

The Book of Revelation

By

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CHAPTER TWENTY

RESURRECTIONS AND DOOMS

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand" (vs. 1).

There are four apartments to the underworld. **"God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell (TARTARUS) and delivered them into chains of darkness"** (II Peter 2:4).

Here are great and shining sons of light, created for joy and freedom. But when they sinned, GOD spared them not and today they writhe in anguish and darkness, waiting the judgment of that great day when they will be cast into their final doom.

Another region of the underworld is "GEHENNA," or the Lake of Fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41), and it is into this fearful place that all unsaved will also be cast (Revelation 20:15). It is GOD's prison house and is fearful beyond all description. Thrice in one chapter did our Lord warn of the place **"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched"** (Mark 9:44).

A third region is known as "HADES" (SHEOL in the Old Testament). Before the resurrection of CHRIST it was the abode of the spirits of both the righteous and unrighteous dead. It had two compartments; one a place of comfort for the saved and the other a place of torment for the unsaved. These two regions were separated by an impassable gulf (Luke 16:26).

Hades' Keys Taken

When CHRIST died, both He and the penitent thief went to the paradise side of Hades, which is in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:40; Luke 23:43). But CHRIST's soul did not remain in Hades (Acts 2:31). Rather did He defeat Satan who held the power of death (Hebrews 2:14), and then unlocked the gates of Hades and, when He ascended, He emptied the paradise side and took the righteous souls with Him to the third Heaven (Ephesians 4:8, 9; II Corinthians 12:4).

Now, when a Christian dies, he is absent from the body and immediately taken to the heavenly paradise where he is present with the Lord (II Corinthians 5:8). CHRIST now has the keys to the gates of Hades (Revelation 1:18), and those gates will never prevail, or close upon a Christian (Matthew 16:18). The unsaved go to the torment side of Hades immediately after death, there to

await the second resurrection.

The fourth region of the underworld is the ABYSS or bottomless pit. Just why it is called "**bottomless**" I do not know. The mouth of this terrible pit is somewhere on the earth, for the angel came to the earth to open it (Revelation 9:1) . This is the prison house of myriads of infernal locusts. Certain kinds of unclean spirits seem to dread this place although they are permitted to enter a human body under certain conditions. In this region the demons walk through dry places seeking rest and finding none (Matthew 12:43).

They dread this place and would rather indwell the bodies of swine than to be confined in it (Luke 8:31).

Invisible Chains

It is into this pit that Satan is to be confined for one thousand years. The unseen world is just as real as the things that are seen, and the keys and the chains of that world are just as real as the ones made of metal on our own earth. The great chain is something of tremendous power for Satan is not a weak creature. These unseen chains have already kept myriads of sinful angels in bondage for thousands of years.

Just what the great chain may be we do not know but GOD has this earth bound to the sun with an invisible chain ninety-three million miles long, and carrying a load equal to a solid iron rod five hundred miles in diameter.

Satan Imprisoned

"And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years" (vs. 2).

Imagine if we can that arch enemy of GOD; he who led our first parents into sin; he who has roamed this planet for six thousand years with nothing but evil in his heart. Imagine his wrath as he sees his army defeated and an angel speeding down from Heaven with eyes focused upon him; a key in one hand and a great chain in the other.

Although at times it seems that he has been victorious in his war against GOD, yet his losses have been heavy. He failed to slay the man child; the earth opened her mouth and swallowed his army and he could not destroy those fleeing Jews. He was also completely routed from Heaven by Michael and his angels.

These losses have so enraged him that earth has been warned, "**Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea! for the Devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time**" (Revelation 12).

Satan is Real

Most certainly his wrath will know no bounds when he feels the power of those fingers tighten about his neck, and hears the ominous clink as the chain is fastened about his limbs and he

writhes in helpless wrath and agony. Although Satan is a spirit yet he must have some sort of a body for the words speak of reality, the angel actually lays "**hold on the dragon**" and binds him.

