

Survey of the Bible Thousand Year Temple Part 2

Last week we looked at the vision that was given to John regarding the binding of Satan for a thousand years.

Revelation 20:1-3 ^{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.

We saw how Christ accomplished this through His death and resurrection.

This binding specifically curbed Satan from being able to deceive the nations, so as to allow the light of the gospel to go out into all of the world, without God's will being restricted in this matter.

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."

And by the way, the apostle Paul fully understood how this struggle for the gospel going out into all the world would play out and how Satan could not thwart it, but also how it would ultimately come down to a show down when this binding of Satan was taken out of the way. And again, he puts it in the context of the time which was near the second coming of Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 ^{NAU} Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ² that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that *the day of the Lord* has come.

Notice how Paul equates the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with the *day of the Lord*. And we know what this day of the Lord involves, including the judgment of the world with fire and the establishing of the new heavens and new earth. In other words, it is the last day.

2 Peter 3:10 ¹⁰ But the *day of the Lord* will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

And so, when Paul addresses this “day of the Lord” in 2Thessalonians he’s talking about the last Day of Judgment. And he goes on to say that this day will not come until specific things happen, not the least of which is the binding of Satan being taken out of the way first, which will introduce the coming of Jesus Christ in judgment.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 ³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come [the day of the Lord]* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. ⁵ Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? ⁶ And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.

Paul specifically says, “you know what restrains him now.”

Who is being restrained in this text?

The man of lawlessness, the son of destruction.

Now we don’t have time to go into all the nuances of who this is, but it is clear that this man of lawlessness is associated with the one who is also described as the son of destruction. And so, this is a man or men who are identified as those who are of destruction.

The same ones, by the way, who are described as the beast and the false prophet who are associated with the serpent in Revelation 20.

But, what restraint are we talking about?

Paul is saying that the restraint that is placed on the man of lawlessness is associated with the restraint that is placed on the serpent, which is the binding of that serpent so as not to be able to deceive the nations to rise up against the gospel in such a way where it could be thwarted, thus the phrase “the gates of hell will not overpower it”, that is the kingdom that proclaims this truth found in Christ alone.

But Paul goes on to say that there will be a day when this restraint will be taken out of the way by God as Satan is loosed and the very church that names the name of Christ will be the place of abomination and because of that there will be no safe place for the gospel.

This is what Paul means when he says in **2 Thessalonians 2:3-4** ...the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

The temple of God is that place where God is said to dwell or reside. That temple of God, where Satan exalts himself, is none other than the church in those days. Remember, this is in connection with the apostasy, and by definition the apostasy is a turning away from the truth.

And Paul is saying that when Satan is loosed from his chains he will come against the church through lies and deception as he exalts himself above the Christ who died for the church, and now claims to be a christ, God Himself.

And in that day the gates of hell will overpower the visible representation of the church to the extent that God allows this to transpire with the result being a swift and sure judgment.

But so as to remind the saints of Satan's intent, though restricted in his binding today, Satan is still given the authority to fight against the church and the gospel of Jesus Christ, but without a final victory until the very end when he is loosed.

2 Thessalonians 2:7-12 ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way. ⁸ Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; ⁹ *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, ¹⁰ and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. ¹¹ For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, ¹² in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

It is during this interval where there is a restraint, a binding on Satan and his activity against the gospel, this 1,000 years that is used to symbolically describe God's truth going out into all the world, that is being described in our text of Revelation.

And so, as come back to our text in Rev.20, we continue with this theme of God accomplishing His will. But in this section we move past the restriction placed on Satan and move into the positive aspect of this 1,000 year time frame which includes the recipients of the gospel going forth that cannot be thwarted for a millennium, again the time frame described in symbolic language, between the first and second advents of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 20:4-6 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. ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Let's look at this and keep in mind that Ezekiel is also describing this event in chapter 37 that we'll revisit a little later.

In this portion of the vision, John sees thrones, and those sitting on those thrones are given judgment. He then speaks of the souls of those who had been beheaded for Christ's sake, along with those who had not worshipped the beast.

This by the way, is the same image we have earlier in this book, and is again, another example of how the book of Revelation will often describe the same event in a little different context with either fewer or more details.

Revelation 6:9-11 ⁹ When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; ¹⁰ and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" ¹¹ And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until *the number of*

their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

Now, here's the question.

Where are these souls, in both passages, located?

In Rev.20:4 John sees thrones. In Rev.6:9 these souls are located under the altar.

The vision, at this point, is taking place where the souls of the saints who have died in Christ reside.

Where do the souls of the saints who have died in Christ reside, according to the word of God?

2 Corinthians 5:8 ⁸ we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

And so, John is giving us a picture of the saints who have died in Christ around the throne of God in the present heaven.

Revelation 20:4 and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

So, who is reigning with Christ and from where are they reigning for a thousand years?

The proponents of a literal thousand year reign of Christ tell us that this is addressing both believers and unbelievers living on this present sin filled cursed world during Christ's reign. In other words, the saints are on this present earth ruling and reigning with Christ during this thousand years.

But is the text saying that these saints are on earth during this thousand years?

No. The text specifically says that the souls of these saints are on thrones and under the altar, those who have died for their faith.

