

Fundamentals of Our Faith from the Beginning

Frameworks and the Future

Revelation 20:1-10

1. Basic positions:

- a. Revelation 20 follows chapter 19 chronologically and describes the 1,000-year millennial reign of Christ on earth followed by a short rebellion, (D - the 2nd coming), and final judgment.
- b. Revelation 20 is a recapitulation of the theme of Christ's victory and describes the binding of Satan during the church age followed by a short rebellion, the 2nd coming, and final judgment.

2. Background considerations:

- a. Revelation is apocalyptic literature filled with visions and images and metaphors and symbols and is meant to be read as such and not as an historical record (whether as past or future "history").¹
- b. There is a purpose for 1st century readers beyond knowledge of events to come.
- c. Even if the visions are recorded in the order in which John received them, this does not mean that the events or matters they portray are necessarily chronologically ordered.
- d. Numbers are a prevalent feature and are symbolic²:
 - i. The number seven occurs 54 times: there are seven churches, seven lampstands, seven spirits, seven stars, seven angels, seven horns; the Lamb has seven eyes, etc., etc.
 - ii. Twelve is also frequent: 12 gates, 12 angels at the gates, 12 names of the 12 tribes, 12 precious stones, 12 apostles, etc.
 - iii. 10 is the number of wholeness or completion and 1000 is its superlative: 1,000 years in Revelation 20 occurs six times. 1,000 is representative of superlative completeness: Psalm 50:10 "cattle on a thousand hills;" 84:10 "a day in Your court is better than a thousand outside;" Isaiah 7:23 "every place where there used to be a thousand vines, valued at a thousand shekels of silver;" 30:17 "1,000 will flee at the threat of one man;" 2 Peter 3:8 "one day is like 1,000 years." [Compare 10 days of 2:10 with the 1,000 years in chap. 20].
 - iv. 144,000 is 12 times 12 thousands (a superlative completeness of tribes/God's people).
- e. Revelation draws heavily on the Old Testament, especially Daniel and Ezekiel.
- f. We must consider three "levels of interpretation:" 1. Visionary 2. Referential/historical 3. Symbolic

3. Theme and structure:

- a. The theme of Revelation is the victory of Christ and His Church over every enemy.
 - i. 1-11 depicts victory over all earthly forces.
 - ii. 12-22 depicts victory over the five enemies of Christ: the dragon, the beast from the sea, the beast from the earth, Babylon, and those who receive the mark of the beast.
 - iii. 20 describes victory over the last of the five, Satan the dragon.
- b. "The book of Revelation consists of seven sections. They are parallel and each spans the entire new dispensation, from the first to the second coming of Christ."³ (cf. Daniel 2 with 7)

An Example of Parallelism: Chapters 8-11 compared with chapters 15-16

Trumpets Chapters 8-9	Bowls Chapters 15-16
1 st "hail...thrown to the earth"	1 st "poured out...on the earth"
2 nd "thrown into the sea"	2 nd "poured his bowl into the sea"
3 rd "fell on a third of the rivers"	3 rd "poured his bowl into the rivers"
4 th "a third of the sun"	4 th "poured out his bowl on the sun"
5 th "the pit of the abyss...air darkened"	5 th "throne of the beast...kingdom darkened"
6 th "...bound at the great river Euphrates"	6 th "poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates"

¹ This does not mean that there is not history in the book but that the book is not written as an historical record.

² Saying they are symbolic does not mean that they never relate to historical realities. There were seven historical churches, but there were many more than seven. The number seven is used to communicate something beyond a mere historical reality.

³ William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, p. 28.

4. The text:

- a. Is there reason to believe chapter 20 is recapitulation?

Chapter 12	Chapter 20
vs. 7 angels in heaven	vs. 1 angels in heaven
vs.7 war with the dragon	v. 2 laid hold of the dragon
vs. 9 Satan cast to the earth	v. 3 Satan cast into the abyss
vs.9 "dragon, ancient serpent, devil, Satan."	vs.9 "dragon, ancient serpent, devil, Satan."
vs. 12 Satan's time is short	vs. 3 Satan's time is short
vs. 10 a kingdom results.	vs. 4 a kingdom results.
vs. 11 overcame by word of testimony	vs. 4 testimony of Jesus and...word of God

- b. Vs. 1 introduces a vision.

- i. "Then I saw..."—the time marker "then" refers to when John saw the vision not necessarily when the vision occurs. He does not say, "then an angel came down" (cf. 12:5-6).
- ii. The keys and chain are metaphorical and not literal since Satan is not a physical being.

- c. Vs. 2-3 describe what John saw the angel do.

- i. The dragon, the serpent of old is "the devil and Satan."
- ii. The angel bound him for 1,000 years (cf. Mark 3:27; Revelation 12:9).
- iii. The angel *threw* him into the abyss (cf. 12:13).
- iv. This work prevents him from "deceiving the nations (τὰ ἔθνη, *ta ethne*).
- v. This lasts through the thousand years at which time he will be released for a short time.

What and when is this binding of Satan?

- What is the significance of this vision for John's readers? What were their circumstances?
 - Jewish character of pre-Christian world—the *nations* (τὰ ἔθνη) were deceived (Eph. 2:11-12).
 - The immorality and corruption of Roman society—heavy persecution.
- What is the Scriptural background of this binding?
 - Psalm 2:8 "...I will surely give the nations (ἔθνη) as Your inheritance;" 72:11 "let all kings bow down before him, all nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) serve him;" Amos 9:11f "all the nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη)."
 - Matthew 28:19 "make disciples of all the nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη)"
 - Mark 3:27 "unless he firsts **binds** the strong man, and then he will plunder his house."
 - Luke 10:17-19 "I was watching Satan fall...I have given you authority...over all the power of the enemy."
 - Mathew 16:18-19 "I will build My Church and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."
 - John 12:31 "now the ruler of this world will be cast out."
 - Colossians 2:15 "...He had disarmed the rulers and authorities...having triumphed over them."
- What does Satan's binding mean?
 - He cannot stop the Church from "plundering" his house with the gospel.
 - He cannot rally world powers to crush the Church as he will when he is released.