

Lesson Seven

(19:1-21—20:1-6)

THE LAMB AND THE SPIRITUAL CONQUEST

The apocalyptic drama of the sovereignty of God in Christ versus the pretended sovereignty of the devil and his allies (the beast, the false prophet, and the harlot—Rome) has come to its grand climax. The opposing characters have all been clearly defined. From the moment of the birth of the Man Child, it was apparent that the old dragon, the devil, was raging to devour the Child. But he could not do it—God brought the Child back to life and caught him up to heaven. So the dragon gave his deceptive authority to the beast, the false prophet and the harlot. They set upon the Woman (the church) in the wilderness (the world of pagan sin). But God pronounces his final judgment upon Rome (especially the prostitute-city itself). Rome's doom is sealed. Her death is inevitable. She will even be an instrument to bring about her own fall. There will be none to help her.

But the real reason behind her doom is that God, through the Lamb, is going to defeat Rome and throw her into the lake of fire and brimstone. The Lamb will become the Warrior-King (Messiah) and completely defeat his enemies. The Lamb will prove his sovereignty by dramatically saving His church (His Bride) on earth and by destroying that fourth great world empire of which Daniel prophesied and which the world believed to be invincible.

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John is going to be given an apocalyptic, highly symbolic vision of victory. The vision will be in the form of a glorious contrast between the defeat of "the city of the world" (Rome) and the revealing of the Perfect City of God coming down out of heaven from God. John will skip from Rome's fall to the end of all time without telling us what is to transpire between. First, the climactic battle between the King of kings and the devil and his allies (beast, false prophet and harlot) Revelation 19:1 through 20:6.

The Bride (19:1-10)

19 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying,

"Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, ²for his judgments are true and just; he has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants."

³Once more they cried,

"Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever."

⁴And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who is seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" ⁵And from the throne came a voice crying,

"Praise our God, all you his servants,
you who fear him, small and great."

⁶Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying,

"Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

⁷Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;

⁸it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure"—
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

⁹ And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are true words of God." ¹⁰Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

vv. 1-3 . . . I heard what seemed to be the mighty voice of a great multitude in heaven . . . — This multitude is probably all the angels, the living creatures and the martyred saints together in heaven. All heaven was commanded to rejoice at the revealed fall of the harlot (18:20) and now heaven's

corridors are ringing with shouts of Hallelujah and praise to the name of God for victory. The rejoicing of heaven is in sharp contrast to the weeping and wailing on earth over Rome's fall! The world sees Rome's fall as detrimental (especially will opportunities for fleshly indulgence and carnal exploitation be lost). Heaven sees Rome's fall as beneficial. Now the power of Satan will be bound. Now the good news of salvation will be able to go to the farthest reaches of human habitation on earth.

Furthermore, God has proved himself true to his word and just and fair. He has kept his promises to avenge wickedness done to those who trust Him. The Greek text makes it emphatic that *the* salvation and *the* glory and *the* power belong to God by placing the Greek article before each noun. When Rome fell according to God's word it was apparent that all sovereignty belong to God and none to Rome. That is still true today! All salvation, glory and power still belongs to Jehovah who manifested himself in the incarnate Christ.

God judged (Gr. *ekrine*) the great harlot who corrupted the whole world with her fornication. The Greek word *ephtheire* is translated *corrupted* but literally means, "to destroy by bringing to a state of moral rottenness" (cf. Eph. 4:22). Moral decadence is destructive! Individuals, one by one, make up a society or civilization. When individuals throw off the absolutes of divinely revealed morality, the society becomes corrupt and is destroyed. Individual freedom is not to be equated with individual moral license. "No man is an island. . . ." No man lives or dies to himself (cf. Rom. 14:7ff.). Each man is morally responsible to the whole of his society or civilization. The decadence of Roman aristocracy soon permeated the whole of Roman society and killed it.

God *avenged* (Gr. *exedikese*, "proceeding from justice; vindicating"). There was no vindictiveness in God's vengeance—it was simply the fair, deserved, right and proper result of Rome's wickedness. It is simply God giving them up to eat the fruit of their deeds. Rome wanted to stamp out the saints of God, to stamp out all that stood for goodness, righteousness and truth, that she might have the opposite, so God gave it to her. God made all His creation to function on the principles of right, justice, faith and love. Creation fulfills its purpose only when it willingly agrees and practices those principles. God also built into His creation a constant revelation of these principles, as well as consequences for obeying and disobeying them. The realm of the spiritual was made to function on the same principles. All God had to do was simply give mankind its choice and it received either the consequence of blessedness or cursedness. All God has to do with an impenitent, rebellious society is give it what it wants and it is judged. So God gave Rome up to the lusts of their hearts, to dishonorable passions, to a base mind and improper conduct (cf. Rom. 1:18-32).

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A second time this great multitude in heaven cried, "Hallelujah!" Hallelujah is a Hebrew word, *Alleluia*, transliterated into Greek and English, and means, "Praise Jehovah." Heaven's multitude observed the smoke (destruction) of Rome going up forever. Rome will never be built again as in the days of the Empire. And for that, heaven praises God!

v. 4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures . . . — From the time of the order to pour out the seven bowls of wrath upon the earth, the throne has been hidden. No one was able to find or approach the throne of God to intercede on Rome's behalf. Her judgment was inevitable. Now that the judgment is sealed by prophetic certainty, once again the throne is seen. Once again are seen the symbolic creatures representing all of God's obedient creation paying homage and praise to his righteousness and justice. "So be it!" (Amen) they said, in perfect agreement with God's final word on Rome.

v. 5 . . . Praise our God, all you his servants . . . — It is not only heaven's hosts that are expected to be in harmony with God's judgments on Rome, but all who claim to be God's servants are exhorted to praise him. God's ways are beyond man's comprehension (Isa. 55:8-9). He does not ask us to evaluate whether his judgments are right or wrong. He does not even give us the prerogative of criticizing his methods. God leaves us free to simply acknowledge his sovereignty, on the basis of his actions, and then to accept them by faith. Habakkuk the prophet fretted because he could not understand or agree with the methods of God's dealing with the Israelites. God told Habakkuk that he did not require the prophet to understand or agree—only to believe, (Hab. 2:2-4). All those servants of God upon the earth—unable to see from heaven's perspective as yet—must trust God's judgment's on Rome even though they may not understand. Jesus had to face this problem when he predicted the destruction of Judaism (Mt. 24). Even Jesus' Jewish disciples could not understand or agree with what he was predicting—but he expected them to accept his predictions by faith and thus save themselves from the holocaust to come in 70 A.D. Many did (see Lesson 11). Some would say this sounds like fatalism. But there is a world of difference between fatalism and faith. In faith, the Christian looks beyond this world to the next and thus lives by hope. In fatalism, the unbeliever's highest expectation is a resignation to oblivion or annihilation. While he lives he is forced to surrender to injustices, frustrations, losses and death.

vv. 6-8 . . . for the marriage of the Lamb has come . . . — The next voice John heard from heaven was awesome! It was roaring and booming. It demanded attention. It symbolized urgency and importance and power. Anyone who has stood at Niagara Falls, or heard the cannon-like boom of thunder in a violent storm, knows what this means. It means that all sound of man's talking is to be drowned out and imperative attention is

to be given to the voice from heaven. "The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab. 2:20). God is about to reveal something extremely significant.

What is significant is that the harlot (Rome) had brought ultimate pressure upon the Bride of Christ, to seduce her, but the Bride remained faithful to her Husband. It might have seemed that the whole world had been deceived and had committed fornication with the harlot, but not Christ's Bride. She married Him and adorned herself in the righteousness Christ had provided for her. She did not dirty her garments with compromise or strip them off by unfaithfulness. The Greek verbs, *elthen* (came) and *etoimase*n (made herself) are aorist tense and, in light of other New Testament statements, indicate the "marriage" pictured here has already happened in the past.

In order to understand this passage the reader must remember Jewish marriage customs. The betrothal (engagement) was considered as binding as marriage. Joseph was told that he should not fear to take Mary his wife when it was found she was with child by the Holy Spirit, and Mary was called Joseph's wife even in the betrothal period (Mt. 2:20, 24). Therefore, people who were betrothed were considered to be married even before the ceremonies, the wedding suppers and before the sexual consummation. The time lapse between the betrothal and the ceremonies (including the feast) is pictured for us in Jesus' parable of the ten virgins (Mt. 25:1-13). In other words, marriage was considered to have taken place long before any feast might be given.

