For What Purpose Is Satan Bound?

Revelation 20:1–3

Today we come to the Revelation's statement on the Millennium. You might be a little surprised: *I didn't see the word "Millennium."* And you would be right. But did you notice the phrases "bound him for a *thousand years*" and "till the *thousand years* were finished"? The word *millennium* comes from the Latin *mille*, meaning *thousand*, and *annus*, meaning *year*. In Latin, *mille anni* means *thousand years*. It comes into English as *millennium*.

Note, then, in our text, that in this brief paragraph of 91 words there are *two* references to the *millennium*. Here is the central biblical passage on the millennium.

It is also an illuminating passage on Satan. It gathers together four terms and identifies them with God's archenemy. Here is the serpent that tempted Eve in the Garden. He is Satan (from the Hebrew שָׂטָן, *accuser*, *adversary*), also "the Devil" (from the Greek διάβολος, *slanderer*; compare English *diabolical*).

Compare Isaiah 27:1, "In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan [לִוְיָתָן] the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent [נָחָשׁ]; and he shall slay the dragon [תַּנִּין; NKJV: *reptile*] that is in the sea."

In John 8:44 Jesus tells the Jews in the temple treasury, "Ye are of your father the devil [διάβολος], and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer [ἀνθρωποκτόνος *someone who mortally strikes a man*] from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

So here are four terms: "dragon," "serpent," "devil," "Satan," identifying God's archenemy. He hates God and would kill him if that were possible. But since that is impossible, he transfers his hatred to God's elect, on whom the Lord has set his love since before the foundation of the world. He successfully tempted Adam and Eve in the garden. He tempted our Savior in the wilderness.

Peter warns: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the *devil*, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).

This is not the first time we have encountered these four terms in the Revelation. Back in Revelation 12:9 we were told that ". . . the great dragon [δράκων] was cast out, that serpent [ὄφις] of old, called the Devil [Διάβολος] and Satan [Σατανᾶς], who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

When did this take place?

As Chilton explains: "He fell, definitively, during the ministry of Christ, culminating in the atonement, the resurrection, and the ascension of the Lord to His heavenly throne." When Christ came, "He went on the offensive, entering history

to do battle with the Dragon, and immediately the Dragon counterattacked, fighting back with all his might, wreaking as much havoc as possible. . . . The message of the Gospels is that in the earthly ministry of Christ and His disciples, Satan lost his place of power and fell down to the earth."[1]

Luke records: "Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.' And He said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:17–19).

Christ "saw" Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Note the past tense: "saw" (imperfect tense: *was seeing*). Jesus saw Satan fall from heaven in real time.

Before Christ's first coming, Satan apparently had liberty to go around doing his diabolical work. In Job 1 we read: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan [שָׂטָן] also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, 'From where do you come?' So Satan answered the LORD and said, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it'" (Job 1:6–7).

But now, with the first coming of Christ, Satan, the "accuser of our brethren," is no longer free to go to heaven and make accusations against God's people (Rev. 12:10).

Satan is cast out of heaven as a consequence of our Lord's ministry on earth. The Lord went around casting out demons, healing the demon-possessed. Read through the Gospels; you will see many instances of this kind.

Chilton explains: "Satan, the evil star that fell from heaven, was briefly given the key to the Abyss (9:1); but Christ descended from heaven, having as His lawful possession 'the keys of death and of Hades' (1:18)."

Now we come to our text this afternoon.

"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand" (Rev. 20:1). Notice the words "Then I *saw*." Here, the apostle John, writing, I am convinced, in the sixth decade of the first century, sees a vision of the imminent casting of Satan into hell.

Our text continues: "He laid hold of the *dragon*, that *serpent* of old, who is the *Devil* and *Satan*, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the *bottomless pit*, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while."

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[1] David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 316

Notice that Satan is cast into the "bottomless pit" (a pregnant description of hell). Sinners will be continually falling, deeper and deeper into the flames, for all eternity. It will be terrifying!

We know from Matthew 25:41 that the fires of hell were prepared for the devil and his angels. Christ, speaking of that future day when he will judge the eternal destiny of all men and angels, says: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into *everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*."

