

DISCOVERIES

By Mark Finley

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Evil in Chains — When the Great Controversy Between Good and Evil Ends

We've heard the word "millennium" so much this past year, I'm sure it's in all our vocabularies. As you know, just as 10 years is a DECADE and 100 years is a CENTURY, 1000 years is a MILLENNIUM—coming as it does from two Latin words: *mille* meaning "thousand" and *annus* meaning "year." We're all tired of hearing about the Y2K crisis that never happened. And by this time we're pretty well accustomed to writing dates correctly with the year 2000. But what about the BIBLE millennium? What does the Book of Revelation teach about that? Actually, the specific word *millennium* appears not at all in the Bible, but the idea of a special thousand-year period does. In fact, the expression a "thousand years" appears *six times*—once in each verse from **Revelation 20:2 to 7**. It's an important concept, for the Millennium is, in a sense, GOD'S TIMETABLE OF FINAL EVENTS—it reveals *the schedule God plans to use* when He brings down the curtain on the drama of this world's history.

God says in **1 Corinthians 14:40**, "Let all things be done decently and in order." And the Lord, being a God of order, has everything organized in a beautiful way. For instance, any study of the future must account for FOUR GROUPS of people: the righteous living when Christ comes, and the wicked living. And the righteous already dead, and the wicked dead. The Bible Millennium neatly accounts for all four groups. Now let's consider events under three headings: Events *before*, *during*, and *after* the Millennium.

A. — Events BEFORE the Millennium

Event #1 - The Mark of the Beast Is Given

Revelation 13:16-17 — The Antichrist Beast enforces his Mark with coercive threats.

Revelation 14:9-10 — But God warns us against taking it.

Event #2 - Our Probation Closes

Revelation 22:11-12 — Jesus accepts each one's decision as final and says He'll return quickly.

Event #3 - The Seven Last Plagues Fall

Revelation 15:1 & 8 — Seven angels pour out the wrath of God.

Revelation 16:1-17 — The Seven Last Plagues punish those who have the Mark of the Beast.

Event #4 - The Second Coming of Christ Is Spectacular

Matthew 24:30-31 — Christ returns "with power and great glory" to gather His faithful people.

Matthew 25:31 — When comes in His glory, all the holy angels accompany Him.

Revelation 1:7 — As Christ gathers His redeemed in the Rapture, "every eye shall see Him."

Event #5 - The RIGHTEOUS DEAD Are Resurrected

1 Thessalonians 4:16 — The DEAD believers in Christ rise "first"—before the living faithful.

Revelation 20:6 — "The FIRST resurrection" is for those "blessed and holy," who are "with Him [Christ] a thousand years." The word *first* implies a *second*, and there ARE two resurrections, 1000 years apart.

John 5:28-29 — "The resurrection of *life*" is opposed to "the resurrection of *damnation*," 1000 years later.

Event #6 - The RIGHTEOUS LIVING Are Caught Up

1 Thessalonians 4:17 — The living saints are then caught up "to meet the Lord in the air."

Event #7 - The WICKED LIVING When Christ Comes Are Struck Dead

2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 — Christ will take "vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not."

2 Thessalonians 2:8 — Christ will "destroy [the wicked with the brightness of His Coming."

Isaiah 13:9—The Lord will lay the land desolate and destroy the sinners out of it.

Isaiah 66:15-16—“Behold, . . . the slain of the Lord shall be many.”

B. — Events *DURING* the Millennium

Event #8 - On EARTH: Satan Is “Bound” with No One Left to Tempt

Revelation 20:1-3 & 7—Satan is bound with “a *great chain*” and cast into “*the bottomless pit* . . . till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be *released* a little while.”

Are (1) the “great chain” which binds Satan and (2) “the bottomless pit” which forms his “prison” LITERAL? The Devil is real and literal enough. Jesus Himself said: “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” **Luke 10:18**. But the angel Lucifer, who made himself into the Devil called Satan, is a *supernatural being*. As Paul put it: “We wrestle **not** against **flesh and blood**, but against principalities, against powers, against **spiritual wickedness** in high places.” **Ephesians 6:12**.