It is evident from many scriptures that the church on earth is married to Christ. In the Old Testament the relation of Jehovah to his covenant people is portrayed as a marriage (cf. Hosea 2:1ff.; Isa. 50:1; Jer. 2:32; Ezek. 16:1ff.; Isa. 62:4ff.). Actually, Isaiah 62:4-5 is a prophecy that when the Messiah comes in His *first* advent, those who believe and follow him will be "Married." It is clearly revealed in the New Testament that the church in the earth is the Bride of Christ (cf. Jn. 3:29-30; Eph. 5:22f.; Rom. 7:4; II Cor. 11:2). So, the "marriage of the Lamb" in our text here is not speaking of some future event. It is past. It took place at the *first* advent of Christ when the church was established on earth. But the *consummation* of the marriage (not the "supper") is yet to take place at Christ's *second* advent, (Rev. 21:2).

As a result of her faithfulness through the great tribulation of Rome's attempt to seduce her, the Bride of Christ "has made herself ready." She allowed Christ, through His Word, to sanctify her. John had already written letters to seven of the churches of Asia Minor (Rev. ch. 2-3) warning them to purify themselves by repentance. They had done so (cf. comments Rev. 14:1ff.). They had remained pure and chaste (cf. II Cor. 7:1; I Jn. 3:2-3; Jude 21) following the Lamb wherever He led them. They had not joined

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the "harlot" in her fornications. God declares the Bride (by grace) to be dressed in fine linen, bright and pure (holy). The reason God *declares* the Bride to be holy is the righteous deeds of the saints. We have here the gospel in brief. God, in the redemptive work of Christ, made it possible for sinful man to be cleansed (dressed in fine linen). But man, is cleansed (dressed in fine linen) only when he appropriates it by faith expressed in obedience to the Gospel.

v. 9 Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb — First, the Greek word *keklemenoi*, translated "invited," is a perfect tense verb, meaning, "having been and continuing to be called." Perfect tense means an action in the past with a continuing result. This means the "marriage supper" had already come when John wrote Revelation and people were continually being invited to it (as they would become Christians), or it means those who had become Christians when John wrote were continuing to enjoy it as a feast. John would surely *not* have used the perfect tense verb to predict some *future* "marriage supper" of the Lamb. The consummation of the marriage comes after the feast.

The whole Christian age is depicted in the New Testament as a festival. Jesus likened the kingdom of God unto a "feast" many times (cf. Mt. 22:1ff.; Lk. 14:15ff.; Lk. 15:1-32; Rev. 3:20). The New Testament indicates the feasts of the Mosaic dispensation were types of the New Testament experience (cf. I Cor. 5:8; Heb. 13:10; et. al.). The Old Testament prophets pictured the Christian age as a "feast" (cf. Isa. 55:1-3; 65:13; et. al.). As we have noted earlier, the Old Testament prophets (Isa. 62:4-5) predicted the re-marriage of God with his Bride when the messianic kingdom would be established (the church) at Christ's first coming.

It appears, therefore, that both the "marriage" of the Lamb and the "marriage supper" of the Lamb have already begun and are continuing to take place as men and women are becoming Christians on earth and becoming a part of Christ's "Bride." The Spirit and the Bride are *still* saying, "Come," and inviting whosoever will to come (Rev. 22:17). To say that the marriage and the marriage supper have already come does not imply the marriage has already been consummated. The ultimate union of the "Bride" (the church) and her "Husband" (Christ) will take place at Christ's second coming (Rev. 21:2).

The contrast is the wretchedness and doom upon those who have answered the call of the harlot to fornicate with her (Rome), and the blessedness and happiness of those who have answered (and those who will continue to answer) the call of the Father to the marriage and marriage feast of his Son (the Lamb). Smoke (destruction and torment) goes up forever and ever from the judgment upon the harlot. Hallelujahs and praises and blessings forever are the experiences of those married to Christ.

v. 10 **Then I fell down at his feet to worship him . . .** — For some reason John thought the one speaking to him should be worshiped. Was it because John did not see clearly who was speaking; was it because John did not know the difference between an angel and God; or was John carried away with the emotional impact of the message and moved to worship the messenger? Whatever the reason, John was quickly corrected. Angels, as spiritual and supernatural as they may be, are *not* to be worshiped (cf. Col. 2:18-19; Rev. 22:8). This should be a constant warning for all Christians about the insidious tendency of the human heart toward idolatry. No one but the Godhead deserves to be worshiped. Everyone else (including angels) and everything else is a *servant* of the Godhead.

The testimony of Jesus is the *spirit* (Gr. *pneuma*, "life") of prophecy. John was probably moved to worship the angel speaking these prophecies to him because of the awesomeness of what was being said. So the angel corrected John by telling him that what Jesus testified to (when he was on earth) was the very life (spirit) of all the prophecies of Revelation (and, of course, of every prophecy in the Bible). The awesomeness of the message of Revelation should make John focus his worship on the *Lamb* instead of the servant delivering the message. The testimony of Jesus was that he was the Son of God—God incarnate (Jn. 1:1ff., et. al.). The statement here by the angel confirms the declaration in Revelation 5:11-14 that the *Lamb* is *worthy* to receive honor, power, glory, and to open the scroll. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father (Jn. 5:23). The deity of Jesus is the very life of the book of Revelation, and of the whole Bible! Jesus declared unequivocally that all the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in him (Lk. 24:25, 26, 27, 44, 45, 46, 47). The testimony of Jesus, that He is Sovereign God, is the very point of the book of Revelation. Caesar is not sovereign—Jesus, the Lamb, is!

The Bridegroom: (19:11-16)

11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹²His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. ¹³He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses. ¹⁵From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords.

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vv. 11-12 . . . and behold, a white horse . . . — The Groom (Christ) appears, not to consummate the marriage (that is predicted in 21:2-9), but to *rescue* his Bride by destroying the beast and the false prophet. Heaven is opened and Christ, the Warrior-King (Messiah), rides forth on a white horse (symbolizing conquest). Poellot says: "If someone could accurately and infallibly predict the tides of battle in civil and international war, the world would beat a path to his door. There is one conflict, however, of which we can say with complete assurance what the outcome will be. That is the warfare between God and all that are God's, on the one hand, and Satan and all that are Satan's, on the other." The book of Revelation accurately and infallibly predicts *that* battle. God conquers!

This Warrior-King is called "Faithful and True"! Jesus Christ is called the "faithful witness" in Rev. 1:4-5. Christ's words and actions are ultimate truth. There is no other truth except that it relates to Christ. In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 1:15-20; 2:1-5). His teaching and his life are the ultimate reality. Everything else is transitory. Furthermore, Christ's word is faithful. It has always proved to be faithful in the past and we may trust everything He says about the future to be fulfilled precisely as he says it. What he revealed to John about the conflict between the Roman empire and the early church was absolutely true and faithful. To millions of unbelievers Rome was no "beast." To them she was man's beneficent god! To millions of unbelievers Rome was eternal. She was invincible. But the true and faithful Revelation of Christ declared Rome was a beast and she would be destroyed.

The Warrior-King judges Rome in righteousness. His judgments are according to facts, not according to appearances (cf. Jn. 7:24). He is not fooled by hypocrisy. Man cannot even hide the thoughts and intents of the human heart from Christ—he knows even these and is therefore able to judge correctly. He makes no mistakes in His judgments. It is interesting to note that the Warrior-King rides forth from heaven to *make war* upon the beast and false prophet as they *are upon the earth*. This context is, therefore, speaking of action to take place before the second advent of Christ, for at His second coming He does not come to make war but to reward and punish for all eternity.

