

THE GRACE OF WRATH

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Text

Revelation 20:1-15

Topic

The Dragon is imprisoned in the Abyss for a thousand years then confined to the Lake of Fire for eternity

Title

"Dungeons & Dragon"

A top five of prison break movies would include *The Great Escape*, *Papillon*, *The Shawshank Redemption*, and *The Fugitive*.

The #1 prison break movie of all time: *Toy Story 3*.

When the lovable crew are donated to a daycare run by a tyrannical teddy bear, they devise a plan to break out and return home to their beloved Andy.

Satan is imprisoned in the Abyss for one thousand years.

He won't escape. He *will* be released to lead one final failed campaign to defeat Jesus. The Lord wins, easily.

We will be part of that end days drama as judges. I'll point us out in the text.

I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 You Work As A Judge Until The Thousand Years Are Over, and #2 You Watch Jesus Judge After The Thousand Years Are Over.

#1 - You Work As A Judge Until The Thousand Years Are Over (v1-6)

“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?... Do you not know that we shall judge angels?” (First Corinthians 6:2-3).

The apostle Paul revealed our future role as judges to inform the saints in Corinth that they should stop their lawsuits against one another and settle their differences within the church.

“Do you not know?” sounds rhetorical. The saints *did* know that they would in the future serve as judges. They were guilty of thinking more about the here-and-now and too little about the future.

Present circumstances need not shape our beliefs and behaviors.

We can respond biblically, spiritually, righteously, always desiring to bring glory to Jesus. You will sometimes be taken advantage of, be wronged. God might ask you to give up your rights for the greater good of the Gospel.

In chapter nineteen, Jesus returned to Earth and immediately defeated the world’s combined military might in the Valley of Megiddo. First on the Kingdom agenda: Deal with the Devil.

Rev 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from Heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

“Bottomless pit” is translated from one word in Greek, “Abyss.” Previously in the Revelation, we’ve seen the Abyss as a prison for evil supernaturals. It is the place the Beast (aka, the antichrist) is thrown into and comes out of after his assassination.

An “angel” serves as jailor. He carries a “key” and a “chain.” They are real and represent the authority and power delegated to him by God.

Rev 20:2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

Four titles describe four of his favorite strategies over the centuries:

- He was called the “dragon” in chapter twelve in his efforts to devour the Savior at His birth. The dragon has a long history of trying to interfere with the Savior’s coming into the world.
- He is the “serpent of old” who, in the Garden of Eden, tempted mankind to disobedience.
- As the “devil,” he accuses God before men.
- He is “Satan” accusing mankind before God.

“Thousand years” repeats six times in chapter twenty.

The Latin word for thousand years is a compound word, *milli* and *annum*, **millennium**.

We commonly refer to Jesus’ Kingdom on Earth for one thousand years the Millennium or the Millennial Kingdom.

Every other person and place in chapter twenty are real. So is the duration of the Kingdom. If someone wants to suggest it means something else, then it can mean almost *anything* else.

Rev 20:3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

The devil will ask to go down to Georgia. (That’s according to Charlie Daniels). He is locked away, chained, with God’s “seal” on him and cannot break out or be broken out.

The devil “must” be released because he has an endgame that will be exposed momentarily.

Rev 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them...

The apostle Paul meant these “thrones” and “judgment” when he wrote to the Corinthians. You and I are going to judge angels and mankind. Don’t worry. You will be in your glorified body, incapable of sin, tapped into the pure and peaceable wisdom of God. You’ve got this.

Rev 20:4 ... Then *I* saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

“Beast,” “image,” and “mark” are a three-word summation of conditions from mid-Tribulation to its end. Tribulation martyrs fit these descriptive phrases.

Although “beheaded” and dead, they will “live.” “Live” means they will be resurrected from the dead to “reign” with the Lord for the thousand years.

Rev 20:5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.

People in both the Old and New Testaments were raised from the dead but not resurrected. They were raised in their earthly body and had to die again. Resurrection is the transformation of the body into its final spiritual state

The Bible describes a *first* resurrection and a *second* resurrection.

1. The first resurrection is the resurrection of all those from the world’s creation until its remaking after the Millennium who believe God and are justified by grace through faith.
2. The second resurrection is the resurrection of all those throughout history who did not believe God for salvation. The second resurrection is called the “second death” later on in this chapter.

The first resurrection does not happen all at once but is spread out over time.

The physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus is fundamental to the faith. Don Stewart writes, "The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central truth of the Christian faith. Without it there is no such thing as the Christian faith." Jesus Christ's resurrection marks the beginning of the first resurrection. He was first among many. First Corinthians 15:20 says, "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."

Firstfruits of a harvest indicate a greater harvest to follow. A few saints were resurrected along with the Lord. "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many" (Matthew 27:52-53). Jesus first, then resurrected saints as firstfruits to declare what was to come.

Next in order in the first resurrection are the saints of the Church Age. First Thessalonians chapter four informs us that Jesus is coming in the clouds for His church and, "the dead in Christ shall rise first."

There will be living believers when Jesus raises the dead in Christ. "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them." Deceased believers will be resurrected, then living believers will be raptured in resurrection bodies.

Next in order in the first resurrection are the two witnesses we met in chapter eleven. "Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them" (v11).

Revelation twenty tells us that the martyrs of the Great Tribulation will be resurrected at Jesus Christ's Second Coming at the end of the Great Tribulation.

