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A Desolate Planet

Revelation 20:1-3 describes the thousand years as a period of time during which the devil is bound with a chain. Is this a literal steel chain from the hardware store? Not likely. This is a symbolic chain. Something happens that prevents the devil from carrying on his usual business of deceiving the world. What is it? Let's put the pieces together:

Revelation 22:11 tells us that when Jesus returns, there will only be two groups of people on planet earth—the wicked and the righteous. At the Second Coming, you will belong to one of those two groups and it will be too late to change your mind.

1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17 and John 14:1-3 reveal that when Jesus comes, the righteous go to be with Him in heaven. The righteous dead are raised from the grave, and together with the righteous living, they are caught up into the air to meet Christ face-to-face. Isaiah 25:9 gives us a glimpse of the saints' excitement when they see Jesus coming!

Not everybody will be excited, however. Revelation 6:15-17 gives us a picture of those who never made the all-important decision to accept the forgiveness Jesus gives. When *they* witness the Second Coming of Christ, they are not excited—they are terrified! Jesus does not appear as a Savior and Friend to them; instead, He appears as the One leading the armies of heaven (Revelation 19:14-21). The wicked are *not* caught up to be with Jesus because they wouldn't be happy in heaven, anyway. The Bible reveals that they are unable to bear the return of Jesus (see Revelation 6:15-17; Revelation 19:21; Matthew 24:27; Jeremiah 25:31).

The wicked are slain by a sword coming out of Jesus' mouth—representing the Word of God (see Hebrews 4:12, for example). The wicked dead are *not* raised at this time. (Revelation 20:5 tells us clearly that the rest of the dead, those not raised at Christ's coming, do not live again until *after the thousand years*. In John 5:28 Jesus speaks of *two* resurrections—the “resurrection of life,” and the “resurrection of damnation.”)

During the millennium, therefore, the righteous are all in heaven, and the wicked are all dead. How many human beings does that leave on planet earth? None! The earth is barren during the millennium. Jeremiah 4:23-27 describes the earth in its desolate state—“without form and void.” The cities are broken down, and there are no people. There is nothing left.

In Isaiah 24:19-22, we are told that when the earth is broken up at the Second Coming and is left desolate, it becomes “the pit.” The wicked, along with the “host of the high ones on high” are gathered there together, where they wait for “many days.” Not only will the wicked dead wait out the millennium on this earth, but apparently the fallen angels will as well. In fact, in Isaiah 14:15, 20, God tells Lucifer that he will be brought down to the “pit,” but he will not join the wicked in burial. Instead, he will have the entire millennium to think about what he has done to the human race! During earth's history, he has been too hard at work to think things through—the millennium gives him a chance!

Revelation 20:1-3 shows us that during the thousand years, Satan is bound up in the “pit.” What is the pit? Isaiah told us it was the desolate earth. Jeremiah said that this earth becomes “without form and void” during the millennium. The word “pit” in Revelation 20 is from the Greek word *abussos*, from which we get our word, “abyss.” In the Greek version of the Old Testament (the Septuagint), this same word is used in Genesis 1 to describe the earth when it is “without form and void” before Creation! The pit, or *abussos*, is simply this planet in its broken-down state after the Second Coming.

Satan is said to be bound because he can no longer deceive the nations (Revelation 20:3). With the righteous all gone, and the wicked all dead, Satan simply has nobody to work with! He is forced into taking a thousand year vacation! During this time, the saints are in heaven, living and reigning with Christ, and doing a special work of judgment (see Revelation 20:4, 6, 12). The books of judgment are opened for the righteous to review. God has nothing to hide. All of our questions will be answered. Why did God allow suffering? Why aren't the wicked in heaven? Was there really no hope for them? What about the fallen angels—was there no chance they would repent? 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3 reveals that we will review such questions once we get to heaven.

If you stop to think about it, not only are human beings on trial—but so is God's character! Satan has maligned God's character and cast doubt on His goodness for thousands of years. All of our questions will be satisfied. Revelation 15:3, 4 depicts the righteous declaring that God is good, and all of the decisions He made through the years were right.