Satan is no mere influence; he is a real and unrelenting enemy of mankind, but he cannot cope with omnipotence. It was in the serpent that he entered Eden. He is called "**old**" because for 6000 years his crooked, subtle and deceiving serpent-like nature has been pitted against the highest and best in mankind.

Why do the Godly Suffer?

We may wonder why GOD has thus permitted this evil personage to deceive so large a portion of earth's weak pilgrims, and why does He permit such a hard and self sacrificing life to be the lot of so many of His choicest saints?

The kingdom of Heaven has always suffered "**violence, and the violent take it by force**" (Matthew 11:12). Only those who are violently in earnest will travel a life of meekness and humility; only those whose hearts beat true will take such a yoke upon themselves. And this life is justly hard because at the end there is glory and dignity beyond the highest imagination of mortal mind.

Satan's imprisonment is to last one thousand years, during which millennium the saints are to rule the world in righteousness with their Lord. Six times in this brief passage we are given the exact length of time, and even then there are those who claim they cannot see it.

The dragon, or serpent, is also called the Devil and Satan. The word "**devil**" means slanderer and liar; and the word "**Satan**" means adversary or accuser, and it is in all of these characters that he is bound for one thousand years.

A Time Lock

"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" (vs. 3).

He is "**cast**" in and the lid of that foul pit is "**shut**" behind him. And lest he might in some way make his escape, a "**seal**" is placed upon the lid. CHRIST's tomb was sealed with a Roman seal, but it was snapped on the third day. Banks seal their vaults with a time lock and no man can open those doors until the time runs out. And so here, the massive doors are sealed with a time lock and that lock is set for one thousand years.

"Deceive the nations no more." What that will mean no mortal tongue can tell - one thousand years without a tempter. Long has sinful man laid all blame upon the devil; long has the human race laid claim to inherent righteousness. If only there were no devil, man could prove his claim and all would be well. "It shall be so," decrees their God, and Satan is put out of the way and for one thousand years there is no temptation from without.

"After that he must be loosed a little season." But will man prove his claim? Is he, after all, not

to blame for a world of sin? Let us see.

Long Life Restored

During the kingdom age, long life will be restored and men will live for centuries. A grandmother, not many miles from where I now sit, could boast of some seventy-five offspring: children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. If that can be in life, in its present form, what will it mean for man and wife to live together for six or eight centuries? When Satan will be loosed out of his prison, he will find the earth teeming with life, but it will be an untested humanity.

Satan is blamed for much that does not have its source within himself. **"For from within (not from without) out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within (not from without - in Satan) and defile the man"** (Mark 7:21-23).

Satan is a fallen creature, but so is man. Man's heart, like a keg of powder, needs but a match to set it off and Satan supplies that match. This does not mean that man's own evil heart would not express itself if Satan did not tempt. **"The heart is deceitful above all things"** (Jeremiah 17:9). **"Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed"** (James 1:14).

Satan's Activities

It was the devil who saw covetousness in the heart of Ananias and whispered, **"Keep back part of the price"** (Acts 5). It was the devil who **"entered into"** Judas and led him forth to the betrayal (John 13:27). It is Satan who whispers into the heart of husband or wife and tempts them into adultery through lack of self control (I Corinthians 7:5). It was Satan who enticed David to number Israel and bring death to seventy thousand men (I Chronicles 21:2).

And so it goes, for Satan is ever on the lookout for weakness in the human heart. Man can choose his own master. Either it is **"God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"** (Philippians 2:13); or it is Satan, **"the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience"** (Ephesians 2:2).

But for one thousand years men will be free from Satanic enticement, and after that the devil will be set free to test those who have been born during that time. But man's heart would turn this world into a cesspool of iniquity even without Satan's aid, were it not that just behind the scene will be countless **"kings and priests"** to shepherd and to rule them with a rod of iron.

Reigning Saints

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (vs. 4).

Here are two different but similar classes of people.

First; there are some already upon their thrones. These are probably the saints who were resurrected at the rapture.

