

Our enemy has been defeated



The 20th chapter of Revelation is the most difficult chapter of the book if not the entire Bible. Premillennialist have used this chapter as the basis for their theory of a literal thousand year reign of Christ in literal Jerusalem on the literal throne of David.

A proper understanding of this chapter as well as the other chapters begins by recognizing that all of John's visions are described in highly figurative (apocalyptic) language. Their big mistake is to make John's visions literal. To understand this chapter we must keep in mind it is a sequel to chapter 19. Chapter 20 is the climax to the last scenes of chapter 19.

The dragon, (Satan), the instigator of all opposition to Christ and his church, is about to be cast into the abyss (bottomless pit – KJV). Thus the final and complete defeat of Satan.

V.1 "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand."

There is a holy war that rages between two opposing kingdoms, the kingdom of light, and the kingdom of darkness. The abyss is the present abode of Satan where he and his angels carry on their opposition to God and His church.

The "key" and "chain" are symbolic. A spirit cannot be bound with a literal chain. The angel is probably Christ and they symbolize His complete power over Satan.

V.2 "And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years."

Through His death on the cross Jesus destroyed Satan's power to rule and ruin men through sin. The cross sets men free, but it binds Satan. There are things he no longer does that he once did.

He cannot destroy the church. He cannot prevent the gospel from being preached to the entire world. He is bound for a thousand years which as other numbers in Revelation is figurative.

It represents the Christian age sometimes referred to as "the last days."

V.3 "And cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time."

The abyss or bottomless pit is the same as the "chains of darkness" where sinful angels were placed (2 Peter 2:4). Satan's power has been broken, he is completely defeated. This does not mean he is not active, but he is greatly limited by the blood of the cross.

God's truth guards those from all nations who have come to the Saviour. He will be released for a little time could mean his influence is short in comparison to what it was before Christ's blood was shed.

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Since no explanation is given about this, we may not understand all that is involved but the inspired reader (1:3) would have known what it meant.

V.4 "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

We are not told where these thrones were but we would assume they are in heaven. The context suggests that justice is being accomplished. John sees those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God and those who remained faithful until death.

They had not worshiped the beast or had his mark on them. They had died to their sins and no longer had anything to do with Satan. John saw souls indicating they were without bodies which is the state of man between death and the resurrection.

Thus they are living and reigning with Christ in complete victory for a thousand years, which is the Christian age, not a literal thousand years.

V.5 "The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection."

The rest of the dead are the wicked that have died. When Jesus comes the second and only time they too will be resurrected and but will suffer a second death (**separation**) by being cast into hell. The Scriptures are clear that there is but one life, one death and one resurrection (**John 5:28-29**, **Hebrews 9:27**).

The "first resurrection" is used in a symbolic sense which is further mentioned in the **next verse**.

V.6 "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

Those who have experienced the first resurrection are to be blessed because they do not have to fear the second death, which is hell. The first resurrection is symbolic of the resurrection Paul speaks of in **Romans 6:1-5** where one is buried in the waters of baptism and is raised to walk in newness of life.

They become dead to sin but are now alive in Christ because they have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus (**Romans 5:9**).

V.7-8 "And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war."

John describes the final defeat of Satan. The Christian age now comes to an end and Satan is loosed from his prison. Again he would deceive the nations. This is not a physical battle but rather the final battle between Christ and Satan.

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Gog and Magog were ancient cities, which are used here as the symbolic enemies whom the Lord would defeat. No specific geographical designation is intended. They are as the sand of the sea, innumerable.

V.9 "And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down out of heaven, and devoured them."

The large area of the enemy armies are ready to attack the beloved church Jesus has established. This is not a literal city but is symbolical of the church. While it looks like they are ready to destroy the church there is no battle described because God defeated Satan and his forces with fire from heaven.

The defeat is decisive and final. It will occur with the second coming of Christ.

V.10 "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever."

The deceiver – the devil – is cast into hell the place of eternal punishment, a lake of fire and brimstone.

The word "torment" implies pain, anguish, and punishment. It will last forever with no end.

V.11 – 15 "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire."

In these **final verses** John sees the final judgment. The white throne is the throne of God in all its glory and majesty. The earth and the physical heavens will be destroyed at the judgment. All the people that have ever lived, both good and bad, will stand before God in judgment.

The books containing the deeds of men will be opened so each one must account for his deeds. A second book is the "book of life" which contains the names of those who have been faithful children of God.

Regardless of where men may have died, on land, or in the sea they will be there. Hades is the destination of all men until Jesus comes. It is the place of disembodied spirits (Luke 16:23). The second death is a designation for hell. It is eternal separation from God.

Death and Hades being cast into the lake of fire means they will no longer exist. All who are not listed in the "book of life" will be cast into the "lake of fire." These are the ones who did not obey the gospel so they could be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb.

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Premillennial doctrine is based to a great extent on [this chapter](#). However, it should be observed not one word is said about establishing a kingdom on earth for a thousand years in the literal city of Jerusalem on the literal throne of David.

Nothing is said about a second coming to earth, a rapture, the conversion of Israel. The restoration of Palestine, the rebuilding of the temple. All these theories are missing.

However, we do learn that the Christians is greatly blessed and comforted with the assurance of the Lord that Satan can no longer harm, hinder, or prevent us from having eternal life if we remain faithful to him unto the end. Satan our greatest enemy is defeated.

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