

20. The Judgment of Satan

Revelation 20

YouTube Video Link: <https://youtu.be/3v1IC9QvNtM>

In our previous study, we looked at The Appearance of Heaven's King. The Apostle John described the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and the Bride of Christ. We also read of the defeat of the Beast and False Prophet, who had waged war against the Lamb and His armies. In chapter 20, John continues his narrative, tying these past events with what comes next.

In this study, we will see four significant themes as John describes what he sees. We will also look at what the prophet Isaiah said about the rule and reign of the Messiah: What will the Millennium be like?

1. The Binding and Removal of Satan
2. The Reign of the Saints with Christ in His Kingdom on Earth
3. What Will the Millennium Be Like?
4. The Release of Satan for a short while on Earth
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The Binding and Removal of Satan

¹Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven with the key to the Abyss, holding in his hand a great chain. ²He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³And he threw him into the Abyss, shut it, and sealed it over him, so that he could not deceive the nations until the thousand years were complete. After that, he must be released for a brief period of time (Revelation 20:1-3).

After losing the last battle of this age over Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:2-3), Satan is seized by an angel. We don't know who this angel is, but it may be the Archangel Michael, the one Satan battled and lost in the war in heavenly realms when he was thrown down: ⁷“Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. ⁸But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven” (Revelation 12:7-8). In verse 2, all four titles for Satan in Revelation are listed. He is referred to as Satan, the dragon, the one defeated in a heavenly battle by Michael the Archangel (12:7-8). He is also called the ancient serpent, intimating that he was the one in the Garden of Eden, as well as the devil who knows that his time is short (Revelation 12:12). Whomever the angel is, he has a key, as well as a great chain with which to bind Satan and throws him into the Abyss. The original Greek word, *abussos*, means a deep hole in the deepest part of the Earth. This Greek word is also translated as "bottomless pit" in Revelation 9:2. Satan is chained and locked in the deepest part of Hell for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:7). The purpose of this arrest and incarceration in the pit is not for his final judgment and punishment, that is to come later. At this point, he is bound so that he can no longer deceive the nations until the thousand years are finished.

If we see Satan bound and thrown into the bottomless pit, where is he now? Many people picture Satan as a character with a pitchfork in Hell now, but Scripture tells us that Satan walks around like a roaring lion, seeking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). Jesus defeated Satan legally on

the cross and sealed his fate, but we do not see him bound yet. However, Scripture tells us that Hell is a place reserved for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41), and that will be his ultimate destination and judgment.

Different Degrees of Punishment

There are different degrees of punishment in that awful place, greater punishment for greater sins. When Jesus spoke to Pontius Pilate before His crucifixion, He said to him, “**You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me up to you has the greater sin**” (John 19:11-12). The greater the level of influence one has, the greater the degree of accountability for that authority or level of coercion. For example, celebrities who speak openly and corrupt the values of those who hear them will be held responsible for their influence. Anyone with more significant influence will have greater responsibility and, therefore, a greater reward or judgment. The same is true of teachers and leaders (James 3:1).

Writer and teacher Chuck Swindoll comments about the degrees of punishment in Hell:

There will always be some who will have less divine input than others. Because that is true, I believe there will be degrees of eternal punishment. Look closely at the words of Jesus:

⁴⁷That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. ⁴⁸But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked (Luke 12:47-48).

Let's understand that no one without Christ spends eternity in heaven. However, the *specifics* of how God handles those who are without Christ because they heard so little might very well be answered by the idea of degrees of punishment.¹

The concept of rewards and punishment is not a popular topic today, but we are told there will be rewards as a direct result of what we have done with the resources, gifts, and talents that God has given us. This does not only refer to worldly possessions but also to information, the light, and knowledge of the truth. There will be consequences directly associated with how we choose to live our lives.

The Reign of the Saints with Christ

John then saw two different sets of people ruling and reigning with Christ:

⁴Then I saw the thrones, and those seated on them had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image, and had not received its mark on their foreheads or hands. And they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵The rest of the dead did not come back to life until the thousand years

¹ Charles R. Swindoll. *Growing Deep in the Christian Life*. Published by Multnomah Press, 1987, page 324.

were complete. This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection! The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4-6).

Believers in Christ are given authority to judge together with those who are beheaded for their testimony and have not worshiped the Beast or his image. Paul the Apostle wrote that believers in Christ would judge evil angels: "Do you not know that we are to judge angels?" (1 Corinthians 6:3). Both parties of believers receive new bodies at the first resurrection of believers in Christ and will reign with Christ at His return (v. 4). They will be priests ruling and reigning in God's kingdom in a marriage relationship as the bride of Christ during this time of peace for a thousand years.