The Warrior-King has eyes like a flame of fire (cf. comments 1:12-16) and He is crowned with many crowns. All sovereignty belongs to Him. And He has a name which no one knows but Himself. If He alone knows it, it seems useless for us to speculate. Perhaps it has something to do with the nature of the three-persons-in-One! Who understands that? In Him dwelt all the fulness of the *Godhead* (Gr. *theotetos*) bodily (Col. 2:9). That also is incomprehensible to man. Man cannot understand that—he simply believes it! Man's belief is, of course, based on evidence to substantiate the claim. When Moses wanted to know who was sending him to Pharaoh,

God replied, "I Am, That I Am!" or YHWH. The English word "God" is simply a human symbol to describe the Being who is above and beyond human experience. Full comprehension of the name and nature of God and Christ is impossible for man.

v. 13 **He is clad in a robe dipped in blood . . .** — Some ancient manuscripts have the Greek word for "sprinkled" rather than "dipped" to describe the blood on the robe of the Warrior-King. The imagery is unquestionably following that of Isaiah 63:1-6 where the Lord Jehovah is seen in vision form coming from the destruction of enemies to his redemptive program in the Old Testament. After God destroyed Edom, as he said he would in the prophet Obadiah, Isaiah the prophet sees a vision of the Lord, symbolically, with blood-spattered garments from having tread the wine-press of his wrath. Isaiah was given this vision to relay to the Old Testament "remnant" God's promise that He would judge and defeat all (even the most secure) enemies of his messianic program.

The Lamb has revealed to John that He is going to tread the awful wine-press of God's wrath upon Rome (Rev. 14:17-20) and that He is going to assemble all the world of Rome for the battle at Har-Meggido (Armageddon) (Rev. 16:14-16). Awesome defeat and judgment upon the world of Rome has been predicted numerous times in Revelation. Now the Lamb (seen as the great Warrior-King) is seen with his robe spattered by the blood of his enemies. The context and the similar vision in Isaiah would preclude this blood being that of the Lamb or of the saints. It is the life-blood of His enemies.

This Warrior-King is called "The Word of God." The use of *Logos* (Greek, *Word*) was a favorite title of John for Jesus Christ (cf. Jn. 1:1, 14; I Jn. 1:1). A person's *word* is himself. A person's word reveals what a person is, who a person is and relates him to other persons. The fleshly body of a person is not really the person. The body is merely an instrument through which a person (word) functions. Thus, Jesus was the Word of God (the Person of God) in a fleshly body. Jesus demonstrated in space and time that the Word of God (Person of God) is powerful, loving faithful, omniscient, just, righteous and eternal. Jesus is God's Word to mankind. He is the final Word of God to mankind. Who is appearing to John with blood-sprinkled garments? The Word of God! The *Logos* is God's Messiah. The *Logos* is God's judge of the world. The *Logos* is God!

vv. 14-16 **And the armies of heaven . . . followed him on white horses . . .** — The armies of heaven do not necessarily have to come from heaven. This undoubtedly refers to the church on earth and its spiritual victory over the Roman empire. It most certainly does not refer to some battle at the end of time and Christ's second coming. There will be no battle at His second advent—only judgment and salvation (cf. Heb. 9:27-28). It is not intended to portray a literal battle of swords, spears, chariots and

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horses. It is symbolism. The Christians of the first century were told their war was a spiritual war—not one of flesh and blood (cf. Eph. 6:10-20). Christians were even told that the weapons of their warfare were not fleshly (II Cor. 10:3-5) but were spiritual weapons taking thoughts and imaginations captive for obedience to Christ.

The sword issuing from the mouth of the Warrior-King is symbolism and so is the “rod of iron.” Therefore, the weapon by which the church overcomes the world is the Word of God. Armies-sword-rod-of-iron are all symbolic of the sovereignty of the Word of God. The sovereign, faithful, Word of God will rule the world—not Caesar (cf. Psa. 2:9; Isa. 11:4). Whatever God’s Word says about the world will come to pass—not what human rulers say. This parallels the clear teaching of the book of Daniel (see Dan. 2:20-23; 2:46; 3:28-30; 4:34-37; 6:25-28). God allows men to choose and act in this world as they wish—but He still rules. He may intervene or He may not intervene—but He still rules. His rule in the hearts of believers (see Col. 3:15) is established by persuasion, not by force. God will never *force* anyone (not even with a rod of iron) to be good. Whatever the battle and whatever the rule John is describing here, it is not a rule of force with a literal rod of iron. Righteousness and faith and love cannot be wrought by force. Hell is God’s prison for all who will not believe and love and obey by choice. There they shall have forever to be wicked (cf. Rev. 22:11). Unbelief and falsehood cannot be wiped out by force—only overcome by truth and faith. Actually, the word translated “rule” is, in the Greek texts, the word *poimanei* which would more accurately be translated “shepherd” them. The nations will be smitten and shepherded with the indestructible and sovereign Word of God. The Warrior-King (also known as the Lamb) will do the work of fulfilling God’s wrath. The Messiah (whom Rome thought they had crucified) will squash Rome and all her influence like grapes in a winepress (see comments on Rev. 14:17-20).

This One whom Pontius Pilate (on behalf of Caesar) scorned and crucified for claiming to be “king of the Jews” is seen by John as having the title, “King of kings and Lord of lords.” Every knee on earth is obligated to bow before Him, and every tongue on earth and in heaven is obligated to confess that Jesus, the Lamb, is King of kings and Lord of lords. This title is inscribed on His thigh—plain enough, now that He has been historically proved to be Sovereign, for all men to acknowledge it.

The Battle (19:17-21)

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in midheaven, “Come, gather for the great supper of God, ¹⁸to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the

flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.”¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who sits upon the horse and against his army.²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had worked the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur.²¹ And the rest were slain by the sword of him who sits upon the horse, the sword that issues from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

vv. 17-18 Come, gather for the great supper of God . . . — Now the fall of Rome is pictured as a great, gory feast for the carrion-eating birds of the earth. A messenger (angel) from heaven is giving the invitation to this feast. Once again the imagery is from the Old Testament prophets. They, too, describe great victories of God over the forces opposing His redemptive work as feasts for the vultures (cf. Isa. 34:6; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 39:17-20).

The fallen and dead are from every spectrum of humankind. Mighty men, kings, princes, and men of all categories of life, both slave and free, joined the army (Rome) opposing God’s kingdom. Satan does not discriminate when he seeks to deceive people into joining him fight against God. He takes his wicked helpers wherever he can seduce them. And his helpers may be found in every vocation and stratum of life. Some of them even pretend to be angels of light (II Cor. 11:14-15).

The imagery of this great devastation and death is borrowed from Ezekiel’s symbolic battle between God and the forces of Gog and Magog (Ezek. ch. 38-39). Just as Ezekiel’s vision was described symbolically, so John’s vision of this war is not intended to be literal but symbolic—spiritual. The reason Ezekiel and John used such symbolism was to impress the minds of their readers with the *complete* defeat of the Lord’s enemies. God does not have to slay people and leave rotting cadavers strewn on a battle field in order to defeat His enemies and rescue His chosen remnant—neither in Old Testament times or New Testament times! God delivered the Old Testament remnant from Persia, “not by might nor by power, but by his Spirit . . .” (Zech. 4:6). God merely “stirred up the spirit of Cyrus” and the remnant was delivered (II Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). He did not march great armies into Persia and kill thousands of Persians. But He led His prophets to describe this deliverance as gory battles with thousands of dead corpses! The whole world of mankind was not slain when Rome fell. Many of those individuals who had worshipped the Caesars and opposed the church went right on living when Rome fell. But God had John describe it symbolically as an enormous slaughter for the sake of impression.

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vv. 19-20 And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet . . . —

The beast and false prophet are the two beasts of Revelation 13:1-10. They are Rome's political-military power and Rome's idolatrous religion of Caesar-worship arrayed against the church. They are willing tools of Satan. Earlier the beast had called the kings of the world together at Har-Meggido (Armageddon) to do battle against the Lamb and His followers (see Rev. 16:13-16; 17:12-14). But the battle is never described—only the outcome is always total defeat for the beast and his allies and total victory for God and His kingdom.