Simple reason tells us that no actual, literal “chain” or “pit” or “prison” could secure a supernatural being. More important, sacred Scripture tells us the same thing. One day after sailing across the Sea of Galilee: “They [Jesus and His disciples] came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and **no man could bind him, no, not with CHAINS: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been PLUCKED ASUNDER by him, and the fetters BROKEN IN PIECES.**” **Mark 5:1-9**.

Ask yourself, if a devil-possessed *man* could easily break apart a chain with superhuman strength, is it likely that the prince of devils himself could be bound with one? So *what kind of “chain” is it* that God uses to bind Satan? It’s a **chain of CIRCUMSTANCES** which binds the Devil more securely than any literal chain ever forged. Note the circumstances in which Satan finds himself at this time: In the first place, all the *righteous*—who were unwilling to listen to him anyway—have been taken to heaven. And all the *wicked* have been struck dead. Thus **the entire earth is depopulated** with NO ONE LEFT for Satan to tempt! Old Testament prophets foresaw this unique situation:

Jeremiah 25:33—The slain wicked “shall not be LAMENTED or GATHERED or BURIED”—for there are no survivors around to do any of these things!

Isaiah 26:21—When the Lord returns, “the earth . . . shall no more cover her slain.”

Isaiah 24:1, 3, 22—“The Lord makes the earth EMPTY. . . .The land shall be utterly EMPTIED.”

How very effective this **chain of circumstances** is! Satan is securely bound—“chained” by circumstances beyond his control. But what is “the bottomless pit”? The Greek word translated “bottomless pit” is *abussos* from which we get our English word *abyss*. Modern Bible versions like the Amplified Bible, NASB, NEB, NIV, TEV, and others translate “bottomless pit” in **Revelation 20:1** as “abyss.” *Abussos* is **exactly the same word** the Greek translation of the Old Testament uses in **Genesis 1:2**, where it says “the earth was **without form, and void.**” The prophet Jeremiah directed divine light on this question when, centuries ago, he looked down the corridor of time with the eye of Inspiration and testified:

Jeremiah 4:23-27—The earth is desolate—**without form and void**—with NO human inhabitant!

What period of history was Jeremiah seeing when he wrote, “Lo, there was NO MAN”? We might think it was at the start of Creation Week, because (1) “there was no man” *before* God formed Adam, the first man, and because (2) Jeremiah said “the earth . . . was without form, and void” which was true at that time.

But although those two clues fit that time period, we note that God placed a third clue in this passage which does *not* fit: Jeremiah says he saw “all the **CITIES** . . . broken down.” This vision couldn’t possibly be of the beginning of Creation Week, for man didn’t build cities before he was even created!

The only other time in human history when prophecy could describe the earth as having “no man” is during the Millennium while the earth is depopulated of all living people—“empty,” as we read before. At that time “all the cities” WILL be “broken down,” completely leveled from the devastation of the final one of the Seven Last Plagues which brings the most terrific **earthquake** ever and pulverizing **hail**.

Event #9 - In HEAVEN: The Saints Assist in the Judgment

Revelation 20:4—The redeemed sat on thrones, “and judgment was committed to them.”

Luke 22:30—Jesus desires “That ye may . . . sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

1 Corinthians 6:2-3—The saints shall judge the world and angels—the angels who fell with Lucifer. Even human legal proceedings don’t dispose of a case in a *flash*. The whole process has **several stages**:

- First, there’s the *investigation* of all pertinent facts we call a TRIAL.
- Second, there’s the rendering of a *decision* we call a VERDICT.
- Next there’s often an *assessment* of the verdict we call a JUDICIAL REVIEW.
- Finally there is a *carrying out* of the verdict we call the EXECUTION of the sentence.

The same process is seen in mankind's Final Judgment. The first two steps take place in heaven before Jesus returns (**Daniel 7:9-10**), for *Step One*, the investigation or "trial," must precede *Step Two* when Christ announces His "verdict" that each morally filthy or holy person stay that way (**Revelation 22:11**). And *Step Four*, the "execution" of the wicked's final death sentence, will take place *after* the thousand years are finished.