Theologians and scholars call this thousand-year reign of Christ the Millennium. The word millennium means a thousand. There are three beliefs about the Millennium. The first is called *Amillennialism*. An Amillennialist believes that the thousand years mentioned six times in Revelation 20:2-7 is not a literal number but a symbolic number representing the time we are in now, the Church age. Secondly, there is *postmillennialism*. Postmillennialists also believe that the 1,000-year period mentioned in the passage above is not a literal 1,000 years. In their view, the Church will bring in a golden age of Christian ethics, and Jesus' Second Coming will come after that period. Thirdly, there is *premillennialism*, to which view this writer holds. A premillennialist believes that the coming of Jesus will be after a time of tribulation and that He will raise or resurrect the saints, i.e., those who have been born-again of the Spirit. The saints will rule and reign with Him in a literal thousand-year reign on the Earth. There will be no more war until the 1,000 years are up, and then Satan must be released for a time (Revelation 20:7).

Imagine what our world will be like with Satan bound and unable to influence the world at all. How will the world be different when it is free from the influence of Satan?

What Will the Millennium Be Like?

For those who are believers, our new resurrection bodies will have no more temptation towards sin and evil. The Scriptures tell us that, with Satan bound in the Abyss, there will be no more deception at work on Earth (v. 3). Our glorified resurrection bodies will take away all fear of harm or death. When Jesus returns, the saints will be immortal: **"For this perishable body must put on the imperishable and this mortal body must put on immortality"** (1 Corinthians 15:53). Because believers in Christ will be operating in a free capacity, the saints' creativity will be unleashed. We will likely see our bodies, souls, and minds working at a different level, free from constraint, and we will experience life as God intended. Also, the whole creation is waiting for the time when those who are in Christ will put on incorruptible bodies (1 Corinthians 15:54), and there will be a change in the nature of the animal kingdom. Paul the Apostle writes:

¹⁹The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. ²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time (Romans 8:19-22).

When Paul the Apostle wrote the above Scripture about the creation, I wonder what was on his mind. I believe he was referring to the animal kingdom, which is so fearful of humankind at present. Since the Fall, the relationship between humanity and the animal kingdom has suffered. Today, we see the devastating effects of modern agriculture and livestock farming methods that bring great suffering to the creation. This treatment of the animal kingdom is not what God intended, and animals are suffering, along with humanity. The inner longing and groaning of all the animal kingdom are for the change of their nature of fear toward humanity and one another. When Jesus comes and the Millennium begins, there will be significant changes to the animal and bird kingdom and all of God's creation.

The Prophet Isaiah's Word About the Millenium

¹A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. ²The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD - ³and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; ⁴but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the Earth. He will strike the Earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips, he will slay the wicked. ⁵Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. ⁶The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. ⁷The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. ⁹They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the Earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious (Isaiah 11:1-10).

Notice the changes that take place when Christ is on the throne. Animals that are opposites to one another will feed alongside one another (vs. 6-7). The wolf and the sheep will lie down with one another at night—they will live in the same habitat. The lion, one of the most predatory animals on Earth, will eat straw in the same way an ox does (v. 7). Then, there will be children reaching into the dens of adders and playing with venomous snakes (v. 8). More than six hundred years before Christ, when Isaiah's above prophecy was spoken, ferocious animals were abundant in Israel. Still, Isaiah prophesies a time when children will play with the animals, and the Earth will be at peace. Isaiah prophesied that because the knowledge of God will cover the Earth, the *goyim*, the Gentile nations, will place their trust in the Son of David. His rest will be glorious (v. 10). It will be the Sabbath 1,000-year rest, and God will answer the prayer for peace on Earth and goodwill towards men. God's presence and reign will accomplish this.

Isaiah the prophet talks about the One who will inaugurate this time of change. It is not the Church that brings about the conquering of evil, as some believe, but the shoot from Jesse's line, i.e., King David's father (Isaiah 11:1). A great King will come from the tribe of Judah and of David's descendants, One who will judge the Earth. The Lord Jesus will not judge by what He sees or hears. He will judge difficult situations because He knows all and has perfect judgment about all

things. Christ will rule in righteousness. He has come to Earth and suffered the worst of humanity and injustice and has overcome all. The Lord is the One who has the power to speak and create with His words. With the breath of His lips, He will slay the wicked (v. 4). “But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap” (Malachi 3:2).

Isaiah 11:9 tells us that "the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Discuss what you think this verse means. How do you think the knowledge of the Lord will permeate the Earth? How will the creation be affected?

The Release of Satan for a Short While on Earth

⁷When the thousand years are complete, Satan will be released from his prison, ⁸and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the Earth—Gog and Magog—to assemble them for battle. Their number is like the sand of the seashore. ⁹And they marched across the broad expanse of the Earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. But fire came down from heaven and consumed them. ¹⁰And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, into which the beast and the false prophet had already been thrown. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Revelation 20:7-10).