Not mentioned here, but elsewhere, we learn that Old Testament believers also will be resurrected at the Second Coming.

There is one more group of believers we need to account for, and they are the Millennials:

- Believers who survive the Great Tribulation will be the only humans allowed in the thousand year Kingdom on Earth.
- Children will be born to these believers, and Earth will be repopulated. These will choose to receive or reject Jesus. There will be multitudes of believers at the end of the thousand-years. The apostle Paul has made it clear in First Corinthians chapter fifteen that eternity is inhabitable only by those with resurrected, glorified bodies that are no longer mortal and are not able to decay. We can safely presume that God will transform Millennials for eternity.

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Believers are “blessed” and made “holy.” You may not feel “blessed” in your life. I know I don’t always feel that way. God is working for your good, to make you “holy.”

The “second death” sounds like the title of the latest horror movie. It’s much worse than that, and we will see why in a moment.

God’s desire for His people in both Testaments was that they be a kingdom of priests. I’m sure king-ing and priest-ing will involve a lot, but it boils down to sharing Jesus with humans born in the Millennium.

I skipped a phrase in verse three.

The devil “deceive[s] the nations” of the world.

What an incredible insight. We could spend years discovering his strategies with former and current empires. Mick Jagger sang about it:

Stuck around St. Petersburg

*When I saw it was a time for a change
Killed Tsar and his ministers
Anastasia screamed in vain*

*I rode a tank
Held a general's rank
When the blitzkrieg raged
And the bodies stank*

The devil is deceiving nations **right now**. It explains the haphazard evil, violence, selfishness, and general unreasonableness of the times in which we live.

In Proverbs, we read, "Righteousness exalts a nation" (14:34). Righteousness ultimately depends upon the Gospel being proclaimed and received. There is a lot we can do as citizens but nothing more significant than to witness.

#2 - You Watch Jesus Judge After The Thousand Years Are Over (v7-15)

Dystopia is defeating utopia hands down.

We are fascinated with dystopian visions of the future. Whether it is zombies, aliens, pandemics, or environmental disasters, we have surrendered to the idea that the End is Near and it will be dystopian.

Jesus' coming will bring utopia.

The risen Lord, Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords, the Lord God omnipotent, will be physically on Earth, ruling from Jerusalem. Nonbelievers will see us in our glorified bodies and understand it is what Jesus intends for them. Conditions will be altogether perfect.

What could go wrong?

Revelation 20:7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison

Revelation 20:8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

Satan is released on his own recognizance with no ankle monitor. He immediately foments rebellion.

The identity of "Gog" and "Magog" is debated by scholars. The uncertainty derives from them being named 700 years prior in the prophecy of Ezekiel. 38&39. There are some similarities, e.g., each passage mentions they are part of a coalition of nations that attack God's people.

If you get out a yellow pad and write down the details of each of those passages, however, you'll pretty quickly determine they describe two different rebellions. One glaring difference: The uprising in Ezekiel occurs *before* the Millennium, probably during the Great Tribulation, while the one in the Revelation is *after* the Millennium.

Revelation 20:9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of Heaven and devoured them.

There is a lamentable emphasis on the sheer number of people who will openly reject Jesus to His face. How can they be so blind?

The devil is involved, but we can't let anyone say, "The devil made me do it." Eve used different words in the Garden of Eden, but she meant, "The devil made me do it."

The devil don't make you do it .

Nonbelievers gather in staggering numbers. Jesus and us sit this one out. God the Father sends "fire" to "devour" this hoard of barbarians.

Revelation 20:10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

The devil never rules in Hell. He is not its jailor. He torments no one. He is tormented day and night for eternity.

Notice that “the Beast and the False Prophet” are there, alive after one thousand years. Eternal, conscious torment is literal.

Revelation 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

The phrase, “the earth and the heaven fled away,” might be telling us that the judgment takes place after the current Earth and heavens are burned up and restored. “The heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (Second Peter 3:10).

There is a terrifying piece of business to attend to before eternity begins. Nonbelievers from creation to the end of the Millennium are crowding Hades awaiting their resurrection. *This is that second resurrection.*

Unlike the first resurrection, the second occurs all at once and is called the second death.

Revelation 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

Robert Thomas writes, “*The Bible makes consistent reference to a register of human actions. The greater focus of this passage [however]... is on another book, the Book of Life.*”

John Walvoord explains,

[The Book of Life] originally contained the names of all for whom Christ died, i.e., the whole world, but at the judgment of the Great White Throne many blank spaces will signal the removal of many names who never believed in Christ for salvation.

Revelation 20:13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

The "sea" and "death" refer to the physical location of the remains of deceased nonbelievers. "Hades" is the location of their souls.

God keeps a careful record of the works nonbelievers perform. In the end, He will review them. They will prove insufficient to gain access to Heaven. No amount of good works can atone for sin. The work of God is to believe in His Son, Jesus (John 6:29).

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

Revelation 20:15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

A result of all nonbelievers being "cast into the lake of fire" is that there will never again be "death" or a need for "Hades." It is in that sense they, too, are "cast into the Lake of Fire."

Nonbelievers die twice. They die physically, and then they die spiritually - meaning they live for eternity separated from God in conscious torment.

With that, the curtain closes on the drama of redemption that plays out on Earth for several millennia. Eternity in the new heavens and on the new Earth begins, to never end.

We will see the curtain rise on eternity as the book closes.