At the end of the millennium, several things happen. After we are done looking through the books and enjoying a “honeymoon” with Christ, God lets us see for ourselves that there was absolutely no chance that the wicked would repent. Even though they have seen the Second Coming of Christ, and even though the devil has had a thousand years to think things through, there has been no change.

God brings the center of operations, the heavenly city, to planet earth (see Revelation 21:2, 3). The millennium is over. Satan is loosed from his prison (Revelation 20:3, 7). The wicked are raised from the dead (Revelation 20:5). For the first time in history, the whole human race is assembled together. The righteous are inside the city; the wicked are outside. Have the wicked changed? No. In fact, Satan leads them in a last-ditch desperate attack on the new Jerusalem (Revelation 20:7-9). We will be able to see for ourselves that nothing has changed.

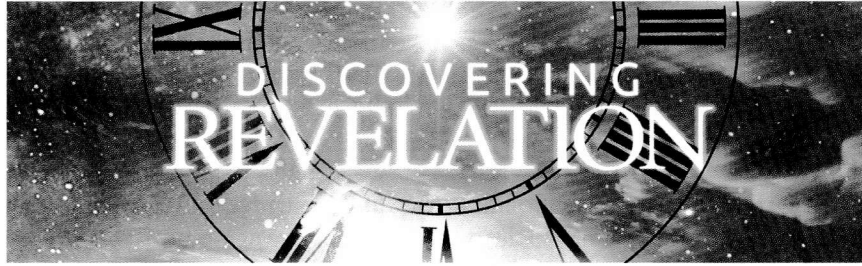
At this point, fire comes down from God out of heaven (Revelation 20:9) and devours the wicked. God cannot permit sin and suffering to go on throughout eternity. His universe was not designed for pain. The wicked would not accept forgiveness and mercy, and because God will not force them into heaven (where they would be miserable), He puts them out of their misery once and for all. Pain, suffering, death, sorrow—they are all eliminated for all time.

It is not an easy thing to do. It's God's “strange act”—but if suffering is going to be eliminated once and for all without violating our free will, it must be done.

Once sin has been dealt with, God recreates the planet. Isaiah 65:17-19 and 2 Peter 3:13 speak of “new heavens and a new earth.” As the head of the human race He has purchased with His blood, Christ takes up residence on this planet (see Revelation 21:3).

What kind of world will it be? Will we strum harps and sit on fluffy clouds? Not according to the Bible. We will be busy! Isaiah 65:21, 22 speaks about building houses and planting gardens. Imagine working for yourself full time without money worries, pain, tiredness or suffering. You won't be working for someone else for someone else's profit! The earth will be restored to what it was at Creation. Even the deserts will blossom (Isaiah 35:1). There will be no handicaps or suffering. The blind will see, the deaf will hear, and the lame will walk! (Isaiah 35:5,6) We won't have to learn about Christ from a book anymore—we will get to see Him face to face. In fact, the Bible says in Isaiah 66:22, 23 that once a week, on the Sabbath, we will appear in His presence to worship Him in person!

What will you be doing when Jesus comes? Where will you spend the millennium? And what are your plans for eternity? Heaven is yours for the asking. God is calling you to join Him. You just have to make a choice!



A Desolate Planet

Back when the year 2000 was approaching, people were excited—and apprehensive. Excited, because many people never get to witness the arrival of a new millennium. And apprehensive, because of the Y2K problem that was supposed to cause massive computer failures and worldwide chaos. Fortunately, the Y2K problem turned out to be a non-problem.

The word “millennium” is simply a combination of two Latin words meaning “a thousand years.” The word doesn’t appear in the Bible, but Scripture does describe a special period of 1,000 years following the return of Jesus, during which some amazing things happen—including a big problem for the devil.

A THOUSAND YEARS MARKED BY TWO RESURRECTIONS

1. What event marks the beginning of this special 1,000-year period? (Revelation 20:6)

This “first resurrection” at the beginning of the thousand years is the resurrection of the righteous dead at Jesus’ second coming. (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17; John 14:1-3) Together with the living righteous, they will be caught up in the air to meet Jesus and go with Him to heaven.

