

## Satan: Bound, Released, And Doomed

Rev. 20

### Introduction:

1. This past week Phyllis and I visited in the south, in Mississippi and Louisiana. In Mississippi we visited the site of the Civil War siege of Vicksburg. In 1863 77,000 Union troops faced a force of 33,000 Confederates. The result was 4,835 Union troops were killed/wounded/captured/missing; 3,202 Confederate troops were killed/wounded/captured/missing, with 29,495 surrendering.
2. Victory often comes at great cost! And so it is in the Book of Revelation. In the spiritual war described there some have been martyred, some have been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus, a Lamb has been slain to purchase for God men from every tribe and tongue and people. The wrath of God has been poured out upon the earth and Babylon has fallen.
3. The beast and his allies have been defeated by the Lamb and heaven is rejoicing over the reign of the Almighty!
4. Rev. 20 opens with these words . . . (reading 1-4).

### Discussion:

#### I. Historically, this passage has given students of Revelation great difficulty.

- A. One popular theory is that sometime in the future (at the second coming) Christ will return to Jerusalem, the Jews will be converted, and Jesus will set up His kingdom on the earth and reign for a literal thousand years.
- B. The theory has problems, not the least of which is that in this text: 1) the second coming is not mentioned; 2) Christ returning to Jerusalem is not mentioned; 3) the Jews being converted is not mentioned; and 4) Christ reigning in earthly Jerusalem is not mentioned.

It is hard to accept a theory when the fundamental tenets of the text that it is based on are not mentioned in that text, but brought to it by the interpreter.
- C. So what does it mean?

#### II. Observations and interpretation of vs. 1-6.

- A. The binding of Satan is not his final punishment, for his punishment comes later (v. 10).
  1. This binding prevents him from deceiving the nations as before (v. 3).
  2. Before, he deceived them into believing the emperor was divine (chap. 13).
- B. The crucial question is, "To what period does this one thousand year binding refer?"
  1. As noted already, some say this is descriptive of a time after the second coming of Christ.
    - a. They see Satan as completely inactive during this time—concluding that this is the meaning of his being "sealed in the abyss."
    - b. They then use passages that show Satan currently active (esp. 1 Pet. 5:8; Lk. 22:3; Acts 5:33, et. al.). All can agree that Satan is active today, but he could be

active while incarcerated in the abyss. "He is a gangster running his mob activity from prison's limitations" (Crouch, p. 360).

2. One interpreter, while acknowledging that he understands this to be portraying an earthly reign of Christ, says, "the passage contains no specific indication that the reign with Christ takes place on the earth or that it follows his second coming. The text does not rule out alternate explanations" (Mounce, comments on Rev. 20:1-3).
3. Others say this one thousand year period is descriptive of the present age.
  - a. Satan is curtailed so that he is unable to prevent the church from evangelizing the lost (Hendriksen, p. 226).
  - b. Passages are presented which speak of the fall of Satan in association with Christ's first coming (Matt. 12:29; Lk. 19:17-18; Jn. 12:31; Col. 2:15).
  - c. The one thousand year reign is understood figuratively to represent the time after the first coming. "The thousand years symbolizes that period of victory beginning with Constantine, when Roman persecution ended and continuing until sometime before the Lord's return when Satan will be loosed from his present restraint" (Hailey, p 392).
4. This second understanding commends itself to me.
  - a. The thousand years is figurative as are other number elements of the book.
  - b. The "first resurrection" is of those beheaded for their testimony who although beheaded "live on" and reign with Christ. They had not worshiped the beast or his image. I take this to be those of John's day.
- C. So what does this text refer to? A period of time when Satan is bound, limited, but not inactive, operating from his imprisonment much like a mob boss running his operation from jail. I would suggest that the limitation of demonic activity after the first century might be an example of this. This period probably began at the end of the Roman persecution and will continue until Satan is again loosed. We are now living in this (figurative) thousand year period.

III. After this period Satan will be released from his prison and thrown into the lake of fire (7-10).

- A. Some interpret the battle to ensue as a great physical battle to be fought between Russia and the United States, and other nations participating. But Russia and the United States are not mentioned in this text.
- B. Gog and Magog are images from Ezekiel 38-39 representative of the enemies of God's people from ancient times who sought to thwart God's purposes and to destroy His king. Note Ezek. 38:17: the prophets of Israel had prophesied of their downfall for many years. Here in Rev. 20 Gog and Magog represent the same, enemies of God's people, who surround them to destroy, but "fire comes from heaven and devours" God's enemies.
- C. The devil is thrown into the lake of fire along with the beast and the false prophet and they are tormented day and night forever and ever. Thus, is the destiny of all those opposed to the purposes of God. This is evident in the next scene . . .

IV. The judgment on the great and small, and all whose names were not found in the book of life (11-15).

- A. The focus is not on the redeemed here, but on those who are condemned. The redeemed will get attention in chapters 21 and 22.
- B. The destiny those whose names are not in the book of life is the consideration.
- C. It is a universal judgment that is seen—the dead, the great and the small, those from the sea, death and Hades gave up the dead in them. All were judged.
- D. Their condemnation was the same as the devil, the beast and the false prophet. All were thrown into the lake of fire.
- E. Robert Mounce makes the following statement as he begins his exposition on Rev. 20.

Judging from the amount of attention given by many writers to the first ten verses of chapter 20, one would think they were the single most important segment of the book of Revelation. The tendency of many interpreters at this point is to become apologists for a particular view of the millennium. Without denying the significance of this important passage, it should not be elevated above such basic themes as the return of Christ, the final judgment and removal of all wickedness, and the splendor of the eternal state.

New International Commentary, The - The New International Commentary on the New Testament – The Book of Revelation.

1. Whatever view you take of Rev. 20 do not let this become the most important part of Revelation. Even if you say, “I simply don’t understand it.”
2. Do not let confusion over the period of the thousand years become a distraction to the message of Revelation or of the Bible.
  - a. God’s judgment on His enemies is certain.
  - b. The Lamb has been slain to purchase people from the earth.
  - c. You can have your name written in the book of life. You can escape the wrath of God. You can be victorious.

Conclusion:

1. But it involves surrender—surrendering your life into the control of the Lord.
2. Do you need to repent?
3. The Lord knows our deeds. He knocks at the door.
4. Do you need to open to Him?
5. Will you surrender your life to Him?