

Survey of the Bible Thousand Year Temple Part 1

Last week we ended with a question regarding a passage in Revelation 20 that is intrinsically tied to the vision in the last 8 chapters of Ezekiel regarding the temple.

And though we will spend the next couple of weeks in Revelation, we have not left Ezekiel, which then leads into the book of Daniel, where the prophetic language in all three books coincides with each other.

The question we were left with last week was this.

Is Satan literally bound with literal chains for a literal thousand years?

And a related question: What is the thousand year reign of Christ?

Let's go back to the passage.

Revelation 20:1-5 ^{NAU} Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ² And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he threw him into the abyss, and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. ⁴ Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.

The first thing we notice here is that an angel of God is laying hold of Satan to bind him. The duration of this binding is one thousand years according to the text and the place of this incarceration is the abyss.

In some of your translations the word abyss is bottomless pit. The Greek word is *abussos* and it simply means boundless or bottomless.

Whatever this abyss or bottomless pit is, it is different from Satan's final destination which is the Lake of Fire.

But we need to consider the book of Revelation in regards to the way it is written and the chronology of this book. Many see it as a progressive chronology starting at one point in the beginning of this Revelation and moving forward in such a progression that one event follows the next to where we end up at the end, not unlike a novel that starts with a beginning point and ends at the end, happily ever after.

But the book of Revelation is not written in this way, nor are many of the prophetic books of the Old Testament. The book of Revelation is actually describing similar events from different perspectives as each builds on the next. This technique is referred to as parallelism or recapitulationism.

It's similar to the way God gives us the creation account in Genesis chapters 1 and chapters 2.

Chapter one begins with God creating and describing it as a day with the passing of morning and evening, and then it moves progressively to the seventh day with one event following the other. But then chapter 2 also describes the same creation, but its focus is on day six with man as the focal point.

We're not talking about two separate creations but the same creation from a different perspective.

And so, the point is that the Hebrew approach to writing and the way God has revealed Himself will often repeat an important event in different ways by either adding new information or information that defines existing information, while sometimes leaving other parts out that were described somewhere else.

And this is the way the book of Revelation is written. John being a Jew would have been intimate with this Hebrew approach to revelation and the same God who revealed the first book of the bible is the same God who revealed the last.

And since He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow it is no problem for Him to employ the same approach to revelation which tells the same story in different places using similar but sometimes different analogies to tell that same story.

And so, when we look at Revelation we can actually see this same story told somewhere else in the same book.

In fact, as we consider the first verse of Revelation 20 we can see this.

Revelation 20:1 ^{NAU} Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, *holding the key of the abyss* and a great chain in his hand.

Is this same subject matter described anywhere else in Revelation?
Yes.

Revelation 1:17-18 ¹⁷ When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, ¹⁸ and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and *I have the keys of death and of Hades.*

Who is He who has the keys of death and Hades?

In Revelation 1 it is Jesus Christ. In Revelation 20 it is an angel. But like the law being delivered on Mount Sinai through the agency of God and angels, there is no conflict here because ultimately it is in God's hand even if delivered through an angel.

But the question needs to be addressed.

Is the angel, or Jesus Christ, telling us that there is a key and a lock and a chain that opens and closes access to death and Hades or the bottomless pit?

This is symbolic language describing a spiritual reality. Hades, or the bottomless pit, exists as a place of God's judgment on both angels and men. But to suggest that God needs a chain and a lock to hold Satan or angels or men in this judgment is to miss the symbolic language being employed here.

And so, when John describes the dragon being bound with these chains in symbolic language, is the intent of the remaining passages meant to drop the symbolic language and then introduce literal language to describe all of the subsequent events taking place?

No. Symbolic language is still being employed.

Revelation 20:2 ² And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

So, we see the symbolism of a dragon and a serpent representing a real person called the devil and Satan. And then we move to this binding taking place for a thousand years.

We need to address two things here in the last part of verse 2. The type of binding being described and the duration of this binding.

Let's deal with it in reverse order.

Is the thousand years to be taken literally, or just as the preceding passage, is it to be taken symbolically describing a spiritual reality?

The number 10 and its multiples all throughout Scripture speak clearly to God's description of totality. And as we saw last week when God speaks of owning a cattle on a thousand hills He is using language that is meant to convey the totality of all He owns, not just those cattle on one thousand hills.

Genesis 24:60 ⁶⁰ They blessed Rebekah and said to her, "May you, our sister, *Become thousands of ten thousands*, And may your descendants possess The gate of those who hate them."