Now, for the third time, only the consequences of the great spiritual struggle for the allegiance of mankind and sovereignty over the world are described. Total defeat for the forces of Caesar—total victory for the forces of Christ. The beast was *seized* (Gr. *epiasthe*, apprehend, arrest, take, lay hands on). God did not have to chase the beast down, he simply seized the beast and the false prophet. This false prophet was the one (Rev. 13:11-18) who, in the presence of the beast, had worked the *signs* (Gr. *semeia*, not necessarily miracles) by which he *misled* (Gr. *eplanese*) those who were willing to receive the mark of the beast and worship the image of the beast. The "signs" of the false prophet were pseudo-miracles—not real ones (see comments on Rev. 13:11-18). The reason so many were deceived was because they *wanted* to be deceived. It had to do with *character*. The Greek word translated "mark" is *charagma*, from which we get the English word *character*. Those who had the *mark* of the beast had the *character* of the beast (see comments Rev. 13:16-17). People *become* what they worship (cf. Hosea 9:10).

The beast (politico-military power) and the false prophet (idolatrous influence) were thrown into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone. This is the second consequence of the battle-not-described. These two forces (not specific individuals) are forever overcome. They are banished to the eternal prison. They will never rise again to the extent they enjoyed in the Roman empire. That does not mean the devil does not continue to oppose God and His kingdom. The devil is not banished forever until the great judgment (Rev. 20:10). But with Rome's fall, the devil is bound—his sphere or power is limited since he no longer has a universal carnal power dominating civilization as Rome did. The statement that the beast and false prophet were cast *alive* into the lake of fire merely symbolizes that the "life" of Rome's power to oppose the church of Christ was no more. It symbolizes that ". . . the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth" (Rom. 1:18ff.). Not even universal paganism with all the accumulated wealth and power of the Roman empire can thwart God's redemptive program in the world. God is in the process of destroying every rule and every authority and power (I Cor. 15:24-26). The "life" of paganism is

consigned to eternal banishment in the lake of fire and brimstone. These are the "rest" of the dead who did not come to life during the thousand years (see comments on 20:5).

v. 21 **And the rest were slain by the sword of him who sits upon the horse . . .** — "The rest" probably refers to all opposers of God's kingdom who die during the Roman empire having exerted their wickedness attempting to suppress the truth. They will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone along with the beast and the false prophet and the devil in due time (cf. Rev. 20:15) because they have the mark (character) of the beast.

All these are also slain by the sword (Word of God) issuing from the mouth of the Warrior-King (Messiah). God's word is powerful. It will accomplish that for which it is spoken and will not return unto him void. God's word saves, or it judges (Jn. 12:44-50).

Homer Hailey has an excellent summary of this section:

The victory is won, and the defeat of the beast and his ally, the false prophet, is complete. The Roman power and the paganism which it supported are now destroyed forever. The vision of Daniel is fulfilled (Dan. 7:11), and in this defeat and destruction is revealed the destiny of all such powers that should ever arise to fight against God and His kingdom. This is God's guarantee of victory to the saints who lived then and to all who would come after them, even until the end of time . . . Not a vestige of the anti-Christian forces was left; the destruction was complete. The sword of truth and judgment prevailed over the sword of political force and human wisdom in false worship (*Revelation*, pg. 388).

The Binding (20:1-6)

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his **20** hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain. ²And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, ³and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years were ended. After that he must be loosed for a little while.

⁴ Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or in their hands. They came to life, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first

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resurrection. 'Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years.

v. 1 . . . an angel . . . holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain . . . — Chapter and verse numbers are not inspired! The earliest Greek manuscripts of the New Testament have no numbers for chapters or verses; in fact, they have no paragraphs or punctuation. Although the English versions begin a new chapter here, we believe these first six verses are an inseparable part of the preceding context which deals with the defeat of the beast and false prophet. Since they are specifically and intimately allied with Satan in the last half of the Revelation (from chapter 12 through 20) as his tools to suppress the truth, their total defeat would unquestionably produce a devastating limitation on Satan's sphere of influence.

Revelation 20 is undoubtedly the most talked about chapter of the Bible. Many people, although they know *about* the chapter, have never analyzed the actual words of the chapter itself, in its context. Numerous books have been written on eschatology taking Revelation 20 out of its context and casting it into a conglomeration of texts from the Old Testament and New Testament. This chapter has been used as a basis for various theories of a literal thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth. The general theory, with variations among different eschatological schools, is briefly this:

1. Within a generation (40 years) from the time the Jews reoccupy the land of Palestine, Christ will begin His 1000-year reign.
2. At this time, the saved, both living and dead, will be "raptured" (caught up in the heavens to meet with Christ).
3. There will be seven years of tribulation on earth, while the "raptured" will be enjoying the "marriage supper of the Lamb."
4. After the seven years tribulation, Christ and His saints will come to earth and set up the kingdom of God. Christ will sit on the throne of David in the literal city of Jerusalem.
5. This will begin His 1000-year (exactly) millennial reign. The Jews will be converted to Christ; Old Testament worship (with modifications) will be restored; there will be peace, prosperity and an idealistic society. Those who do not wish to join this ideal society will be ruled over with a rod of iron, so that the tranquility of the millennium will not be disturbed.
6. At the end of exactly 1000 years, Satan will be loosed for a little while and make furious war upon the saints on earth. But Christ and His armies, engaging in literal combat against their foes, will defeat them at the literal site of Har-Meggido.

7. Following this, the wicked dead will be raised and, with the wicked remaining alive, judged and sent to hell, forever, while all the righteous will go to heaven forever.

We should note *carefully* the following about *this* text:

- a. There is no mention whatever of the second coming of Christ.
- b. There is no mention of a *bodily* resurrection. The New Testament, in other places, provides for the possibility of a resurrection other than and prior to the bodily resurrection.
- c. There is no mention in this text of a literal reign of Christ on earth.
- d. There is no mention in this text of a literal throne of David.
- e. There is no mention in this text of literal Jerusalem or Palestine.
- f. There is no mention in this text of the conversion of the Jews.
- g. There is no mention in this text of the church being "raptured."

This vision begins as John sees an angel coming *down* from heaven. Whatever is to happen in this vision, is to connect immediately to what has happened in 19:1-21. It is not Christ coming down, but an angel sent down. This angel holds in his hand the key of the bottomless pit (*Gr. abussou*, abyss) and a great chain. This is symbolic language. Literally, in human experience, there is no such thing as a "bottomless pit." It could not be a pit if it had no bottom! Furthermore, how does one bind the spiritual, non-physical being Satan with a literal chain? If the thousand years are literal, so should the bottomless pit and the chain be literal. Evidently, the bottomless pit (abyss) is not the final destiny of Satan (the lake of fire and brimstone, 20:10). It is probably to be equated with *Hades* (Lk. 16:23), the *abyss* to which Jesus could send demons (Lk. 8:31), or *Tartarus*, the *nether darkness* (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6) where demons reside. Peter says sinning angels are kept until judgment in *Tartarus* (not hell) in *chains* (the best Greek texts have the word for chains rather than pit), in *darkness*. Jude says the angels who abandoned their own (or proper) dwelling-place are kept in eternal *bonds* under *darkness* for the great day of judgment. This is the *abyss* to which the angel had the key—not the lake of fire and brimstone.

v. 2 And he seized the . . . Devil . . . and bound him for a thousand years . . . — The Greek word *ekratēse* (from *krateo*) is translated *seized*; it has the idea in it of laying hold of in order to restrain, hinder, repress or keep under reserve (cf. its use in Mark 9:10; Lk. 24:16; Rev. 7:1). The angel laid hold of Satan in order to repress him, to bind him, and not, at this point to destroy him. It is interesting, to say the least, that God gave an angel power to lay hold of and bind Satan. Satan was "allowed" to make war on the saints through the beast (13:7)—now he is "bound."