Second; there are the souls of the tribulation martyrs who also live again. Both of these **"lived and reigned with CHRIST a thousand years."**

Both of these companies are in the first resurrection and those of the first resurrection, **"shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years"** (vs. 6).

The Resurrections

Scripture does not teach a general resurrection.

There is a **"first"** resurrection, and then **"the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished"** (vs. 5). All that are in the **"graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth."** But there are two resurrections; there is one **"unto the resurrection of life"** and the other **"unto the resurrection of damnation"** (John 5:28, 29). All of the righteous come forth in the first resurrection, which is called the **"resurrection of the just"** (Luke 14:14).

Although it is called **"first,"** it is not merely a single event. **"Every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming"** (I Corinthians 15:23).

We pick the first ripe apple from the tree. That is the first fruit. It is the pledge and pattern of bushels more to follow. Then after harvest, we gather a few gleanings, and last of all, there are the knotty and useless ones.

CHRIST was the first fruits; a pledge and a pattern of all that are to follow. The rapture is the harvest. At the rapture, the **"dead in Christ shall rise first; Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air"** (I Thessalonians 4:16-17). The Tribulation saints are the gleanings, while the second resurrection may be likened to the wormy and useless fruit.

Thus all of those who have part in the first resurrection are to rule with CHRIST during the thousand years.

Ruling the World

Satan is now the **"prince of this world"** (John 14:30) and with his countless demons, he rules behind the scenes. Our world today, in all its misgovernment, is Satan's mess and not GOD's. Neither is it the fault of the church, for the church is to witness of CHRIST and not to clean up the community.

During the Kingdom Age; Satan and his demons will be in the bottomless pit, and CHRIST and the saints will rule the world. Think of having a pure and holy saint as the invisible mayor of

Chicago.

"In the regeneration (kingdom age) when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye (the disciples) also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28).

Once it was the fate of the saints to be judged by an ungodly world. Once CHRIST stood before Herod, and Paul pleaded before Felix. But think of the future when such men as Pilate, Nero, and Napoleon, will stand for judgment before such royal powers as Paul and John and Peter.

New Conditions

What a change in our world this will be; no tempter to tempt to evil and just behind the scenes a holy saint to shepherd and rule with a rod of iron. This will effect buying and selling; no pure food laws, no check on weights and measures. All dens of iniquity will be cleansed. There will be no more gambling, nor modern dancing. No nudist societies nor theaters. There will be a cleanup of political rings; whisky rings and oath-bound society rings; and all other rings which hinder law and cripple honest industry.

No more robbing the public; no more profiteering; no more corrupting the press; no more drowning the man they can't buy off.

Think of a world where every liar, infidel, blasphemer, drunkard, whoremonger, thief, slanderer, cheater, murderer, oppressor of the poor, babe destroyer and peace disturber, will be instantly judged and put away. What a boon to this poor sin-sick world; what a bringing in of new life will the first resurrection be.

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power" (vs. 6).

There are those who teach salvation by grace through faith, but forget that a saving faith is a faith that produces a righteous life; in fact, **"faith without works is dead."** GOD demands a holy life and a walk that is worthy of His great and holy name. Those who have part in the first resurrection are **"blessed and holy,"** and on them the second death hath no power.

What fearful realities in the second death, but those in CHRIST have passed from death to life and shall not come into condemnation. What words are these; what source of peace and joy; and what born again saint but should wish to do His will.

The saints shall reign with CHRIST a thousand years.

This is not mere empty talk, nor are these empty titles; These are not mock rulers, nor lazy sitters on foggy clouds of ease, singing psalms and playing harps. They **"reign"** with CHRIST. They are co-rulers with Him. This speaks of exalted place and high position. It points to the glory and honor of priesthood and kingship. Certainly the hardships of the present are small indeed when we consider the dignity and glory of the future.

The Last Rebellion

"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" (vs. 7, 8).

