

Chapter 20

In preceding chapters we have seen the final judgment of God poured out through the means of the Bowl judgments. We have witnessed the judgment against the False Prophet and the Beast. As we come to this chapter we are given the details of evils final end. It is important to remember that in the original manuscripts of Scripture there were no chapters and verses. The events in chapter 19 and 20 should be read as one continuous flow of events.

Satan Bound Vv. 1-3

¹And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

“And I saw” (kai eidon). This phrase always indicates a chronological event or order).

Some Bible scholars believe this is Jesus but this is unlikely. The word for angel is the same as at other times when referring to a similar kind. Whoever the angel is he has been given authority by God to seize Satan, thus the key and chain.

²And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

κρατέω (krateo)= to seize, lay hold of.

Notice that the evil one is described with four different names.

1. Dragon. This indicates his cruelty.
2. Serpent. This indicates his guile or deceptive nature.
3. Devil. This indicates his being the tempter of man.
4. Satan. This speaks of his adversarial role against Christ and humanity.

(KJV Commentary, NEBRL)

Satan will be bound for a thousand years.

Is this to be taken literal? Yes. Why? There is no basis to interpret this verse in a symbolic manner.

MacArthur noted: “It is highly unlikely that any symbolic number would be repeated six times in a text.”¹

¹ John MacArthur, Jr. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Revelation 12-22* (Chicago: Moody Press, 200), 231

Chuck Swindoll offered:

Amillennialists believe that because Christ and the saints are currently reigning over the earth, Satan is figuratively bound in the sense that he is unable to exercise full deception over the world . . . But a direct reading of the text argues strongly for a literal kingdom on earth. . . In this view, Christ returns prior to a literal thousand year earthly reign. Jesus' own words in other passages of Scripture suggest that He will establish a literal kingdom when He returns (Matt. 19:28-30; Acts 1:6-8). After the apostles, many prominent teachers in the early church—including Papias, Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Hyppolytus—taught that Christ would return before an earthly millenium²

Amillennialism views the thousand year reign of Christ figuratively as noted by Swindoll's above notation. In other words, Christ's reign is spiritual, not literal.

³And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

“Cast” = *ballo* (GRK) means to throw.

“Bottomless pit” = *abussos* (GRK) means abyss

Saints Reign

Vv. 4-6

⁴And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

“And I saw thrones” Kai eidon θρόνος thronos = thrones.

² Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's New Testament Insights: Insight on Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 259.

Who sat upon these thrones? The saints of God. People from the Old Testament era, the New Testament era and all those who lived thereafter, including the Tribulation saints will sit upon thrones.

Daniel 7:27, I Cor. 6:2, 2 Tim. 2:12, Rev. 2:26; 3:21; 5:10

⁵But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.

It is important to understand that this is a parenthetical thought. There is much confusion about the end time judgments and resurrections. The Postmillennialist and Amillennialists argue for only one general resurrection, but such a position cannot be sustained with scholarly Biblical study.

“**The rest of the dead** refers to unbelievers of all ages who will be raised at the end of the Millennium to stand before the Judgment of the Great White Throne.” ³

⁶Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

To be a part of the first resurrection will indeed be a position of joy and rapture. MacArthur noted: “The comforting truth is that no true child of God will ever face God’s eternal wrath....Romans 5:9, I Thess. 1:10; 5:9.”⁴

Note that they will serve as priests and reign with Christ a thousand years.

Satan’s Grand Finale and Eternal Doom **Vv. 7-10**

⁷And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

A question that many people might have is: Why will God allow Satan to be released from the pit? There are at least two reasons that are obvious yet closely related.

1. Although the reign of Christ will be with perfect righteousness and there will be no wars, those born during this era still will have a free will to choose Christ or no. Even though evil will be bound, man will still have the freedom to choose right or wrong.
2. Satan must be judged. Regardless of how horrible the abyss may be, it is not Satan’s final end. He must be judged and sentenced by the Righteous God.

³William MacDonald; edited with introductions by Arthur Farstad, *Believer’s Bible commentary: Old and New Testaments [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1995 by William MacDonald.

⁴ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, 238.