That leads us to discuss the meaning of the word *bind* as it is used in this context respecting Satan. The Greek word is *edesen*, from *deo*, the

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same word used in Jude 6. We believe this text refers to a binding of Satan, to some extent, *as a result of the fall of the Roman empire* which took place in the fourth and fifth centuries, A.D. These are our reasons:

1. The very terms "binding" and "loosing" in the Bible are relative terms.
 - a. God is Almighty. He is the only almighty being in existence.
 - b. Satan, therefore, is *always bound* to some degree or other.
 - c. Any "binding" or "loosing" Satan has is by God's sovereign permission, and according to God's purposed limitations.
 - d. The record of *Job's* experience (*Job* ch. 1 and 2) shows God kept Satan in check ("bound") to some degree even in Old Testament times. God allowed certain freedoms with Job that Satan could not have otherwise taken (see also *Zech.* 3:1-5).
2. Revelation ch. 20 is *only one* of a number of passages in the Bible that deal with the "binding" of Satan and his hosts. Thus the passage must be interpreted in the light of the consistent teaching of these other scriptures. Revelation 20 must not be used to outweigh or contradict the cumulative statements on this subject from all other passages.
 - a. *Mk.* 3:27; *Mt.* 12:25-29; *Lk.* 11:17-22 make it plain that Jesus claimed to be "binding" or restricting Satan's sphere of influence at His first coming, incarnate, into the world. Jesus proved His claim by casting out demons.
 - b. Jesus claimed that His death and resurrection would "throw" (Gr. *ekblethesetai*, cast) out (*Jn.* 12:31) the pretended "ruler" of this world. In other words, Jesus' redemptive accomplishment at His first advent placed severe limitations on Satan's sphere of influence.
 - c. Discussing the work to be accomplished by His death, resurrection, and return as the Holy Spirit, Jesus said (*Jn.* 16:11), "the ruler of this world (Satan) has been, and is being (Gr. *kekritai*, perfect tense verb), judged." When Satan was judged, he was handcuffed and restrained, but not then consigned to eternal incarceration.
 - d. Paul writes in *Hebrews* 2:14-15 that Jesus shared the flesh and blood experience of humankind, died and rose again, that He "might cause to cease to operate the one having the power of death, that is the devil." The Greek verb *katargese* in this text means "to deprive of force, influence or power." Compare its use in *I Cor.* 2:6; *II Tim.* 1:10; *I Cor.* 15:24.
 - e. Jesus said (*Lk.* 10:18) He *saw* (Gr. *etheoroun*, imperfect tense, meaning, "I was seeing") Satan as lightning (brilliant and instantaneous) falling out of heaven." This was said in connection with Jesus having given miraculous power over demons to the seventy disciples.

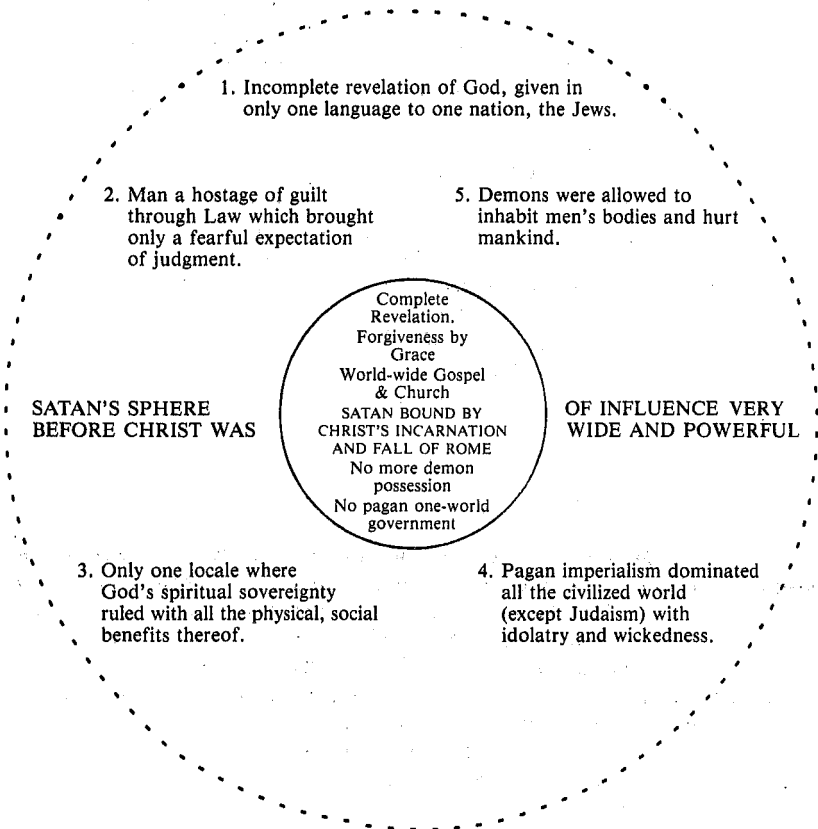
- f. John writes (I Jn. 3:8) that the Son of God was revealed at his first advent to *undo* (Gr. *luse*) the works of the devil.
 - g. Paul writes (Col. 2:13-15) that Jesus' death and resurrection *disarmed* the rulers and authorities (spiritual hosts of wickedness) and triumphed over them publicly (historically).
 - h. Jesus, when He ascended, took *captivity* captive (Eph. 4:8-9).
 - i. Peter preached that the devil *could not hold* Jesus in the bonds of death (Acts 2:24).
 - j. Christians *overcome* the devil in the blood of Christ (Rev. 12:11).
3. From these passages it is clear that the "binding" of Satan was initiated at the onset of Jesus' earthly ministry and was *finished at the downfall of Rome*. Rome was the last of the four great empires which Daniel predicted would exert *all possible* human and Satanic power to erase Jehovah's work of redemption from the face of the earth. But Daniel also predicted that "during the days of those kings" (the fourth empire) God would establish a fifth universal kingdom (the church) which would overcome the last universal humanistic empire and continue forever (Dan. 2:44-45). Rome's military-political, religio-idolatrous, and materialistic stranglehold (as the tool of Satan) on civilization is a classic example of what it was like before Satan was "bound" or limited by the ascendancy of the Gospel (the spread of Christianity to the ends of the earth). The very fact that God could rescue His covenant people from the worst that men could do (Isa. 49:24-25) and from the worst that demonic powers could do (Dan. 10:13, 20) is proof even in the Old Testament that *God keeps Satan bound all the time* to the extent He wishes to have it so in order to carry out His redemptive work. The binding of Satan in Revelation 20 is *relative* to the needs of God's redemptive work in the New Testament age which is the last of the ages (I Cor. 10:11). Satan's final incarceration takes place at the end of the world and the final judgment.

To help us understand the relative binding of Satan someone has suggested we think of Satan as a vicious animal on a chain tied to a tree. In Old Testament times, the chain binding Satan to the tree was extended to great lengths and his sphere of influence to deceive and destroy was wide. In New Testament times, because sin has been atoned for historically, because forgiveness has been wrought, because life and immortality have been brought to light historically, God, through the Gospel of Christ, has *shortened* the chain binding the devil and has severely restricted the power the devil has to deceive the world. The devil is still active, like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. And though his chain (sphere of influence) is less than it was, anyone who steps within that sphere of influence will be deceived and devoured.

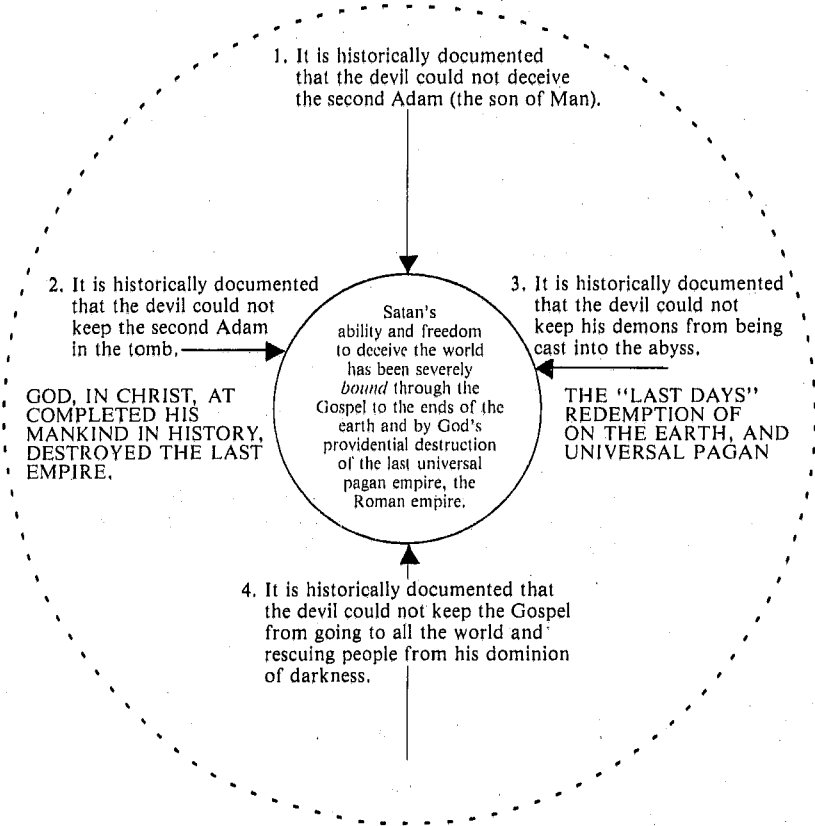
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Another way to help understand the relative nature of Satan's present binding is to contemplate what widespread area of influence the devil had when the only verbal revelation of God before Christ was to a small nation of Jews surrounded by many nations of paganism. The whole world (except for isolated and exclusivistic Judaism) was held hostage by Satan in ignorance, superstition and fear. Most of ancient civilization was controlled, life and death, by one-world government. We introduce the following charts as aids to understanding this concept.