When the time lock that seals the abyss has ticked off one thousand years, the lid again swings on its hinges and forth upon this earth there steps that arch enemy of GOD and man. Imagine Satan as he emerges from his dark prison, and blinks in the bright sunshine. What will he do first? How can he again deceive mankind? How can he best thwart the will of GOD in the lives of the human race?

Here is an earth that has enjoyed one thousand years of righteous rule and perfect peace. Is it possible to somewhere find a man in whose heart there lurks rebellion? Adam and Eve once enjoyed such perfect surroundings, but alas! they turned the truth into a lie and suffered the consequences. So again will men rebel and gather to fight against their Creator.

Deceived Again

"And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them" (vs. 9).

Just what form of deception Satan will use we are not informed. However, Satan has long been the unrelenting foe of every Jew, and now with the Jews as **"the head, and not the tail"** (Deuteronomy 28:13); in a time when **"strangers shall stand and feed your flocks"** and **"ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles"** (Isaiah 61). In a time when every blessing to the Gentiles must flow to them through the Jew, in such a time as this, it may not be difficult for Satan to present some such deception as this.

"This is fine; no war, no death, no sickness. This is a great world, but what I cannot understand is why you Gentiles permit the Jews to rule over you. Why don't you break their yoke and rid yourselves of their bondage. Proclaim your liberty and show yourselves like men. Follow me and I will free you from this humiliation and give you liberty without bondage."

At any rate, whatever Satan may say or do, he will be tremendously successful and will gather an army of uncounted millions to storm the holy city.

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (vs. 10).

There are those who would have us believe that sinners will be annihilated in the lake of fire, but the beast and the false prophet are still alive after one thousand years.

The Lake of Fire

Some would also teach that a few years of fearful torment in the Lake of Fire will suffice to repent the unbeliever and that all will finally be saved, but after one thousand years Satan is the same wicked devil, and no word of change is mentioned concerning the two who have occupied the Lake of Fire for the same period of time.

Others would have us believe that the Lake of Fire will somehow burn out and cease to be; but the words "**for ever and ever**," that are here applied to the final doom of the wicked is the same as is used in Hebrews, "**Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever**." If the throne of GOD is enduring, we dare not change the meaning to suit our fancy here.

Great White Throne

"I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them" (vs. 11).

This throne is "**great**" and "**white**" and sets somewhere outside the earth. It is white, because here is manifested the white heat of GOD's wrath. In chapter four we saw another throne. Thunders and lightnings were issuing from that throne, denoting judgment, but circling it all was a rainbow. At that throne was judgment with mercy. But around this great white throne there is no rainbow; this throne speaks of judgment without mercy, for mercy has been spurned.

Upon this throne there sits the terrible presence of the indescribable Deity. So terrible that even the Heaven and earth must flee and pass away. Little did the scribes and Pharisees know upon whom they vented their fierce hate when they opposed the Man of Galilee. Little did Caiaphas realize that the Man who stood before him was his own creator and would sometime be his judge.

The Judge is a Man

"The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son... And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man" (John 5:22 and 27).

If an American were to commit a crime in China, he would be tried by an American court, for he would receive more sympathy from his fellowmen. And so, to CHRIST is given authority to judge mankind "**because**" he is the Son of man.

One of the most marvelous truths I ever met up with, was John 1:3, "**All things were made by him (CHRIST); and without him was not anything made that was made.**" To think that He who lay in the crib of Bethlehem, had created the earth, and even the little donkey that later carried His mother into Egypt. To think that it was He Who had spoken the sun, the moon and the stars into existence - it was almost too much for me to believe. But true it is that He Who was born of a virgin will yet sit on a throne and judge the human race.

Three Heavens

"The earth and the heaven fled away."

Scripture mentions three heavens. One, the Heaven of the atmosphere where the birds fly; the second Heaven of stars, and the third which is the presence of GOD Himself. Here we no doubt have reference to the earth and the Heaven that immediately surrounds the earth.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (vs. 12).

