

# PASTOR'S BIBLE STUDY

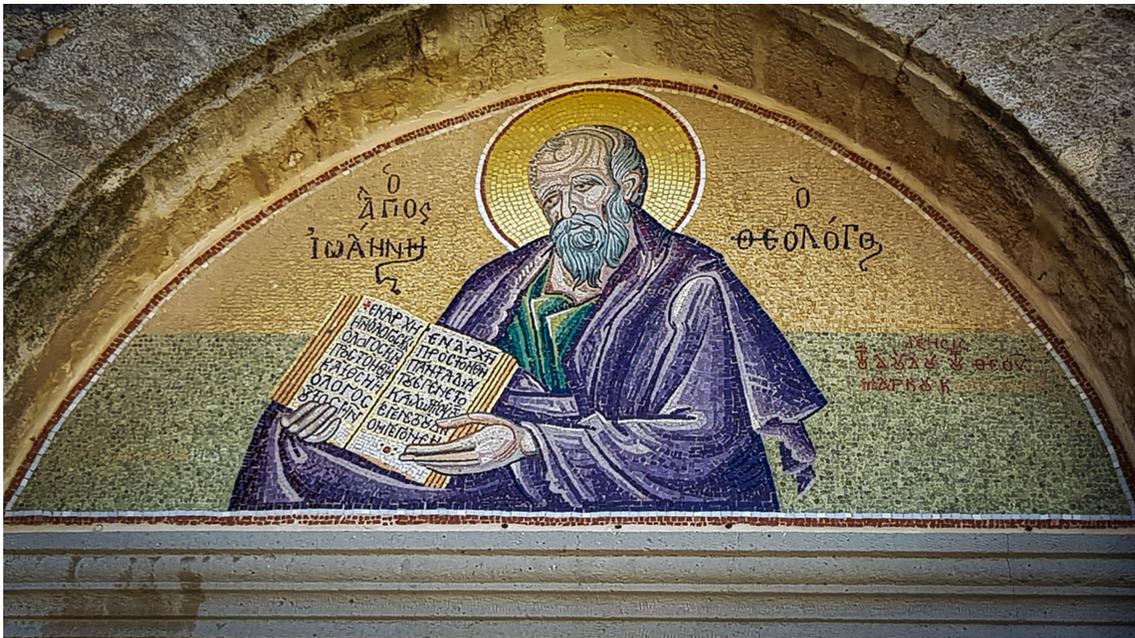
## *THE BOOK OF REVELATION*

27 APRIL 2021

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### THE DRAGON'S DEFEAT

REVELATION 20:1-15



## Intro

A 2009 Barna survey of self-professed American Christians showed that 67% strongly agreed, agreed somewhat, or were not sure that Satan “is not a living being but is a symbol of evil.” Why does this matter? If there’s no real, personal being Scripture calls “Satan” then you can’t have a real, personal assurance against his assaults!

Turning to Revelation 20, we see the chaos Satan seeks to bring into our individual lives and our lives together as congregations contrasted with the comfort of Jesus. Satan brings enmity; Jesus brings encouragement.

Unfortunately, this chapter has been side-tracked into debates on differing millennial views: *premillennialism*, *postmillennialism*, and *amillennialism*, which leads a lot of pious believers into **panmillennialism**—it’s all gonna pan out in the end! Sadly, one’s position on the millennium has become more important today than the gospel itself as there are large movements of churches like Calvary Chapel whose statement of faith says nothing about the issue that makes us Protestants—justification by faith alone—yet they ardently stake their claim to the premillennial, pre-tribulational secret rapture of the church. As you can already tell from these studies, I’m not all about views of the millennium. I’d heartily encourage you to go online to read and listen to the many resources by my friend and colleague at Christ Reformed Church in Anaheim, Dr. Kim Riddlebarger, on eschatology.

***Our Theme. Revelation 20 is the third and final vision of judgment on our enemies: the dragon, the two beasts, and Babylon. We’ve seen them conquered in reverse order: Babylon, beasts, and now dragon. The Holy Spirit’s message to us who are already in the age John calls “the tribulation” (1:9) is that Jesus Christ will conquer our ultimate enemy, Satan! Amen?***

### I. Chaining the Dragon (vv. 1–3)

I.I. We open with another **angel coming down from the spiritual realm of heaven** having **in his hand** two things: a **key...and a great chain** (20:1).

I.I.I. We have to get our minds out of thinking of Revelation 20 in terms of Nicolas Cage movies or *Left Behind* books and into thinking of how

this communicated spiritual reality and comfort to real persecuted Christians in the first century. This is a vision; it corresponds to reality and isn't to be taken in a crassly literalistic way. Satan is an angel and therefore a spiritual being.