But *Step Three* is where the redeemed saints, in heaven, are granted the privilege of conducting a "judicial review" of the cases of the wicked who lie dead on earth. God knows that because some people are not saved, they'll be *missed* by the saints—yet He wants **no heavy hearts in heaven**. So God will allow us to ask any questions about His decision as to why some are not saved in heaven, such as:

- "How come Aunt Martha—and Grandfather!—aren't here? They were such good people."
- "Yes, and how about Pastor Jones and Father Brown? God *made a mistake* if they're lost!"

Then an angel will lead the inquirers to heaven's Record Books, now lying open to examination, and sadly reveal the unforgiven sins—sins not blotted out, unknown to the world, unknown even to close friends and loved ones. God is too wise to allow even a trace of a doubt to linger in anyone's mind about His justice. Though the wicked from all ages suffered the first death common to all men, God will not destroy them by the second death in the Lake of Fire until this review of His judgment is completed. In other words, God makes sure that Event #14 will not take place until Event #9 has been thoroughly completed.

C. — Events *AFTER* the Millennium

Event #10 - The Wicked Are Resurrected, So Satan Is Loosed

Revelation 20:3, 5a, & 7 — Those "blessed and holy" had part in the first resurrection. "But the *rest* of the dead [the wicked] lived not again until the thousand years were finished. . . . And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be *loosed* out of his prison"—for once again he has people to tempt!

Event #11 - The Holy City Descends from God Out of Heaven

Revelation 21:2 & 10 — The New Jerusalem, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, descends.

Event #12 - The Wicked Surround God's Holy City

Revelation 20:7-9 — With the wicked alive again, Satan is loosed out of his prison and goes out to deceive them, to gather them to battle against the beloved city.

Event #13 - The Wicked Are Judged Before God's "Great White Throne"

Revelation 20:11-13 — Before the great white throne, "the books were opened" to judge the lost.

Romans 14:10-12 — Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess and give account to God.

Event #14 - The Wicked Are Destroyed by Fire

Revelation 20:9, 14-15 — When the wicked surround the holy city to attack it, FIRE comes down from God out of heaven and DEVOURS them. This lake of fire is the SECOND death.

Revelation 21:8 — The wicked of every description have their part in this lake of fire.

Event #15 - The Earth Is Cleansed by Fire and Made New

2 Peter 3:10-13 — "The elements shall MELT with fervent heat. . . . All these things shall be DISSOLVED."

Revelation 21:1 & 5 — But "He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new."

Psalms 37:11 & Matthew 5:5 — The blessed redeemed "shall inherit the earth," the earth made new.

Isaiah 65:17, 21-25 — The redeemed will build houses, plant vineyards, and enjoy the New Earth.

Isaiah 66:22-23 — On the glorious New Earth, we'll come to worship God from one Sabbath to another.

Quick Quiz

Our heavenly Father has *so much* He longs to teach us! Think of each seminar session as one in a series of steps leading upward—a series of “lessons from heaven.” May we learn our lessons well, so we in turn can teach others. God’s Word, the Bible—our Textbook for this seminar—offers **Learning Unlimited!**

#16 - Revelation’s Thousand Years of Peace

1. The Millennium is *bounded on each end* by a _____ of the dead, *first* of the _____ people, and *then*—a thousand years later—of the _____ people.

To check your answer, see Revelation 20:4-6 and 1 Corinthians 15:22-23.

2. Where did Jesus promise to *take* His faithful followers when He returns? _____

To check your answer, see John 14:1-3.

3. T The Bible makes clear that the redeemed saints will somehow participate in God’s
F Judgment process.

To check your answer, see Revelation 20:4, Luke 22:30, 1 Corinthians 6:2-3.

4. Where will the WICKED remain during this thousand-year period? _____

To check your answer, see Jeremiah 25:33.

5. What condition will the EARTH be in during the thousand years? _____

To check your answer, see Jeremiah 4:23-27.

6. During the thousand years of the Millennium, Satan will be “bound” by a chain which is:

- A. A figurative “chain of circumstances.”
B. A literal, actual chain of material links.

To check your answer, see Mark 5:1-4.

7. When the WICKED are raised to *life* at the end of the thousand years, Satan is effectively _____, for he again will have *subjects* to tempt.

To check your answer, see Revelation 20:3 & 7.

A Thought for Today

Revelation 20:4

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. 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.