

Satan's Limitations

Revelation 19:19-21

Introduction: Chapter 19 of the book of Revelation concludes with the defeat of the beast, the false prophet, the kings of the earth and their armies. Christ is engaged in removing those who were responsible for the wickedness on the earth at that time. Of course, wickedness will never end as long as Satan is allowed to reign in the kingdoms of men. The struggle between good and evil didn't end when God removed Rome as a ruling power. Earth time continued...

Revelation 20:1-10, is a short synopsis of the remaining of earth time as seen from a heavenly perspective. These ten verses give us a small insight into God's control of wickedness until the end of time; including the time in which we now live.

I. The binding of Satan (Rev. 20:1-3)

A. An angel comes down from heaven, lays hold of Satan and casts him into the bottomless pit (abyss).

1. The "key" that the angel holds signifies authority over the pit.

2. The "great chain" represents his ability to limit Satan's power by confining him into the abyss.

B. The angel confines Satan into the bottomless pit.

1. This bottomless pit cannot be Hell. A distinction in location is made between those cast into "the lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Rev. 19:20; 20:10; 21:8) and Satan who is being thrown into an abyss.

2. Since the context is located in a heavenly location, this pit is a spiritual realm or a spiritual container.

3. We know that Satan is still able to seek and devour souls (1 Pet. 5:8). Therefore, our view of this spiritual container should be something like a cage. Think of Satan as that lion who is bound by a fence like you might find at a zoo. As long as we don't enter his cage, he can't hurt us. However, if we enter his realm, he can maul and destroy us.

C. There are 3 occasions in scripture referencing Satan being bound.

1. Jesus speaks of binding Satan to explain His ability to cast out demons (Matt. 12: 28-29). Jesus is speaking of Satan as the "strong man."

2. The Hebrew writer refers to Christ's death and resurrection as the events that free us from the bondage of death (Heb. 2:14-15). Satan had the power over death.

3. This third reference to Satan being bound is in fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 2:44; 7:18, 27).

D. From these 3 occurrences in scripture we can infer in what sense Satan is being bound:

1. He no longer has power to possess people with demons.
2. He has no power to prevent saints from being redeemed and thereby avoid the second death.
3. He has no power to use world power (nations) to persecute God's people. He can't destroy the Church.

II. The 1000 year reign

A. The 1000 years is figurative for a very long time.

1. Moses uses "a thousand generations" to denote the length of God's mercy and promises (Deut. 7:9). He is not saying God's mercy and promises are limited to any certain amount of time.

2. The Psalmist uses "a thousand hills" to denote the length of God's possessions (Psm. 50:10). He is not limiting the Lord's cattle to strictly 1000 mountains worth.

B. During the 1000 years Christ will reign with the martyred saints and His people (Rev. 20:4-6).

1. The first resurrection is a metaphor denoting a person's change in spirit when baptized (Rom. 6:3-6).

2. Christians are described as priests of God (1 Pet. 2:9).

3. Our reign with Christ begins at baptism (Rom. 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:11-13; Eph. 2:1, 4-7; Col.2:13).

C. At some point in time the 1000 years will come to an end (Rev. 20:7).

III. Satan released (Rev. 20:7-10)

A. For a short time before the end of time Satan will be released from his bonds. That would seem to indicate that Satan will once again be allowed to:

1. Possess people with demons.

2. Persecute Christians to the death.

3. Use governmental powers to try to destroy the Church.

B. However, despite Satan's concerted effort to wage a new battle against God's people; God will destroy Satan and send him in the end to Hell.

Conclusion: I believe we are still within the 1000 years whereby Satan is bound by the limitations God has placed upon him. How short Satan's release will be or whether or not Satan will exercise all his permitted powers during that short time is impossible to know. Obviously, we have no clue when the 1000 years will end. However, if we are prepared it makes no matter when the thief breaks in to steal (1 Thes. 5:1-8). Are you prepared?