So our text clearly says that Satan was cast into the bottomless pit, and shut up, and sealed. This sealing was at the beginning of the thousand years of the millennium.

For what purpose is Satan bound? Do not miss this: Satan is bound during the thousand-year millennium "so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished."

Satan is not incapacitated. He is still the great deceiver. But his freedom is curtailed. He is, as it were, on a chain, like a junkyard dog. He can bark viciously and scare and intimidate people, but his power to deceive the nations (τὰ ἔθνη, the ethnic groups of the world—the Gentiles) is broken. During the present age the Gentiles are coming to Christ. There are reports of large numbers of conversions, of house churches, in places where the church is illegal, in China and other places around the world.

Isaiah 9:2, "*The people that walked in darkness* have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."

This is one of the blessings of Christ's first advent. Christ came with power to defeat Satan.

Eschatology is that branch of theology concerned with the last things (ἔσχατος, *last*).

So what is the eschatology of the book of Revelation?

What was the position of the historic, orthodox church on the question of the Millennium?

To answer that question, one must consider another:

When did (or will) Christ's Kingdom begin?

Consider a very important statement in the apostle Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost:

"Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ *to sit on his throne*, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise

of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. 'For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"' Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that *God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ*" (Acts 20:30–36).

Did you catch that? Why did the Lord raise Christ from the dead? *To sit on his throne!* According to the apostle Peter, Christ's mediatorial kingdom—his thousand-year kingdom, as it were—began with the resurrection of Christ.

Peter had been quoting Psalm 16:8–11.

Now, the crucified, risen Christ, upon his resurrection, is declared to be Lord of all things in heaven and earth. "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, *both Lord and Christ*."

In order to be saved you need to confess that "Jesus Christ is Lord": "That every tongue should confess that *Jesus Christ is Lord*, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:11).

In its biblical context, "that Jesus Christ is Lord" means that Jesus Christ is *Yahweh*, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. It also means: "He's the boss!" Whatever he says to do, we must do; whatever he says *not* to do, we must *not* do; whatever he says to believe, that we must believe.

If Jesus Christ is Lord, then those who follow him don't get to pick and choose which of his teachings and claims to believe and which to reject. If that were so, then *man* is Lord—the exact opposite of "Jesus Christ is Lord."

A conservative Roman Catholic website laments the fact that Pope Leo XIV, in his encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, publicly rejects the reign of Christ the King over states and nations. "He affirms that civil society possesses 'autonomy' from religion, including in its 'values' and 'laws.'"[2]

In other words, according to the current Pope, Leo XIV, Jesus Christ is *not* King over the nations! Nations are free to pass any laws that they want—no matter if they violate God's eternal moral law!

Try to sell that to the Old Testament prophets! They preached against the nations' violations of God's unchanging moral law. Their preaching was in error if God allows the nations to pass whatever laws they want, to follow whatever moral code—or lack thereof—they want.

Is this not a rejection of Jesus' words: "All authority [KJV: *all power*] has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18)?

Sorry, Pope Leo! Scripture does not give us the option of disagreeing with the Lord Jesus! To do so is to fight against the King of kings, the supreme Judge before whom every knee shall bow.

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[2] https://www.lifesitenews.com/analysis/leo-xiv-openly-rejects-the-reign-of-christ-the-king-over-states-and-nations/ accessed 10-24-26

We still need to answer the question, *When did (or will) Christ's Kingdom begin?*

Chilton observes that "From the Day of Pentecost onward, orthodox Christians have recognized that Christ's reign began at His Resurrection/Ascension and continues until all things have been thoroughly subdued under His feet, as St. Peter clearly declared (Acts 2:30–36). 'The Millennium,' in these terms, *is simply the Kingdom of Christ*. It was inaugurated at Christ's First Advent, has been in existence for almost two thousand years, and will go on until Christ's Second Advent at the Last Day. In 'millennial' terminology, this means that the return of Christ and the resurrection of all men will take place *after* 'the Millennium.' In this objective sense, therefore, *orthodox Christianity has always been postmillennialist*. That is to say, regardless of how 'the Millennium' has been conceived (whether in a heavenly or an earthly sense)—i.e., regardless of the technical exegesis of certain points in Revelation 20—orthodox Christians have always confessed that Jesus Christ will return *after* ('post') the period designated as 'the thousand years' has ended. In this sense, all 'amillennialists' are also 'postmillennialists.'"[3] What that means is that the millennium has already begun with the resurrection of Christ.