Note that during the Millennial Reign of Christ much of the curse of sins effects will be reversed. The prophecies of Isaiah 11 will be fulfilled during Christ's earthly reign. Ravenous beasts will be tame and gentle, children will play with the cobra (adder) and not be harmed. The lion will eat grass like cattle.

If Christ reigns in righteousness and Satan's influence is absent during the 1,000 year reign; where do all these rebellious peoples come from who assemble against the Messiah?

⁸And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom *is* as the sand of the sea.

“The four quarters of the earth” This refers to Satan's global influence. He will deceive all those whose hearts have rejected the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. We do not know what kind of deception that he will use but that it is of global proportion is apparent.

“Gog and Magog”

Who are these people? It is easy to see how some would confuse them with the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel 38-39. But the Ezekiel passage is referring to the invasion force against Israel at the end of the Tribulation. Note the differences between that war, the Battle of Armageddon, and the events at the end of the Millennial Reign.

“Ezekiel 39:4 and 17 describe the invaders perishing on the mountains of Israel, but according to Revelation 20:9, the rebels at the end of the Millennium will be destroyed on a broad plain. Also the language of Ezekiel 39:17-20 seems to describe the same event of Revelation 19:17-18.”⁵

Thus, the Battle of Armageddon is usually taught as being the last battle of human history but in reality, there will be one at the end of the Millennial Reign as based upon this passage.

I think it is important to note that due to all of the cataclysmic events through the Tribulation era, the earth's topography will certainly be different. Remember that every mountain has been made smooth.

⁹And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

Note that no actual battle will occur however. As soon as all these forces surround Jerusalem, the Headquarters of the Millennial Reign, fire will come down out of heaven and devour them. So in one sense the battle ended before it ever began.

⁵ MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, 241.

¹⁰And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Satan will meet his final end at the conclusion of this event. The day that the Saints of God had longed for throughout generations will finally come to pass. Although the Bible is silent about the reaction of the saints and heavenly hosts, I cannot help but believe that there will be a celebration beyond our imagination.

Note also that Satan joins his cronies, namely, the Anti-Christ (Beast) and the False Prophet. This is important to note. It concretely proves that there is no such thing as annihilation of souls. The Beast and the False Prophet are certainly humans and they will remain in the lake of fire where Satan will also be cast.

The Great White Throne Vv. 11-15

¹¹And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. ¹³And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. ¹⁴And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

The Great White Throne will be a scene of unimaginable anguish and suffering. This judgment will take place immediately following Satan's final judgment—being cast into the lake of fire.

Swindoll offered:

Appropriately, Revelation 20:11-15 begins with God. John saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it. The throne is described as “great” because it is God’s eternal throne—the seat of His sovereign rule, the place of infinite justice. It is “white” because the verdicts and sentencing that proceed from it will be pure and righteous, reflecting His unimpeachable holiness.⁶

⁶ Swindoll, *Swindoll's New Testament Insights*, 257.

John Phillips observed:

To look upon the face of Jesus is bliss beyond words for the child of God, but for the ungodly, it will be the first agonizing stab of hell. The earth and the heavens have fled away already from that face, for heaven and earth have been defiled by sin and need to be made new.⁷

Note that everyone, both “small and great” will stand before God to be judged.

These are those who were not part of the first resurrection. Only believers will be part of the first resurrection. Unbelievers will be part of the second resurrection where they will appear before God to be justly judged.

John mentions “the books were opened and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

What are the books to which John refers? The answer is found in the same verse: “ and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” The books undoubtedly is a book of deeds, that is, a record of every deed committed. In the context of this passage it lends itself to the understanding of sinful deeds. God’s judgment will be just and righteous. There will be no defenses launched or allowed, because the books will have every deed perfectly recorded without error. The other book is the “book of life.” The Lamb’s book of life has every name recorded in it who has placed their faith and trust in Jesus. It is important to note that every sin will be judged, this includes the sins of omission as well. See Matthew 25:41-46.

The final sentence will then be pronounced: “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

John does not describe the anguish and horror of those who will be cast into the lake of fire but Jesus spoke about it in Mark 9:42-48.

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⁷ John Phillips, *Exploring Revelation: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004) 242.