

The Binding of Satan

A Study on Revelation 20:1-3

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The Passage

“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.” (Revelation 20:1-3, King James Version)

This remarkable passage raises several important questions that every thoughtful student of Scripture is likely to ask. What does it mean for Satan to be bound? Where is he confined? Is this his final judgement? Why is he released again? Could he ever enter God’s New Creation? Scripture provides clear answers to many of these questions while inviting humble restraint where God has chosen not to reveal every detail.

God’s Absolute Sovereignty

The first truth that emerges from this passage is the absolute sovereignty of God. An angel descends from Heaven carrying the key to the Abyss and a great chain. Satan, who once deceived the nations and opposed the purposes of God, is seized, bound, cast into the Abyss, shut in, and sealed.

Each action demonstrates that Satan is never God’s equal. He operates only within the limits God permits. When God’s appointed time arrives, Satan is rendered completely powerless.

The “great chain” is best understood symbolically. Since Satan is a spiritual being, the chain represents complete divine restraint rather than physical imprisonment.

Where Is Satan Confined?

The passage states that Satan is cast into “the bottomless pit,” translated from the Greek word *abyssos* (the Abyss).

It is important to distinguish between three different places mentioned in Scripture:

- The Abyss – a temporary place of confinement for demonic powers.
- Hades – the temporary abode of the dead.
- The Lake of Fire – the final and eternal place of judgement.

Revelation 20:10 makes it clear that Satan is not cast into the Lake of Fire until after his final rebellion. His imprisonment in verses 1-3 is therefore temporary.

Why Is Satan Bound?

Scripture gives a specific reason:

“...that he should deceive the nations no more...”

The emphasis is not that Satan ceases to exist, but that his ability to deceive the nations is restrained during this appointed period. God’s purpose is to remove the great deceiver from influencing the nations until His redemptive plan reaches its next stage.

Is Satan the Only Occupant of the Abyss?

The passage does not say that he is.

Other Scriptures indicate that certain fallen angels are already kept under restraint awaiting judgement (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). While the exact nature of the Abyss remains beyond full human understanding, there is no biblical reason to conclude that Satan is its only occupant.

What About God’s People?

This naturally leads to another important question: if Satan is bound, are all God’s redeemed people already enjoying the fullness of Christ’s eternal Kingdom?

The answer depends partly upon one’s understanding of the Millennium. Faithful Christians have held different views regarding the thousand years described in Revelation 20.

Whatever one’s position, Revelation itself makes one truth unmistakably clear: the New Heaven and the New Earth do not appear until Revelation 21, after Satan’s final rebellion and after the Great White Throne Judgement.

Could Satan Ever Enter the New Creation?

This is one of the most significant questions raised by the passage.

The answer appears to be an emphatic **No**.

Satan is released only before the New Creation is established. Following his final rebellion, he is cast permanently into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:10).

When Revelation 21 introduces the New Heaven and the New Earth, Scripture declares:

“And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth...” (Revelation 21:27)

Likewise,

“And there shall be no more curse...” (Revelation 22:3)

These glorious promises leave no room for Satan’s return. The one who introduced sin into Eden will never enter the New Jerusalem. Christ’s New Creation will remain eternally pure, holy, and secure.

Why Is Satan Released Again?

Perhaps the most difficult question concerns Satan’s brief release after the thousand years.

While Scripture does not explain every detail, several important truths emerge.

His release demonstrates that God remains completely sovereign over history. It reveals that those whose hearts remain unchanged will still rebel against God even after living under Christ’s righteous rule. It also exposes evil completely before its final and eternal judgement.

The final rebellion proves that mankind’s deepest problem has never been circumstances but the sinful heart that needs redemption through Jesus Christ.

The Grand Story of Redemption

The Bible begins with Satan entering God’s perfect creation and deceiving humanity.

It ends with Satan permanently excluded from God’s perfect New Creation.

Between these two events stands the Cross of Christ, where the decisive victory over sin, death, and Satan was accomplished.

Revelation is therefore not primarily a book about Satan. It is the revelation of the victorious Lord Jesus Christ. Satan’s binding, imprisonment, release, and final condemnation all unfold under God’s sovereign authority.

The closing chapters of Scripture leave believers with an unshakeable hope: Christ reigns forever, evil is finally abolished, and God’s redeemed people dwell securely in His glorious presence. Never again will sin, death, deception, or the devil disturb the perfect fellowship between God and His people.

This is not merely the end of Satan’s story. It is the eternal triumph of Jesus Christ and the everlasting security of all who belong to Him.