Exodus 20:5-6 ⁵ "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but *showing lovingkindness to thousands*, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

Psalms 3:6-8 ⁶ I will not be afraid of *ten thousands of people* Who have set themselves against me round about. ⁷ Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God! For *You have smitten all my enemies* on the cheek; You have shattered the teeth of the wicked. ⁸ Salvation belongs to the LORD; Your blessing *be* upon Your people! Selah.

So, whether it's the totality of the offspring of Rebekah, the totality of those who love God, or the totality of the enemies of God, the number 10 and its multiples addresses these things and so are not taken literally.

And so, what John is doing in our text in Revelation, where almost the entire book, and certainly our passage at hand, is using symbolic language, it is also utilizing one thousand years, not as a numerical constant but the totality of the incarceration for however long that is.

And the length of time of this binding actually speaks to the type of binding that it is. Remember, He who is the first and the last, the living One in Rev.12:17-18 tells us that He has, and by implication, owns the keys to death and Hades.

And the angel in Rev.20:1 holding the key of the abyss is about to bind this serpent for a thousand years which is symbolic for a long period of time. But do we have any indication anywhere in God's word where this binding is described in language that is not symbolic language but literal language that can be applied to our symbolic passage?

The answer is yes. But before we go there we need to address one more aspect of the type and the length of binding by addressing the purpose of the binding.

Why is the dragon bound for a thousand years according to our text in verse 3?

Revelation 20:3 ³ and he threw him into the abyss, and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, ***so that he would not deceive the nations any longer***, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

By the way, remember when I told you at the beginning of this study that the book of Revelation is not written in chronological order but is describing the same events in different portions of this book from different perspectives.

^{NAU} **Revelation 12:9** And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

What John is describing in Revelation 20 is what is being described in Revelation 12 with different details.

Instead of using the word ***bound***, like in chapter 20, the phrase ***thrown down*** is being employed in chapter 12.

In 12 we have the act of deceiving the whole world while in 20 we have a halt to that deceiving of the whole world.

What deception are we talking about? Well, Jesus Christ gives us some insight into this.

Mark 3:23-27 ²³ And He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ "If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ "If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶ "If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished! ²⁷ "But no one can enter the strong man's house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house.

The issue here is a kingdom and all of its assets. And Jesus is saying that Satan will not plunder his own kingdom, but rather someone from the outside must have the power and authority to plunder it, as the strong man, or Satan is bound.

The whole discussion of the book Revelation revolves around this concept of the battle of the different kingdoms and whose kingdom will be triumphant.

Remember when this battle started?

Genesis 3:15 ¹⁵ And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

All of redemptive history found in Scripture is about the Kingdom of God being renewed and the battle that ensues until that final day. And the book of Revelation demonstrates how this battle will be won by Christ, which is why John begins this book with these words.

Revelation 1:3 ³ Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

Satan was allowed to deceive the nations, which is another way of saying that the dominion of Satan in this spiritual war was in force for most of the world for a particular time. The exception to that was the remnant that God put in place in both the patriarchs and the nation of Israel, both lights in a darkened world at that time.

But how is Jesus described when He came into this world?

John 1:1-4 ^{NAU} In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴ *In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.*

This light has come into the world of the kingdom of darkness and what did this light say to the world?

Matthew 12:28-29 ²⁸ "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ *"Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.*

Christ came into this world to bind the strong man, to advance the kingdom of light. But to do this the kingdom of darkness cannot have the same power to deceive the nations. And with Christ coming on to the scene this is precisely what our Lord accomplished in His death and resurrection. And He gives His disciples a taste of what that would entail.

Matthew 16:18-19 ¹⁸ "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. ¹⁹ "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

The keys of the kingdom of heaven are in stark contrast to key of hades and death. And Jesus is the one who locks the kingdom of darkness shut to deceiving the nations so that the gospel of light is now enabled to be used by our King of kings to advance His kingdom for a particular time, until He unlocks the kingdom of darkness, which had previously been shut up, so that the gates of hades was not able to stand against the kingdom of heaven.

This shutting up, this binding of the strong man so as not to deceive the nations, as it pertains to the gospel of Jesus Christ going out to the nations, was spoken of by our Lord after His resurrection.

Acts 1:8 ⁸ but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem,

and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Satan will not be able to thwart that effort of Jesus Christ advancing His kingdom. This has been going on for some two thousand years, but it is this time between His first coming and His returning in glory, that John symbolically refers to as a thousand years.

But at the end of this thousand years, this period between Christ's first coming and His second, Satan will once again be allowed to deceive the nations in such a way where the world will be given power to come against God's people where it may look like Satan has the final victory.

Revelation 20:3-4 until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. ⁴ Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Next week we'll look at this thousand years, the time between the two comings of Jesus Christ, as it relates to the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and how they came to life and reigned with Christ for those thousand years and where all of this is going in the grand scheme of the Kingdom of light.