In our day, many Christians, particularly those in independent fundamental Baptist and charismatic churches, are taught what is known as *premillennialism*, that is, that Christ's second coming must take place *before* he establishes his millennial Kingdom. In premillennial theology, Christ is *not* reigning now. His kingdom has not begun. It is future only. It will not begin until he returns bodily and sits on a physical throne in Jerusalem, Israel. His kingdom will not begin until he returns for his Second Coming.

In amillennial and postmillennial theology, Christ's kingdom has already begun. His second coming will take place *after* the millennium. Amillenniallists believe that Christ reigns in heaven only. Postmillennialists likewise acknowledge that Christ presently reigns in heaven, but that his heavenly reign will ultimately transform the earth. "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14).

The *church* has never formally declared that we must wait for a future time when Christ will be crowned Lord. He reigns already! He is *already* Lord of All! The church sings,

"All hail the power of Jesus' name! Let angels prostrate fall; bring for the royal diadem, and crown him Lord of all."[4] Amen!

Yes, Jesus Christ is Lord of all! That is standard Christian theology.

The Apostles' Creed states: "I believe in Jesus Christ . . . our Lord. . . . He was crucified, dead, and buried . . . the third day he rose again from the dead; he

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[3] David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 494, emphasis added

[4] https://www.trinitypsalterhymnal.org/hymns/all-hail-the-power-of-jesus-name-2/

ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he shall come to judge the living and the dead."[5]

Sitting at the right hand of God the Father is his present reign at the right hand of God. He is reigning *now*, until all his enemies become a footstool for his feet. "For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool' (Mark 12:36).

In other words, Jesus is *Lord of All—now!*

The hymn we sang this morning, "Now Thank We All Our God"—one that we often enjoy singing around Thanksgiving Day—says this in its third stanza:

"All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given, the Son, and him who *reigns* with them in highest heaven—the one eternal God, whom earth and heav'n adore; for thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore." [The one who reigns with the Father and the Son in highest heaven is the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the holy Trinity. "Reigns" *now*, not "shall begin to reign" at some future time.]

Jesus Christ is Lord! He is God Almighty, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, sitting at the Father's right hand. As his church gathers for worship, the saints pray that God will fully and perfectly accomplish all his holy will. We pray the Lord's Prayer:

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*." Here, the church prays for Christ's kingdom to come in all its fulness and victory. The Kingdom has already come *definitively* with Christ's resurrection, ascension and present session (sitting) at the right hand of the Father. We are assured of victory on the basis of Christ's constant, perfect intercession. The church militant is presently "fighting the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12). All faithful Christians are involved in that fight!

Just as in the waning days of World War II, victory has been achieved. The enemy has surrendered.

World War II officially ended with Japan's formal surrender in September, 1945. Emperor Hirohito announced Japan's intention to surrender, effective immediately. On September 2, 1945, the formal surrender ceremony took place aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay. U.S. General Douglas MacArthur accepted Japan's surrender, and the war was over. But there were fighting units that did not get the message, and fighting continued on certain remote Pacific islands.

What we are seeing presently is in some ways a mopping-up operation. There are battles still to be fought. But make no mistake, victory is assured!

In a few moments we are going to sing hymn 212, a prayer by the great Reformer Martin Luther:

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[5] *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*, 851

"Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word; *curb those who by deceit or sword would wrest the kingdom from your Son and bring to naught all he has done*.

"Lord Jesus Christ, your power make known, for you are Lord of lords alone; *defend your holy church*, that we may sing your praise triumphantly.

"O Comforter of priceless worth, send peace and unity on earth; support us in our final strife, and lead us out of death to life."[6]

May God grant us grace to receive the gospel, the good news of Christ sacrificial death for the sins of mankind. May he grant us his perfect righteousness, and may he give us a strong faith in his power to bring all things under the dominion of our Lord Jesus Christ. May we never waiver as we fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life. Amen!

[6] https://www.trinitypsalterhymnal.org/hymns/lord-keep-us-steadfast-in-your-word/