

Title: Revelation Twenty

Text: Rev. 20

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Place: Decatur Church of God

Theme: Packed Bags

I grew up with the Sunday comics, Beetle Bailey, Peanuts, and Lil Abner. I didn't really read about all the comic book characters.

Now they are making movies about the comic book characters and if you didn't know their stories you lose a lot of the symbolism and "inside jokes."

Are you missing the symbolism of Revelation?

Revelation with all its symbols, visions, pictures, metaphors, and apocalyptic presentation can become very difficult to interpret thus we must make some observations:

1. We must interpret this scripture by other scriptures.
2. A definite rule of hermeneutics (a study of the methodological principles of interpretation) is that obscure passages of Scripture must be governed by the clear passages.
3. This lone passage dealing with the millennium is couched in a book of the Bible literally filled with symbols, numerology, figures of speech, poetic language, and spiritual lessons couched in Old Testament terminology, and means to be unveiled or understood.

* E. P Barrows in "Companion to the Bible" writes, "Figurative language is no less certain and truthful than its plain and literal declarations. The figures of the Bible are employed not simply to please the imagination and excite the feelings, but to teach eternal verities."

4. Since Revelation was written primarily to bring comfort to the Christians of John's day, it is obvious that a correct

understanding must be gained by learning what these symbols and figures meant to the people of that day.

* Revelation is written as a drama and the form is apocalyptic. This is an imagery that heightens John's messages by describing judgment and blessing in vivid and unnatural combinations.

5. Apocalyptic writings are known to have definite characteristics, such as figurative language, imagery, numerology, hyperbole, and the like. These are used for a purpose—to teach spiritual lessons to God's people.

*These characteristics are used in the same way a director uses special effects and scenery. The important thing in watching a drama is not the effects, but the message they help to portray.

6. A truth for Bible study is that most sections demand literal interpretation unless the context or other known Scripture passages demand figurative or spiritual interpretation. In apocalyptic literature the opposite is true. Here one must interpret figuratively, unless literal interpretation is absolutely demanded.

7. In chapter 20, we must be consistent in being either figurative or literal. In other words, we must be able to harmonize the meanings from beginning to end.

I. Chapter 20 has four basic sections.

A. The Binding of Satan.

Rev. 20:1-3

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. ²He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the

nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

- a. Most will agree that the key, the abyss, the chain, the sealing are obviously figures of speech.
- b. They also will agree that the Satan is not literally a dragon and at the same time a serpent.
- c. John is describing him poetically.

* Do you see the difficulty in binding Satan, a spiritual being, with physical chains and keys?

- d. Only one event coincides with John's language here—this is the defeat of Satan brought about by Christ's first advent and crucifixion.
- e. John does not picture Satan as obliterated, but merely imprisoned.

* There are many prisoners who are known to operate from inside barred windows to their associates on the outside. And many dogs, though bound, have bitten people who come within the confines of their chain.

* A slave is bound to his master, but he lives his life as a human being with freedom to do countless other things. So Satan's being bound does not mean that he is powerless to tempt people.

- f. It is only a limitation of his power in one particular respect.
- g. The gospel is to be proclaimed to all nations and Satan is unable to prevent it.
- h. Satan is limited in his attempt to deceive the nations.

Rev. 12:10

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who

accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

Luke 10:19

I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.

* Carolyn Arends writes in Christianity Today...

As a kid, I loved Mission Sundays, when missionaries on furlough brought special reports in place of a sermon There is one visit I've never forgotten.

One day, they told us, an enormous snake—much longer than a man—slithered its way right through their front door and into the kitchen of their simple home. Terrified, they ran outside and searched frantically for a local who might know what to do. A machete-wielding neighbor came to the rescue, calmly marching into their house and decapitating the snake with one clean chop.

The neighbor reemerged triumphant and assured the missionaries that the reptile had been defeated. But there was a catch, he warned: It was going to take a while for the snake to realize it was dead.

A snake's neurology and blood flow are such that it can take considerable time for it to stop moving even after decapitation. For the next several hours, the missionaries were forced to wait outside while the snake thrashed about, smashing furniture and flailing against walls and windows, wreaking havoc until its body finally understood that it no longer had a head.

Sweating in the heat, they had felt frustrated and a little sickened but also grateful that the snake's rampage wouldn't last forever. And at some point in their waiting, they told us, they had a mutual epiphany.

I leaned in with the rest of the congregation, queasy and fascinated. "Do you see it?" asked the husband. "Satan is a lot like that big old snake. He's already been defeated. He just doesn't know it yet. In the meantime, he's going to do some damage. But never forget that he's a goner."

Rev. 20:4-6

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy are those who have part 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.

B. The Millennial Reign.

- a. Takes place during the same period in which Satan is bound.
- b. Let's examine the "stage" setting.

* John says the people of this millennial reign are seated upon thrones. Those seated are the persons who were martyred for their faithfulness to Christ.

- They are reigning with Christ
- They are martyrs for the faith
- They do not have the mark of the beast

* In contrast to the "mark of the beast" each Christian receives the mark of God's approval.

2 Cor. 1:22

(God) set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Ephes. 1:13

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

- c. Another part of the staging is the new birth that is spoken of in many places as a resurrection from the dead. Certainly this is the first resurrection.

John 5:24

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

- d. Revelation 20:6 is a restatement of John 5:24.
 - 1. He who has a part in the first resurrection will escape the 2nd death.
 - 2. The second death is being cast into the lake of fire.

Rev. 20:7-10

When the thousand years are over, 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 gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. ⁹They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

C. The Loosing of Satan.

- a. Just before and at the time of the Lord's 2nd coming.
- b. Satan whose power was limited by our Lord's victory on the cross, will begin a full-scale warfare against the church.
- c. John here is using Old Testament terminology to teach a New Testament truth.
 - i. He doesn't leave his hearers to speculate.
 - ii. The target in this battle will be the "beloved city" which is the headquarters for the "camp

of the saints”, the church, which of course includes all believers.

- d. John predicts how the battle will end and the destiny of Satan.

* Anthony Hoekema in “The Bible and The Future” writes, “We conclude, then, that the binding of Satan during the gospel age means that, first, he cannot prevent the spread of the gospel, and second, he cannot gather all the enemies of Christ together to attack the church.”

Rev. 20:11-15

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. ¹⁴Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

D. The General Judgment.

- a. At the 2nd coming.
- b. At the end of the figurative 1,000 years.
- c. After the time of unprecedented warfare against the church.
- d. Satan defeated by God.
- e. The dead shall be judged according to what they have done.
- f. Anyone not found in the Book of Life will be thrown into the Lake of Fire.

Conclusion: Friends, the present phase of the kingdom and the millennium are synonymous terms. The kingdom is best defined as God reigning in the hearts of his followers.

How do I know? You want biblical proof. Revelation 20 is the only chapter in the entire Bible which mentions the millennium (never using that word, it is the 1,000 year reign) and that chapter records a universal judgment following the 1,000 year reign.

What does it mean? Pack your bags! Time is drawing to a close and you best be ready, and the only way to prepare is to have Jesus at the center of your heart.