LIMITATIONS ("BINDING") IMPOSED UPON SATAN BY THE FORCE OF GOD'S TRUTH AND MERCY THROUGH THE HISTORICALLY-ACCOMPLISHED REDEMPTIVE WORK OF CHRIST, WRITTEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND ESTABLISHED ALL OVER THE WORLD AFTER THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE.



ANOTHER VIEW OF THE "BINDING" OF SATAN BY THE POWER OF GOD ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH CHRIST AND THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE.



v. 3 . . . that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years were ended . . . — We believe the thousand years during which Satan is "bound" symbolize the Christian age following the victory of God for His saints over Rome until the "little while" of Satan's loosing and the end of time. The thousand years started *after* the "time, times and half a time" of the near death of the two witnesses (see Rev. 11:3-13) and after the "time, times and half a time" of the woman's nourishing in the wilderness (see Rev. 12:13-17). The beast, false prophet and harlot (prompted by the old dragon, the devil), bring great tribulation upon the woman and her offspring for three and one half times. That comes to an end when these

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wicked forces are defeated and the devil is bound. Then begins the thousand year reign of the saints.

It is clear that the Bible often uses the number thousand (as well as many other numbers) in a figurative, symbolic sense. Surely, more than all the cattle on a thousand hills belong to God (cf. Psa. 50:10). Did the Lord multiply Israel exactly, or figuratively, a thousand times more than they are at the time of the exodus (see Deut. 1:10-11)? For other figurative uses of the number thousand see Job 9:3; 33:23; Psa. 90:4; Eccl. 6:6; 7:28; II Pet. 3:8. John's use of numbers throughout this Revelation is altogether figurative and symbolic—why should he suddenly select such a "round number" to predict something literal.

The "little while" when Satan is to be loosed here is the same as the loosing of Satan in 20:7. It is not the same as the "short time" of Rev. 12:12. The "short time" of 12:12 is the same as the three and one half times of 11:3-13 and 12:13-17, the time when Satan knows he has only a limited time left to use Rome as his tool to make war upon the woman and her offspring.

How does one account for the fact that Rome has been dead for *more* than one thousand years and yet Revelation 20 seems to indicate the final judgment follows immediately after the thousand-year binding of Satan and the death of Rome? The thousand years is simply symbolic of a vast, indeterminate, yet complete time known literally only to God. Why doesn't John tell us in detail what will transpire during this "thousand-year" binding of Satan, if it is predicting the time-span between the death of Rome and the end of time? Because it is not necessary for the faithfulness of any saint to have that information (Acts 1:7). The Old Testament prophets left centuries of blanks in their eschatology, just as John does here. Many of them jumped, eschatologically, from their own times (700 B.C.) to the beginning of the messianic age (the coming of the Christ and establishment of the church) with hardly any details of the intervening centuries being revealed at all.

This is a unique vehicle of prophetic, apocalyptic literature and is sometimes called "Shortened Perspective." It is the same perspective one gets as he approaches a mountain range on the horizon head-on. The mountains appear to be jammed up against one another without any space or valleys between them. Once the traveler arrives along side the mountain range, he sees that there are valleys in between. The prophet Joel furnishes us a classic illustration of shortened perspective. In Joel 2:27 the prophet is speaking of the blessings God gave the land after the locust plague of Joel's day. In Joel 2:28, the prophet leaps some 800 years into the future (from one verse to another) and predicts the messianic age and the establishment of the church. We have that on divine authority. Peter interpreted Joel 2:28 for us in Acts 2:16ff. Joel sums up what will happen in the messianic age from

the establishment of the church until the "great and terrible day of the Lord" comes (final judgment) by saying there will be "signs in the heavens and on the earth" and whoever calls upon the name of the Lord during that time will be saved. Joel goes on, in chapter 3, to explain that what he has prophesied about the messianic age will be God's defeat of all the forces of worldliness and wickedness. All of Joel's prophecy from 2:28 through 3:21 is figurative and symbolic of the messianic age. But the important point is to see clearly how the prophet shortened the eschatological perspective by jumping over 800 years from one verse to the next.

This is precisely what John does in Revelation. He jumps over centuries and centuries of time (now more than 1500 centuries) from 20:6 to 20:7. The two charts at the end of this chapter will aid in understanding the "Shortened Perspective" concept.

The devil is caged (thrown into the abyss with the opening shut and sealed) so that he may *deceive* (Gr. *planese*, lead astray) the *nations* (Gr. *ethne*, ethnic groups) no more until the thousand years are ended. The devil's only power is that of falsehood (deception). He has no real authority. Jesus said the devil has "nothing to do with the truth and there is no truth in him . . . he is a liar and the father of lies" (Jn. 8:44). The devil's primary goal is to deceive the world into believing that he is the ruler of this world. The recurring theme of this book of Revelation centers in Satan's false claim to sovereignty in the universe. Deception is really the only power Satan has. This whole book of Revelation is a refutation of that deception. That claim is totally and empirically refuted in the historical work of Christ's redemption. Essentially, Satan was bound when Christ was raised from the dead and proved that "all authority was given to him in heaven and on earth" (Mt. 28:18).

John uses the term "nations" in the sense of whole nations. After the fall of the Roman empire with her military and economic powers broken, whole nations could no longer be deceived and led into idolatry because the Gospel freed many people in every nation, tribe, tongue and race. Satan no longer had the awesome, apparently invincible power of Rome to use to deceive the whole world into believing that demons and idols and emperors should be worshiped as sovereign. Once the eyewitnessed testimony that Jesus Christ had conquered death permeated the world, people from every nation turned away from allegiance to satanic falsehood unto the truth of God. This principle is still true today. Because there is no universal imperialism ruling the whole world today, Satan cannot use such a tool to deceive the nations. Large segments of the world are free today only because the Word of God is believed and honored there. In many nations today truth has the upper hand and not falsehood. And even in nations today ruled by unbelieving dictators, there are millions who refuse to be deceived by the lie of Satan that he rules the world. Of course, in every

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nation after the fall of Rome, as well as today, millions of individuals believed the lie of the devil. They were, and are, willingly deceived (cf. II Thess. 2:11ff.). But the whole world is not deceived as it was during the unchallenged rule of the Roman empire.

It should be noted that this text never says that the church of Christ was deceived. Before Christ came and instituted his kingdom of truth, practically the whole world had joined Rome in idolatry. The church remained for a while confined, with a few exceptions, to the land of Palestine. The "nations," therefore, were being deceived by Satan. Then the great apostle to the Gentiles began invading the "nations" (Asia Minor, Greece and Italy) with the truth of God. Thousands of Paul's converts also took the Gospel to the ends of civilization. Eventually, the veil of Satanic deception began to fall away from the eyes of those in the "nations" and the empire of darkness began to crumble. When Rome fell Satan's power to deceive the whole world was severely restricted—Satan was bound.

