rapture timetables; they need their names written in the Lamb’s book of life and a life lived in faithful endurance until He comes. Reject all date-setting (Matthew 24:36; Acts 1:7). Let the class leave steadied: we do not know when, and we refuse to guess, but we know Who reigns, we know He comes once, and we know that for those written in the book, the judgment holds no terror.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- Revelation 20:11–15 is one final judgment at one throne, with all the dead, great and small, together, the single end of history.
- Scripture teaches one resurrection of the just and the unjust together, not two separated by a millennium (John 5:28–29; Acts 24:15).

- There is one second coming, loud and visible (“every eye will see him”), with no secret rapture (Revelation 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17).
- A rebuilt temple with restored animal sacrifices denies the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ and is forbidden by Hebrews 9–10 (Hebrews 9:26; 10:10, 18).
- There is no future seven-year tribulation timetable and no date-setting; no one knows the day or hour (Matthew 24:36; Acts 1:7).
- The thousand years is ten cubed, a symbol of fullness; Christ reigns now, not in a future political kingdom from Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 15:25; Acts 2:29–36; Colossians 1:13).

Discussion Prompts

- Walk the class through John 5:28–29 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17; how do they establish one resurrection and one visible coming?
- Ask why a rebuilt temple with animal sacrifices would deny the gospel of Hebrews 9–10, and what that tells us about the dispensational scheme.
- Discuss: what does the church actually need instead of charts and dates, and how does “your name in the book of life” reframe the whole question of the end?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across the whole passage, the Hallelujahs and the wedding, the Rider conquering by the word of His mouth, the dragon bound, the saints reigning now, the one great white throne, and the book of life. Name one specific way the certainty that Christ already reigns and is coming once to judge is reshaping how you will live, endure, and worship this week. Where is Jesus forming hope and faithfulness in you through this passage?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone gathers the whole passage, the Hallelujahs and the wedding, the Rider who conquers by the word of His mouth, the dragon bound at the cross, the saints already reigning, the one great white throne, and the book of life, and asks the student to name one specific way Christ is forming him through it. The aim of the entire study is transformation, members becoming more like Christ, not better-informed debaters of eschatology. This lesson, of all lessons, must not end as a won argument but as a steadied, worshiping heart.

The teacher should press for specificity and refuse vague resolve. The certainty that Christ already reigns and is coming once to judge is meant to produce concrete change: courage to speak because the strong man is bound; freedom from the fear of death because we already share the first resurrection; freedom from anxious date-setting because we trust the King and not a chart; endurance under a particular pressure because the martyrs already reign and we will too; worship because the Lamb has wed His bride. “Since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be grateful... and offer to God acceptable worship” (Hebrews 12:28).

Help students connect the doctrine straight to life. If Christ reigns now, I can stop living afraid of the world’s powers. If the dragon is bound, I can open my mouth with the gospel. If I already

reign with Christ, I can endure this hard season without despair. If there is one judgment and one book, then my single, pressing business is to be found written in it and to walk worthy until He comes. The teacher's closing task is to send each person out with one named, specific way they will live, endure, and worship differently this week because the King already reigns and is coming once, and because, by grace, their name is in the Lamb's book of life.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- The goal of studying Revelation 20 is transformation into Christ's likeness, not winning eschatological arguments (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18).
- Christ's present reign and certain return should produce courage, freedom from the fear of death, and freedom from date-setting (Hebrews 12:28).
- Assurance of one judgment and one book of life reorders the believer's priorities toward faithful endurance (Revelation 20:15).
- Worship and faithful following are the fitting response to the King who already reigns and is coming once (Revelation 19:6-9).

Discussion Prompts

- Ask each person to name one specific way Christ's present reign and certain return will change how they live this week.
- Discuss: what fear or speculation loses its grip when you believe the King already reigns and is coming once?
- Close by having each student name one step toward making sure their name is written in the Lamb's book of life.