

The Last Stand of Satan

Revelation 20:1-3

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Doesn't it seem like evil is accelerating in our world today? Last week, a cybercriminal group claimed to steal sensitive information from the FBI, compromising data on tens of thousands of current and former agents. This week, we've heard allegations of an unspeakable assault that took place two years ago involving a Cornell college student. In Florida, four young children were left at home alone while their mother went on a cruise. Police found the children, including a two-month-old, huddling together in the bathroom.

In Ohio, a pastor who appeared on *American Idol* was convicted of murdering his wife. On Wednesday, in what appears to be an act of terrorism, a co-pilot stabbed the captain on a passenger plane headed to Israel and tried to crash the flight with 176 souls on board.

Sadly, that's just a sampling. Human trafficking, abortion, the persecution of Christians, violence, abuse, and exploitation continue to remind us that we live in a world where evil seems to be exploding everywhere. And that says nothing about the evil that dwells within our own hearts. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn famously wrote, "*The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through every human heart—and through all human hearts.*" We often pretend that evil people live far away from us. Jeremiah 17:9 makes it more personal: "***The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?***"

The problem with evil is not simply out there. It's also in here.

This leads to a question: *Will evil ever end?* We find that answer in Revelation 20. We've seen throughout Revelation that God is not indifferent to evil. He sees it, judges it, and will ultimately defeat it. Revelation 19 describes the return of the King and how the beast and false prophet will be thrown into the lake of fire. *Because Jesus is coming again as the conquering King, we must see Him as He truly is and surrender to His rule.*

Revelation 20 begins with God dealing directly with the devil, who is behind so much of the evil and deception in the world. Today, we'll lay the groundwork for the rest of the chapter by looking at verses 1-3 as we learn about the devil's defeat:

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.”

Here’s our main idea: *Evil has an expiration date because Satan will be seized, subdued, sealed, and sentenced by King Jesus.*

1. Satan will be seized. Have you ever wished you could just lock the door on evil and throw away the key? That’s essentially what happens in verse 1 and the first part of verse 2: ***“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan...”*** The word ***“then”*** helps us see chronological sequence and progression. John is showing us what happens next in the unfolding plan of God. Something similar is stated in Revelation 19:1: ***“After this...”*** Satan will be seized *after* the marriage supper of the Lamb, *after* the return of Christ, and *after* the beast and false prophet are thrown alive into the lake of fire.

This may be the same angel who had the key to the bottomless pit in chapter 9, but we can’t know for sure. Notice the angel comes ***“holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain.”*** The key represents access and authority over the abyss, and the great chain represents restraint, control, and confinement.

The term ***“bottomless pit”*** literally refers to ***“the pit of the abyss,”*** which is used seven times in Revelation and refers to an extremely deep prison-like place. Jude 6 says, ***“And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.”*** This place was so bad that the regular demons urged Jesus not to send them there in Luke 8:31: ***“And they begged Him not to command them to depart into the abyss.”***

Again, we see the sovereign hand of God. We know from Revelation 1:18 that Jesus has ***“the keys of Death and Hades.”*** Evil is not running loose beyond God’s sovereignty, and Satan is not God’s equal. The One who holds the keys of Death and Hades will one day permanently defeat every enemy and exterminate all evil while establishing His kingdom.

In verse 2 we read that the angel ***“seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan...”*** The word ***“seize”*** means, *“to grasp; to be dominant and have power over as one’s master.”* This angel is empowered by God to be the devil’s master. He is called by these same names in Revelation 12:9: ***“And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan...”*** These four names or titles describe the character and practices of the evil one.

- **He seeks to devour.** The ***“dragon”*** is mentioned more than a dozen times in Revelation. Like a dragon, he is terrifying, ferocious, dangerous, cruel, and vicious. He is not a cartoon character with horns and a pitchfork. Until Satan is put on lockdown, 1 Peter 5:8 warns us, ***“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”***
- **He seeks to deceive.** The ***“ancient serpent”*** appears in the beginning of Genesis to unleash his deceptive wiles on Eve. 2 Corinthians 11:3 says, ***“the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning.”*** Satan’s strategy has not changed. Our ancient enemy continues to twist God’s Word, question God’s goodness, minimize sin, exaggerate pleasure, and make rebellion look reasonable. Jesus called him ***“a liar and the father of lies”*** in John 8:44.
- **He seeks to defame.** The name ***“devil”*** means accuser and slanderer. Revelation 12:10 calls him ***“the accuser of our brothers...who accuses them day and night before our God.”*** Satan not only attacks us; he accuses us. He reminds us of our failures, magnifies our guilt, and whispers that we are beyond God’s grace.
- **He seeks to defeat.** The name ***“Satan”*** means, *“adversary, archenemy, and opponent.”* Satan, our adversary, hates us and constantly longs for our defeat, destruction, and death. In John 8:44, Jesus calls him ***“a murderer from the beginning.”***

The commentator Grant Osborne says, *“In this context the list of names might almost be official, as if the legal sentence is read to the condemned prisoner as he is being thrown into prison.”*

When we were in Kenya, our team went on a safari. We saw all sorts of animals like giraffes, elephants, ostriches, baboons, and zebras. We even had a pair of lions come right up to our vehicle and lay down. We all started talking excitedly until our guide quickly told us to be quiet, reminding us they are wild animals who could jump into our vehicle and have us for lunch. That got our attention.