E.A. McDowell says succinctly in, *The Meaning and Message of Revelation*, pg. 190, "Let it be repeated that this is not the termination of Satan's power; he has not been cast into the lake of fire; he is confined for a 'thousand years' to the abyss, the home of the demons. In the vision John teaches that with the failure of the Caesars to make Christianity subordinate to the imperial rule, the reign of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords in history was confirmed. . . . So far as the span of history which stretches from the triumph of Christianity in the first and second centuries to our time is concerned, we may say that no instance is on record of a general challenge to the rule of Christ paralleling the challenge made to that rule by the empire of Rome which ruled almost all the civilized world."

v. 4 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them . . . the souls of those who had been beheaded . . . — This describes only one group of people; believers who had been martyred during Rome's attempt to stamp out Christianity. They are *such as* (Gr. *hoitines*, a relative pronoun) those who had not worshiped the beast or its image. The Greek perfect participle *pepelekismenon*, from *pelekus*, "axe," indicates a continual slaughter of Christians. These are the "two witnesses" Satan and Rome believed they had eradicated (Rev. 11:7-10), but God raised them up (Rev. 11:11-13)! Rome died but these saints came to life! The visionary, figurative (*not* bodily) "resurrection" of the martyred saints symbolized the resurrection of the kingdom of Christ (the church) on earth and its sovereignty rather than Rome's. John does not see Christians in bodies living and reigning—he sees souls. It is a vision—it is symbolic—it represents a principle. At Rome's defeat, the sovereignty of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords was proven, and those martyrs seen in John's vision as coming to life and judging symbolized that Christ's kingdom would come to life, defeat and judge Rome.

The Greek phrase, *kai ezesan* in verse 4, literally, reads, "and they lived." Satan and Rome tried to deceive the world into believing that martyred Christians and Christianity were dead forever, while the Empire would live and be enthroned forever. Christ is revealing, through John, that those martyred Christians, faithful unto death, had not died but had really come to life and, furthermore, the kingdom to which they belonged reigned and judged the world—not the empire of Rome. This revelation of the martyred saints alive and reigning is not intended to single them out as a group holier than other Christians or as a group appointed to positions higher than others. The vision is designed to make a sharp distinction or contrast to "the rest of the dead."

The "rest of the dead" (the pagan contemporaries of the Christian martyrs) were those *unbelievers* who had died during the same tribulations of empire in which the Christians died. The unbelieving dead did not live during the thousand years—they remained forever dead. The second death claimed them.

v.5 The rest of the dead did not come to life . . . — The sentence here in Greek reads, *oi loipoi ton nekron ouk ezesan achri telesthe ta chilia etc.* The Greek word *achri* is usually translated *until*, but may also be translated *during*. The Greek word *telesthe* is usually translated *ended*, but may also be translated *completion*. The rest of the dead, during the 1000 years, did not come to life. This would emphasize the absolute difference between the martyred Christians and dead pagans who worshiped the beast and the false prophet. If "the rest of the dead" is to refer to Christians, we must assume that John visualizes a "special" resurrection for a favored class, and at the same time assume that hosts of Christians who did not experience martyrdom by Rome are to be exposed to the possibility of suffering the "second death."

Contrary to the devil's lie, those *faithful* to Christ and slain came to life and reigned. The "rest of the dead" never did. They came to the "second death." The Greek word translated "rest" is *loipos*. It may also be translated "other" (cf. Lk. 8:11; Acts 17:9; Rom. 1:13; II Cor. 12:13; 13:2; Gal. 2:13; Phil. 1:13; 4:3). The "other" dead are the dead of another kind—they are the pagan dead. The "rest" of Rev. 19:21 slain by the Word of God. These apparently went with the beast and false prophet to the lake of fire.

That which the Christian martyrs experienced is called symbolically "the first resurrection." It is *not* the bodily resurrection. There will be only one bodily resurrection. That is the plain teaching of the rest of the New Testament. John's vision of these "resurrected" *souls* may be explained as that which takes place when the soul of every faithful believer departs the dead body and goes to be with the Lord. When the Christian's body dies, the soul of the Christian is "raised" to be with Christ, and is conscious and alive

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with the Lord (cf. Phil. 1:21-23; Lk. 23:43; Lk. 16:19-31). When the unforgiven sinner's body dies, his soul dies the "second death" and is eternally separated from the Lord in torments.

While this "first resurrection" must, according to sound hermeneutical principles and the immediate context, apply primarily to the saints martyred during the Roman empire, it reveals and symbolizes that the gates of Hades (death) never prevails over the Lord's church. The New Testament also speaks of the act of becoming a Christian as a "resurrection" from being dead in sin (cf. Jn. 5:24-25; Jn. 5:26-29; Rom. 6:12-13; Eph. 2:4-7; Col. 2:13; I Jn. 3:14). When people believe and obey Christ they "have passed from death unto life." Jesus talked about a "first" and "second" resurrection in John 5:24-25 and 5:26-29, respectively. The "resurrection" spoken of in John 5:24-25 is present tense and takes place at belief and baptism into Christ (the new birth). The "resurrection" spoken of in John 5:26-29 is future and takes place at the resurrection of the physical body from the grave.

Nowhere in the New Testament are we led to believe there will be more than one bodily resurrection. This "first resurrection" of the martyred saints must, therefore, be only of the soul and revealed simply to symbolize the never-dying nature of Christ's kingdom. "First resurrection" and "they came to life" are simply synonymous terms. The vision is graphic symbolism—it is not declaring some complex, detailed eschatological schedule for multiple bodily resurrections and multiple judgments. Symbolic "resurrections" are not uncommon to Scripture. The Old Testament prophets symbolized Israel's return from the captivities as a "resurrection" (cf. Isa. 26:19; Hosea 13:14; Ezek. 37:1-14). Daniel was told that during the troubled times of Antiochus IV there would be a "resurrection" of many Jews to faith and loyalty to God's word (Dan. 12:1-4). The seemingly dead "witnesses" were "raised up" by God (Rev. 11:11-13). Mothers, during the Syrian persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes, "received" their dead sons in symbolic resurrection because of their faith in God (Heb. 11:35).

The saints martyred by Rome not only symbolized the perpetual life of God's kingdom, they also symbolized its perpetual reign. Daniel had predicted that at the death of the "fourth beast" (Rome), the warred-upon saints would reign and judge (Dan. 7:19-27). John's vision is a fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy. Christians are said to reign with Christ as they remain faithful to him on this earth (cf. Eph. 2:6; II Tim. 2:12; Rom. 5:17; Rev. 5:10). They are also said to have certain judgments committed to them (cf. Mt. 7:1-20; I Cor. 5:9-13; Heb. 11:7; I Cor. 6:1-6).

v. 6 Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection . . . — Those Christians who were slain for their faith by Rome are completely and finally separated from the wickedness and pain and trials they endured

so faithfully. They are alive where everything is happiness and holiness. Over these the "second death" has no authority (power). The second death is defined as "being thrown in the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14; see also Rev. 2:11; 21:8). The "second death" is eternal separation from God and incarceration in eternal torments—it is hell. The Bible does not teach annihilation of the wicked dead (cf. Mt. 25:46), but *eternal* (Gr. *aionion*, everlasting) punishment. But condemnation and punishment has no authority to claim the Christian. The authoritative Word of God claims the Christian for blessedness and holiness (cf. Rom. 8:31-39; II Cor. 4:16-18; I Pet. 1:3-9). These Christians who came to life by coming out of the great tribulation are also declared to be ministering to God as priests. Again, that is an experience to be shared in an anticipatory way by Christians even while they are on earth (cf. I Pet. 2:4, 5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; etc.).

Careful contextual analysis of this highly symbolic and figurative passage, and studied comparison with what the rest of the New Testament teaches on resurrection and judgment, should bring the reader to a sensible and harmonious interpretation. It goes without saying that the Holy Spirit would not contradict himself. He would not reveal a doctrine of *multiple bodily* resurrections in Revelation 20:1-6 and then contradict that by declaring in the rest of the New Testament that there is *only one bodily* resurrection. We are constrained to quote at length here from *Worthy Is The Lamb*, by Ray Summers, pgs. 205-206:

No basis is found in the symbolism (of this passage) for a literal reign of a thousand-year reign of the saints with Christ on earth either before or after this second coming. No basis is found in the symbolism for multiple resurrections and judgments. Theological systems which have majored on a literal interpretation of these verses and have interpreted the clear teachings of the New Testament in the light of the obscure have found several resurrections and several judgments taught. They find a resurrection of believers at what they call the "rapture," when Christ comes to call his people out of the earth before the great tribulation which is also interpreted as future. Seven years later, at the "revelation" (the second stage of the program of the Lord's second coming), they find a resurrection for those who have become believers and died during the period between the "rapture" and the "revelation." According to their system, people are converted and die during the millennium which is set up at the "revelation." So there must be a resurrection of this group at the close of the earthly millennium when the heavenly order is set up. If the wicked dead are raised at a separate judgment, the system has at least four (perhaps more) resurrections. In similar fashion they find multiple judgments ranging from two (one before and one after the millennium) to seven, according to the particular interpreter.

