

He Seized the Dragon, or Satan, and Bound Him for a Thousand Years

20: 1-3

DIG: What thousand-year period does Satan's imprisonment coincide? Where is he bound? By whom? For what purpose will he be bound? What purpose will be served when Satan tries to deceive the nations again? What will it prove?

REFLECT: What is the hope in this passage for you? What is discouraging?

Satan, the counterfeit Father, will be bound for a thousand years, or a millennium, in the Abyss. Traditional Judaism has other views of how long the "Days of the Messiah" will last. Some rabbis say forty years, some say seventy years, some say four hundred years, and some say seven thousand years. Rabbi ben-Yitzchak said: As long as from Noah's day until our own (Sanhedrin 99a).⁴²⁵

John saw an angel coming down out of heaven and holding a great chain in his hand (20:1). So this angel will be at His bidding. The lowest order of heavenly beings, a common angel, will be able to bind Satan, the model of perfection who was the anointed cherub, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty (Ezekiel 28:12b and 14). This angel is probably the same one who released the demonic locusts by opening the shaft leading to the Abyss in the fifth trumpet judgment (9:1-2).

It is important to understand that the devil isn't in control of the Abyss. The One who has the keys of death and Hades (1:18) is our Lord Jesus Christ. Satan is not the king of hell. He doesn't run around with little horns and a red suit, ordering people to shovel coal. That is not the picture in the Bible. My friend, Satan is the chief prisoner. He is not king of hell. ADONAI is the King of hell. The Bible teaches that hell was prepared, and designed by God, for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). They are His prisoners.

All four titles by which Satan is called in the book are brought together here. He is the dragon (12:3-4) defeated in heavenly combat by Michael, the ancient serpent (Genesis 3:1) the devil (Luke 4:2-13) who knows his time is short, and Satan (12:9-10). The angel bound and chained him for a thousand years (20:2). This is the first time in the Scriptures that the exact length of the messianic Kingdom is given. It will be a thousand years, or a millennium. There is no good reason for taking the thousand years in other than

their literal sense.⁴²⁶ In the first seven verses of this chapter they repeat the phrase **thousand years** six times. It must be pretty important to put that kind of emphasis on it. The early Church believed in a literal thousand-year reign of **Christ**. Those who rejected that position were considered to be heretics. Therefore, to spiritualize this passage is to disembowel all Scripture of vital meaning. The thrones are literal; the martyrs are literal, **Yeshua** is literal; the Word of **God** is literal; the beast is literal; his image is literal; his mark on people's foreheads and hands is literal; and the **thousand years** are literal. **A thousand years means a thousand years!** Can't the Lord say what **He** means? Of course **He** can, and when **He** says a **thousand years** **He** means a **thousand years**.⁴²⁷

Then **the place, purpose** and **promise** of **Satan's** binding are given. **The place** is the **Abyss**. **He** threw him into the **Abyss** (9:1, 9:2, 9:11, 11:7, 17:8, 20:1 and 20:3). The **Abyss** is also the temporary place of confinement for fallen **angels**. It is the same place where the demonic **angels** of **Genesis 6:1-4** were chained. They had devised a wicked plan to completely corrupt mankind, making it impossible for humans to be saved. (see my commentary on **Genesis Ca - The Sons of God Married the Daughters of Men**). Thus, the **Abyss** is a place for the worst of the worst. **Peter** tells us that **the LORD did not spare the demonic angels when they sinned** by marrying the **daughters of men** and producing the **Nephilim, but sent them to hell (Second Peter 2:4a)**. The phrase, **sent them to hell**, is actually the translation of a single *Greek* word used only in **Second Peter**, it is derived from *tartarus*, which in *Greek* mythology identified a subterranean **Abyss** that was even lower than **Hades** or **hell**. **Tartarus** came to refer to the abode of the most wicked spirits, where the worst rebels and criminals received the severest divine punishment. Much like when **Jesus** used the term *gehenna* (the name for Jerusalem's garbage dump, where fires burned continually) to illustrate the inextinguishable torments of eternal anguish, **Peter** used a familiar word from popular *Greek* thought to designate **hell**.⁴²⁸ There, **ADONAI** put **them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment (Isaiah 24:21-22)**. Because **their** sin was so severe, **God** placed **them** in chains to prevent them from committing such wickedness ever again (**Second Peter 2:4b**). After the **Great Tribulation**, **Satan** will be chained, along with his co-conspirators, for a thousand years.

And **the purpose** will be that **he** will be **locked and sealed** there to **keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended**. The binding of **Satan** will restrict **him** from doing what **he** does best, deceiving people about themselves, **God** or eternity. There can be no messianic Kingdom with our **enemy the devil** prowling around like a roaring lion looking for people to devour (**First Peter 5:8**). **He** will be incarcerated for a **thousand years** with no hope of escape.

But **the promise** is that **after that**, or **after** the thousand years, **he must be set free for a short time** to fulfill **God's plan (20:3)**. Why would **ADONAI** allow **Satan** to be set free and deceive the nations once again? What purpose would that serve?

The Bible teaches that **the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure (Jeremiah 17:9)**, and that we are born with the disease of sin. However, the world teaches that we are born sinless and to end up with a person like Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Osama bin Laden or Charlie Manson, something terrible has to go wrong. And there are those who will blame the dreadful outcome of a child molester or mass murderer on their environment. They say if only his father hadn't abused him, or if only she would have had more opportunities as a young woman, and so on. This argument has gone on forever.

But all that will end with the **thousand-year** reign of Jesus **Christ**. It will be a time of perfect peace. There will still be those with a sin nature living at that time, but they will be unable to carry out any evil plans. There will be no abuse, sexual crimes or murders. The believers who **will reign with Christ (20:6b)** will prevent it. As a result, conditions will be perfect and unbelievers will have a hundred years to accept the **Messiah** or die (**Isaiah 65:20**). However, **when the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out and deceive the nations** one last time. **In number they will be like the sand on the sea shore (20:7-8)**. At that time all excuses for mankind's sinful behavior will be exposed for what they are - lies.

King David saw the heart of this debate clearly after his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah. He pleaded: **Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your unfailing love; according to Your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise (Psalm 51:1-2 and 17)**. We should do likewise.