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2. Satan will be subdued. Verse 2 continues: “...and bound him for a thousand years.” The word “**bound**” means, “to bind, tie, or wind.” I was helped by this insight: “*The picture is not of Satan being persuaded, negotiated with, or talked into taking a break. He is forcibly restrained. The devil who has spent human history deceiving, tempting, accusing, and opposing God is suddenly and completely subdued by divine authority.*” 2 Peter 2:4 says, “...**God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment.**”

The phrase “**a thousand years**” is used six times in the first seven verses of Revelation 20. That repeated reference is why this period is commonly called the Millennium, which in Latin means, “a thousand years.” There are three primary views of the Millennium, with some important nuances within each position.

- **Amillennialism** understands the “thousand years” symbolically rather than as a literal future thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. In this view, the Millennium describes the present church age, with Christ reigning spiritually from heaven. The final judgment and Christ’s return bring history to its conclusion.
- **Postmillennialism** understands the Millennium as a period of increasing gospel influence and righteousness on the earth, followed by Christ’s return and the final judgment. Various postmillennialists understand the nature and duration of this period differently.
- **Premillennialism** believes Revelation 20 describes a literal future reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years, following His second coming in Revelation 19, where He defeats His enemies. Satan is bound at the start of this period in verses 1-3, and Christ reigns with His saints after the bodily “first resurrection” according to verses 4-6.

Because faithful, Bible-believing Christians differ on how these passages fit together, we should be humble about our own view and charitable toward those who believe differently. We don’t need to make our brothers and sisters in Christ our enemies over an issue on which genuine Christians have disagreed throughout church history.

I believe the most natural reading is that John is describing a future, literal thousand-year reign of Christ on this earth. But regardless of where you land on every detail, one truth is unmistakable: Jesus Christ wins and Satan loses as we read in Revelation 11:15: ***“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.”*** The Millennium will be radically different from the world we know today because the great deceiver will be removed from the scene.

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3. Satan will be sealed. Satan will not only be bound, but he will also be assigned to the abyss for a long time according to the first part of verse 3: ***“And threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer...”*** Remarkably, Satan was cast out of *Heaven* in Revelation 12:9 and now he is cast out of earth and into the *abyss*. There are four movements in this verse:

- **Thrown.** The word ***“threw”*** means *“to carry and cast off.”* Matthew Henry writes, *“He cast him into the bottomless pit, cast him down with force, and with a just vengeance, to his own place and prison.”*
- **Shut.** This means the pit is closed tight.
- **Sealed.** This refers to an authoritative seal often affixed with a signet ring, preventing anyone from opening the door.
- **Restricted.** For a long period of time, Satan will not be able to ***“deceive the nations.”***

Isaiah 24:22 is a prophecy about this: ***“They will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit; they will be shut up in a prison, and after many days they will be punished.”*** One commentator writes: *“Satan’s activity, even his presence on earth, is completely curtailed and brought to a halt for the entire millennium. His deceptive work among the nations is stopped for a thousand years!”*

From all appearances today, it seems that Satan is winning the war between good and evil, but God will have the final word!

4. Satan will be sentenced. Revelation 20:3 says that Satan will be bound in the abyss ***“...until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.”*** During the Millennium, the Deceiver will be able to deceive no

one, and Satan's eventual release will be on God's schedule. Interestingly, he ***"must be released for a little while"*** and allowed to deceive the nations one final time. This indicates that Satan will not sneak out of the pit but will instead be released to fulfill God's will according to His sovereign plan. According to verse 10, Satan will then be cast into the lake of fire and sulfur, where he will be tormented ***"day and night forever and ever."***

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Action Steps

1. **Don't underestimate Satan.** He is real, powerful, sinister, dangerous, and deceptive. He's out to take you out so be ready for battle every day as Ephesians 6:11 says, ***"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."***
2. **Don't overestimate Satan.** He is not God's equal. He is a defeated foe as 1 John 3:8 says, ***"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."***
3. **Don't procrastinate about Christ.** Acts 26:18 urges people to ***"turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins."***

Communion

We began this morning with a hard question: *Will evil ever end?* We learned that the problem of evil is not only out there; it's also in here. The good news is that Satan will be seized, subdued, sealed, and sentenced by King Jesus because evil has an expiration date.

Before Jesus comes again as the conquering King, let's remember He came the first time as a suffering Servant who died in our place. Satan's defeat in Revelation 20 is the final chapter of a victory secured at Calvary. The cross answers every accusation of the Accuser. Romans 8:1 says, ***"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."***

We don't come to the Lord's table because we have defeated evil on our own, or because of our own righteousness. We come because Jesus has dealt with the evil in us and the evil around us.

If you're a born-again believer, we invite you to the Lord's Supper. 1 Corinthians 11:27-28 gives us a warning: ***"Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup."***

Take some time now to confess any sin and to repent of any evil you've allowed in your heart, in your head, or on your hands.

Time of Confession

Distribution of Elements

The elements will be passed down each row. Simply pull a cup straight out – there are actually two stacked together and then wait for everyone to be served.

Bread

Listen to the words Paul passed on to the church in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26:
"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'"

Cup

"In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

Japan Interview

1. What did you see God do?
2. What is one story or moment from the trip you'll never forget?
3. How did this trip impact or change you personally?