THIRTEEN LESSONS ON REVELATION

This is pure fantasy read into a literal interpretation of these highly symbolical verses. By the "proof-text" approach one can prove practically any proposition by perverted use of Scripture passages. When the entire New Testament is studied, it teaches *one* general resurrection (of both good and evil) and *one* general judgment (of both good and evil), both of which are directly related to the second coming of Christ which brings to an end this world order and ushers in the eternal heavenly order.

The "resurrection" of the souls of the martyrs not only symbolizes that the kingdom of Christ defeats Rome and reigns in sovereignty, it also guarantees, symbolically, the perpetuation of their "priestly" work in mediating the messianic blessings of salvation throughout the world during the "thousand years" (Gospel age) (see Rom. 15:16).

The Bridegroom (Messiah-Warrior) has ridden forth into the arena of history to defend his Bride against the beast, the false prophet, and the harlot. John sees these enemies of the Bride captured and thrown into the lake of fire, along with the "rest" of the pagan dead. Satan, with his most powerful allies ever destroyed, is "bound" for a thousand years; his power to deceive is severely restricted. The martyred church is "resurrected" to life, reigns and ministers for the "thousand years." Death cannot prevail against it. Others (pagans) who died did not come to life; they came to the second death. This is John's answer to the challenge of the Caesars to the sovereignty of the Lamb—the defeat of the Roman empire and the victory of the church. Rome did fall! The church did live on and spread throughout a larger world than the Caesars ever dreamed existed. God won—as he always has!

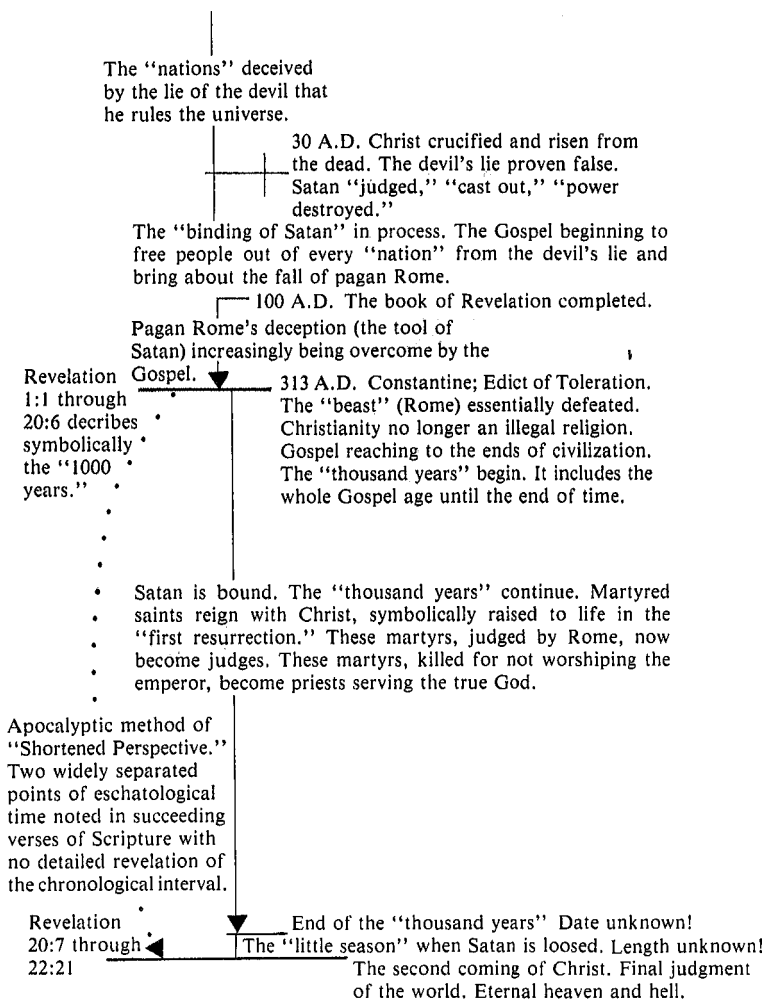
APPREHENSION AND APPLICATION:

1. Why was heaven so joyful about the fall of the harlot? Would heaven rejoice today if the political powers persecuting the church fell? Would you?
2. Do you understand why God acts the way the Bible portrays him acting? What do you do about it?
3. When did "the marriage of the Lamb" take place? Do you think of your relationship to Christ as intimate and binding as a marriage? What does that require of you?
4. When does the "marriage supper of the Lamb" take place? Is the Christian experience like a festivity to you—or is it more like being in prison?
5. Whom should you worship in light of the prophecies of Revelation? Would you worship an angel if one appeared suddenly in your congregation?

6. Who is the rider on the white horse? What does he ride forth to do? What kind of warfare does he fight? Are you in his army? What is your weapon? Is it powerful enough to do the job?
7. Is the scene depicting vultures eating the flesh of dead bodies to be understood literally or figuratively? Would Christ ever lead an army to such a literal slaughter?
8. Who was the "beast" and the "false prophet"? Where were they thrown? Who else was slain with them? What is having "the mark" of the beast?
9. Why should Revelation 20:1-6 be tied inseparably to the end of chapter 19?
10. Name some events, said to be taught in 20:1-6, which are not there. Where do you think material comes from for the many millennial theories?
11. When was the devil "bound"? How was he "bound"? Do you think the devil is "bound" now more than he was in ancient times?
12. Is the devil completely inoperative today? How do you resist him?
13. What are the "thousand years"? Why doesn't John tell us what is to happen during the "thousand years"? What is "shortened perspective"?
14. What did the devil deceive the nations about? Just how much power does the devil have? Is he really the god of this world?
15. Who are those beheaded souls John saw? Why was he given a vision of them? Does John's vision mean anything to you?
16. Who were the "rest of the dead"? Why didn't they come to life?
17. What is the "first" resurrection? Is there another resurrection? What? When? Who will participate in it?
18. Does the "second death" have any power over those believers not martyred during the Roman empire? What is the "second death"?
19. Has all this apocalyptic imagery done anything for your faith and Christian growth? Should it have? Didn't John begin the book by saying, "blessed are those who read and keep the words of this prophecy"?

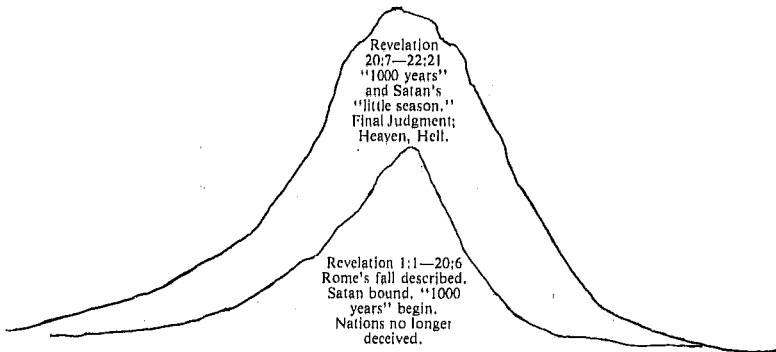
THE BINDING OF SATAN AND THE "THOUSAND YEARS" IN PERSPECTIVE

by Paul T. Butler



**APOCALPTIC METHOD OF
"SHORTENED PERSPECTIVE" AS APPLIED TO
REVELATION 1:1—20:6 AND 20:7—22:21**

by Paul T. Butler



Shortened Perspective: John has revealed to him two "mountain peaks"—*Rome's fall* and the *Consummation* of all things, final judgment and eternal heaven and hell. . . .

. . . but all he sees in between those two "peaks" is an indefinite time called "1000 years" during which Satan is bound and martyred saints reign.

