

The Thousand Years, Part 4: Satan Bound (Revelation 20:1–8)

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Introduction

1. In three messages we have done much groundwork to interpret Revelation 20 properly.
 - a. We showed that the premillennial view, so popular in the modern church, fails to contribute adequately to the overall story of redemption.
 - b. We argued that the amillennial view is, on the other hand, consistent with Scripture, sound interpretation and theology, and grounded in church history.
2. “Strong Points of the Amillennial Position” (by Bobby Grow, *Amillennialism*, Monergism.com)
 - a. It is highly Christocentric: it makes Christ the center of all the biblical covenants (even the “Land” covenant or the Sinaitic covenant).
 - b. It notes the universal scope of the Abrahamic Covenant (as key) to interpreting the rest of the biblical covenants.
 - c. It sees salvation history oriented to a person (Christ), instead of a people (the nation of Israel).
 - d. It emphasizes continuity between the “people of God” (Israel and the Church are one in Christ, Eph. 2:11ff).
 - e. It provides an ethic that is rooted in creation, and “re-creation” (continuity between God’s redemptive work now, carried over into the eternal state then).
 - f. It emphasizes a Trinitarian view of God as it elevates the person, Christ Jesus, the second person of the trinity as the point and mediator of all history.
 - g. It flows from a hermeneutic that takes seriously the literary character of the Scriptures (esp. the book of Revelation).
3. We now begin to look at the millennium as it is addressed by John in Revelation 20 in the following messages:
 - a. The binding of Satan (vv. 1–3), today
 - b. The nature of the millennial kingdom (vv. 4–6)
 - c. The first resurrection (vv. 4–6)
 - d. The release of Satan and the brief chaos to be ended by the return of Jesus Christ (vv. 7, 8).

I. The Coming of Christ

1. Confronted by the Pharisees over His exorcisms, Jesus testified that He came to “*bind the strong man*” in order to plunder his house (Matt. 12:28, 29).
 - a. The purpose of His casting out demons was to demonstrate His authority in the kingdom of God.
 - b. A secondary purpose was to identify the work of the Spirit, and, of this, Christ warned the Pharisees of the great danger in blaspheming the Spirit by rejecting Christ (vv. 31, 32).
2. Christ’s first coming fulfilled the purpose of God to crush the serpent’s head (Gen. 3:15).
 - a. God forgives the redeemed children of Adam by canceling the charges against them through the cross, by which He “*disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to an open shame*” (Col. 2:13, 14).

- b. By the cross Jesus destroyed the works of the devil and released those held in captivity by him (Acts 26:28; 1 John 3:8; 5:9; Heb. 2:15; Luke 10:18).
3. The vision of Revelation 12 details how God checked Satan, casting Him out of heaven and putting him on a short leash (12:7–17).
- a. Thus, John’s vision has an angel binding Satan for a thousand years (20:1–3), which binding took place with Christ’s first coming as we have seen.
 - b. The question that remains is how Satan can be bound now when we have many warnings to beware of his wiles (Acts 5:3; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:14; Eph. 4:22; 6:11; 1 Tim. 3:16, 17; 5:15; 2 Tim. 2:26; 1 Pet. 5:8).

II. John’s Vision

1. Chapter 20 is a new vision, as seen in the use of “*I saw*” (v. 1).
 - a. Clearly, the language is designed to show that God is frustrating the purposes of Satan.
 - b. The language is *apocalyptic symbolism*; so we know that we were never meant to understand it literally.
 - 1) How can an angel bind a spiritual being with a real chain?
 - 2) How are we to identify the angel and keys (9:1, 2)?
2. This binding of Satan is for a specific time (a thousand years) and for a specific purpose (to prevent him from deceiving the nations).
 - a. However, his evil activities are not fully curtailed (Ill. Al Capone).
 - b. After his expulsion from heaven, earth is warned (12:12) because he is now more dangerous than ever.
 - c. He wages war on the saints and overcomes them (12:17).

III. Why Bound?

1. John’s vision is intended to inform us that Satan’s activities in this age, while not curtailed, are limited in two ways:
 - a. He cannot deceive the nations with respect to the gospel and its purpose in salvation (v. 2).
 - 1) Before Christ, the nations were left in darkness and enslaved in the power of idolatry (Eph. 2:2–5).
 - 2) Now Satan cannot prevent Christ from taking out of the world a people from every nation for His name’s sake (Rev. 5:9).
 - b. This binding also protects the believers from spiritual harm (Col. 2:13).
 - 1) He can no longer accuse believers before the throne of God (12:10); however, he can still mess with the assurance of the saints (Ill. Martin Luther).

It is well-known that in his writings in table conversation Luther would often refer to visits from the Devil, how the Devil would come to him and whisper in his ear, accusing him of all manner of filthy sin: “Martin, you are a liar, greedy, lecherous, a blasphemous, a hypocrite. You cannot stand before God.”

To which Luther would respond: “Well, yes, I am. And, indeed, Satan, you do not know the half of it. I have done much worse than that and if you care to give me your full list, I can no doubt add to it and help make it more complete. But you know what?”

My Savior has died for all my sins – those you mention, those I could add and, indeed, those I have committed but am so wicked that I am unaware of having done so. It does not change the fact that Christ has died for all of them; his blood is sufficient; and on the Day of Judgment I shall be exonerated because he has taken all my sins on himself and clothed me in his own perfect righteousness.”

2) He can instill fear and dread in believers (Matt. 10:31; Luke 12:32; Rev. 1:17; 2 Tim. 1:7; Heb. 2:15).

3) He can still rage and raise a ruckus as we spoil his kingdom.

4) He can deceive the unwary (2 Cor. 11:3, 13–15).

2. This binding is temporary; Satan will be released for a brief time to lead a final rebellion before he is cast into hell forever (vv. 7, 8). We will look at this end in another message.

Application

1. We must not understand the thousand years as a literal period of time. It is representative of an ideal period. Remember when Christ informed the saints in Smyrna that they were to endure tribulation for 10 days (2:10)? If they endured, they were rewarded with the promise of ruling with Christ for a thousand years. The comparison is intended to show that our suffering is brief compared to the glory of our eternal state.
2. When we preach the devil-defeating, sin-atonement, wrath-propitiating, death-conquering gospel of Jesus, lives are set free from the bondage of Satan. Surely, that is worth all trials that we might endure at Satan’s hand. We must endure and remain faithful because we know that Satan is already a defeated foe. His end is near.

*“When Satan tempts me to despair,
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin;
Because the sinless Savior died,
My sinful soul is counted free,
For God the just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me.”*

Before the Throne of God Above, Second Stanza, Original Words by Charitie Lees Bancroft (1841-1892), Alternate Words and Music by Vikki Cook, Sovereign Grace Music, 1997

“Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death” (Rev. 2:10, 11).