One thousand years before, another company stood before another throne. That was the first resurrection where saints were judged according to their works and given their rewards. Those who stand before this throne have come up in the second resurrection. Resurrection is a living again and has reference to the body only. The soul and spirit do not die. **"The body without the spirit is dead"** (James 2:26) and at the resurrection the body and spirit are united again.

Here are the **"dead"** in contrast to Matthew twenty-five, where the living are judged. The living are judged before the thousand years to determine their position in the kingdom age. Here the dead are judged to determine their position for eternity in the Lake of Fire.

Standard of Judgment

Part in this judgment is reckoned not by earthly standards, for **"small and great"** alike stand here. There are degrees in hell as well as in Heaven. **"It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee,"** warned the judge as He upbraided self righteous Capernaum (Matthew 11).

Degrees of punishment are determined by light rejected. **"That servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes"** (Luke 12:47-48).

The Book of Works

Here are two sets of books. **"Books,"** plural, and **"book,"** singular. The dead are judged out of the **"books, according to their works."** Just what these books are, we are not informed. It may be the book of memory. Some think everything we say or do is written down in the pages of our mind, from which they will be brought forth for review at the judgment.

There may be a sense in which the words are recorded outside the mind also. A few years ago, we were informed that Edison, believing that every word we have ever spoken is still in existence somewhere in the form of vibration, was working on a machine to catch the very words of CHRIST. Whether this be true or not, there is no doubt but that our whole life will be brought before us in detail.

This is a judgment in great detail. **"Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment"** (Matthew 12:36). All of our words are written down;

even the ones that are lightly spoken - the idle ones. And not only the ones we speak, but even the words we did not speak, for GOD "**shall judge the secrets of men**" (Romans 2:16).

Our Life's Record

If we were in a level country and could see a train three miles away and could see the white steam issuing from the whistle, we could not hear the sound for some ten seconds, because it takes sound about that long to travel that distance. That is, we would be hearing what the engine did ten seconds ago.

It takes eight minutes for the light to reach us from the sun. That is, the light we now see is what the sun was giving off eight minutes ago, and if we could suddenly be transported to the sun we might look towards the earth and see what we were doing eight minutes ago, for it takes that long for light to travel that distance.

It takes light some fifty years to travel from the north star. Thus if we could suddenly be transferred to that blazing orb and look earthward, a man fifty years old might see his own birth and childhood. And so at the judgment the books will be opened and all our acts and words will be brought forth in their true light.

The Book of Life

The book of "**life**" will also be opened. When a babe is born, his name is registered upon the county birth records. And so the records of the new birth are kept in the book of life, and only the names of those who have truly accepted the Lord as their Saviour have their names recorded on its fair pages.

There are, however, thousands of church members who are not saved. Probably the saddest verse in all the Scriptures is in Matthew 7:22, "**Many shall say unto me (the Judge) in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name (been a preacher)? ...and in thy name done many wonderful works (been a deacon or church-member)?**" How sad to have been a member of some local church but not having been born again.

Righteous Judgment

There will be a time for parleying with the judge.

"Lord, I was a preacher." "Lord, **we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.**" But alas, to no avail, and they will be cast to their certain doom. And then will be a time of great sorrow indeed as the unsaved will look across to the other side and see what they have lost by their folly and neglect. "**There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth; when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out**" (Luke 13:28).

The Ocean's Dead

"**And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell (hades) delivered up the**

dead that were in them" (vs. 13). A body that has been drowned in the sea is absolutely out of existence as a body; for great fish will swallow and digest it and water currents will carry the material to the ends of the earth. However this is no problem to God, for let a man find his grave in the sea, yet all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and come forth (John 5:28).

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (vs. 14). Hades, the abode of the unrighteous dead, of course will be emptied of its occupants and they will all be cast into the lake of fire.

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the Lake of Fire" (vs. 15).

What a blessed privilege to know that our name is written on those pages so bright and fair. **"He that believeth on the Son HATH everlasting life"** (John 3:36).

Thank God for such a salvation.

~ end of chapter 20 ~

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