2. What happens to the wicked who are alive when Jesus comes? (Luke 17:29, 30; 2 Thessalonians 2:8)

Those who refuse to give up their sins are destroyed when Jesus returns in “flaming fire taking vengeance on those . . . who do not obey the gospel.” (2 Thessalonians 1:8) They die from “the brightness of His coming.” (2 Thessalonians 2:8) Those who have died in their sins before Jesus returns continue to sleep in the grave.

So when the thousand years begin, all the righteous are alive and go to be with Jesus in heaven. All the wicked are dead on the earth.

3. Will the wicked ever be resurrected to life again? (**Revelation 20:5**)

The righteous are raised to life in the “first resurrection.” (Revelation 20:4, 5) So “the rest of the dead,” who do not live again until the thousand years are finished, must refer to the wicked. Jesus spoke of a “resurrection of life” and a “resurrection of condemnation.” (John 5:28, 29) The resurrection of life occurs at the beginning of the thousand years, and the resurrection of condemnation marks its close.

SATAN’S BIG PROBLEM



During the thousand years, all the righteous are in heaven. All the wicked are dead on the earth. So no one is left alive on earth during this time. This is a BIG problem for Satan.

4. What happens to Satan at the beginning of the thousand years? (**Revelation 20:1-3**)

Is this a literal chain made of steel? Could such a chain actually bind Satan? No. This is a symbolic chain—something that prevents Satan from carrying on his usual work of deceiving men and women into sin.

5. What is the condition of planet Earth during the thousand years? (**Jeremiah 4:23-27**)

Centuries ago, the prophet Jeremiah had a vision regarding the coming destruction of Judah by the invading forces of Babylon. The language used also describes the conditions the Bible tells us about regarding what the earth will be like at the end of time. (Revelation 19:17-21; 20:1-3)

During this time, the earth lies desolate. It is an “abyss”—a deep, bottomless chaos. Here is where Satan is “bound” with a great chain of circumstances. This is the devil’s big problem—no one is left on earth for him to tempt and deceive. For a thousand years, he will be confined to a desolate earth to contemplate the awful results of his rebellion!

THE THOUSAND YEARS AND THE RIGHTEOUS

6. In heaven, what are the righteous doing during the thousand years? (Revelation 20:4, 6, 12)

The righteous will have an opportunity to have all their questions answered. God has nothing to hide. Is someone missing in heaven whom you felt sure would be there? You will be able to review his or her case and see that God couldn’t have done differently than He did.



What about the fallen angels? Was there really no chance they might repent? The Bible reveals in 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3, that we will investigate such questions during this time in heaven.

When he rebelled in heaven, Satan raised doubts about God’s character. During the thousand years, the righteous will be able to see for themselves that all of God’s decisions dealing with sin have been just and fair. (Revelation 15:3, 4)

THE FINAL END OF SIN AND SINNERS

When the thousand years are finished, the wicked are raised to life. (Revelation 20:5) Satan is set free from his “prison” (Revelation 20:3, 7), because now he once again has men and women to deceive into a final, desperate attempt to overcome God.

7. What appears on earth at the close of the thousand years? (Revelation 21:2, 3)
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The New Jerusalem descends from heaven to earth. For the first time in human history, everyone who has ever lived on the earth is assembled together—the righteous inside the city, and the wicked outside with Satan and his angels.

8. What happens when the wicked throng attacks the Holy City?
(Revelation 20:9, 10)

Fire comes down from God out of heaven and devours Satan, his angels and all his human followers. God will make a final end of sin and sinners. God will not force anyone into heaven.

In mercy, He puts the wicked out of their misery for eternity. It's not an easy thing to do. That's why the Bible calls it God's "strange" or "unusual" act. (Isaiah 28:21) But it must be done to ensure the safety of the universe forever.

The fire that consumes the wicked purifies the earth. (2 Peter 3:10-13) Sin, pain, suffering and death are eliminated for all time. God makes all things new. (Revelation 21:4, 5)

What will be your reaction when Jesus comes? Where will you spend the millennium? God wants you to be with Him in heaven. He's calling you to join Him. It's your choice!

MY DECISION

- Jesus, I choose to be with You in heaven during the thousand years.
Come into my heart and live in me each day.

MY PRAYER

Father, may nothing prevent me from meeting Jesus in peace when He returns. Thank You for saving me. In Jesus' name, Amen.