This passage about the devil is one of the more difficult things to understand. Why would God plan to release Satan at this time before his ultimate judgment? To understand this question, we would, of course, have to know why God allowed Satan to have any influence over man at all. Have you ever wondered that? Why did God not destroy the serpent in the garden after he deceived humanity? Why allow him to exist at all? God created man and woman for relationship. He gave us free will to choose to follow and serve Him. It is a choice that we all have. The consequence of this freedom is that God watches our choices, whether we choose evil or decide to serve ourselves. This test of our character is a great mystery and one that we will only truly understand when we know the Lord as we are known. Paul tells us that one day, we shall see him face to face: “For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known (1 Corinthians 13:12).

This writer's view is that there will be two kinds of people alive on Earth during the thousand-year Millennium. There will be the Body of Christ, the saints of the Living God, but there will also be those who never came to Christ and are still alive when Christ returns with His saints and the angels. Verses 7-10 say that Satan will be released after the thousand years are up, and he will go forth to deceive the nations all over the world. If it is only the saints living on the Earth, how can the saints be deceived in the new bodies they receive at the resurrection? We read twice about the deception of the devil (vs. 8 and 10). Furthermore, Isaiah prophesied a time when people would live to a great age.

Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed (Isaiah 65:20).

Some will not join in the Antichrist's war at the last battle over Jerusalem and will still be left alive when the Millennium begins. They will still be subject to death. Death and Hades are only destroyed at the end of the Millennium (v. 14). We are told that when Satan is released for a short time, he will deceive those born during the thousand years and motivate them to make one last attack on the saints and the beloved city. There is only one beloved city referred to in Scripture—Jerusalem. Fire from God will come down upon those who attack the saints, and at this point, Satan will join the Antichrist and the false prophet in the lake of fire (v. 10), and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. This Great White Throne judgment signals the end of all evil.

The Great White Throne Judgment

¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and the One seated on it. Earth and heaven fled from His presence, and no place was found for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne. And there were open books, and one of them was the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their deeds, as recorded in the books. ¹³The sea gave up its dead, and Death and Hades gave up their dead, and each one was judged according to his deeds (Revelation 20:11-13).

At the end of the thousand years of peace, and with all God's enemies overcome, then will come the Great White Throne judgment with books opened with the records of all deeds. It will be a fearful and awesome thing to stand before the living God and give an account of one's deeds. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews writes, **"It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"** (Hebrews 10:31).

Along with the records of all deeds, another book will be opened: the Book of Life. Thank God for this book! It contains the names of all who choose Christ and receive a pardon for their sins and new life in Christ. May your name be found in that book.

The Book of Life

Jesus talked about the Book of Life with His disciples when He sent them out two by two to all Israel's cities. They came back to Him, rejoicing that they had power and authority over evil spirits, but He replied to them: **"However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven"** (Luke 10:20). When a person commits himself to Christ, their sin is forgiven, and he enters into a covenant relationship with God with their names written in the Lambs Book of Life.

We also read about the Book of Life when we looked at the Antichrist's deception and the war against the saints. During that time, the Antichrist's war against God's people will force people to decide whose side they are on. All those who are on the Lord's side will not worship the Antichrist and Satan: **"And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"** (Revelation 13:8). You must make your choice as to whom you will serve, Satan or God. It might seem to be a good choice during the Antichrist's reign to become a part of his kingdom, for he will offer many things that will satisfy our flesh. However, know this: the destiny of those who choose this world and its allurements will suffer eternal damnation along with the devil and his angels:

¹⁴Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death—the lake of fire. ¹⁵And if anyone was found whose name was not written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14-15).

All of us are faced with a choice of direction in our lives. If you have never committed your life to walk in obedience to Christ, now is an excellent time to choose life. This choice is similar to what Joshua put before the Israelites, i.e., whether or not they would serve the Lord (Joshua 24:15). Whom will you serve?

When we choose Christ, we choose life eternal. We will see His kingdom come, and it will be life as He intended. Can you imagine the life that God intended? It is a far cry from the world in which we live. I hope that you can allow yourself to dream about life as God intended. This study has given us a glimpse of what is to come. The good part is that this is not a fairy tale! We see longings of a better life in all the excellent fantasy tales, i.e., a better world. This longing exists within us because we know that the world in which we presently live is not the world for which we were created. We age, our bodies decay, nature is held captive and suffers, everything deteriorates, and the innocent suffer. Deep down, we instinctively know that we were created for a different life, and we long for what C.S. Lewis called our "inconsolable longing."² One day, however, God will answer our longings and everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord and whose name is found in the Book of Life will find fulfillment in the life that God has prepared for those who love Him. Before His crucifixion, Jesus said:

¹Do not let your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ²In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also (John 14:1-3).

John the Apostle assures us of the future: "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). We can rest in His love and what He has prepared for our future with Him.

Prayer: Lord, we thank You that You hold everything in Your hands. Your plans are set, and You exist in the past, present, and future. You are the Great "I Am." Thank you for choosing us before the foundation of the world. We declare that Your Kingdom has no end! Amen.

Keith Thomas
Email: keiththomas@groupbiblestudy.com

² <https://www.focusonthefamily.ca/content/longing-for-a-far-country-never-visited>.