And by the way, you'll notice that we are told that these souls came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

This seems to indicate that they didn't have life until they found themselves in the present heaven. But the Greek would give us a little different picture.

The phrase “and they came to” is a juxtaposition of the previously described direct object “the souls” who came to life. But there is only one word that addresses life in this sentence and it’s the Greek word *zao* which simply means to live.

And so, the phrase, “and they came to life” is not the only way this can be interpreted, since, “and they came to” is not in the original Greek, but is implied according the context.

Another way in which this can be interpreted is the way the KJV and NKJV interpret it which is, “and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”

One interpretation gives the impression that they didn’t come to life until they got to heaven, while the other says that in the present heaven they simply lived as they reigned from heaven.

The point is, in either interpretation, the life they live, they lived for a thousand years during which time they reigned from heaven, not the earth.

And it is from this perspective that John says that this life is described as the first resurrection.

Revelation 20:5 ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.

The first resurrection is not describing the rest of the dead who did not come to life until the thousand years were completed, but everything just described up to that point.

Stay with me here because we’re going to address what this first resurrection is in just a moment. But before we do that let me just quickly speak to those “who do not come to life until the thousand years are completed.”

We’ve already seen how the number , 1,000, is a symbolic number in a book that is full of symbolism. And this number speaks to the totality of time that God employs to bring about His plan of redemption from the binding of Satan, which took place at the cross, to the end of this thousand years, which describes the return of Jesus Christ in judgment.

And so, when it says that the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years are completed, it is saying that they did not come to life until Christ returns.

Well, if those who are dead in Christ are alive in heaven for a thousand years, from the time that they died in Christ until Christ comes back, who are the rest of the dead who come to life at the end of the thousand years?

It must be those who do not have the same kind of life as those who died in Christ. In other words, those who don't have life in Christ, who would be all those who rejected Christ during this same time period.

And so, when John identifies those who died in Christ during this thousand years as partakers of the first resurrection, between the cross and the second coming of Christ, it cannot be describing a physical resurrection, but a spiritual resurrection.

But because this is described as the first resurrection it presupposes that there is a second resurrection which is different in kind because we know that when Christ returns He will raise all of His people physically from the dead. And this is what is implied in the phrase, "The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed."

In other words, those who were dead spiritually because of their unbelief in Christ, did not come to physical life until the thousand years were completed. This speaks to the final resurrection of all people when Christ returns.

Sam Storms in his book, Kingdom Come, sums it up this way when addressing the time between Christ's first and second coming.

"The believer DIES PHYSICALLY but experiences SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION!"

"The unbeliever is RESURRECTED PHYSICALLY but experiences SPIRITUAL DEATH!"

And this is the play on words that John has been using in this section when he speaks about a first resurrection that results in being excluded from experiencing the second death.

Revelation 20:6 ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

You'll notice that John speaks of a first resurrection and a second death. But he never uses the terms second resurrection or first death.

It's all implied and designed for the result of the one to be applied to the second.

And so, if you have tasted the first resurrection you will not taste the second death.

Well, what is the second death?

Revelation 20:14 ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

The rest of the dead who came to life at the end of the thousand years are all of those who are spiritually dead and have aligned themselves with the devil, the beast and the false prophet.

And so, the second death is an eternal spiritual death in resurrected bodies on the last day at the Great White Throne judgment.

Therefore, the first death is necessarily that death associated with Adam that results in both spiritual and physical death. Unless that unbeliever has a spiritual resurrection, with new life in Christ, that unbeliever awaits the second death in the lake of fire.

Therefore, as it pertains to the first resurrection of believers, the converse is also true. The physical death of the believer allows him or her to experience the outworking of this first resurrection as they await the resurrection unto eternal life when Christ returns on the last day when we're told in **John 6:39** ³⁹ "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

And so, to sum up. John is describing a heavenly scene where the souls of those believers who died in Christ are experiencing a spiritual resurrection where they enjoy a foretaste of this resurrection life for an extended period, symbolically described as a thousand years, until Christ descends with a shout and gives them their resurrected bodies to be with Him forever on the new earth.

But he also alludes to those outside of Christ who experience the first death, that is physical death, and they will come to life, that is they will also be resurrected to experience the second death, or the lake of fire.

And this is precisely what Ezekiel has said about the first resurrection when he was comparing the deadness of the heart of Israel with the life giving power of God bringing dead dry bones to life as He causes breath to come into them to bring them to life.

Ezekiel 37:11-13 ¹¹ Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.' ¹² "Therefore prophesy and say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³ "Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people.

Now it is true that the first resurrection is spiritual in nature and John depicts the souls of those who died in Christ as sharing in this spiritual resurrection. But it is also true that there is a sense that this first resurrection is secured before our physical death.

Colossians 2:12-13 ¹² *having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.* ¹³ When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, ***He made you alive together with Him***, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

Colossians 3:1 ^{NAU} Therefore ***if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above***, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

And it is this raising from death to life that John describes with the anticipation of being raised physically from the dead as this is where our true citizenship resides.

Philippians 3:20-21 ²⁰ For ***our citizenship is in heaven***, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, ***the Lord Jesus Christ***; ²¹ who ***will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory***, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.