- 1.2. He then takes the **great chain** and **bound** Satan with it (20:2) and **threw him into the pit, shut...and sealed** a lid.
  - 1.2.1. We've already seen that the "keys of Death and Hades" that Jesus holds (1:18) are symbolic of his authority to open and close eternal life to us (3:7-9).
  - 1.2.2. What is this chaining? The present binding and chaining of Satan by the presently reigning Lord Jesus Christ.
    - 1.2.2.1. Genesis 3:15: a seed of the woman would come to crush the head of the seed of the serpent
    - 1.2.2.2. Psalm 110:1: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool"
    - 1.2.2.3. Jesus is the fulfillment of these prophecies: "God has made him both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36); "For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:25); "through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14); and a final example: "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).
  - 1.2.3. When was Satan chained?
    - 1.2.3.1. Jesus himself said in Matthew 12 that as the Son of God he became incarnate that he might enter the strong man's house to bind him.
    - 1.2.3.2. On another occasion he sent out his disciples two by two to preach the kingdom in Luke 10. And they returned and reported back that they saw Satan fall light lightning from heaven.
    - 1.2.3.3. Jesus spoke of his crucifixion in John 12 as the time when he would be lifted up but Satan would be cast down.
    - 1.2.3.4. Note how verse 2 refers to the fourfold designation of Christ's great enemy as **the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan**. Where else have we read this? John is connecting our minds here with that vision back in

chapter 12:9 where he said that at the ascension of the resurrected Christ there was no more room for Satan in heaven and so he was cast down to earth.

1.2.4. How long is Satan chained?

1.2.4.1. **For a thousand years** (20:2). This is symbolic for a long period of time because as we've been seeing throughout, the entire book of Revelation is symbolic. Back in 1:1 we read that God gave Jesus this revelation who gave it to an angel who gave it to John so that we might be shown it. And the particular word used translated "to show" is the word used in John's Gospel for "sign." This book is a book of signs. That's why we read over and over again "And I saw." We've seen throughout symbolic numbers used again and again: seven spirits (1:4), although Scripture says there is only one Holy Spirit, twenty-four elders, four living creatures, seven seals, trumpets, and bowls, ten days imprisonment, 1,260 days, three and a half years, and most illuminating, in 5:11 the angels around the throne are ten thousand times ten thousand and a thousand times a thousand.

1.2.5. Why is Satan chained?

1.2.5.1. **So that he might not deceive the nations any longer** (20:3). Satan is presently restrained not entirely but especially from gathering the nations to make a full-on attack of the church. He is like a dog on a chain. He's limited, but within his limits he wreaks havoc. In the meantime, "the Word of God is not bound" [chained] (2 Tim. 2:9) but has been unleashed into the world through us. This should give us great confidence in witnessing.

2. **Reigning Over the Dragon (vv. 4–15)**

2.1. The scene changes. What so we see? **Thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed** (20:4).

2.1.1. According to what we saw in Revelation 4 (based on Daniel 7), where are these thrones? They're not here; they're in heaven.

- 2.1.2. Why is this important? John is writing to persecuted Christians who have lost loved ones from their community because they were spreading the Word. As the scene shifts, these martyrs are sitting on thrones in heaven *now*, reigning over the dragon: **Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands (20:4).**
- 2.1.3. To die for Christ is to live with Christ. To be judged by the world is to become a judge of the world. John then says something ironic: **They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years (v. 4).** The irony is that the physical death of martyrdom in this life is the beginning of heavenly life in the life to come. In fact, John even calls this a resurrection: **The rest of the dead** (“the rest” in 19:21 were the unbelieving enemies) **did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years (vv. 5–6).** A while back the world looked in horror as Egyptian Christians were beheaded on the shores of North Africa. I read that the video shows the men speaking aloud although their voices were muted in the video. What were their last words? “Jesus!” They’re now reigning in heaven. You will, too, should your life be taken for the Word of Jesus.
- 2.2. There’s an ultimate reigning over the dragon at the end. After the heavenly reign of a thousand years **Satan will be released from his prison (20:7) and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog (20:8).**
- 2.2.1. John uses the Old Testament enemy of Gog and Magog; but note that they’re no longer specific enemies but symbols of all the nations of unbelievers who stand against Christ and his church as **their number is like the sand of the sea (20:8).** That’s the particular deception Satan will accomplish.
- 2.2.2. It’s **to gather them for battle (20:8)**, or literally, he says *the battle*. John uses this word for battle several times throughout Revelation, but only in three places does he use it with the definite article: 16:14, 19:19, 20:8—all describe the same final battle at the Second Coming of Jesus from different vantage points over different enemies. A

- 2.2.3. Note there's not one location for the final battle. This army of the nations **marched up over the broad plain of the earth** (20:9). "But I thought the last battle would be fought at Armageddon, which is the Valley of Megiddo in the Old Testament?" Go back and listen to the study on chapter 16. This last and great battle will be fought at Armageddon, Mount Megiddo. There is no Mount Megiddo. It's symbolic.
- 2.2.4. When Satan's armies **surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them** (20:9) and therefore **the devil, like the beast and the false prophet, was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur to be tormented day and night forever and ever** (20:10).
- 2.3. History ends with the dread of final judgment for all of the dragon's followers before **a great white throne and him who was seated on it** (v. 11 cf. chs. 4–5). **All the dead whether great or small will stand[...] before that throne to be judged according to what they had done** (v. 12) and to be thrown into the lake of fire (v. 15).

Conclusion:

Satan is real. His anger and assaults of the church are real.

But because we have a conquering King, we're confident.

While Satan is chained, the Word of God isn't. As we come in confidence to the house of the Lord to hear the Lord's Word, let's go out confidently back into the world to speak this Word and to expect this Word to give new life to sinners of all colors. Amen.